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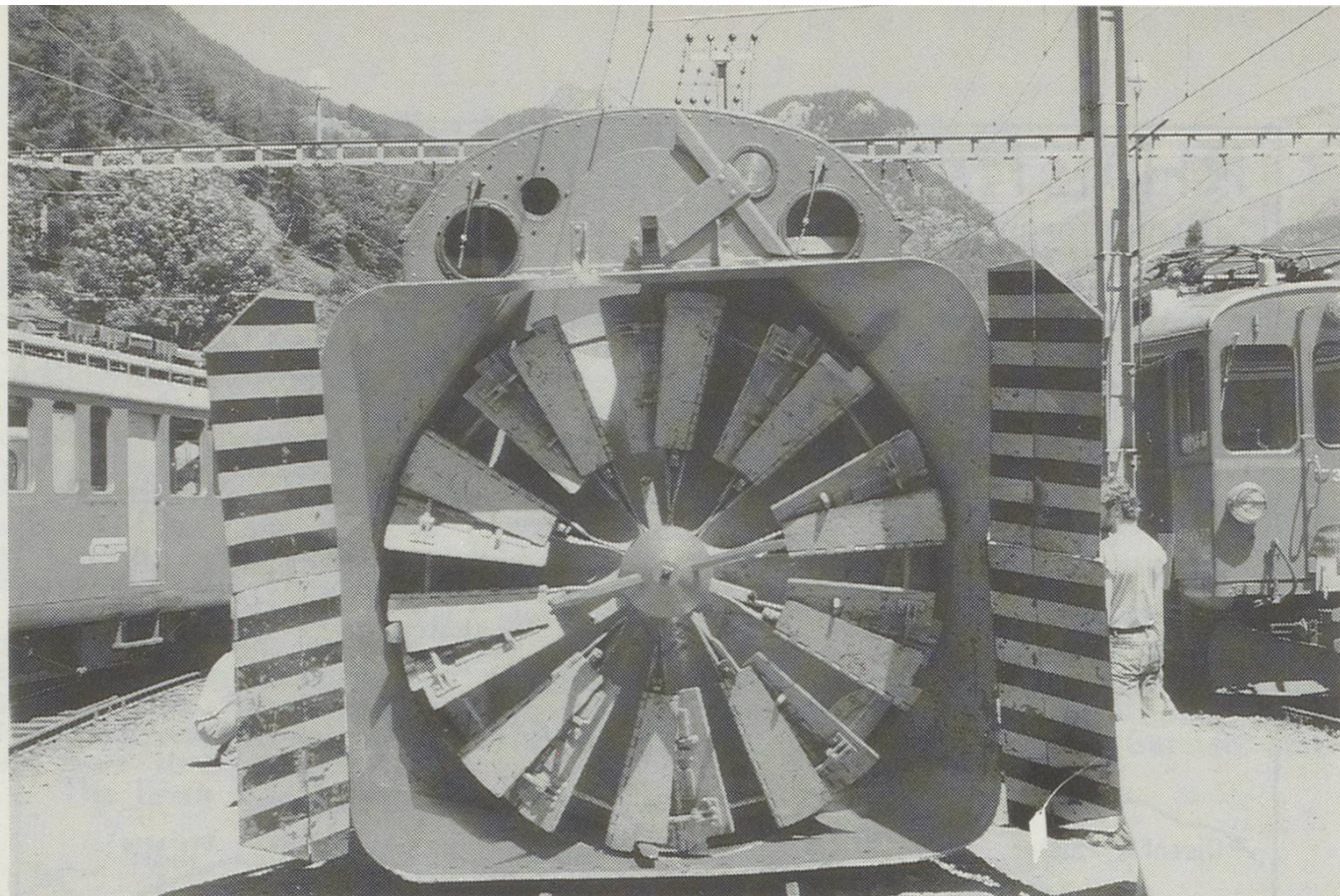
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Front view of RhB snowplough at Poschiavo, July 15th 1989

Photo Steve Horobin

RhB Centenary

Celebration in the Puschlav

by Steve Horobin

As all members will know 1989 saw the Centenary Celebrations of the RhB. I was fortunate enough to be allowed two weeks leave in which to take part and was able to cover the weekend of 14th/15th July when the Puschlav valley was host to the festivities.

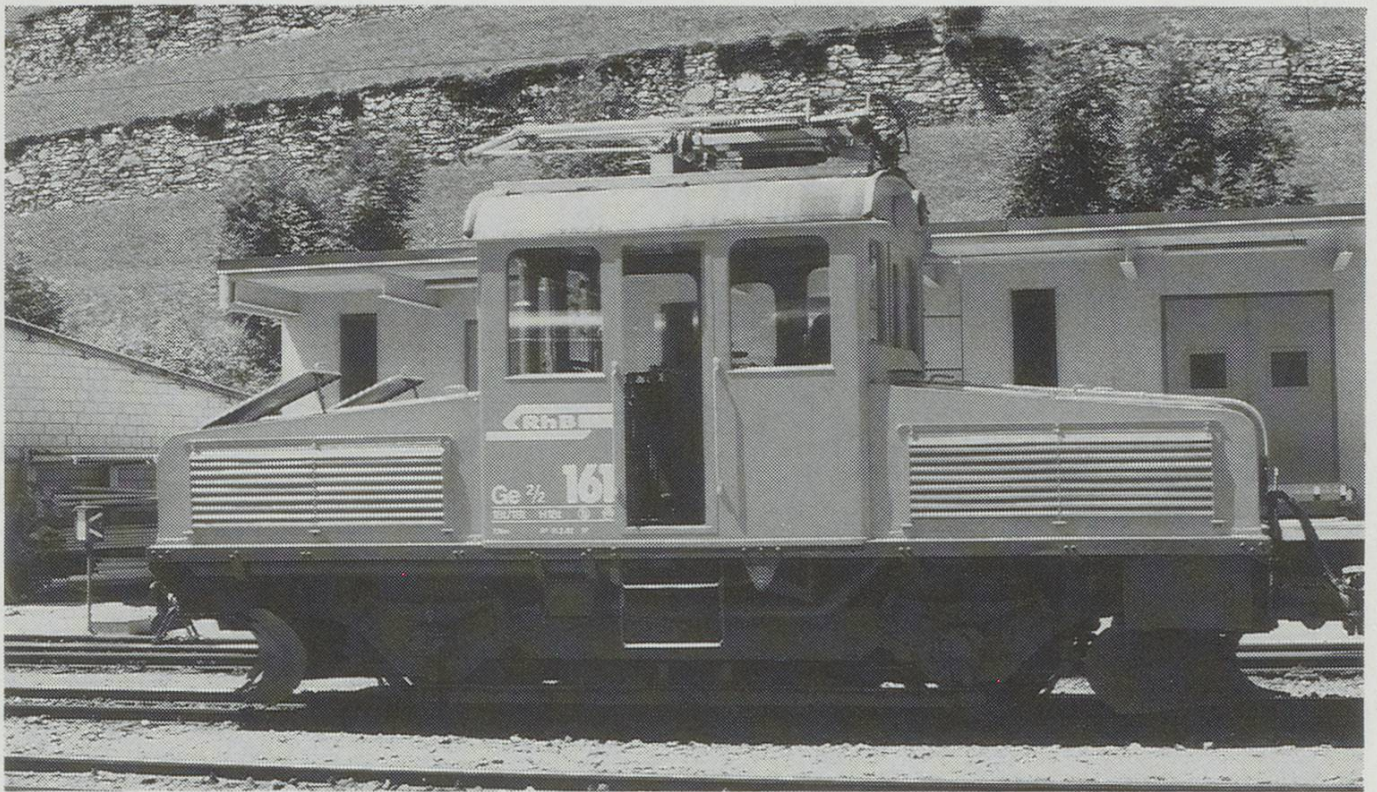
On leaving Bergun, my base for a week, on the 8.21 St.Moritz bound train on Saturday 15 July, the weather was gloomy and by the time we had reached Preda there was low cloud and rain but on emerging from the 5 km Albula tunnel into the Bever valley there was brilliant sunshine and clear blue skies with the distant brilliance of the snow-capped mountains of the Bernina range.

At Samedan I changed for Pontresina where crowds of people were lining the platforms for the journey over the Bernina pass to Poschiavo where the main event was being staged. After everyone had crammed onto the Treibwagen it was standing room only and the spectacular views of the climb up the Bernina pass were very restricted.

By now I was getting frustrated and hot so I decided to break my journey at Alp Grum and take in the spectacle of the Palu glacier and Puschlav valley below with the sapphire-like Lake Poschiavo before me.

Whilst waiting for the next train, a special full of RhB dignitaries went express-like through Alp Grum, ahead of the Bernina Express "B" bound for Tirano, which I boarded. Once again space was limited and I had to stand by the toilet.

Arriving at Poschiavo one was immediately aware that something very special was happening since all tracks and sidings were occupied by examples of the locomotives and rolling stock used on this line. In addition the snow clearing apparatus was displayed, the jewel in the collection being the 70 year old steam powered rotary snow plough.



*RhB Bernina line Ge2/2 No 161 "Asnin" at Poschiavo, July 15 1989
Photo Steve Horobin*

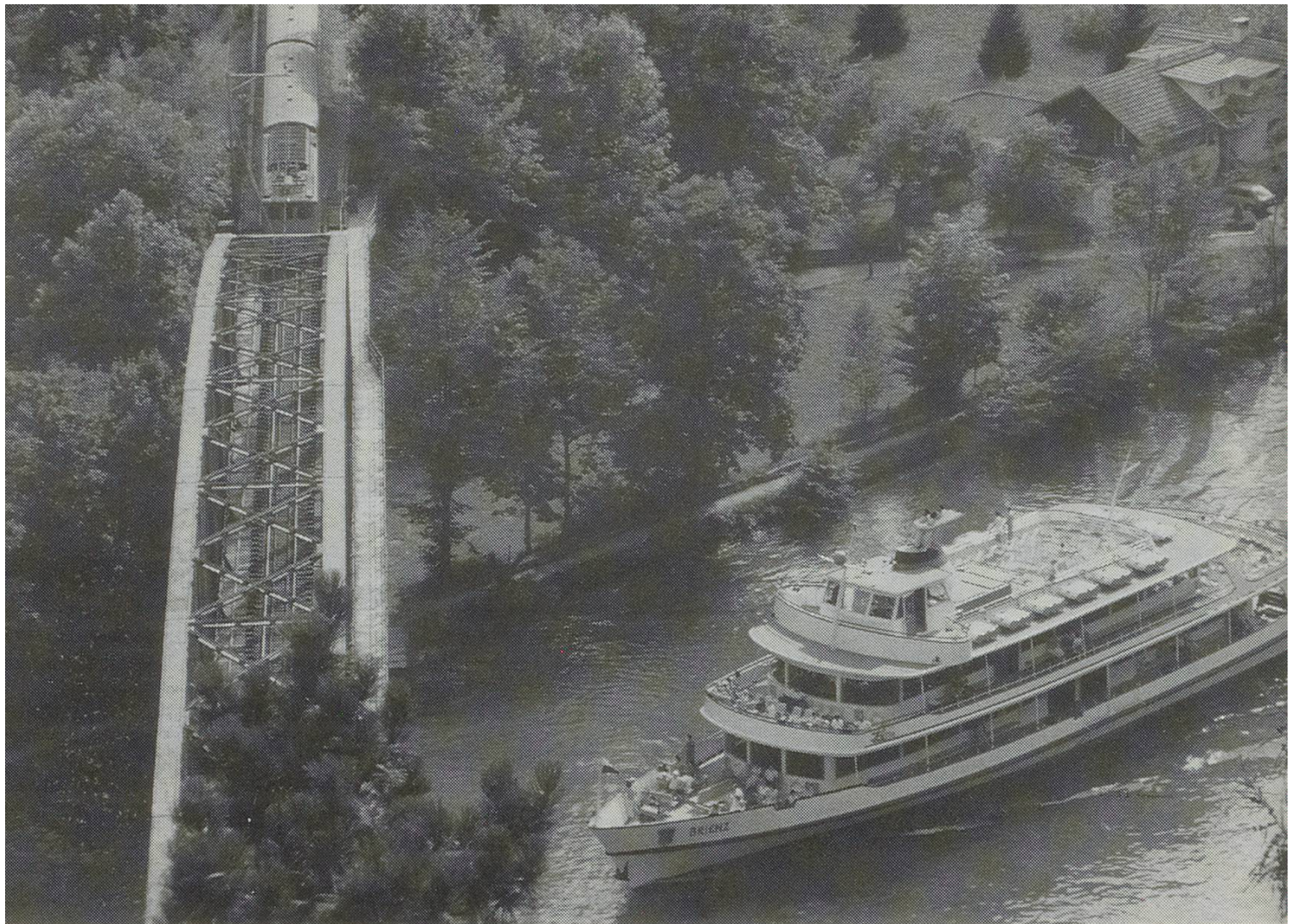
On the station forecourt a silver band was playing for the pleasure of the dignitaries who, after making their speeches on the importance of this line to one of the more remote parts of Switzerland, went to the Maintenance sheds where a banquet was laid out for them. It is worth recording that another banquet was held later in the day for retired RhB staff.

The Maintenance sheds were open for public inspection, one was amazed by the general air of cleanliness and good order in what was clearly a well used workshop. On the opposite side of the sheds were the display and publicity carriages that went round to every event during the Centenary Celebrations.

The highlight of my day was a ride in one of the Aussichtswagen behind Ge2/2 No.161 "Asnin" to Tirano. We headed out of Poschiavo with the silver band on board, playing every time we came to a halt or passed along the road sections of the line. Scores of cars, full of Eisenbahn fans, chased us down to the next vantage point. At the Brusio spiral, the screaming of the flanges was both deafening and exhilarating. When we finally reached Tirano, every passenger was smiling. Both Tirano RhB and FS stations were bedecked in flowers and bunting. A special Pendolino excursion to Sondrio had been organised and it returned to connect with our trip back to Poschiavo. After an hour to experience a little Italian atmosphere – and nearly getting run over by an Italian motorist in the process – I boarded the Aussichtswagen yet again. This time "Asnin" needed the assistance of an ABe4/4 Triebwagen to cope with the 1 in 18 climb back up the Brusio defile. The return journey was equally exciting.

On returning to Poschiavo I discovered that people had already started to drift away and after a further hour spent buying souvenirs, I boarded the 16.26 for St.Moritz, sharing the now far less crowded carriage with a group of railway enthusiasts for St.Gallen enjoying the Rhaetische Bahn wine that they had bought from the Festival Market on the approach to Poschiavo station.

Returning to Bergun I was able to reflect on my most enjoyable railway experience, organised as only the Swiss know how. Here's to the next hundred years!



Above : Rail and water : Brunig train passing over the Aire bridge, Interlaken whilst BLS lake boat Brienze is about to pass beneath.
Photo taken from the Waachtseuer, Goldswil by Peter Kloss in 1988

Below : Perched perilously on the mountainside, Tretien station on the Martigny Chatelard
Photo Alan Pike





RhB in Devon. 1/5th size (7 1/4" gauge) model of Ge4/4/II No 615 built by Pfeifferbahn for Alan Kitchenside's Gorse Blossom Railway, nr Newton Abbott. 3x1HP 12V motors, electronic control, rheostatic and air brakes plus 500kg of batteries in the baggage car! *Photo Don Fifer*

Gallery

Bodensee-Toggenburg Be4/4 No.11, station pilot at Herisau. 12.6.88
Photo Peter Over

