

# Seen at Christmas : some observations by members during festive visits to Switzerland

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Objektyp: **Article**

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

Band (Jahr): **3 (1991-1993)**

Heft 9

PDF erstellt am: **11.09.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-855240>

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# Seen at Christmas

Some observations by members during festive visits to Switzerland

**Steve Horobin**

## **Aigle - Leysin (AL)**

All available railcars were in operation on 27 December 1992 transporting a school party of skiers to the SBB at Aigle at 8am.

Railcars are currently carrying adverts describing the planned Bernese extension.

The hotel *La Paix* now has private access to the platform at Versmont. Does this make it a railway hotel?

## **Aigle - Sepey - Les Diablerets (ASD)**

Work has begun on repairing the Pont des Planches. Services are still running to Le Sepey.

The ABDe4/4 No.2, reported as vandalised and out of service, was seen outside the shed at Les Diablerets attached to a snow plough on Christmas Day.

## **Bern - Lötschberg - Simplon (BLS)**

OeBB Be2/4 No.201 ex-BLS railcar was outside the sheds at Spiez.

The Hotel Bahnhof at Spiez, used by participants in the Society's 10th Anniversary tour has been demolished!

## **Brig (SBB)**

The refurbishment of the SBB station has been completed, with a new underpass beneath the platforms and a much enlarged, spacious Booking Hall.

## **Brig - Visp - Zermatt (BVZ)**

The new line at Randa to avoid the site of the

avalanche is equipped with rack. One now has the novel experience of climbing on a downhill run as the line makes its way to the opposite side of the valley.

**Stephen Barnes**

## **Rhätische Bahn (RhB)**

**General:** Trains were very heavily loaded on some sections over the holiday period, especially in the ski resort areas and the very scenic routes. Interestingly, Preda on the northern side of the Albula tunnel was a major destination for sledgers. There is an excellent Schlittelbahn nearby.

The problems of operating an intensive service, with heavy trains on single track, were very apparent. Of 13 or 14 RhB separate journeys made, only one or two kept time throughout. Waiting for connections at Filisur or Pontresina, for example, or merely waiting for the single line to clear were the main causes of delay. This was rarely in excess of 10 minutes.

**Train Formations:** (*Reference to the Kursbuch will help*) The Davos Platz - Landquart service is almost exclusively worked by Ge4/4<sup>II</sup> locomotives. The standard *schnellzug* formation is D, 3xB, AB, A, AB, 3xB - ie 10 coaches. The D is at the Davos end. The locomotive and stock stay together for the day, eg 08:05 Davos Platz - Landquart (arr. 09:40) returns as the 09:40 to Davos Platz, then 11:05 to Landquart, etc. Running round is accomplished with despatch.

The standard formation can vary, changes noted include one less B at the Landquart end or the following:

10:05 Davos P. - Lq. Lok, AB, B, B, D, B, AB, A, A, AB, 3xB (13 coaches)

Lq. - Davos P. Lok, D, 3xB, AB, A, B, B, AB, B, (11 coaches)

The 09:40 and 10:40 up trains (ie, from Landquart to Davos) are double headed, being very heavily loaded with skiers and walkers.



MacDonald's Restaurant car at Brig, 26 Dec. 1992 Photo Steve Horobin

*Regionalzug* formations are smaller, commonly noted with just 4 or 5 coaches eg D, 3 x B, AB. Some are Ge4/4<sup>I</sup> with *Pendulzug*.

The Davos Platz - Filisur service is operated for most of the day by *Pendulzug* formations of Ge4/4<sup>I</sup>, B, AB, B, BDt. Over the holiday periods 601 was operating with trailer 1731 and 607 with trailer 1721. These two formations shuttle to and fro, crossing (when on time) at Davos Frauenkirch.; if late Davos Glaris.

An exception is the 08:32 Davos Platz - Filisur which is a normal loco hauled train, headed by a Ge4/4<sup>II</sup>. It starts from Davos Dorf, formation Lok, AB, B,B,. At Filisur the loco runs round to return at 09:06

Other interesting workings include the attachment of 2 goods vans to the 12:06 Filisur - Davos Platz, three PTT vans were on the 16:38 Davos Platz - Landquart and the 10:47 Landquart - Davos Platz conveyed one of the bogie household refuse container wagons which operate out of a rubbish compaction plant located between Davos Platz and Davos Islen.

**New Coaches:** The new second class coaches were noted in service on all lines, but not in block formations, at most, two per train. Most entered service from mid-November. Nos. B2492/94-96 were noted.

The general internal appearance of these coaches is similar to the SBB EW IV or the new EuroCity Bpm. They seat 44 in six bays (2 smoking). Seating is grey moquette with red horizontal stripes and red PVC headrests. The floors are a linoleum type material in black with white flecks and roof and walls are very pale grey. Lighting is from diffuse tubes and windows are double glazed and tinted - but they still open! Each seating bay has a small coffee table which includes a map of the RhB system Height of land, in 1000 m intervals, is shown shaded. The new Vereina tunnel is shown dotted. Entry doors are air-operated. Division of smoking and non-smoking sections is by glass and a glass door. Externally they are finished in the red/dark grey livery. The journey from Tirano to Filisur in one of these gave me ample time to study details.

**Bernina Line:** Services are obviously worked by the ABe4/4 railcars. On 27 December the 08:40 Tirano - St.Moritz and 11:05 St.Moritz -

Tirano were double headed. The 11:05 returns at 14:30 from Tirano with the same motive power. Of interest was the use of three of the four available pantographs on uphill sections, but only two (both trailing) when going downhill. Furthermore it was always the more modern, and powerful car which used both pantographs, eg. with 49+53 on the 11:05, 53 used both pantographs.

Formations were 49+53, AB, B, BD, B, B, A; the rear three coaches being detached at Pontresina for through working to Chur via Tiefencastel.

On the St.Moritz-Chur route Ge6/6<sup>II</sup> were in evidence on most services, with 13+ heavily loaded coaches.

### **SBB Observations**

**Chur - Bad Ragaz:** Work on track doubling is progressing apace. The Chur - Maienfeld section is complete as far as a double cross-over just south of Maienfeld Bahnhof. Reconstruction of this station and replacement of the semaphore signals will take place in the coming months. From Maienfeld to Bad Ragaz preparatory work is underway - strangely the signalling is in place first. It looked odd to see a signal sitting 2-3 m from the track; almost in a field! Just before Bad Ragaz a new bridge over the Rhein is under construction to ease the alignment. Incidentally Bad Ragaz Bahnhof has been tastefully restored and features in the 1993 SBB calendar for June.

**Zürich S-Bahn:** Re4/4<sup>450</sup> 450.0053/0055 were noted in service.

Routes S5, S7 and S8 are now operated by double-deck stock. The old RABDe12/12 maroon liveried *Mirage* units are now on S14 (ex S7) to Hinwil. It is now rare to see an RBe4/4 worked service which does not have at least one of the refurbished and re-liveried units in its formation.

The first unit to be fitted with air-operated doors No.1465 - emerged from HW Zürich on 16 December 1992 numbered 540.062-7.

A full feature article on the refurbishment of these power cars is in the 12/92 issue of *Schweizer Eisenbahn Revue*. Further to the article the release date us as above (one week later) and the unit has its number, in black, on the front ends. Observed at Brugg on S12 31 December 1992.

**Local Services in East Switzerland:** The *Regionalzug* services, Sargans - Buchs - St.Margarethen - St.Gallen are locomotive hauled by Re4/4<sup>II</sup>, with NPZ liveried stock and a green D, eg Lok, B, B, AB, D. Another example of colourful formations was provided by 11108, a *Swiss Express* liveried locomotive at the head of one of these formations.

Ae4/7 locomotives were working on the Bülach - Winterthur services (Table 701). These were also noted on parcels and freight services in much of Eastern Switzerland.

**Buffet Cars:** Most, if not all EW III cars are now in the grey/purple *Le Buffet Suisse* style.

An older (EW I) car No.88-33 710-7 is also now in this livery and carries *Calanda Land* logos. For the benefit of the unfortunate members who haven't yet sampled it, *Calanda Bräu* is the Chur brewery and this beer is sold on all

the Minibuffet AG operated services out of Chur.

**Seethal** driving trailer 92-33 934-7 has had its front end painted in the very gaudy pink/red colour all over, plus yellow stripes as before. Earlier repaints only had pink/yellow stripes below the windscreen level.

**ICE 76/77 Panda:** For this and the additional four ICE services to Basel (2) and Zürich Hbf (2) from May 1993, a total of 25 Zü drivers have received training on these sets. Power cars 410 072-090 and 401 572-590 are the ones equipped for SBB overhead with two pantographs. DB staff the restaurant cars.

Re4/4<sup>IV</sup> No.10101 has been repainted from *Bahn 2000* livery to the standard livery, but with a large <+> logos on the side and the number on the front end. Others will no doubt follow.

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## Editor's Jottings

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**Several members** have commented on the general improvement in *Swiss Express* over the past year, it is our intention to make it even better during 1993. One step forward has been the new DTP program, **Timeworks 3**, we are using which has not only made it a good deal easier to maintain a uniform style throughout the magazine, it uses a different process to produce the printout and has made a very considerable saving in time. This however is only the technical side of the process, we do rely on member's submissions to provide us with a varied diet of articles. Fortunately we do have a few stalwart contributors who don't even need to have their arms twisted but a few different viewpoints are always appreciated. I've said this before, I'll probably have to say it again, we are woefully short of modelling articles.

We are again providing a 52 page issue, we hope we will be able to continue to do so for at least another issue though as postal charges will be going up and paper costs are bound to rise, we can't guarantee to do so for ever. However if membership continues to increase as it has done over the past year we may have to continue to give you a bigger issue to avoid the embarrassing situation of having our reserves grow unnecessarily large.

The AGM will take place on the 13th March - for full details see the December issue. I'd like to remind members of the photographic competition, this year divided into two sections, Railway and Swiss scenes. Prints are limited to a maximum of 7 x 5 in (standard 'larger' commercial prints) to put everyone on a level footing, so please look out your collection of prints and choose two of your favourites. We're also planning a slide quiz for after the dinner and are hoping to make it possible for our lady guests to identify some of the shots.

We shall be supporting several exhibitions over the coming year, our purpose is not merely to get new members but is also to provide a place for members to meet one another, to exchange views and to talk about matters Swiss - and other topics if we so please. We try to select shows which draw in serious enthusiasts from a wide hinterland since this widens the attendance of members. However, the main meeting points are the area groups. Some, notably London and Manchester, publish a list of activities, others are less formal, though to be perfectly frank, many of the meetings are extremely informal and a good time is had by all. If you've not yet visited a branch meeting, do try to fit one in during 1993.