

Swissrail '90. Part 2, ...Gang Aft Agley

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...Gang Aft Agley.

by C.J.Freezer

(Concluded from page 27, September 1990 issue)

From Chur to Vevey the direct route over the Oberalp and under the Furka passes is also the prettiest. We managed to take this without using a section of the Glacier Express, though there was a slight element of cheating since the 13:55 from Andermatt to Brig is really a Glacier relief but is not so marked in the Kursbuch. Having got the luggage away before nine, we had ample time before catching the 09.50 to Disentis to purchase rolls from that excellent shop across from the station and more wine from Globus, since most of our trains definitely did not have refreshment facilities.

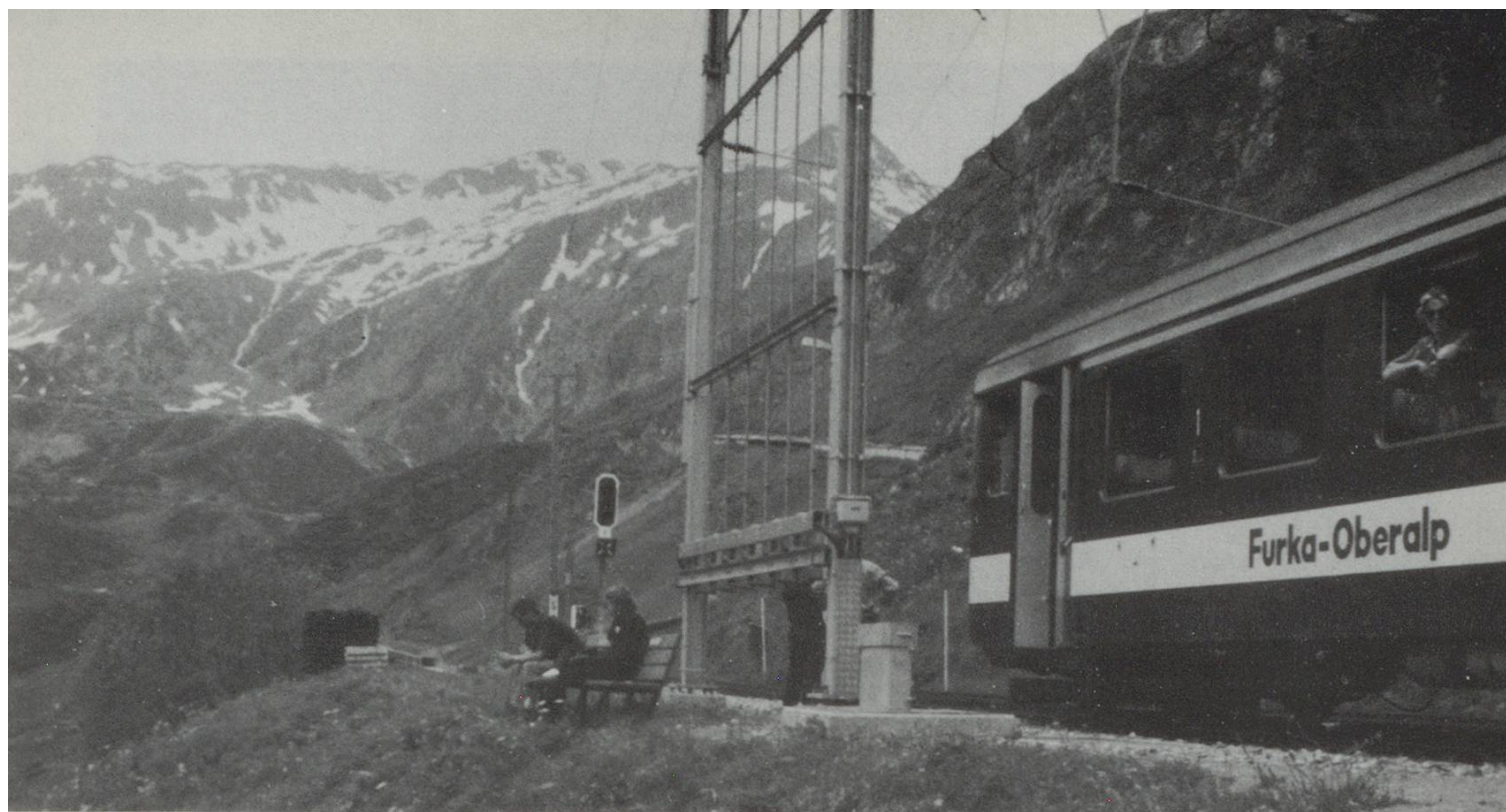
Once again we had a first class saloon for our use to Disentis, where we changed. Our next train was a shuttle to Goschenen and with some twenty minutes in hand, there was ample time for coffee. I'd checked beforehand that the first class accommodation on the FO pendelzug sets was more than enough for our party and, as I surmised, they put us into this. What I didn't expect was that our RhB coach would be hooked on the back, locked.

There are two advantages in taking a local over the Furka. First, you can be sure that the FO will not, in their usual generous fashion, provide one of the new panoramic, air conditioned, closed window coaches and frustrate the photographers. The other, more subtle, is that your train will wait for the various bits of the Glacier that are going the other way to cross. This is very much to the photographer's liking but in this instance, not at all reassuring for the guard who, seeing half a dozen of his passengers jump out to take their stance all over the place anxiously informed me that "We don't wait." I told him that they all knew that, but I don't think he believed me. However, at the next cross both he and the driver got out and sat on a convenient seat, admiring the view whilst even more of the party got out to record yet another portion of the Glacier heading eastward. I fancy he'd decided by then that the Group Freezer weren't as crazy as they looked.

In due course we arrived at Andermatt, a matter of some 12 minutes late and reversed down the hill to Goschenen. A lot of work is being done on this line, not only on the tunnels but in extending and reinforcing the avalanche shelters with the result that the views are getting fewer and further between. But it's still a delightful run and we had time to stretch our legs before returning to Andermatt, where we found our RhB coach at the head of the Brig train, increasing its length from three to four coaches. As befits a through train, a mini-bar service was provided, but as the coach behind us was a driving trailer and there was only a minimal gangway, I thought we'd lost the chance of food. I underestimated the SSG, the attendant negotiated the gap whilst the train was stopped at Oberwald and we set to with relish. The weather was far from bright, but we didn't quite reach the clouds on this trans-Alpine run. In fact, it seemed that Murphy was busy elsewhere that day.

Arriving at Brig there was no sign of the usual electric tractor, though a diesel shunter was busy in the metre gauge station. We crossed over to the SBB station and up onto platform 1 for our train to Vevey. There was a slight discussion, several of the party wondered why we'd not booked onto the EC set that was due in shortly, but I was certain it didn't stop at Vevey. A quick check in the Kursbuch showed I was right.

The Kursbuch also showed a wineglass against our train, but no mini-bar appeared to provide coffee, rolls and suchlike. As we'd joined the train at



Waiting for the Glacier Express at Tschamut-Selva on the climb to the Oberalp pass. Driver and guard are taking their ease on the bench, our coach is neatly in view. We have all the time in the world.

Photo by N.J.Freezer

the start of its run, it was obvious that Murphy had returned. After the delights of the Furka-Oberalp, the run along the Rhone valley from Brig beneath lowering clouds was commonplace but as we passed Chillon Castle, the skies brightened and we rolled in on time. Our luggage was waiting on its pallet, we collected our cases and walked round the corner to the Hotel de Famille.

Wednesday was the day for the MOB. Once again, I avoided the named trains and opted for a local train and plenty of changes. Another first class saloon was added for our use to the 10:00 departure from Montreux and took us as far as Gstaad. Here we had an hour's break, time for a little shopping and the chance to see one of the Panoramic sets go through on its way to Lenk. We took the 11:32 shuttle from Gstaad to Lenk, which is well provided with first class accommodation, reflecting the traffic thereabouts. However, we had both sections to ourselves and, as usual the photographers gravitated to the smoking section, leaving the rest in peace. At Lenk, for once it was the men who looked enviously into a shop window. It was full of railway models and the shop was shut, but on the other hand it hadn't been we might not have got back in time for our train. At Zweisimmen we caught a glimpse of a Lotschberg Te2/3 shunting the yard. There we changed to yet another first class saloon, this time provided by the BLS, and travelled to Spiez.

There are two obvious routes from Spiez to Vevey, over the Lotschberg and via Bern and Lausanne. I was certain that most would want to take the scenic route and so didn't make any more reservations. However the party had already split another way, four had gone on ahead to sample the boats on Lake Thun. This is a standard hazard, someone always manages to think up a route you hadn't even considered. Luckily, my gang do let me know when they're deviating but you soon stop counting heads, the mental arithmetic involved is too complex. We've not actually lost anyone yet, but a couple have got mislaid now and then.

To my surprise, no one wanted the Lotschberg route, so, with one exception, we all caught the 15:01 to Bern, Nick, the odd man out electing to follow on the next train. At Bern we picked up two of the boat party and caught the 16:17 for Lausanne, dropping three off at Fribourg en route.

By now the weather was superb and when it's fine at Lausanne, there's only one sensible thing to do with a spare hour, take the Metro to Ouchy where we watched *Italie* berth. It was tempting to board her, but as she wasn't due at Vevey before dinner time, we reluctantly desisted. After all, the following day we were taking her all the way along the lake to Geneva. All in all, things went as planned; you get days like that now and again.

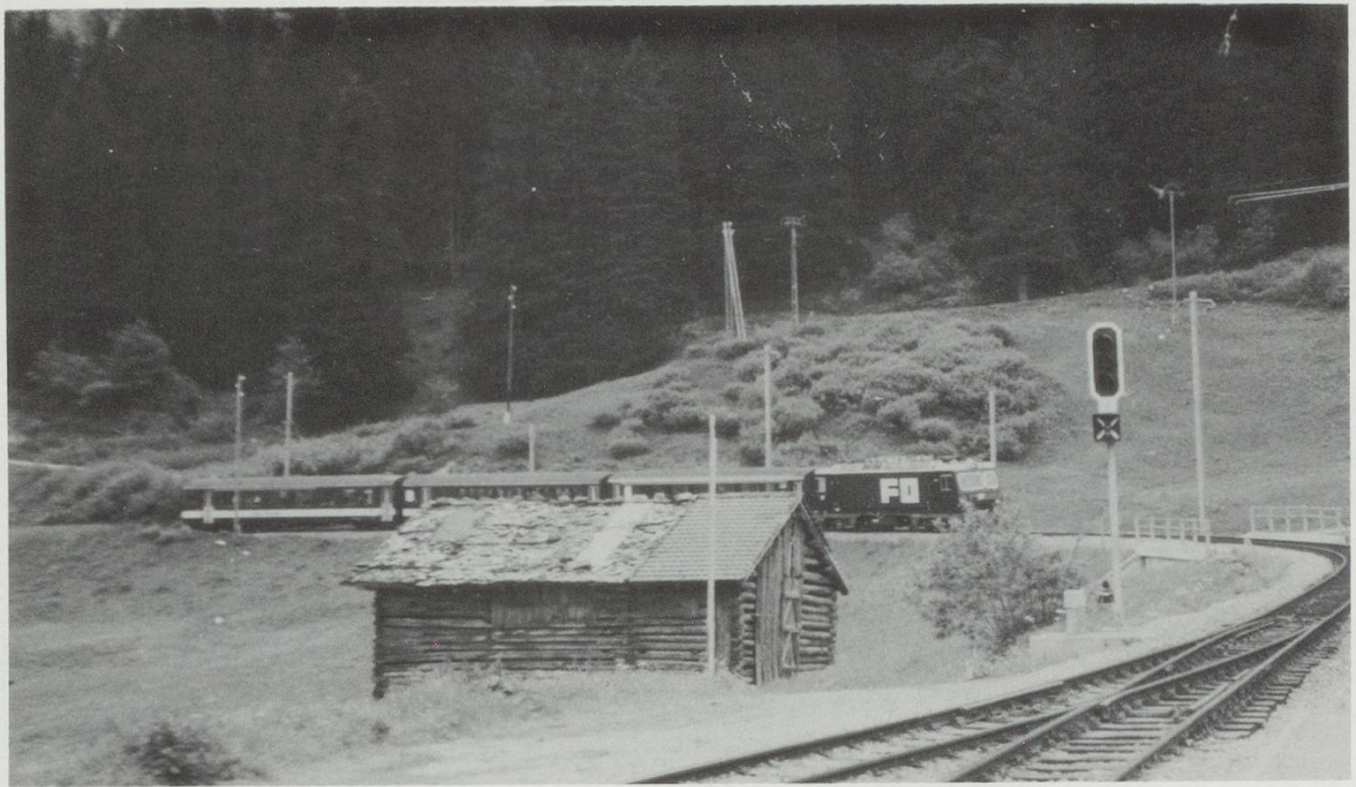
Our final full day was to be restful, a leisurely cruise along Lac Lemman to Geneva, and a return by any suitable train, of which there are an ample supply. No reservations were made, or indeed, were needed, which meant that if the weather went bad on us we could scrub the boat trip. The day dawned indifferent, not exactly wet, but not exactly promising either. However, the majority of us decided to give it benefit of the doubt.

Italie arrived on time, we boarded her and chose our vantage points. A couple of us tried the foredeck, at the start it was bracing. All right, downright draughty, so it was back into the saloon and the faint smell of diesel. It became more and more unsettled and by the time we'd passed Lutry rain was falling steadily and, after a lot of uninformed discussion as to the exact distance between the various landing stages and stations along the lake and how wet one would get en route, most of the party decided that the best option was to leave at Ouchy and take the Metro to completed the journey to Geneva by train. We returned variously through the day, the weather remained indifferent, even the herons on the lake shore looked disconsolate.

We'd all been provided with a book of tokens by SNT0, most of little use, but Vevey provided their special glasses and Montreux offered a souvenir handkerchief. Doris and I took a quick round trip, a free gift and a run along one of our favourite stretches of main line was too good to miss. Much to my surprise, we were able to do it in well under the hour, including the walk to and from the Tourist Office at Montreux. There are plenty of trains on this route.

It was time to return. Fly Baggage has made a tour organiser's life much easier, the heavy luggage can be got rid of early in the day. However, the last time we did it from Vevey we ran into difficulties, but by now we knew the ropes. You hand in the cases on one side of the booking hall and then do the paper work on the other and you take care that the bags and flight tickets are matched. Doris volunteered to deal with the paperwork while I ran to and fro with the chitties, which took very little time as the baggage crew were really on the ball. Then I spotted a new Kummerley & Frey in the window, dived into the enquiry office and paid my SFr14.60. The latest edition is to the original scale, and the town maps are now a small inset booklet at the front making a good product even better.

With the suitcases on their way to Zurich on a pallet, we were free to do what we liked. I'd reserved accomodation on the 11.10 Lausanne-Lucerne train, allowing everyone to choose which train they'd take for Lausanne. With everything cleared away quickly, Doris and I found time to have a short look around Lausanne shops before heading for Lucerne. We bought a new umbrella. We should have done it earlier, the weather improved out of all recognition. The party at Lausanne was down to 10, of our original 18, five were stopping another week, Nick had decided to take a different route and two of the group were mislaid. We reached Lucerne to find the sun shining.



What we were waiting for, another bit of the Glacier Express on its way to Chur. After this, we all scrambled back on board just before the guard joined us.

Photo by C.J.Freezer

We did a little shopping, met Nick in good time and, with the whole of the returning party, managed to get onto the 17.10 train for Flughafen, the most heavily used of the shuttle trains. It had four strengthening coaches added for good measure and lost time, but with an over an hour to spare before our flight, we didn't much care. We'd got the party together again!

We lost even more time at the Hauptbahnhof, much to Nick's delight for he now has yet another slide of Zurich board showing all departures sadly astray to add to his collection. As a professional timetable compiler, he delights in demonstrating that other railways can get their schedules in a twist.

So far, we'd been reasonably free of trouble, but Murphy will not be mocked. We arrived at the airport and then faced the standard guessing game, will the flight leave from terminal A or B? We chose B, only to be informed that our plane left from A and that as it hadn't left Heathrow it would be delayed by 45 minutes. This meant we wouldn't get to Heathrow until a little before 21.00 hours, which makes it more than a little difficult if you've to get home that night. When we finally got to Heathrow, we were told there would be a delay with the luggage "due to shortage of equipment". We had visions of expensive taxis.

At that point Murphy relented and our cases were the first off the conveyer. We grabbed ours, loaded the trollies and set off at a rapid rate through customs, who seemed too bored even to look up, and went helter skelter down the slope, across the road and to the bus station. To our relief, the coach for Watford was standing there, we reached it just as the driver returned. At Watford the last bus for Hemel Hempstead arrived on time and we got back about midnight, to clamber over the inevitable pile of junk mail and freebies.

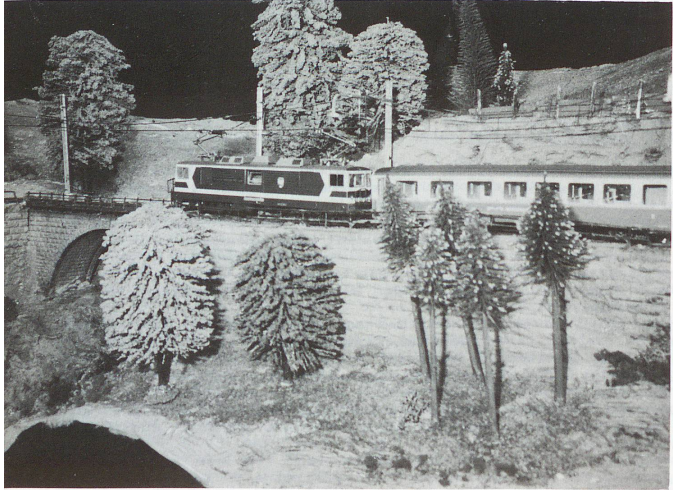
Another trip was over, we were content and I've been asked to run another next year. We've settled on Thun and Lugano, in early June. There will be a couple of vacant places, is anyone interested?



GDe4/4 No.6004 Interlaken passing through Gstaad on Panoramic Express,
6 June 1990
Photo C.J.Freezer

GALLERY

A section of P.Ramsay's HOm MOB layout.
Photo P. Ramsay



Above : The body of the first Re4/4 460 class locomotive at SLM, prior to
despatch to ABB for the electrical and running gear.
Photo SLM

Below : The first of the new Vierwaldstattersee boats, Weggis.
Photo SGV

