

Hendschiken

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Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal**

Band (Jahr): **6 (2000-2002)**

Heft 2

PDF erstellt am: **26.05.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-854867>

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Hendschiken probably does not rank very highly in the average Swiss Railway enthusiasts idea of a railway "hot spot" in that the majority will not even know where it is, but in terms of variety and total number of trains to be seen it should be in anyone's "top ten".

The Zürich-Aarau-Olten corridor and the Basel-Brugg-Rotkreuz freight line leading to the Gotthard are two of the busiest routes in Switzerland. Naturally they have to cross each other and in fact they run parallel from Othmarsingen south westwards for 2 kilometres before the freight line dives under the Zürich-Aarau route and curves away to the south. A connecting link from the Aarau direction with a burrowing junction for the northern track curves southeasterly to join the freight route just north of Hendschiken station. The curve is used mainly by a half-hourly passenger service variously linking Olten or Brugg via Lenzburg to Muri, Rotkreuz or Zug. The occasional PTT train is also routed this way.

As both lines run through Othmarsingen this might appear to be the ideal spot, however the station's next door neighbour is the main Zürich-Aarau Motorway and after 20 seconds the traffic noise becomes a little wearing and is not conducive to good video. Hendschiken station is a much better locality being surrounded by fields and with a good network of paths linking the various sides of the triangle. Although unstaffed the station is in the usual good state of preservation (the goods shed mysteriously burnt down a couple of years ago), and the former signal room is now a waiting room. A modern island platform serves 2 of the through lines, however most of the Lenzburg bound trains still utilise the ground level track 1 next to the station building. Goods traffic is still handled in the former yard and a Sugar Beet loader is active during the season. Whilst trains on the Zürich-Aarau line can be observed from the station, it is possible to walk up a path on the east side of

the triangle, then across a bridge to the inside of the triangle and along a path to a point where all 3 lines are equidistant from you. This is possibly the closest I have come to video Heaven!

Although the two routes are now strategic main lines it is only in the last 30 odd years that they have achieved this pre-eminence with the opening of various connecting links, a major tunnel and cut-off. The first line to be built was the route from Rapperswil to Wohlen via the western side of the triangle opened in June 1874 by the Aargauische Sudbahn (ASB). The Schweizerische Nationalbahn (SNB) opened the next line, from Baden to Lenzburg forming the triangle north side in September 1887 and the ASB completed the eastern side with a line from Brugg to Hendschiken opened in June 1882. All the lines eventually became part of the SBB and were electrified in 1927 apart from the north side, which was not converted until 1932. The completion of the Killwangen-Spreitenbach-Gruemet cut-off transformed the services using the northern side as this now formed part of the Zürich-Bern Mainline.

In April 1999 I attempted to video every train over a 75-minute period in the early evening. In the event several escaped the net because I could not point the camera in two directions at once; however the scores were:

Zürich-Bern line (north side of triangle) Express Passenger; 18. Local Passenger; 5. Mail (containers); 1. Goods; 3. TOTAL; 27.

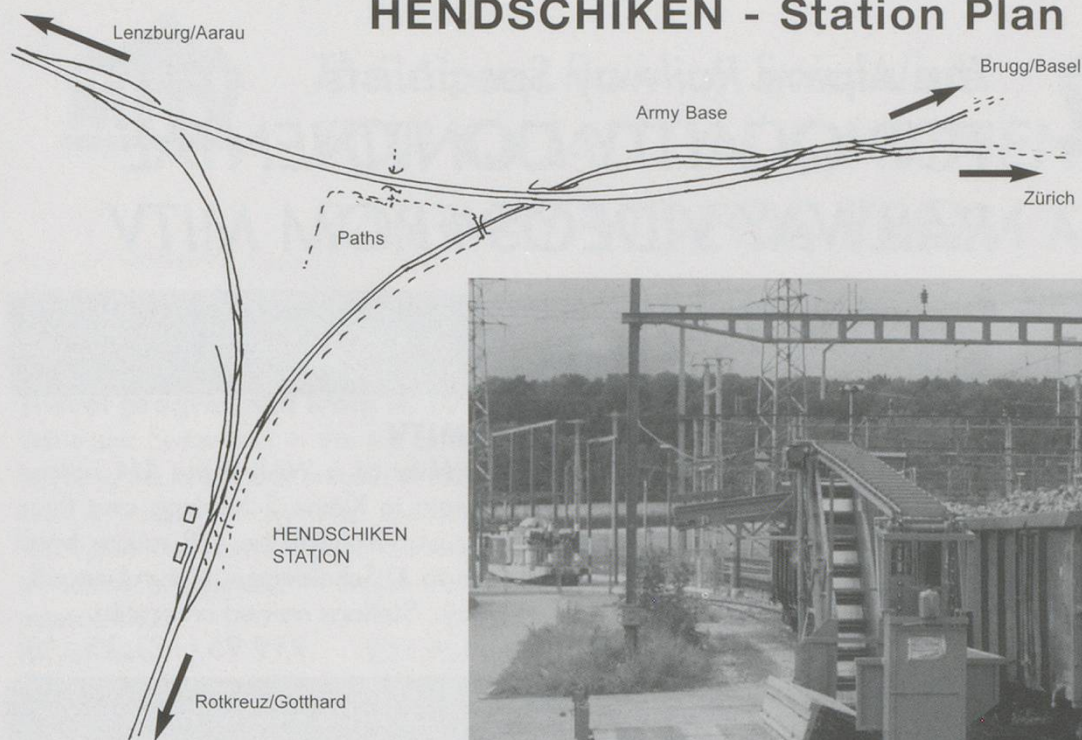
Gotthard line (East Side of triangle) Goods; 9. Hupac; 1. Local passenger; 1. TOTAL 11

Western Curve. Local Passenger, 7. Mail (vans) 1. TOTAL 8.

Some of the local passenger trains were 4 car push pull sets powered by an Re4/4^{II} and the local on the Gotthard line was another Re4/4^{II} hauling 10 coaches.

HENDSCHIKEN! Put it on your itinerary; you won't be disappointed!

HENDSCHIKEN - Station Plan



Two views of Hendschiken. The upper shows beet loading. In the background distance is the Zürich-Aarau line crossing the Brugg line. The latter (looking south) shows the station area, an Re6/6 and an Re4/4 travel light engine somewhere!

Photos and diagram: Ernie Brack

