

The Seetalbahn : the southern half

Autor(en): **Brack, Ernie**

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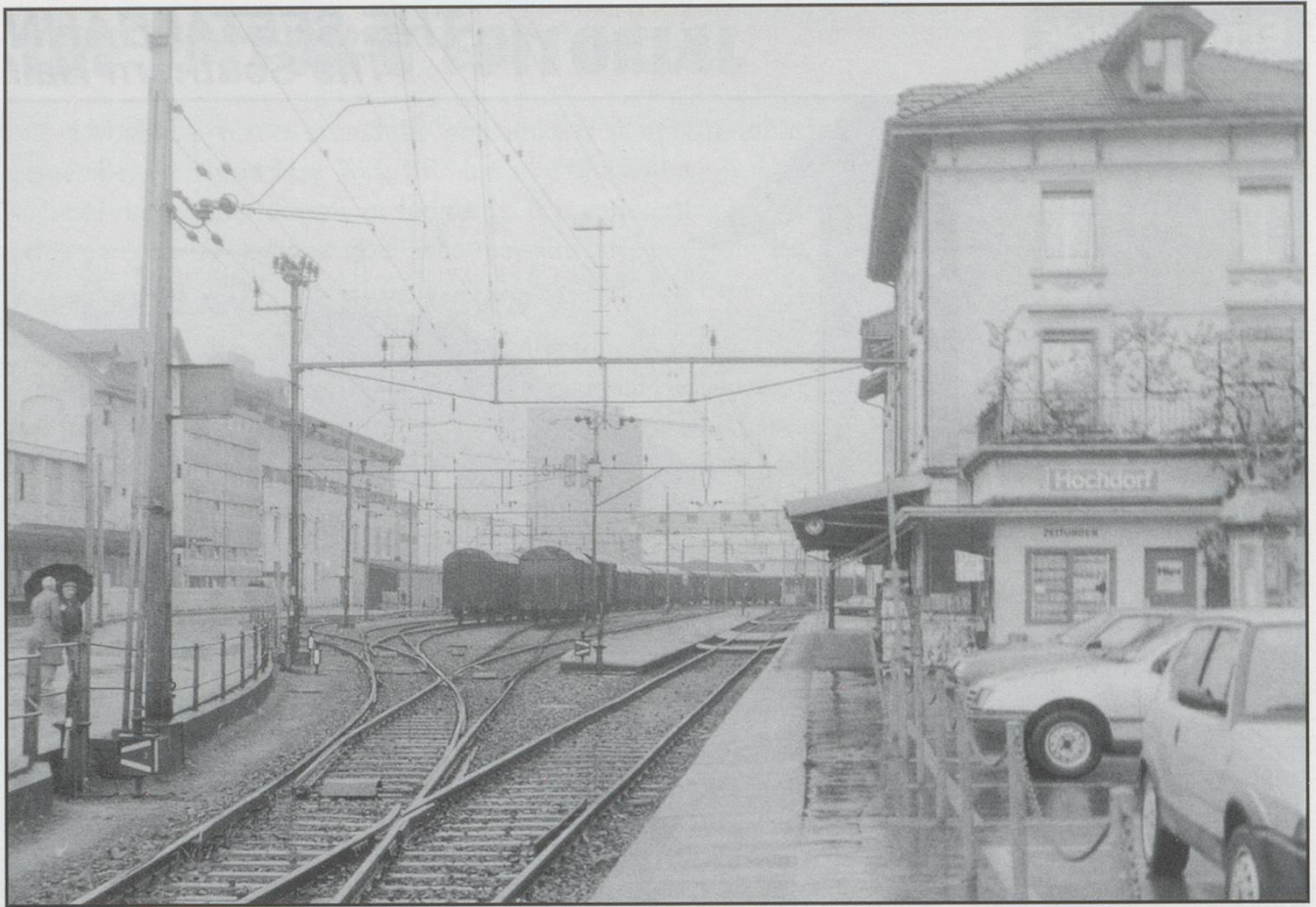
Leaving Beinwil the line curves left over a busy level crossing across the road to Reinach and resumes its right-hand roadside position until the outskirts of Beinwil are reached. The road drops away on the left and the line although also dropping steeply through the woods gradually assumes its own right of way in order to maintain an even gradient. Shortly before Mosen road and rail reunite. Mosen used to have an old semaphore signal but this together with the loop and siding has now disappeared. Leaving Mosen the line maintains its roadside position as it traverses the flat plain between the Hallwiler See and the Baldegger See until approaching the village of Ermensee it veers sharply to the left across the road and through the fields until the village's halt is reached. Shortly after this we rejoin the road but stay on the left-hand verge. Hitzkirch is the next station and this retains a passing loop and a couple of sidings. Goods traffic is occasionally seen here, an adjacent works receiving small tank wagons.

Baldegg Bhf. 1997.

Photo: Ernie Brack

We are still running on the left-hand verge, however the next village, Gelfingen has some tight bends and hills and we therefore take avoiding action to the right on the outskirts, through the single platform halt and regain the road, but now remaining on the right-hand verge once the built-up area is passed. The line gradually climbs away from the lake until after some two miles Baldegg is reached. Baldegg has a passing loop with a wide central island platform. Goods traffic is regularly handled here and the three sidings see some variety including logs, sugar beet and vans. The line continues to climb past a closed private halt at Baldegg Institute and the outskirts of Hochdorf come into view.

Hochdorf is the most important station on the route and was the original operating headquarters of the line. As we approach from the north there are a couple of industrial sidings on our right, nowadays mainly used for loading timber. At the junction of these sid-



*An excellent example of the then and now picture format. **Above:** Hochdorf from the south, May 1988. **Below:** Hochdorf, May 1999 and taken from more or less the same position. Both pictures taken by Ernie Brack.*





Eschenbach, 5/88. Note the old lever frame.

Photo: Ernie Brack

ings with the running line a spur veers off to the right with a kick back siding into a large factory. The main line now turns to the right away from the road and climbs past the old loco shed, which now appears to be used for wagon repairs, and runs into Hochdorf station. In recent years a factory to the west of the station has had an office block built over the running lines and goods yard. This detracts somewhat from the attractiveness of the large station building and goods shed. The level crossing at the south end of the station has also been closed and a pedestrian underpass built. Goods traffic is heavy and warrants the use of an Ee3/3 shunter. Vans and covered hoppers are often seen and there are usually some of the distinctive white Interfrigo vans under repair in the loco shed sidings. There are also usually one or two PW tractors in evidence. Passenger trains usually cross here.

Leaving Hochdorf on its own right of way the line crosses a viaduct over the town centre and as it climbs away through the suburbs the road rises on the left to meet it. Road and rail run for perhaps a mile in a straight line until, on the outskirts of Ballwil, the road swerves to the right across the railway and the line now runs on the left-hand side through the village.

Ballwil retains a little used loop and siding. The route now continues until shortly before Eschenbach the road curves away to the right. Eschenbach station retains an occasionally used crossing loop together with two sidings which handle some goods traffic. On the west side there is a large monastery, which forms an attractive backdrop to the station activities.

The line now begins to drop steeply into the valley

of the River Reuss and crosses over the main road before joining a minor lane for half a mile until the increasingly busy main road comes in on our left for the last mile into Waldi-brücke. A new halt has been built here and a spur diverges to the left to link up with the old route to Emmen-brücke. A new loop is to be built here to increase line capacity and also to facilitate the working of freight trains off the old line.

The old route to Emmenbrücke has now been de-wired but remains in place and in April 2001 I alighted at Waldibrücke and walked the old route to Emmenbrücke. A wide path has been laid alongside the road and this eventually uses the track-bed near the old station at Emmenfeld. Several industries are located in the Emmenfeld area and the first one we reach, Schnyder AG, has at least one shunter. A further works run by Josef Meyer appears to use rail and the line eventually ends at a large complex called SF. There were at least 20 wagons at the various works although none were moving at the time.

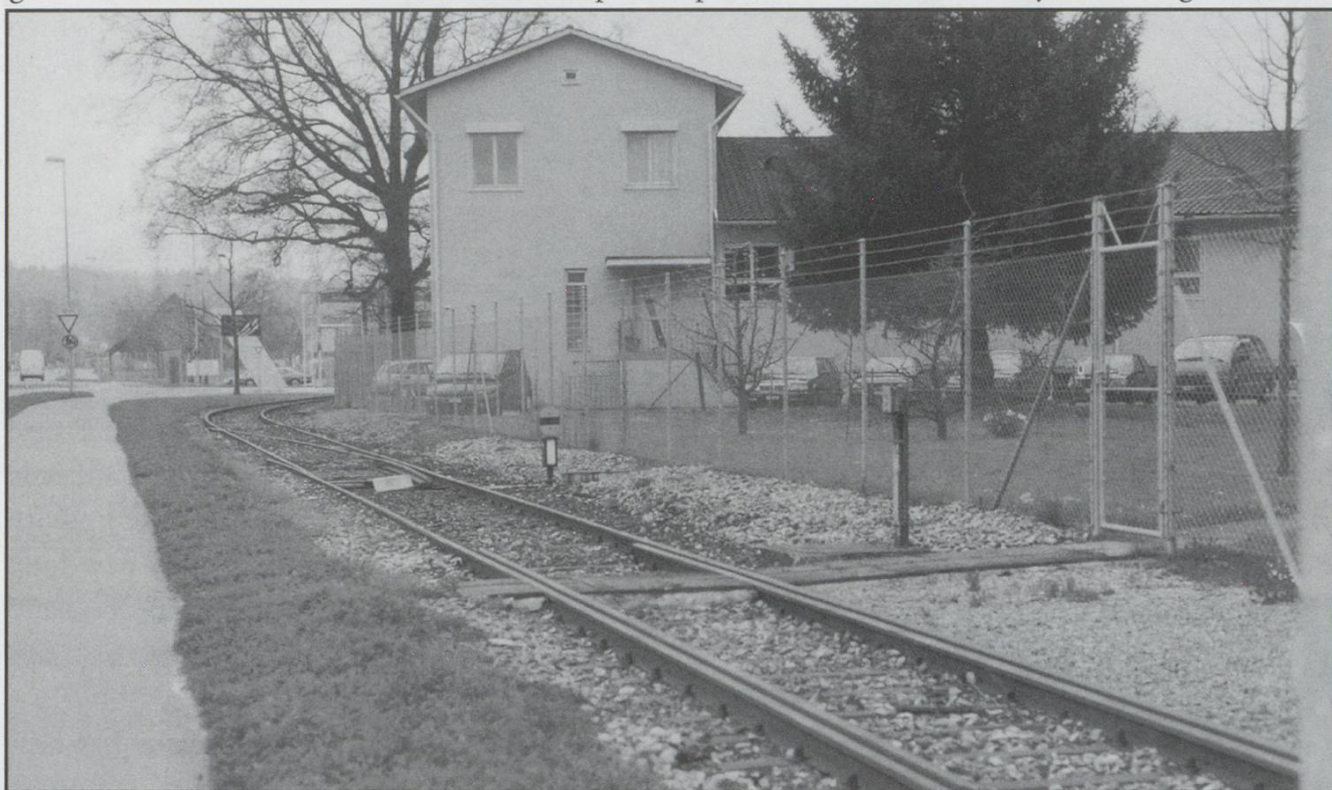
Retracing our steps to Waldibrücke the new route to Emmenbrücke curves to the right on its own right of way and climbs steadily passing a Swiss Airforce Base on the

left. Passing through a short tunnel the main line from Olten appears high above us on the right and the two lines gradually close together. Shortly after the junction we pass under the motorway and drop down into Emmenbrücke. The track-bed of the old route can be seen on our left.

Emmenbrücke is an interesting location and there are extensive goods facilities and a long private siding serving several industries goes off to the west. Diesel locomotives oper-

CURRENT OPERATIONS

I have managed to make a few more journeys along the line in 2001 and noticed that the extra morning and evening peak trains can add a bit of variety. A 540 set was noted at Seon heading south one evening, whilst at Beinwil an Re4/4^{II} attached to three 2nd class coaches was parked in a siding. The siding was just long enough to accommodate the train and the stop blocks bore evidence of periodic attempts to push them out of the way! The freight for the-



The siding continues past the remains of Emmen station. Note the point in situ which formed part of the station loop. The main track-bed is now the footpath. April 2001.

Photo: Ernie Brack

ated by the Panoli Company shunt these industries, as the lines are not electrified. I am not sure who owns these sidings as various SBB tractors are also dumped in them. Back at the station there are usually a couple of SBB locos stabled on the north east sidings awaiting trains. At present modernisation has not reached Emmenbrücke and, as the station is on a curve, Olten-bound expresses can surprise platform spectators, although the station staff usually shout out a warning.

former Beromünster branch leaves Lenzburg at about 7.30am and also leaves the wagons for Lenzburg Industrie on the connecting link adjacent to Platform 11. These are taken down later by a shunter. If you take the 07.39 departure from Lenzburg to Beinwil, and if one is lucky the bus connection to Beromünster chases the freight as it climbs to Reinach. On the branch Menziken station has disappeared and the track has been lifted back to Reinach. A new concrete monstrosity is obviously considered necessary for the relocated metre gauge. Freight services may be offered here in future as some traffic is still dealt with by the metre gauge. An Eaos wagon was picked up from Menziken WSB on my April 2001 visit.