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The Secretary's AGM Report

David Stevenson writes...

"The Swiss Railways Society AGM and Spring Meet is always a pleasure; meeting old colleagues, renewing relationships, and all in a convivial atmosphere. This year saw the start of an organisational process that was overwhelmingly approved by those attending the meeting. The change to the Society becoming a Company Limited by Guarantee is important for the Committee in particular, and we are very grateful for the support we received. In essence members will see no change to what the Society does, and the way in which it conducts business, other than the AGM itself becoming a slightly more structured affair. The Society is in a very healthy state and doing very well, although we need to be aware that our reserves are now down to the level we wish them to be at, so we must structure our finances accordingly in the future. One particular pleasure was the awarding of Life Membership to Dave & Jan Howsam. Both have done so much for SRS over the years and we hope this recognition will go part way to acknowledging how much we owe to them. The layouts and traders make the day and all reported great interest from those present. Around 200 members, guests and other attendees came to the Midland Hotel at some point during the day, confirming the impression that the Swiss Railways Society is going from strength to strength. Unfortunately I was unable to stay for the dinner, but I understand it went well and was enjoyed by those who took part. I, and all the Committee, look forward to meeting as many members as possible at the forthcoming Extraordinary General Meeting on the 23rd July when the agreed change in the Society's status is formally confirmed. This will be in the same Derby venue as the recent AGM, as will be next year's AGM on the 11th March 2017. Please put these dates in your diary and try to come along to both. Any member who was unable to attend the AGM, but would wish to see the financial statement that was approved by the meeting, can access this on the 'Members Area' of our website. Alternatively you can receive a copy by sending an A4-size stamped addressed envelope to me at my address shown in the magazine, quoting your Membership Number."

Chairman's Notes

John Jesson writes...

"To start, one thing that I did not mention at the AGM and should have done, was to thank Ron Dawes and Neil Wheelwright for organising the event. Other members of both the London and the Yorkshire branches ably supported them on the day. Many thanks to all of them, and I apologise for forgetting to do so at the meeting. I also wish to thank the retiring Treasurer, Malcolm Job, for his excellent management of the Society's finances.

I have to admit that the AGM was somewhat of a surprise to me and, I think, to many of the Committee as well. In recent years there has been almost nothing in the way of questions, complaints or disagreements at this meeting, but I think we were all expecting more doubt expressed about the Society becoming a Company Limited by Guarantee than was received. I have to say that I was, and am, very pleased that the membership has so much faith in the Committee and supports its considered proposal. For those not at Derby none of the approximately 90 members present in the meeting voted against the proposal and there were just two abstentions. Whilst the confidence of the membership towards the Officers and Committee is very gratifying, I do have a concern. Many of us running the Society are not exactly 'spring chickens' and the situation will inevitably arise when replacements need to be found. At present, all of us are happy to continue, but I would like to make a suggestion. If anyone would like to consider

taking on any of the tasks please contact us and talk about it. An excellent example was that David Stowell, having expressed an interest in becoming our Treasurer, "shadowed" Malcolm Job for a year before taking over, resulting in a smooth handover. Now that David is in post Malcolm is willing to answer any queries that David has, as well as continuing to manage for the short term a few aspects of the job that need complex changes to the paperwork. All of us are staying in post for another year, but it would be very helpful if we had some idea of who might be interested in taking-over the various roles when such a situation arises. As you will read in the magazine this will be the case next year when Roger Ellis has indicated that he will not stand for re-election. Even if this were not to be for several years for other posts, it is always useful to know of someone who could step in should the need arise such as due to an accident or illness. So please think about it. You are welcome to contact me, or the present incumbent, of any specific post, that you are interested in. You would not only be helping the Society, but it also can be a lot of fun.

I hope to see as many of you as can make it at the EGM on the 23rd July at Derby, when the agreed change in the status of the Society is formally voted upon."

Photographs for Swiss Express

The Editorial Team always welcomes photographs for *Swiss Express*, as without them it would be a very dull publication. The old Chinese saying that 'A picture is worth a thousand words' is still valid today. However Tony Bagwell, our Photographic Editor, does not want to receive a thousand pictures, as almost can be the case when some of our very keen members submit their photographs. Please keep the photos coming in, but please do a bit of editing first. We will probably never publish more than 10 or 12 images with any article, so please carefully go through all those photos you took on your Swiss visit and simply choose the best, and keep the rest for your family album. If you are not illustrating an article, just one really good image of an interesting subject will often stand more chance of making it into the Photo Gallery, than a selection of similar ones. Keep the photos coming, but in moderation please.

Members' Area of the Society Website.

The Username to access the "Members Area" of the Society website is SBB@swissrailsoc.org.uk You will find the password on your current Society Membership Card.

SRS on Facebook

A reminder that the Society now has a Facebook presence. Our Facebook page is at: www.facebook.com/swissrailwaysociety. We hope that it will promote the Society and will be a vehicle where we can put announcements at short notice. Please have a look at it and "like" it. We also have a Facebook Group page at: www.facebook.com/groups/swissrailwaysociety. Members can join, ask questions, post photos and videos. Please join this closed group and make use of it.

Members' Letters

From: Mel Barnes (by Email)

On P32 of the March *Swiss Express* the news item about 'd/s *St Urs*' mentions that the replacement engine sourced for the boat's rebuild was originally manufactured in 1898 by Samuel Whites at East Cowes on the Isle of Wight. Both my father and grandfather worked for Whites so the article was of particular interest to me. In practice the name of the company (founded in 1805) was John Samuel White and Co. and their premises were on both sides of the wide River Medina. Ships were built at East Cowes and fitted out on the west side at Cowes (sometimes known as West Cowes) – my

hometown. The Engineering Works, where the replacement engine for the 'St Urs' would have been made, was based on the west bank of the river. I am not sure what type of engine the newly fitted 1898 replacement is, but in a book Whites published it says "In 1896 the firm built a beautiful set of triple engines for the express yacht 'Scud' - real 'watchmaker's craftsmanship' - which aroused universal praise - and after that it (the company) could tackle any order...". It sounds like just the thing the Swiss would have gone for!

Editor's Note: The East Cowes shipyard closed in 1964, whilst the West Cowes operation was sold in 1972 to an American engineering company.

From: Bill Canfield, McLean, Virginia, USA.

I appreciated the 'Climbing above Territet' article in the last Swiss Express. In the summer of 1968, upon graduation from college and seeing the military draft in the offing (I went on to spend 14-months in the Mekong Delta of South Vietnam), I was able to make a memorable "Grand Tour" of Europe. My then girl friend had spent a summer or two at what was then an English/American girl's school in Glion and convinced me to take the train with her from Genève to Montreux, and then via Territet up to Glion on the old funicular. I will recall that trip for the rest of my life and it was certainly the precursor to my interest in the SRS. In 1984 I again had a chance to retrace that trip. I stayed at the Montreux Palace Hotel and took the Montreux-Rochers-de-Naye line up to the summit. I had lunch at the mountain top hotel and then hiked down the mountain to Caux. At Caux I waited for the train down to Montreux and could not help but notice a memorial plaque on the wall of Caux station. This was given by WW2 RAF pilots to thank the Swiss people and the citizens of Caux for helping their colleagues who had bailed-out over Switzerland to avoid German capture and for facilitating their repatriation to England.

From: Robert Foster – by Email.

I am not certain that the commentary upon photograph Nos.3 and 4 of those taken at Luzern in 1937 (Swiss Express No.125) is correct. The extra coach has not been added in No.4, but is backing down in No.3; the clue is in the roofline of the coach to which the extra coach is about to be coupled. Nor am I certain that it is morning and that the passengers are off for a day's walking. The clue is in the shadows in No.4, which are in the opposite direction from those in photograph Nos.1 & 2, while the two rucksacks in No.3 seem too bulky for a day's hiking. The preponderance of suitcases in No.4 suggests that this is a long distance train, possibly to Italy or France. Sadly with the possible exception of the teenage girl in No. 3 and the young boy in Nos. 1 and 4, none of the other people pictured will now be alive.

Despite having had an interest in SBB for 40 years, I am only a recent member of the SRS and have only just realised from items in Swiss News that avoiding reversal at Luzern was still a live issue. In summer 1974 I worked at a hotel in Melchsee as a student. At the time there was a beautiful model at Luzern of a proposed underground through station, to replace entirely the existing surface station. There was


talk then of a new line along the south-west bank of the lake which, together with elimination of reversal, would have saved 25 to 30 minutes between Basel and Erstfeld. It would have fitted well with the Gotthard base tunnel, but of course never came to pass. While on this subject, for a brief period in the mid 1980s there was a day train from Basel, which took the direct route via Wohlten to Arth-Goldau, today used by freight trains and until their sad demise the overnight trains, so avoiding the time-consuming exercise of serving Luzern.

Incidentally there is a reference in the March issue to the Brussels-Basel TEE 'Edelweiss' continuing at one time to/from Brig and Interlaken. I am not entirely certain if this is correct. The Edelweiss ran until 1974/5 between Zurich and Amsterdam via Brussels, attached to the 'Helvetia' or 'Arbalete' as far as Basel, but when the Cisalpin went over to loco haulage, the displaced RA units then did two Zurich-Brussels return trips daily.

Editor's Note: The commentary I put together for the Luzern 1937 photo-spread was based upon the notes with the photographs. In practice I think the coach in No.4 is coupled-up as there are passengers already entering, and in it. As we have no record of the photographer, and sadly the person is almost certainly no longer alive 79-years on, we cannot be too definitive. As Robert notes, apart from the children present (there are actually three clearly visible in No. 4, and possibly a fourth behind the 'lampman'), unfortunately it is probable that the majority are now dead. Robert is correct about the time of day the images were taken, so it is probable that the individuals with rucksacks were off on holiday in the Alps (where a train to Italy would have stopped en-route) rather than for a day's hiking.

Member's Advertisements

For sale: The widow of a deceased SRS member has asked that I dispose of the following Swiss transport books on her behalf: Swiss Railway Saga, AS Verlag's superb coffee table book for the 150th anniversary; two full colour books on private and narrow gauge Swiss railways - 1) Schmalspurige Privatbahnen in der Schweiz and 2) Les Chemins de Fer Privés Suisses, Vol. 1; various commemorative books issued by LEB and AL, plus several other titles, including some on lake steamers. List available from: **Michael Farr at pandmfarr@talktalk.net or send an SAE to 1, Trethurgy Gardens, Callington, Cornwall. PL17 7RH.**

For sale: 'Swiss Narrow Gauge Volume One: West' and 'Volume Two: East'. Both booklets: A4, 36-pages, 100 colour photographs. Each booklet: £10 including postage. Send to **Jason Sargerson, 17 Muirfield Park, Westbourne Avenue, Hull, East Yorkshire, HU5 3JF.** Contact: Tel 01 482 446 451 or by email at **Jason@sargerson.freeserve.co.uk**. Cheques payable to Jason Sargerson. Please see my website for further details: **www.jason-sargerson.uk**. 

So where was Heidi?

Luzern Bahnhof. 

