

Editor's jottings

Objektyp: **Group**

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

Band (Jahr): **2 (1988-1990)**

Heft 12

PDF erstellt am: **05.08.2024**

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EDITOR'S JOTTINGS

There was a small difference of opinion, Doris wanted a week in Devon, I wanted another in Switzerland so we compromised; Devon in September, Switzerland in October. It was a good guess, both weeks turned out to be exceptionally warm and sunny, indeed, Switzerland in late autumn, with the leaves changing colour is absolutely delightful. One small benefit of travelling in October is that the clocks agree, you get an extra hour on the day of arrival and, best of all, you don't have to readjust when you get home.

Whilst we were discussing where to go apart from Lucerne, Doris asked "What's Winterthur like? We're always changing trains there, but we've never got out." Nick and I thought of the seven routes, with practically every train stopping to connect with several others, and less than 15 minutes from Flughafen and said it was the ideal choice.

Our President's notes arrived a month later, we can confirm all he said and more. Winterthur also has Technorama, well worth at least a morning's visit, a good bus and trolleybus service from outside the main station and an excellent shopping street. In fact the shops were so good we rounded out our holiday at Winterthur where we got some real bargains in the large EPA next to the Hauptbahnhof. Some of the prices in Swiss francs bore a close resemblance to the cost of the same goods in pounds back home.

Lucerne station is at last showing signs of completion, in October the first eight tracks were fully extended, the rest are well under way and everything else, except the upper floor, is in full working order. The essential offices down below form one long block with the Weschel at the extreme right. Baggage collection is very slick, your cases go over a baggage weigher and then on a conveyer belt into the back regions, which makes sense when you realise a fair proportion of the input is Fly-Baggage.

Doris admired the restored arch, but regretted that it wasn't part of a complete classical facade, rather than the present glasshouse effect. You can see the result from our cover picture, supplied by Arthur Crane, though it is necessary to view it in the round to appreciate the subtle tones of the old pillars, now restored to their former glory.

My own reservations centre around the stops. Noting that the buffers were at the very end, I wondered why modern kinetic energy absorbing devices weren't used. I soon discovered that they were there right enough, neatly placed under concrete slabs in the concourse, which will also absorb a good deal of the momentum, whilst causing sheer panic - at the best - among everyone in the station at the time. I only hope that the first run through happens in the small hours and that there isn't a kiosk in front. Or, better still, that someone shifts the stops back at least 10m before anything happens. It would be a pity to mar a well planned, convenient station by an avoidable accident.

The railway section of the Verkehrshaus is undergoing re-arrangement, several showcases were empty and the LGB layout has vanished. However there is a new signalling section on the gallery, which includes an Integra panel for the SBB passing loop alongside, with TV monitors to show what's happening. We wondered whether, when they need to work the line manually,

someone has to come into the museum to do it. Apart from the fact that the road is between it and the line, the museum building does make a good signal box.

This display has a couple of "layouts" demonstrating the action of a passing loop and simple shunting. At long last we have absolute proof that model railway operation is just as much fun if you replace the rolling stock with snooker balls. Indeed it's better since if you do derail anything - either by a miss-set point or simply by hitting the "train" too hard - the "vehicle" just rolls down to the end and is put back on the track by a device reminiscent of a pin-table delivery mechanism.

Model '90 was running at the Verkehrshaus, no railways but plenty of ships - the lower hall of the marine building was filled for once - whilst there were several model airships in the flying section in the Conference Hall. One that caught my eye was a part finished model of R100, designed by Barnes Wallis with the calculations prepared by Nevil Shute Norway.

It was quite an airship trip for us, since earlier we'd gone across the Bodensee to Fredrichshafen specifically to visit the Zeppelin Museum. Doris and I, separately, saw the *Graf Zeppelin* when it passed over London in the early thirties and wanted to see something of its background. If only they were still here. Helium could - and should - have prevented the *Hindenberg* tragedy. Imagine, Luftschiff from London to Fredrichshafen with ample room to move about and close enough to the ground to see where you're going, followed by a trip across the Bodensee to Romanshorn. What a lovely way to go to Switzerland!

Modelbahn Boutique of Lucerne, which was displaced from its former site by redevelopment, is now at Frankenstrasse 5, next to the Tourist Information Office. I felt the window displays were less comprehensive but the stock inside is just as extensive, and now that it's so close to the Hauptbahnhof one can stock up when passing through - if you don't mind paying a premium over our advertiser's prices.

I bought a diecast/plastic 1:87 bubble-packed postbus at SFr.7 in a shop in Brunnen, and thought it good value until I saw the same thing in the Kiosk at Frauenfeld for only SFr.5.50! Lettering is by a self-adhesive label, hardly noticeable at the regulation 1m viewing distance for a model railway.

Our return trip was remarkably smooth, we completed all formalities at Lucerne before 08:45, then, armed with boarding passes and bereft of half the luggage, went to Zurich Airport via Wolhusen, Huttwil, Burgdorf, Solothurn, Winterthur and Frauenfeld, lunching in one of the new dining cars between Solothurn and Winterthur. At Zurich we just had time for coffee and a quick trip to the duty free shop before boarding our plane. Incidentally, we've just found out that there is a departure monitor just above the escalators up from the station at Flughafen which tells you which terminal the flight leaves from. You discover something new each trip!

Looking forward to 1991, we intend to do something special to celebrate Switzerland's 700th anniversary - details with the next issue. Subscriptions are now due, there is no increase for 1991 despite inflationary pressures. You can help, not only by renewing promptly, but by encouraging others to join the Society. You can also help by completing the questionnaire, the clearer picture we have of your likes and dislikes, the better we can tailor the Society's activities to your desires.