

The letters pages

Objektyp: **Group**

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

Band (Jahr): **6 (2000-2002)**

Heft 9

PDF erstellt am: **29.06.2024**

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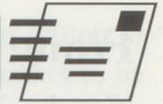
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Letters are welcomed on any relevant subject. Please ensure that when you send an email letter you include your address.

From: Margaret Smith – Harrogate Thanks for the replies

I was pleased to have a reply to my request for information on the disused railway in Interlaken. The enclosed photographs show more details of this line. The dilapidated state of the bridge over the River Aare is very obvious. At the junction end of the bridge there is still a 40 k.p.h. restriction sign for movements over the bridge. Although it is possible to see the junction site from the road on that side, the bridge itself is obscured by vegetation.

On the following day to our visit, the Swiss Alpine Marathon was run beginning in Davos and following the route of the railway to Filisur. Extra trains were run for spectators, which stopped in various loops to allow for viewing of the competitors as they went by.

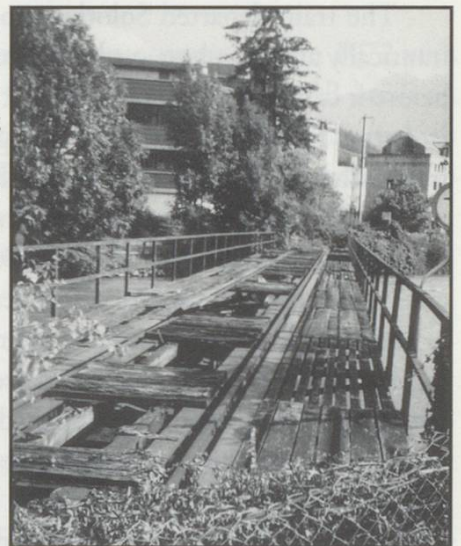
At Brienz a miniature railway runs from the pier along the lakeside. It uses a steam locomotive (see photograph). Also on the pier at Brienz, the BLS has erected a display board showing all the steamers past and present on both the Brienz- and Thunersee.

I hope these photographs and comments may be of interest to Swiss Express readers.



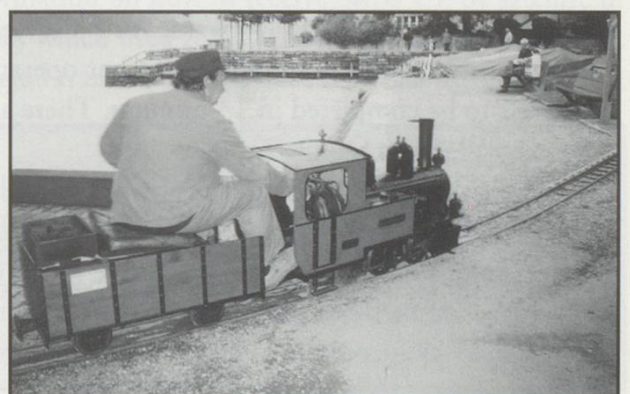
Two views of that bridge in Interlaken showing the dangerous state of the bridge and the road crossing mentioned in Margaret Smith's letter.

It has been very gratifying to see the reaction to the original query which has led to much correspondence and several pictures. All these pictures are by Margaret Smith.



The new BLS notice board at Brienz.

The miniature steam train along the lakeside at Brienz. It must be possible to see four different types of steamers at once here. The Brienz Rothorn Bahn, the Ballenberg Dampfbahn, the BLS steamer and the miniature railway. No prizes but plenty of kudos for the first to succeed.



From: Brian Hemming - Chobham

Numbering and subsequent history of Be2/5 11001

Following Paul Russenberger's excellent article on the Buchli drive in the December issue, I have managed to turn up some information regarding the numbering of this locomotive and its subsequent history.

On rebuilding the locomotive after its return from France the SBB had no suitable track for testing so trials took place on the BLS where it was numbered 2B1 10001 on 1st August 1918. The SBB officially renumbered it to Fb2/5 10001 on 1st May 1919 and it was unofficially named *Viktor* by Bern depot. In the spring of 1920 it was reclassified Be2/5 11001. It was withdrawn from service in 1929 and rebuilt as self-propelled welding power vehicle Xe1/5 99999, becoming XTe1/5 99999 in 1930. The rebuild involved the removal of the Buchli drive from the middle axle, leaving the Tschanz drive as the sole means of propulsion. The body outline was unchanged. It was withdrawn after eight years of service in Kreis III on 17th September 1937 and cut up in December 1937. There was never a number clash with Ae4/9 11001 as this did not enter service until 1934.

From: David Adams - Solihull

Fatality on SBB-Sunday 21st October 2001

A rather macabre subject but these things do happen on the best-run systems and it is interesting to see how the SBB coped with such a situation. On the above date a friend of mine was travelling on the 10.07 Zürich HB – Geneva Airport service formed by two ICN sets of which the leading one was 500 002.

The train departed Solothurn on time at 11.11 and shortly after passing Bellach the horn was blown frantically and simultaneously the emergency brakes were applied. Ballast was heard flying up under the train before it came to a stand at 11.15. It transpired that someone had been hit by the train and emergency services attended. Once the police had given permission for the train to move the brakes could not be released from either the double ICN set or the individual sets.

In the interim single line working had been introduced allowing other trains to pass but delays were significant by this time. At 13.00 Em3/3 18811 arrived on the adjacent line from Biel with three rescue vehicles containing appropriate equipment which included ladders and also attached were four passenger coaches and a DVT. Passengers from the rear ICN set detrained and were taken on a slight detour to avoid passing the scene of impact and all passengers were transferred to the rescue train. This departed at 13.40 and ran at reduced speed being propelled from the rear by 18811. It made the booked call at Grenchen Süd and arrived Biel at 14.08, a delay of 159 minutes. Passengers detrained and the Em3/3 and rescue vehicles went to Biel Maintenance Depot and an Ee3/3 removed the passenger vehicles to a siding. Passengers for destinations beyond Biel were transferred to the 13.07 from Zürich HB arriving at their respective destinations 180 minutes late.

Operational skills at the ready - lets play The Weakest Link

You are in charge of operations at a border station where the FS and SBB operations meet. A through international train is due in the platform headed by an FS loco which has to be detached but cannot move forward under its own power under SBB wires. Three additional SBB coaches are to be attached to the front of the train after the FS loco has been removed, as well as the BLS loco which has been standing nearby for some time to take the train forward. An FS diesel shunter is provided to help with the manoeuvres, so all you have to do is devise the most efficient operational method possible to enable all shunting work and a brake test to be completed in 13 minutes. There are no other trains moving during this period and free sidings are available as required.

Full marks if you suggested the obvious, namely that the BLS loco should be already attached to the three SBB coaches ready to reverse onto the train as soon as the FS diesel shunter has removed the FS loco to another line. Quite simple and easily achievable in 13 minutes. Unfortunately this simple answer is far removed from the actual methods used because there appears to be an agreement that is set in stone between FS and SBB whereby all incoming FS locos will be removed from trains by the forwarding operator thus precluding

the use of the FS diesel for this move. This is what actually happened when I travelled from this station in 2000 - no marks for guessing the location. The BLS loco was not attached to the three SBB coaches to be attached to the train. However, the FS diesel shunter was attached to four coaches.

On the train's arrival, which was four minutes late, the BLS loco coupled up to the FS loco and took it to an adjacent line but with no fly shunting involved. The FS shunter then reversed the four coaches onto the front of the train and it too then headed off to an adjacent line with one coach still attached. The BLS loco then drew forward and reversed onto the train after which a brake test was done and the SBB conductor, who was acting with much haste, had to physically release the brakes with a pole on each of the three vehicles that had been attached. Result, eight minutes overtime in the station and twelve minutes late departing.

Who was playing the bureaucratic card? Who was putting the dampers on an efficient and reliable international service? Who was it that failed to bank any of the four minutes lost time on arrival and actually managed a pathetic and pitiful further loss of time? It's time to vote off the weakest link!

I bet you get the answer to that one correct as well! Arrivederci.

From: Ted Scott – Cyberspace

Whose is the most powerful?

When I recently purchased my latest copy of *Modern Railways* (January 2002 issue) I was surprised to see on the front cover in large print "UK builds world's most powerful locomotive." On reading the article it said, "A milestone was reached on 5th December when the first 7Mw locomotive - the most powerful single unit locomotive in the world - arrived at Cheriton (that's what it looks like AR) from manufacturers Brush Traction in Loughborough."

I was still puzzled since I always thought that the SBB Re 6/6 locomotives (prototype built in 1972 with production versions supplied from 1975 to 1980) pretty powerful. I looked up my official SBB book on locomotives, published in 1981, which gave the power of all Re 6/6 locos as 7900Kw i.e. 7.9Mw. So, which is the most powerful single unit locomotive in the world? Have the SBB locos been down-rated? Are English and French Watts different from those in Switzerland? Or is the Brush claim just wheel spin?

Perhaps one of our members can enlighten both myself and others?

From: Peter Valentine – Chester

Swiss Television

Recently I have been making enquiries about receiving Swiss TV. A fellow member with whom I discussed this previously made the suggestion that I write to Swiss Express but I had hesitated to do so, for the following reason.

My understanding of the position is that most people in CH receive programmes by cable. To receive by satellite one needs a decoding card, for which a charge is made. A figure of CHF50 has been quoted, presumably an annual charge. Such cards are intended primarily for Swiss nationals living outside CH and when purchasing they have to sign that the card is for their own use and will not be passed to non-nationals. Therefore, any British member replying publicly to such a query in Swiss Express might incriminate themselves and/or the source of their card.

I wonder if I might issue a brief request for any information on how to receive Swiss TV by satellite in Britain. I am already aware that Swiss Radio International, which used to be available by analogue satellite, has for some considerable time been available only by digital transmissions. Please reply via the editor.

Steve Horobin reports that Ryanair are adding Friedrichshaven to their schedules from April. This should allow an interesting entry into Switzerland by Ferry! Keep up to date with latest fares and offers, subscribe to their on line newsletter at www.ryanair.com.