

A Swiss goes home

Autor(en): **Russenberger, Paul**

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Former MittelThurgau Bahn train crossing the Rhein from the Munot. The emu now belongs to Thurbo.
All pictures in this article are by Paul Russenberger and were taken 27/4/03, apart from this one which was taken 26/4/03

It was several years ago in Le Bouveret that I first met Herr Richard Blatter, the President of the "Eisenbahn-Amateur-Klub Schaffhausen", as it is advertised in "Eisenbahn Amateur." He had been very keen to tell me that the 2003 Conference of the SVEA was to be held in Schaffhausen and that he hoped I would be there.

The great sense of personal excitement grew as one Saturday last April the train rolled tantalisingly close to the Rhinefalls before I stepped off onto the platform bedecked with flags to welcome me – and over a hundred others – to the SVEA gathering.

I repaired to my hotel to link up with Alan Pike before meeting Heinz Russenberger for lunch. We were utter strangers to each other, united only by a love of locomotives and a common surname. To help me, Heinz's daughter Doris had come as well as her English was well nigh perfect and she was certainly most helpful when my German stalled. Heinz and I commiserated with each other over having no

other enthusiasts in our respective families, but Doris said she felt one railway enthusiast in each family was quite enough! I could have chatted to Heinz and Doris Russenberger all afternoon, but since I was representing the Society at the SVEA with much hand shaking we took leave.

The SVEA meeting passed uneventfully sitting next to Alan and a Union Flag to show whence we came. After we were all greeted formally, the business passed to the reports from visitors and the necessary procedures of such a conference. After the business, Alan and I were able to raise the matter of the delays to Eisenbahn Amateur and gain evidence of the timings of its transmission to pass to Royal Mail in the UK.

Alan was disappointed that I had not been called to speak and quietly mentioned it to Herr Urban Rüegger, the SVEA President. I was a little taken aback when he returned with the words "It's all right, you're the after dinner



93 1360 during run past at Gummelshofen on the Wuchtalbahn.

speaker." Schaffhausen blood was clearly thicker than water!

The morning sun had turned to evening drizzle as we made our way up the hill to the Munot (pronounced Mu-not), a tower on the south side of the town above the Rhine, for drinks. There was a splendid view over the town and Richard Blatter devoted much time to explaining the various buildings to me and telling me how Schaffhausen had grown from its days as a toll point on the Rhine where goods had to be transhipped to cross the falls. Seeing the bridge which carries the Winterthur line over the river, I looked in the timetable to see if a train was about to come as a photograph was certainly possible. Why did I bother? The timetable showed a train was coming and, in Switzerland, as everywhere else if railway enthusiasts are grouped where a photograph is possible a crowd will have taken up position in good time and that evening was no exception!

Suitably fortified by the dinner, I could have felt a lot worse as I moved to the microphone. I started using my prepared words, but

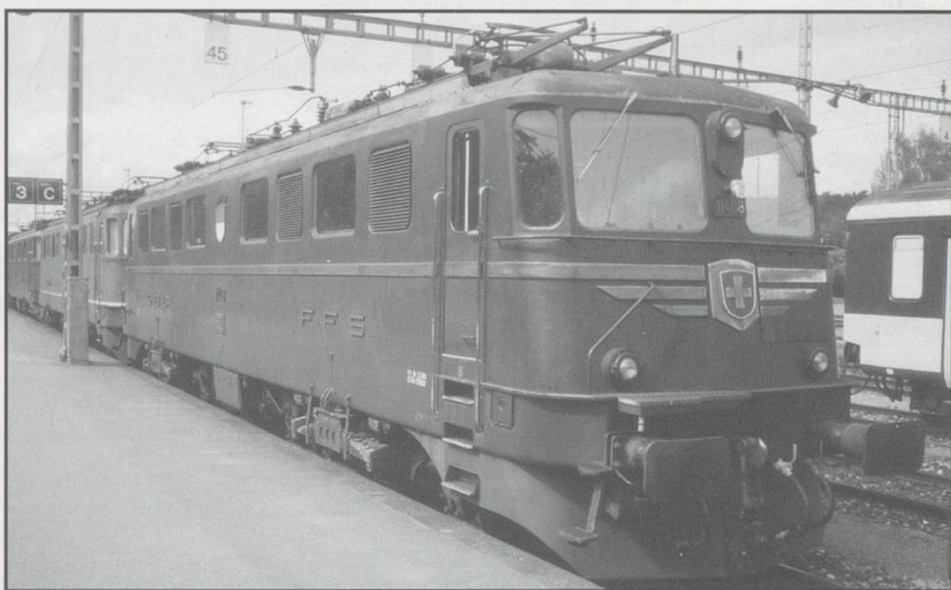
felt obliged to move from them somewhat to express my thanks for the link between the SVEA and the SRS, to say how delighted I was to be back in the home canton and explain that my grandfather's best friend at school had become a civil engineer, starting on the Gotthardbahn and retiring (help – what was the word for "retired?" but Alan saved the day for me with "pensioniert" in rather more than a stage whisper!) in 1915, as he did not think he could cope with those new-fangled electric engines. A lump was rising in my throat. It was a relief to move back towards my place, only to be intercepted by Herren Rüegger and Blatter who shook my hand warmly. "You spoke from the heart," they said. I like to think my grandfather would have been proud.

Sunday broke fair as we gathered at the bus station for the coach which was to follow the route of the erstwhile Schaffhausen – Schleithelm Strassenbahn to take us to Wutachtalbahnhof in Germany. We stopped briefly at Siblingen to see the remains of the shed and drove on. Despite dredging my memory, I did not recognise much of the road, but

as we passed the sign at the entry to Schleithelm I knew where I was. There was just a moment to glance up the road to the house where my grandfather grew up before we stopped briefly where the road gets wider and is still referred to as “der Bahnhof.”

Getting out was not an option and we were soon in Germany and photographing a train of rather mixed rolling stock. A rake of German coaches was leavened by a Swiss one and headed by an Austrian 93 class tank locomotive! With one photostop, we made our leisurely way the length of this line to lunch and a return to Schaffhausen by road, pausing to note the Georg Fischer factory on the way.

I returned to Zürich by way of Bülach (where a clutch of Ae6/6s were crying out to be photographed) and Winterthur. Once in the city, I decided I had had enough of trains and wandered the length of the Bahnhofstrasse for a few moments by the lake. The sun was now low and tinting the far mountains. It was good to have returned to Schaffhausen.



UPPER: 11153 at Schaffhausen
MIDDLE: Bülach. From camera 11408/475/510
LOWER: Bülach. From camera 11506/415/488/442/510/475/408