

# Society pages

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**NEW SRS 2015 Calendar** - Order now as supplies are limited. **UK £13.00, Overseas £15.50** surface mail. See 'Society Sales' on the inside back page for details.

## EA Subscriptions

The subscription scheme for the monthly magazine "Eisenbahn Amateur" has been running now for a number of years. It was started when the SRS became an associate member of the SVEA, the umbrella organisation for the Swiss local clubs, for which 'Eisenbahn Amateur' is the common magazine. As the years have passed, the number of SRS members taking advantage of the scheme has dropped. The situation was not helped a couple of years ago during the financial crisis, when exchange rates were somewhat unpredictable. The situation now is that your committee is divided equally between continuing the scheme and dropping it and I, as Chairman, would value any thoughts on the subject. Discontinuing the scheme would probably not affect our associate membership of the SVEA, but may sour relations.

John Jesson

## News from Ontracks

Our friends at Ontracks are delighted to have been appointed Sole UK Distributors of ACME model trains. Based in Italy the founders of the company felt that there was a lack of quality models of Italian prototypes in the market. Over the 14-years since then they've produced a whole array of HO scale locomotives, coaches and wagons. Their range now encompasses models of German, Czech, Russian, Hungarian, Danish, Slovakia, Slovenia, Swiss and the many private operators. To celebrate the launch Ontracks are offering members of the Swiss Railways Society a special offer, a FREE copy of the ACME 2014 catalogue. They simply ask members to make a contribution of £2.50 towards P&P. To take-up the offer SRS members should ring 01981 241 268, quoting product code ACECAT2014 and stating they are an SRS member.

## Update on the Hotel Frohsinn at Erstfeld

After many years of providing a welcome for railway enthusiasts, Paul Jans has sold the business. The new owner has a different philosophy, his intention apparently being to cater only for tour groups. As a result, we no longer will be able to use the Frohsinn as a base for our wanderings in the Gotthard area. However, an alternative is available at Flüelen, the Hostellerie Sternen. This hotel is about 3 minutes walk from the station and has 6 single and 13 double rooms, all with en-suite facilities. Room prices are SF85/163 B&B, less 5% for SRS members. Half board, if required, would add

about SF35 - 40. Needless to say, with the smaller number of rooms, early booking is desirable. Frau Bonetti, the owner, speaks some English. The hotel can be contacted by letter, fax, telephone or e-mail.

Hostellerie Sternen, Axenstrasse 6, 6454 Flüelen am See.

Tel: 041 875 03 03. Fax: 041 875 03 05.

E-mail: [info@bonetti.ch](mailto:info@bonetti.ch). Internet: [www.bonetti.ch](http://www.bonetti.ch).

## MEMBERS' LETTERS

**From: Martin Fisher - by Email.**

It was good to see two substantial items in the June Edition of *Swiss Express* to mark the withdrawal of the last members of the Ae6/6 class. One point that did not get mentioned, or as Michael Caine might put it "Not many people know this", was the reason why a seemingly odd number of "city and town" locos were delivered. There were, of course, 95 of these (11426-11520, ignoring the fact that 11483 was renamed when Jura became a separate canton). 100 would have been a more likely order and, in fact, this was the original intention but SBB reduced the order, thereby omitting 11521-11525. Another member of the West Midlands Group, Helena Moretti, has a 'Swiss Cross' badge (and associated paperwork) for one of the five locos that were never completed.

You will see that I have quoted 5-figure fleet numbers. It is unfortunate that amongst the typos in the June edition were captions for 6-figure Ae6/6 fleet numbers. It is easy to see how those minor errors arose but unfortunately they give the impression that the very Society who should be providing authoritative information about Swiss railways is not in fact doing so. I appreciate that the Society is a broad church and not everyone is a number-snatcher, but if the editorial team would like to involve an additional proof-reader who knows about basic locomotive information then there are people around such as myself who have the time and interest to help out. Errors of this sort are a shame because the overall quality of *Swiss Express* continues to be excellent and there were a lot of interesting articles in the June edition, for example.

**From: Chas Levin - by Email.**

Although I'm probably one of the Society's newest members I would like to offer my support and thanks for your decision to stay with paper copies of the magazine. Like many people these days I spend an inordinate amount of my time reading on a computer screen, almost all my working day in fact, so I enormously enjoy reading from printed paper when I have the opportunity. It feels much more relaxing and it helps to differentiate leisure activities from more work oriented ones. Thank you for your continuing work in producing such an enjoyable magazine,

**From: Trevor Bond, Southwell, Notts.**

Regarding the article in June *Swiss Express* about the Swiss Railway Clock it must be made clear to the Swiss railway authorities that the sweep second hand is the reason for the world renowned punctuality of their trains. The removal of that hand will result in Swiss Railways joining the mess that is the rest of European transport. It could also result in a dent in Swiss national pride! I have visited Switzerland on thirty

one occasions since 1968, and every time my first job was to seek out the nearest station clock and reset my watch, knowing that this was 'the ultimate time machine'.

**From: David Gartside - by Email.**

I read the articles in June's *Swiss Express* about the threatened demise of the distinctive second hand with a mixture of amusement and alarm. A solution may not be that complex. On a recent visit to Northern Spain, I noted that the newest issue RENFE clocks perceptibly pause between 00 and 01 seconds, and again between 30 and 31 seconds. Doubtless that could be tweaked. They're manufactured by Festina, who trace their origins to La Chaux des Fonds, but nowadays are based in Spain. Time to swallow a bit of Swiss horological pride perhaps?


**From: Geoffrey Bryson - by Email.**

I was intrigued by Boyd Misstear's article (*Swiss Express* - 118) and wondered if the group of these clocks at London's Canary Wharf also jumped 1.5 seconds – checking I found that happily they do. I think it is more important that a station clock has a second red sweep hand than Mr Hilfiker's

1.5 second jump. This is also probably cheaper to achieve. Each of the Canary Wharf clocks also has a different large number in the appropriate dial place. Perhaps SBB could use that on the platform clock to remind everyone which number platform it is on!

## Member's Advertisements

**New Book:** As reviewed in the March *Swiss Express* **Swiss Narrow Gauge Volume One:** West – A4, 36 page booklet describing 25 Narrow Gauge Railways in South and West Switzerland. 100 quality colour photographs. Send £10 to Jason Sargerson, 17 Muirfield Park, Westbourne Avenue, Hull, East Yorkshire, HU5 3JF. Cheques payable to Jason Sargerson. Contact: [jason@sargerson.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:jason@sargerson.freeserve.co.uk) or Tel: 01 482 446 451.

*Swiss Express Magazines*, 3 issues of 1995, and 1999 to 2010 inclusive. Free to anyone to collect. Jack Duxbury lives about 1 mile from junction 13 of the M6. If interested, please contact Jack Tel: 01 785 713 690 or e-mail: [jackduxbury@btinternet.com](mailto:jackduxbury@btinternet.com). 

## BOOK REVIEW

### Slow Train to Switzerland


Author: Diccon Bewes.

Published by Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 3-5, Spafield Street, Clerkenwell, London, EC1R 4QB. Paperback, 300 pages. 9" x 6".

Over 70 vintage b&w photos. £10.99.

ISBN 978-1-85788-625-2

Available from all good book shops – use them or lose them!

This is the paperback version of Diccon Bewes highly successful book about Thomas Cook's first organised tour to Switzerland. In it Diccon, his mother, and the ghosts of Thomas Cook, John Murray and a Miss Jemima set off to travel the original route as near as possible by the original means of transport. However, donkey rides or walking over some of the passes may have been updated if more suitable modes of transport are now available. The 1863 party started off as 130 souls, but once the Alps were reached only 4 ladies and 3 gents were left – the "Junior United Alpine Club" as they labelled themselves. Starting on the ferry from Newhaven, Diccon retraced the route to Paris and then on to Geneva, before visiting many of the current favourite alpine locations. In his typical slightly humorous prose, the author describes the difference in travel between then and now, slipping the odd quote direct from Miss Jemima's diary. He starts the tour in Switzerland by giving a description of life there in the 19th century, again using quotes from English visitors at the time. There are also quotes and tips from John Murray's 1861 guide book to set the scene for the travel still to come. As Diccon says "That first Cook's Tour was noticeable for its pre-dawn starts, 18-hour days and the place-a-day itinerary." As the journey progresses around the country, each phase is accompanied by quotes from the original journal and other period publications, and explains the conditions prevailing at that time, conditions that were very different from those we are all familiar with today. This book gives an excellent history of our favourite country, not the usual "battle of this or war of that", but at the much more personal level of the common people's everyday lives. The 1860s were the birth of mass Swiss Tourism and here we learn how the Alpine visitors since then have changed the life of the locals from poverty to the country we love today. I'm certain that even those of us who think we know a lot about Switzerland will learn something new, and gain that knowledge in a very readable and entertaining way. If you enjoyed 'Swiss Watching' and 'Swisscellany', and you did not buy the hardback of this volume, then you'll need to get a copy of this new paperback edition. Highly recommended. 

Tony Bagwell

