

# Swiss express : Michael Farr (half of our proof reading team) explains its journey to your doormat

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# SWISS EXPRESS

## Michael Farr (half of our proof reading team) explains its journey to your doormat

You pay your subscription and apart from enjoying the other benefits of the SRS you expect *Swiss Express* to plop through the letter box four times yearly ... but how does it get there?

Producing any magazine takes much time and effort by all involved. Before Pauline and I receive the proofs for checking it will have involved dozens of people over a gestation period of several months. This edition started life long before you received your December magazine. First and foremost are our contributors – whether submitting an article, some news, or some photos, or perhaps all three. Without them there would be no magazine for the printers to deliver to Nan and Alan Mackie for them to pack in envelopes and post to you.

Contributions go either to Liliana Wood or direct to the editor, Malcolm Bulpitt, whose job it is to ensure the articles and photos in each issue present a balanced view of Swiss public transport systems. This is not always easy as he has little control over what arrives each quarter. Up to the minute news is collated by Nick Freezer for *Noteпад* before it is emailed to Malcolm. *Society News* and the *Branch Diary* come in from the officers, and from group organisers who are tactfully chivvied by Glyn Jones. The editor has the task of going through all the input in detail; sometimes having to précis over-long items; sometimes having to add more information; always having to check references. Meanwhile the illustrations should have reached Tony Bagwell, our Photo Editor, who is an expert at using digital techniques to make the best of the images submitted. Many come with articles, others are earmarked for *Photo Gallery* and if no suitable picture is submitted, Tony can trawl the SRS archive for suitable shots sent in previously by our members. While all this activity takes place Hugh Edgley is contacting existing and potential advertisers in an effort to bring in additional income for the society.

About six weeks before your magazine is delivered, members of the editorial team meet at Gerald Savine's studio at Upton-on-Severn. Tony has a disk with chosen images, all referenced and colour coded to relate to specific contributions; he also has collated the captions. Malcolm has his laptop and transfers to Gerald all the copy. Then thanks to Gerald's expertise with his professional-standard Apple Mac installation he combines the two sources. Now it is possible to work out the pagination of each issue, deciding

where each article will go and which pictures offer the best illustrations.

Gerald then spends time putting the layout together prior to sending proofs of each page on to Pauline and me who read (individually) each page, hopefully noting not only spelling mistakes but also punctuation and inconsistencies. The last named pose a problem because no editor wants to change a contributor's style, yet corporately we strive for a house style. It is usually a case of choosing a middle road! If a place name appears to be spelt incorrectly it is necessary to check with the *Kursbuch*, or a useful little booklet available (free) from Swiss Post Offices *Verzeichnis der Postleitzahlen*, the Swiss equivalent of our postcode directories. Any doubts about locomotive classification, numbering, etc are checked in our small library of reference books, etc.

After our first read-through we compare notes and I mark up two master sets with alterations we feel are essential (in red) and those which are desirable (in blue); if there is time I will read everything through again and often pick up the odd mistake which, despite our efforts, we have missed. The "finals" are returned to Gerald and Malcolm so they can incorporate the changes that they feel are justified. Once they are happy, the digitised files go to the printers who send Gerald final proofs for signing off. Within days the copies have been printed and are sent overnight to Scotland for Nan and Alan to stuff into envelopes which they in turn have already labelled and stamped.

For someone who is a fourth generation printer, and who has been involved in the business since leaving school in 1955, the changes in production are awe-inspiring. The magazines we produced were set in hot metal type and printed by letterpress. If we wanted a photograph, a special block had to be made, an expensive process which made you choose your illustrations carefully. One aspect of *Swiss Express* production has not changed, however. In order to plan the spread of articles and to allocate the advertisements throughout the magazine, Malcolm and Gerald still use manual page layout charts which give an instant indication if the position of photos will clash or an article is taking up too much space. And for me even hot metal type is not dead, for I still use it to set up and print replica Edmondson railway tickets for transport systems here in the UK, and occasionally in Switzerland!

The team values the efforts of our regular contributors and we are always keen to receive articles, photos or even ideas from other people. So, please SRS members keep the material rolling in – it is *your* magazine!