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LETZENACHRICTEN

NEWS NOTES BY ALAN PIKE

Arth-Rigi Bahn and Vitznau-Rigi Bahn

Between 19th and 21st May the Vitznau-Rigi Bahn held a three day festival to celebrate the introduction to service of new two-car sets. On Monday 19th a grand parade of almost all its rolling stock not otherwise in service left Rigi Kulm for Vitznau. Both the steam rack locos were in operation from Vitznau to the Rigi Kaltbad. Of particular interest was the fact that the V-R rival for traffic to the summit helped out its neighbour the ARB by running the regular services with its own stock giving the unusual sight of the blue and white Arth Rigi cars running in parallel from Rigi Staffel to Rigi Kulm.

Nyon - St. Cergue-Morez

No longer can one be greeted by the sight of a vintage train standing outside Nyon station. The new rail cars working either singly or in multiple glide silently to and fro probably to the great satisfaction of the passenger if not the railway enthusiasts. All is not lost, however, because sufficient stock has been preserved to run specials.

SSIF/FART



Centovalli train in the main thoroughfare at Locarno. Photo Editor.

Work has started in Locarno to take this famous railway away from the main streets outside the station. A tunnel is being built which will lead to a new terminus under the existing SBB goods yard.

SBB

A great leap in communications is being implemented by the introduction of a very modern radio system which will enable communications with trains to be made even if they are in tunnels. The system is also capable of transmitting data as well as speech. It is being produced by Brown Boveri and the system will have main control centres in Bellinzona, Biel, Lausanne, Luzern and Zurich as well as 42 remote centres and 400 radio stations which will be spaced between 3 and 5 miles apart. Trials are expected to be carried out between Zurich and Rapperswil in 1988. Completion of the system is not expected before 1993.

It is suggested that the shortest train in regular service is train 3053 from Geneva to Versoix and 14053 on to Nyon on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays which comprises an RE 44 II plus a second class coach. Because of its composition, its lower brake power restricts it to 125 kilometres an hour.

Sensetalbahn

A visit to this short but interesting line, is worthwhile if only to see the ex BLS BDe 4/6 sets in their new livery. Set 102 is named "Laupen" and 103 "Neuenegg". This line runs steam specials on the first Sunday of each month June to September and can provide sound and fury by the steep incline from Flammatt Dorf to Flamatt on the SBB main line between Fribourg and Bern.

REPORT BY HUGO ROTH

Back to the Belle Epoque

Very soon, carriages dating from the time of the great European Express trains will again be seen on the M.O.B. Two coaches from the Belle Epoque are now restored and back in their original glory. Just as in 1932 they bear the inscription of the International Sleeping Car Company as well as "Grands Express Europeans". In 1932 five Pullmans were put into service but due to the recession and the resultant lack of tourists they did not continue operating in regular trains for very long. Special duties however were assigned to these vehicles from time to time such as the transportation of General Guisan and his staff.

Four of these vehicles were eventually purchased by the Rhatische Bahn. Two of them an authentic Pullman and a saloon car were put on show at the Swiss National Exhibition. In 1970 they were saved from the scrap yard and now thanks to the resourcefulness of the M.O.B. workshops at Chernex they will again return to their original splendour. That the M.O.B. is rescuing old rolling stock does not mean that it is taking a step backwards. Together with partner companies the M.O.B. has shown that it is ahead of its time with such developments as the Panoramic Express which is a huge success for the M.O.B. Today passengers can choose from a wide selection as to what vintage of train they would like to travel along the terraces of Lake Geneva up to the Pays d'Enhaut and into the upper Simmental Valley.

REPORT BY MALCOLM HARDY-RANDALL

BLS Double track. Update.

The Hondrich tunnel at Spiez is now operational as a two track tunnel. The second bore was drilled out as a single track tunnel as far as the half way point where it was widened out into a twin track boring. This tunnel now has two single track portals on the North side and one double track portal on the South side. By doing this the acute bend at Km 3 in the old track route could be eliminated, and the old track lifted. A temporary crossover is in action inside the tunnel as all traffic at the moment is routed via the new bore. Catenary supports are being replaced on the section Spiez to Frutigen, with stainless steel units. Twin tracks are in operation as far as Blausee and will be complete as far as Felsenburg by the end of August. The supports of the new concrete Sarengrabenbrücke at Km 29 is almost complete, this will carry the new track with the old track running on the steel bridge alongside. Twin track is in use from Km 30 just north of Kandersteg via the Lotschberg and the new Mittlegraben tunnel (3.2 Km long) to Hohten (Km 54). The Lougelkinviaduct is finished and fitted with the second track, major construction work on the Bietschtalbrücke is now complete and the top track supports are being fitted. A major problem has been encountered on the power distribution, as environmentalists have objected to the route via the Gemmi pass for the high voltage supply line. A new route has to be found, which is almost bound to increase cost and lengthen the construction period.