

Book review

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Tuesday 8th October 1985. The 13.37 St. Maurice to St. Gingolph consisted of old electric Ae 4/7 10954, one second class carriage and three open wagons. The wagons were all detached at Monthey - CFF, leaving the train rather short and over-powered.. The train arrived at Gingolph at 14.18 (one minute late). This is a very strange village, being half in Switzerland and half in France, with only a little creek between. The station is also strange, comprising only a platform, there being no run-round loop or siding. The train therefore had to push back empty the four kilometres to the preceding (and more important) station of Bouveret.

A full list of all goods trains with passenger accommodation attached as at the Summer 1985 timetable. It will be seen that some mainline journeys are quite lengthy. The longest being 101 kilometres over the entire length of the BLS mainline-- but the journeys are often at strange hours of the night. The "trains de Marchandises avec voitures", can, however, be recommended as providing insights simultaneously into passenger and freight working, and often including usual workings. For example, of the three runs instanced above, that to Le Brassus gave travel on goods trains in both directions on a partially Federal partially private branch, with plenty of shunting along the way to and from Pontarlier offered international working and that to St. Gingolph produced a run behind an elderly locomotive.

BOOK REVIEW by Nigel Heath

"Tramways & Light Railways of Switzerland and Austria". Author R.J. Buckley. Published by Light Railway Transit Association. Size A5, paperback 120 pages. Price £3.50 from Swiss Railway Society Book Sales.

This volume fills for me a gap in available information. It covers Tramways & Light Railways including some funiculars. Of necessity it excludes metre gauge systems such as the Rhaetian Bahn as virtually Main line railways, but it includes some standard gauge DC powered lines. The author has applied an arbitrary rule of thumb in doing so, but then the distinctions between tramways, light railways and full railways were always blurred at the edges. What for instance is the Newcastle Metro ? the answer depends upon your definition and viewpoint.

There are no pictures, except for an illustration of a city tram and bus ticket, but there are a mass of routemaps.

The book includes sections on ticket arrangements, rolling stock classification and each line grouped by Tramways, Electric Light Railways and Tramcar Preservation. There are separate parts for Switzerland and for Austria, of which the part on Switzerland is by far the largest. Comprehensive Indexes detail both the lines included and lines excluded, and also Funiculars & Museums. This even includes a warning of the museums, all municipal, which are not open to the public. Though why have a museum if you dont let anyone come and see what you have got ?beats me !

The section on the lines includes rolling stock lists, descriptions and timetable information where appropriate.

This is a useful little book with a vast amount of information for its size. For anyone wanting to explore the Tramways & Light Railways of Switzerland, it could easily be taken with them and would be invaluable for planning trips. It contains plenty of warnings on the perils of the ticket systems and inspectors which could easily save the price of the book in fines avoided. Mr. Buckley has clearly put an immense amount of work into this compilation and is to be congratulated on a fine job. be congratulated on a fine job.