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We are not alone!

Ron Smith



Swiss railways are well known and appreciated throughout the world, and the SRS is not the only Swiss specialist society. A leading one is the VSZ (Vereniging Spoorgroep Zwitserland) in the Netherlands. The VSZ is very active, and for some 32 years has produced an excellent quarterly magazine 'Signalglocke'. It was the VSZ who "staked out" the Gotthard to produce the double DVD about the classic route that can be bought from SRS Sales. The Netherlands comprises twelve Provinces, and to cover the country the VSZ has five regions, roughly sized according to a geographic spread of the population. The Gelderland (mid-east of the country) Group has its club rooms in Gennep and in November 2016 Gilbert Kegels, 'Signalglocke's' editor hosted my visit there. Gennep, close to the German border, is known as 'Spoorstad (Railway Town) Gennep' as it once was the site of the works of the Noord-Brabantsch-Duitsche Spoorweg-Maatschappij and was an important railway centre. Although there is now little trace remaining of this, a plinthed 0-10-0T and some art-work on a roundabout commemorate this aspect of its past. The VSZ have a house just off the main street

that accommodates: a workshop; layouts; café area - including two seating bays from old NS coaches; store rooms; audio/visual equipment; models, and a library of DVDs, magazines, books, etc. Here the Group are working on a fine exhibition standard modular layout, which will allow the various modules to be cleverly exhibited in various combinations from small to enormous. They fit into each other to make transport easier too! The theme is the Graubünden, and the completed modules are very detailed. As with all model railways, it is never finished, and several modules were under construction, utilising the various skills of the members, during my visit. Each of the VSZ regions has a similar centre where they meet at least weekly. It was great fun to meet the members and see the impressive layouts, the Bemo and LGB stock, plus HO models from all manufacturers, and to enjoy the fellowship. I could have stayed all day - but as it was I left a bit late to catch the train from nearby Nijmegen! 

TOP: Just some of the high quality scenery on the layout.

LEFT: A general view of the clubroom and layout.

BELOW: Even the social area is made to look like a carriage interior.

All photos: Ron Smith

