

100 Jahre [i.e. Jahre] Gaiserbahn

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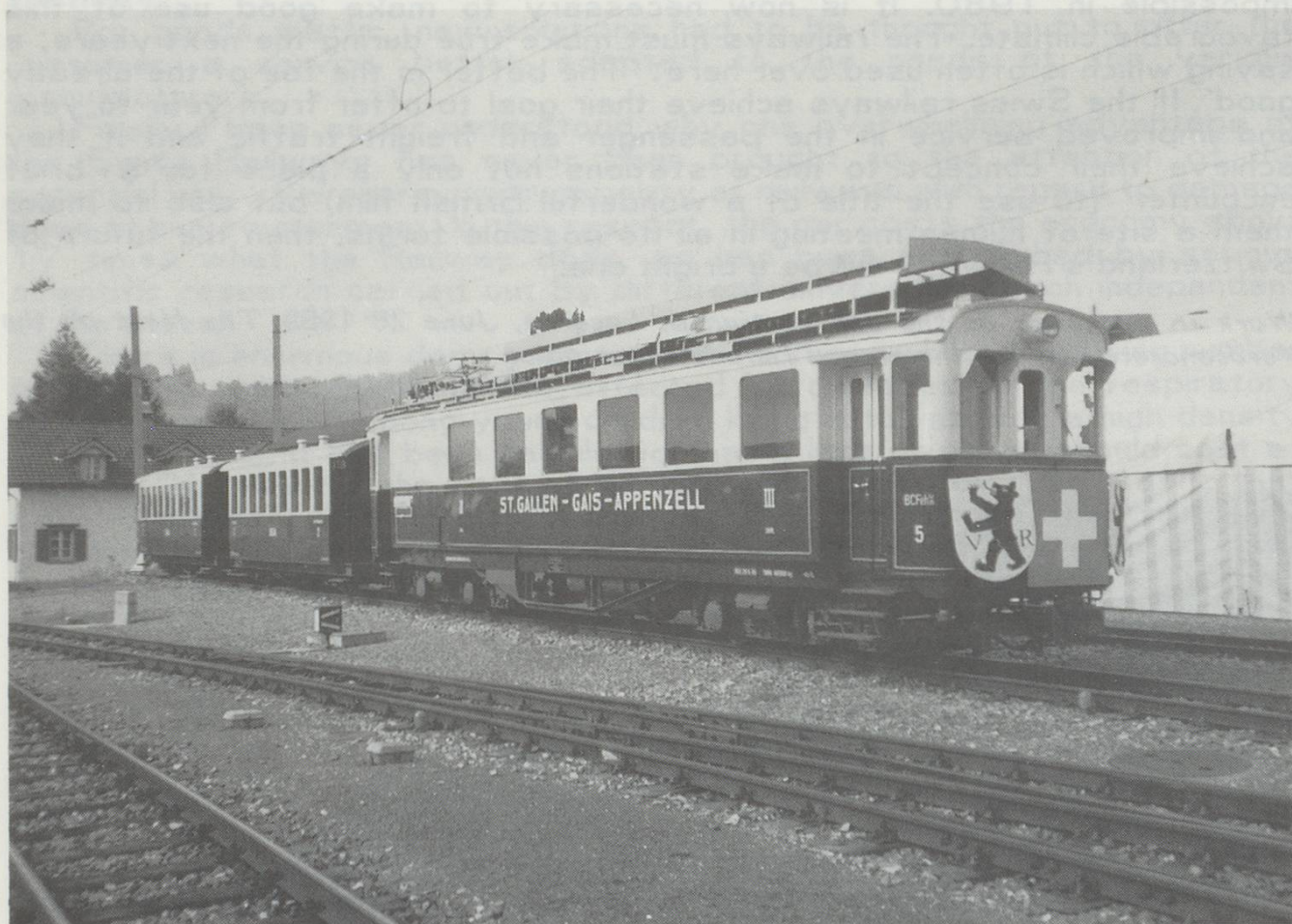
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100 YAHRE GAISERBAHN

By C. Elliott.

If you travel by train to the North East of Switzerland you will come to St. Gallen. Get off there, cross the road to the 'Nebenbahnhof' and you will be able to get on the 'Gaiserbahn'. 1989 saw the 100th Anniversary of this train - it was on 1st October 1889 that the first train of the then St. Galler Strassenbahnen left for Gais just 20kms away. Through the years it has changed its name many times lately being the SGA (St. Gallen - Gais - Appenzell - Alstätten) and since the 1st January 1988 being part of the AB (Appenzeller Bahnen); locally though it has always been known as the 'Gaiserbahn'. Up until 1889 the journey had been done using the post coach which took some 2 hours 5 minutes up and 1 hour 25 minutes down; the train immediately reduced this to 1 hour 40 minutes up and 1 hour 35 minutes down.



SGA Triebwagen. ABDeh 4/4 No.5 (Built 1931) with nostalgic train. Photo: C. Elliott.

My earliest memories of railways must be the 'Gaiserbahn'. And so having noted all the changes and improvements that have been made over the past twenty years, it was decided that I had to be there to celebrate '100 Jahre Gaiserbahn'. There have been various activities over the year with parties in some of the villages it passes through and, the running of the 'Nostalgie Composition' in July and August. The celebrations culminated in a village party in Gais on each day from 29 September to 1 October.

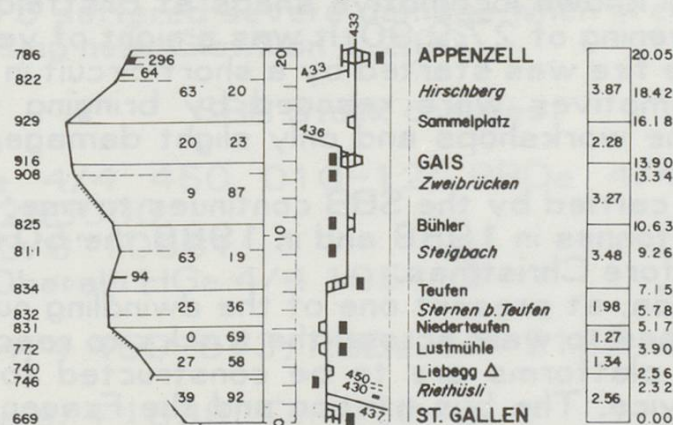
29 September 1989 was a cold damp and grey day in St. Gallen where the

celebrations started with a Post Coach setting off with two local dignitaries on board to show, I suppose, how things were done before the railway arrived. Also on board was a sack of letters, bearing a special 100 Jahre Gaiserbahn postmark which had been on sale earlier in the week which I had missed. The Post Coach was timed to arrive in Gais at the same time as a special train, to symbolise the one form of transport giving way to the next. The idea was that the coach would stop off in the villages for people to see it. Although the weather was poor, I was hoping to be able to take many photographs of the proceedings. I therefore got onto the next train and went to Gais to see if the 'special' was there. I could not see the 'Nostalgie Composition' in Gais so I went back to Bühler where I thought that I could take some good pictures. The train runs along the main street into a simple station, and then out and along the road again. On asking, the station master told me when the train was due. The camera was set up on the tripod correctly aligned, just needing the cable release to be operated at the right moment. Having done that I set off up the road with the cine camera to take some pictures of the train coming through the village. Unfortunately, when the train arrived it was travelling rather faster than I had anticipated. This meant that I got the cine film but not the still as I could not get to my camera in time! The Post Coach then came by, rather earlier than I had imagined so I filmed that and set off back to Gais to film the arrival of both the train and the Post Coach.

At 17.00 hours when I got back to Gais there were many people milling around and a band was ready to provide a welcome. For some reason, which was clear to me, the Post Coach arrived well ahead of time. Perhaps the passengers wanted to push on as it was so cold. At 17.20 hours the 'Nostalgie Composition' pulled in and out got many dignitaries and guests. After a short speech a plaque was unveiled on the central platform to commemorate the 100 years of the Gaiserbahn. A large marquee and some smaller rooms had been set up for the evening entertainment which ran from 20.00 hours until the small hours when extra trains took everyone home.

On Saturday and Sunday there were various things to see, such as a stamp exhibition, a 1:5 model of the first locomotive which had been built by Klöse, who also built the line, three S.B.B. goods wagons on 'Rollbocks' and the 'Nostalgie Composition' consisting of ABDeH4/4 No.5 and coaches B116 and B117 running to Stoss halt and back in 45 minutes for just SFr.1.00. This train ran in the afternoons each day, I spending most of my time taking photographs of it along the route. Saturday evening provided some evening entertainment and the celebrations ended with the running of the 16.35 'Nostalgic train' on the Sunday, the 100th Anniversary day.

In conclusion I have to say that I was a little disappointed with the small amount of full scale railway items that there were to look at. In half a day it would have been possible to see and do everything. That said though, I was lucky enough to be able to be with 'my' little railway on the occasion of its 100 anniversary and see again the Green/Cream train of which I have so many fond memories.



Profile Map: Courtesy of SBB.