

# An hour or so at - Arth-Goldau

Autor(en): **Adams, David**

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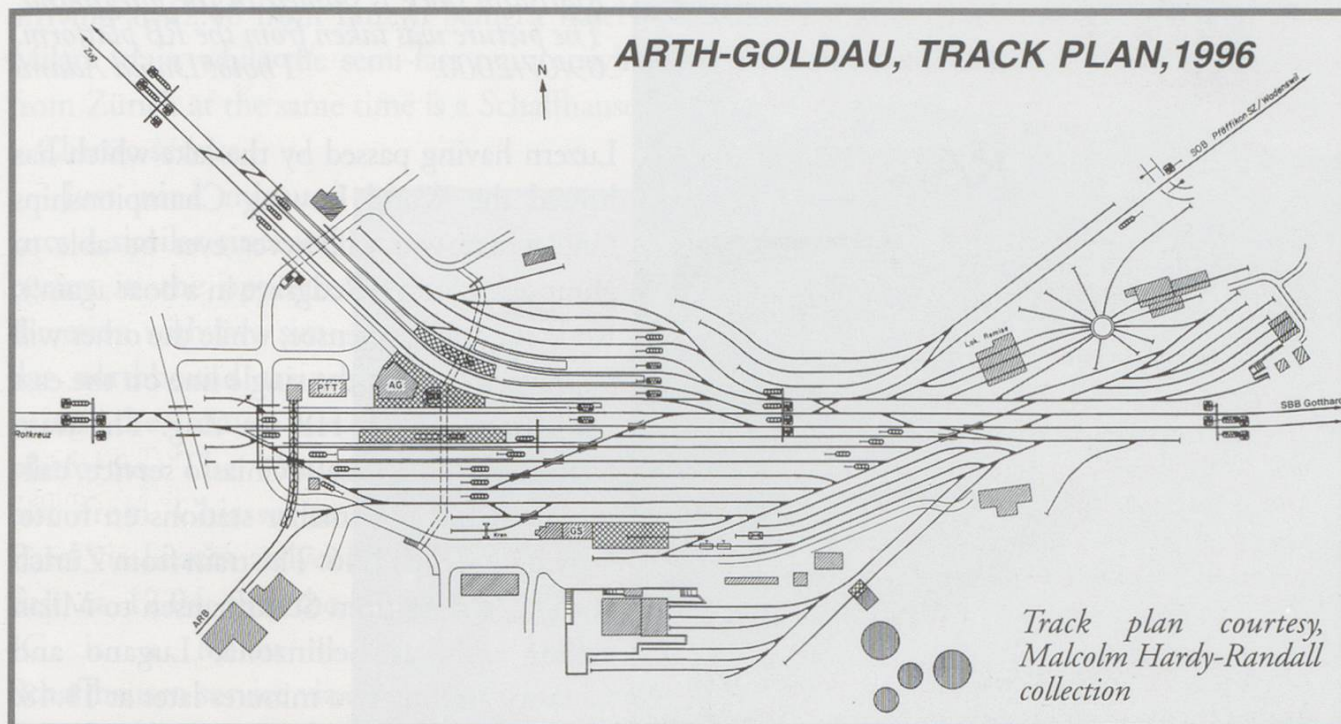
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Many readers will be very familiar with Arth-Goldau (A-G) but for those that perhaps have only passed through or changed there briefly on their travels then a longer visit at the right time of day should be rewarding. As a result of some ingenious timetable planning A-G has become an important intermediate interchange station on the Gotthard line and can certainly be an interesting place to view the typically efficient Swiss style of train operations.

While the general direction of the Gotthard line is N-S, the station actually lies on a W-E axis. The main passenger routes that converge are the lines from Luzern (31km) and Zürich HB (51km). The station is actually situated in the "V" of the junction of those lines which meet just east of the platform ends. The SOB line to Rapperswil (55km) (which crosses the Zürich – Chur main line at Pfäffikon SZ) turns off up a steep incline in a northeasterly direction just to the east of the station.

There are three straight platforms on the side of the "V" taken by Luzern line trains as well as two through loops and some sidings on the south side. On the side of the "V" taken by Zürich line trains there are three sharply curved

platforms and more sidings on the north side. To the west the background is dominated by the Rigi massif while the twin peaks of the Mythen are prominent on the skyline to the east.

The Rigi Bahn rack trains start their 37 minute journey to the summit from a platform on a covered over bridge at the Luzern end of the station. From the summit, which does not look that high when viewed from below, it needs a keen eye to pick out trains heading alongside Zugersee and A-G station can be seen in miniature 1,240 metres below. There is of course also a magnificent panorama of mountain scenery to take in on a clear day.

The passenger timetable has mainly a basic hourly pattern of both long distance and local services covering at least 9 departures. However, it only strictly repeats itself every two hours as the main Gotthard line long distance services, of which there are two each way per hour, alternate between serving Luzern and Zürich. This will, I hope, become a little clearer in due course. There are some minor variations which I will not detail and a few additional passenger trains run mainly at weekends when freight traffic is much quieter. I will take





*An SBB560 EMU on a local to Luzern via Küssnacht waits departure. A selection of RigiBahn stock is stabled in the foreground. The picture was taken from the RB platform. 09/07/2000. Photo: David Adams*

Luzern having passed by the lake which has hosted the World Rowing Championships (and where you will never ever be able to glimpse Sir Steven Redgrave in a boat again!), Rotkreuz and Immensee, while the other will be travelling along the single line on the east bank from Zürich HB via Zug. The train from Luzern is a Basel - Chiasso service, calling at all but the smaller stations en route, arriving A-G at 11.46. The train from Zürich is an IC service from Schaffhausen to Milan calling only at Bellinzona, Lugano and Chiasso, arriving two minutes later at 11.48. Between these two arrivals an IR "Voralpen Express" service from Romanshorn and St Gallen arrives from the Rapperswil line at 11.47. After just a one minute stop it departs for Luzern but from Immensee takes the

a one hour period on a working day starting with the 11.46 arrival and based on the timetable for 2000.

At around 40 minutes past each hour two southbound trains will be approaching A-G and the passengers on either one may well be eyeing the other across Zugersee. One train will be running along the west bank from

more scenic single line route close to the shores of Vierwaldstättersee which it follows from Küssnacht am Rigi. A cross platform interchange is advertised between the two main line trains, the IC service departing first at 11.52 fol-

*460021 arrives at 15.08 on the Milan-Dortmund "Verdi". The connecting Chiasso-Schaffhausen semi-fast which arrived at 15.04 is adjacent behind Re6/6 11656. One of the few Sunday intermodals is held on a through loop on the right. The scene is dominated by the twin peaks of the Mythen. 09/07/2000. Photo: David Adams*





lowed by the semi-fast service at 11.55. In an hours time the reverse takes place, the IC service arriving at 12.48 from Luzern being a Basel – Milan train while the semi-fast train arriving from Zürich at the same time is a Schaffhausen – Chiasso service.

Just nine minutes later a similar situation occurs in the opposite direction with two similar northbound trains using the same two platforms. The semi-fast from Chiasso to Basel via Luzern arrives first at 12.04 and the IC is a Milan – Schaffhausen service via Zürich which is right behind arriving at 12.08. After interchanges have been made they depart at 12.13 and 12.12 respectively. An hour later the semi-fast is a

Chiasso – Schaffhausen service via Zürich and the fast train is an EC service from Milan – Hamburg via Luzern and Basel. The Luzern – Romanshorn IR train arrives at 12.11 and departs one minute later.

Motive power on the IC/EC services is normally either a single class 460 or an Re6/6. Single Re4/4<sup>II</sup> or <sup>III</sup>s are more usual on the semi-fast services although class 460s and Re6/6s also appear on these trains. Some Milan services on the Zürich line are worked by ETR 470 Cisalpino tilting sets of the FS (not my favourite and, unlike the ill fated British APT which lent its technology to the development of the ETRs and which I was fortunate enough to experience on the West Coast Main Line in the 80s, they only lean slightly in comparison to the full-scale tilt of the BR model). The Romanshorn – Luzern trains are shared

between three designs of Re4/4s, those of the SBB, SOB (former SBB 10101-4) and BT which normally work in push and pull mode with the loco at the Romanshorn end, usually two of each type covering six diagrams with only a 7 minute turn round time at the latter.



*460090 and 460070 pass on a N/B freight. It has crossed to the normal S/B line to allow a local ex Luzern to run wrong line in the opposite direction into the platform on the right. 04/07/2000. Photo: David Adams*

Other passenger services comprise mainly of hourly local trains. These serve all stations to Luzern via Küssnacht am Rigi and all stations to Erstfeld. They are usually worked by class 560 EMU's but in 2000 I also noted a few class 540's which I had not seen on these services in previous years. The Erstfeld service is shared with SOB class 566 units. Locals to Zug run during peak hours only. Finally there is a two hourly all stations service to Biberbrugg usually worked by older SOB class 576 units.

An analysis of the above would suggest that the activity is no more than steady. However, between these passenger services there is a multitude of through freight traffic that has to be dovetailed in. In my experience late morning / early afternoon is a fairly productive period for freight and also a good time for photography. There are several suitable vantage points that





*SOB Re4/4, 446447 ,  
then in Märklin livery on the  
then 1134 ( now 1145) Voralpen  
Express to Romanshorn. 22/07/97.  
Photo: David Adams*

make for an interesting shot. I remember being there between 10.30 and 11.10 one weekday morning when the only freight moving was a Lokoop 477/9 shunting a few wagons in preparation for a trip to Samstagern. These included one bogie wagon carrying household waste containers that had been tripped from Erstfeld, I believe on the rear of an EMU.

Lunchtimes on the other hand have produced a considerable number of main line freights including two southbound on my last visit with single Ae6/6's in charge, one a train of empty hoppers and the other a short pick up freight. This was a welcome diversion from the pairs of class 460's or Re4/4<sup>II</sup> or <sup>III</sup> / Re6/6 combinations that dominate the freight scene though a few trains are powered by a single locomotive. The recent news that, despite their age, an Ae6/6 prototype, followed by around another twenty if successful, may be fitted for multiple operation and used on Gotthard line freights is welcome. This would bring them back to this route in greater numbers than at present adding to the interest. As only one prototype is to be fitted it seems likely that they will work in tandem with other classes as well as within sub-class. If this initiative goes ahead the newest locomotives of the class (11500 – 11520 circa 1966) could be the ones chosen as

this would create a ready made class sub-division between non-fitted and fitted examples. We shall see. When I first visited the Gotthard in the 60s it was the Ae6/6's that had almost total charge of all through freight and passenger trains with over 100 members of the class working almost exclusively on this route, the remaining few being based at Lausanne. Today, although they can be found all over the system and in many a back-water, I will always look upon

them as a Gotthard machine.

The bidirectional facility on the double track section between A-G and Immensee, over which all through freights are routed, is heavily utilised to best advantage. The Luzern – Romanshorn IR trains and Luzern – A-G locals often travel wrong line over part or the whole length of this section and it is not unusual to see a northbound IC/EC or semi-fast departing wrong line parallel to a departing northbound freight. Some freight trains are occasionally held in one of the through loops to allow passenger and other freight trains by. The adjacent sidings usually hold an Ee3/3 shunter and a couple of Tm<sup>II</sup> or Tm<sup>III</sup> tractors are often present. In the evenings and at weekends an empty stock, off what I believe to be the 17.23 Monday – Friday commuter service from Zürich HB via Henschiken (SE 6/2, page 42) to Rotkreuz and which offers an alternative route “home” from the Zürich area, was stabled with an Re4/4<sup>II</sup> attached.

One word of warning, especially if you have younger family or friends with you or indeed you have an unusual passion for fast food yourself, try not to notice that there is a McDonald's in the station approach road. You will not see many trains from there!