

Rhätische Raritäten

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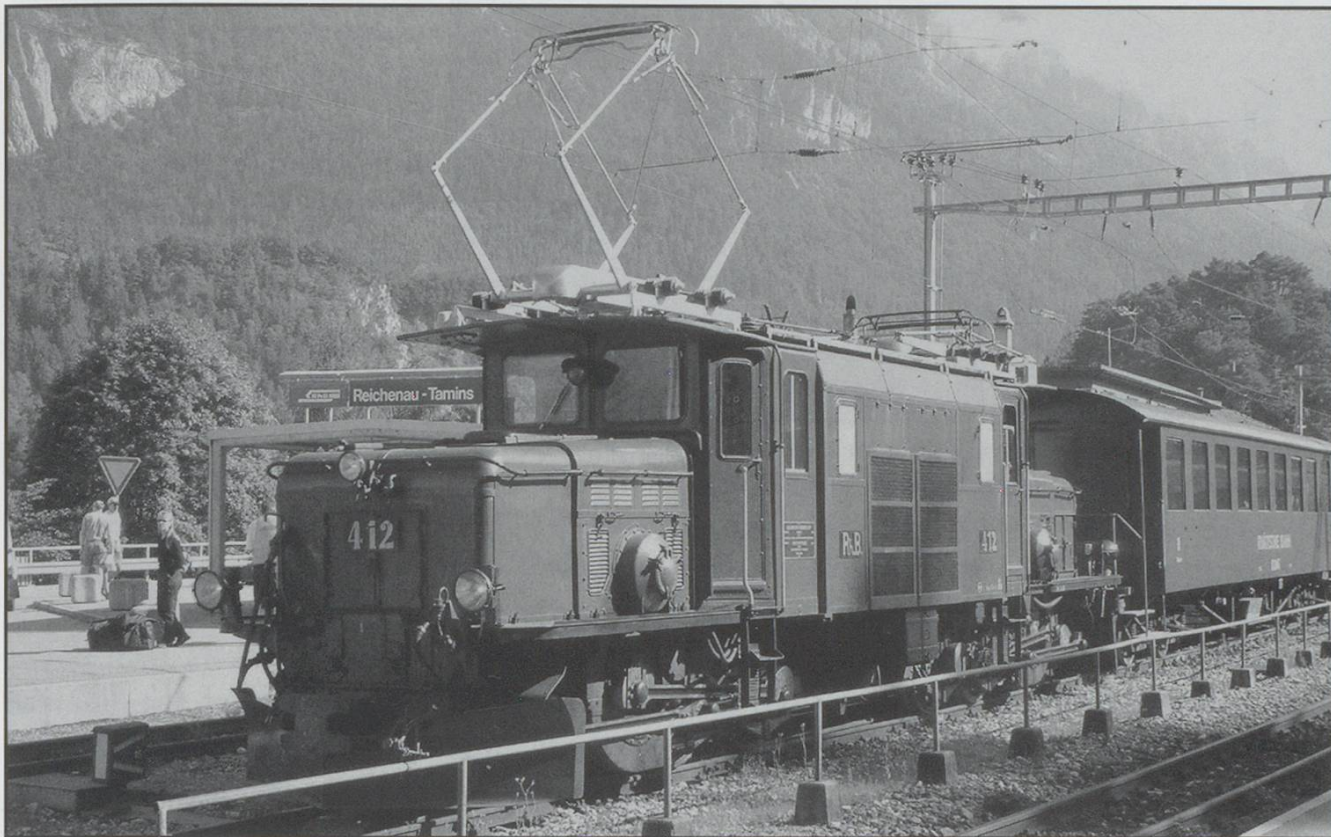
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A travelogue with a difference as you will see. Visitors to the 2001 AGM may remember an RhB flyer on yellow paper. This is what you missed.



Ge6/6 412 ready for departure from Reichenau-Tamins for Ilanz with the first special train of the Rhätische Raritäten trip, 22/08/2002 ALL PHOTOS BY BRIAN MASON

Every year, since 1989, the Rhätische Bahn (RhB) has organised a special four-day railway feast for enthusiasts of this popular Swiss metre gauge railway, and 2002 was no exception. I first became aware of these trips some years ago while surfing the Internet for general information on the RhB and this year, for the first time, decided to join this adventure.

The 2002 event took place from 22nd to 25th August and I travelled the day before from Luton to Zürich, with easyJet's early morning flight, finally arriving at my hotel in Chur in the early afternoon. This gave me time to get the feel of the RhB once again with short visits to Domat/Ems and Landquart. Those of us taking part had been asked to be ready for departure on the 22nd from Reichenau-Tamins by 10:15. Included in the price of the four-day trip was an unlimited season ticket on the RhB

and so on a beautiful sunny morning at Reichenau the participants gradually began to arrive and at about a quarter to ten our special train entered the station; a Ge6/6 Krokodil hauling a selection of historic coaches and trucks. The train was made up as follows:

Ge6/6 Krokodil412
 B2245-3rd class coach from 1928
 C2012-3rd class coach from the Landquart – Davos Bahn (1889)
 B2060-3rd class coach from 1906
 A1102-1st class from the Albula Bahn (ex-A2 from 1903)
 D4052-Rhaetian Parlour (used as a bar and souvenir wagon by the Verein Dampffreunde der Rhätische Bahn)
 A selection of goods wagons including G5563 (the wagon restored by 1889 Club and carrying the logo celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the above-mentioned Verein), G5502 and E6603

Before boarding the train we all loaded our luggage into G5563 since, at the end of the day, the train would take us to Davos, our centre for the next few days. Once on the train we were provided with an information sheet detailing the day's events and a very useful



G4/5 107 filling up with water and waiting for the *Löschzug* to attach to the front of the train before departing for Tiefencastel, 22/08/2002

waiting to take us on the next stage. In dry weather, a *Löschzug* (fire brigade train), normally consisting of a Krokodil hauling a water tanker with associated spray apparatus, accompanies steam-hauled trains on the RhB. In areas where it is not possible for the fire service to access the railway line easily the *Löschzug* heads the train. The *Löschzug* also heads the train when heavy loads are involved or when the journey is on a stretch of track featuring numerous tunnels. For our

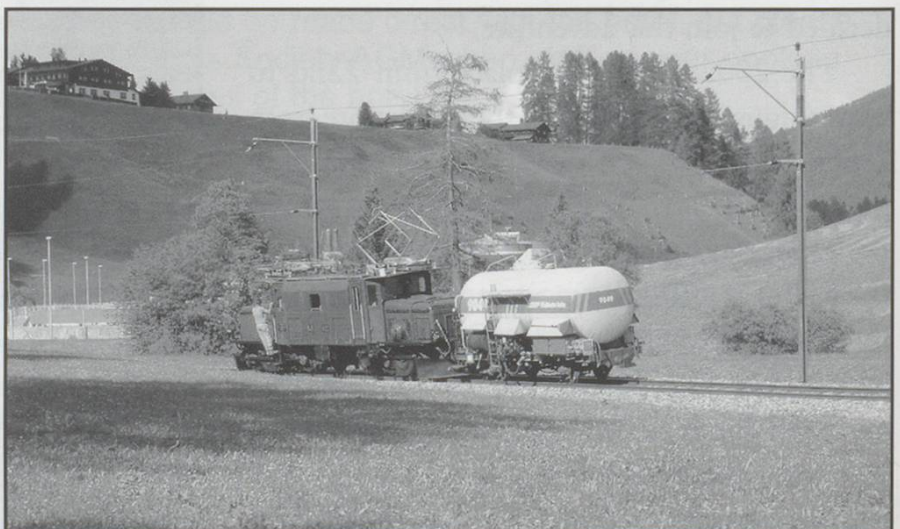
booklet giving detailed information on the complete four days travel. This included train formations, train speeds, and detailed timings of crossing and passing trains, photo stops and the special train timetables to and from the starting points of our daily trips.

trip Ge6/6 412, hauling tanker wagon 9049, took over the task of *Löschzug*.

We left at 10:25 and headed down towards the Rhine gorge. Krokodil "412" took us as far as Ilanz and then back to Reichenau. Three photo stops took place on this part of the journey together with a stop at Ilanz for reversing the locomotive for the return to Reichenau. Photo stops throughout the four days took the usual format. Those wanting to take photographs and videos would leave the train. It would then reverse down the line, then travel back past the cameras and everyone would climb back on board. Occasionally, when photo stops took place close to a station, we would take the short walk to the station to rejoin the train.

Our first stop with the steam train was at Thusis and on this stretch of the line the Krokodil and its tanker wagon followed about five minutes behind. At Thusis it was time to take on water from the station hydrant and attach the *Löschzug* to the front of the train for the next stage of the journey to Tiefencastel. Here the *Löschzug* was once again detached for the onward journey to Filisur. After a photo stop near Surava we headed towards the Landwasser Viaduct which was crossed at slow

The *Löschzug*, consisting of Ge6/6 412 hauling tanker 9049 waits to attach once again to the steam special after a photo stop near Davos Glaris, 22/08/2002



As we pulled into Reichenau on our return we could see that G4/5 107 was

speed to enable the filming of the train as we moved across into the tunnel and arrived at Filisur. After a stop of about 45 minutes, time to turn the steam locomotive on the turntable, take on water and once again attach the *Löschzug* to the front, we headed off towards Davos via the Wiesen Viaduct. Photo stops here, and again near Davos Glaris, saw the run past of the train headed by "107" with the *Löschzug* detached. On arrival

at Davos we transferred to the four-star Hotel Post which was to be our home for the next three nights. In fact we appeared to occupy totally the hotel and even some of its apartments. After a long day and a very enjoyable evening meal we retired to the bar or our rooms.

The next morning, after an early breakfast we headed down the slope to Davos Platz station. The first part of our journey was on the Heidi Express with three extra coaches (B2492, B2493, B2496) attached for our group. Hauled by Ge4/4^{II} 612 we headed for Pontresina where Bernina railcars 43 and 42 took over for the journey over the Bernina Pass. Unfortunately, as we climbed over the pass, the



The recently repainted motor coaches ABe4/4 30 and 34 await departure from Miralago towards St Moritz, 23/08/2002

glaciers and mountains of the Bernina range were barely visible. However, as we descended down the other side, conditions improved and were quite favourable as we arrived in Poschiavo.

Our special train for the day was waiting in the sidings, having travelled down earlier from Pontresina. On this occasion it was made up as follows:

ABe4/4 30 and 34 D4052, A1102, B2060, C2012, C114 "La Bucunada"

From Poschiavo a variety of options were available but I could not resist taking the opportunity of travelling in C114 "La Bucunada" to Miralago and enjoying a nice cold beer on the way. Dating from 1910 it had at one stage been used as RhB works coach X9079 but now, after being fitted out internally by Club 1889 and then painted by the RhB at Pontresina, it really is a delight.

We then returned from Miralago to Le Prese and Poschiavo to collect the remaining passengers for the journey to St Moritz. The pleasant weather allowed us to make the most of the photo

ABe4/4 30 and 34 heading round the shore of Lago Bianco will soon arrive at Ospizio Bernina, 23/08/2002



stops, the first of which was just before Cavaglia. At Cavaglia station our train had to be manoeuvred into a siding to allow for the passing of a train in each direction, and then after another photo stop at La Dotta we arrived at Alp Grüm. Here, a 30-minute stop allowed us to take refreshment, as well as photos, and the Piz Palü glacier, which had been obscured on the outward journey, was now clearly visible. Before arriving at Ospizio Bernina a stop for photos was made alongside the Lago Bianco

take us to Selfranga, the Klosters end of the Vereina Tunnel, where we were able to observe one of the emergency trains, the loading zone and Krokodil Ge6/6 414 in the small glass-fronted shed. Our two buses were driven on to a car-ferry train and it was not long before we set off. At Sagliains our buses headed for Zernez where our special train would await. However, before this we had an opportunity to photograph it as it swept through the 180-degree curve shortly before arriving at Zernez station.



Ge4/6 353 takes a lunchtime rest at Ardez, 24/08/2002

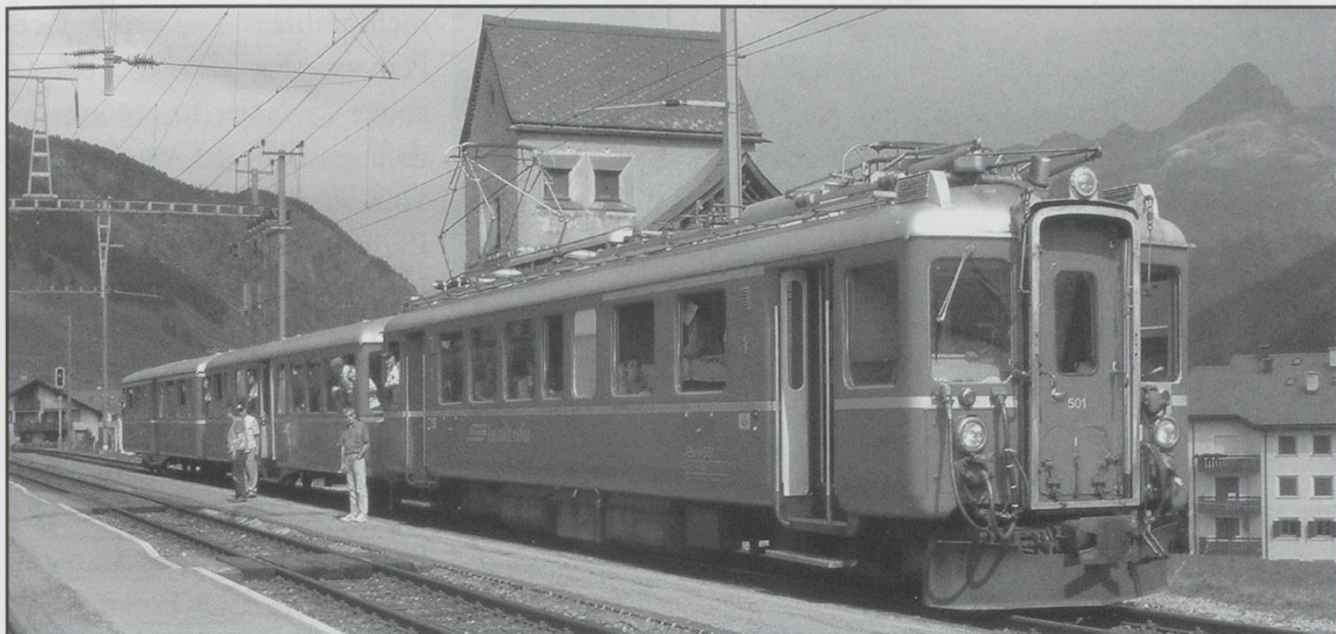
and another soon after passing the summit at the “Wild West Bridge”.

On arrival in St Moritz we transferred to the regular Chur train with three reserved coaches attached for our party. However, we would only occupy these coaches for the short trip to Samedan. Here the restaurant cars WR3810, WR3812 and the saloon wagon WR-S3814 were attached to the back of the train and we took up our reserved seats to enjoy dinner on the return trip to Davos. A busy day did not end here and in the evening, back at the hotel, we were treated to some presentations and videos on other RhB projects.

Activities on Saturday were mostly in the Engadin. At 08:30 we boarded two buses to

Our train today was hauled by Ge4/6 353 and consisted of the now familiar rolling stock. Travel from Zernez was either with the special train or with one of the buses, which now acted as a photo bus along the route to Scuol. During the 45-minute stay at Scuol “353” shunted the goods trucks to the other end of the train ready for the return trip. The photo bus had long since departed as we left Scuol and headed for Ardez, where we arrived about midday. The sun was shining brightly and we were able to enjoy the typical grilled sausage, roll and beer or soft drink served on the station forecourt.

After lunch we set off towards Susch where a second special train awaited. This time it was the “Fliegender Rhaetia”, ABe4/4 501 hauling coaches A1251 and B2301. After several photo



ABe4/4 501 awaits a passing train at Susch, 24/08/2002

stops we arrived in Bever where the motor-coach was moved to the other end of the train for our journey over the Albula Pass to Filisur and then on to Davos. Opportunities for filming were again provided near Preda and at the Wiesen Viaduct. Here, after unloading the photographers at Wiesen station, the train was reversed over the viaduct while they walked up the road to the viewpoint overlooking the viaduct. We arrived at Davos Platz soon after 17:00 to take a well-earned rest before dinner. That evening another special dining experience awaited and just before 19:00 we all made the short walk to the Jakobshorn cable car, especially reopened to take us to the summit restaurant (2590m). Here a most enjoyable fondue dinner was taken as we watched the sun go down. On returning to the hotel at about 23:00 those with enough stamina continued the fun in the Hotel's Pöstlibar.

Sunday brought another beautiful day and after checking out from the hotel we took the short walk down to the station to take up our reserved seats on the Alpine Pullman Express. The train was made up of As1141, As1142, As1143, As1144 and D4062 and was hauled on the first stage of the journey to Landquart by Krokodil Ge6/6 412. I was fortunate enough to be allocated a seat in As1144, very spacious with single facing seats down each side

and an extra one at each end. Thick upholstered seats, deep-pile carpet and wood-veneered panelling go towards creating an air of opulence and it really was a privilege to spend a whole day travelling on this train. The journey to Landquart included two scheduled photo stops. Other opportunities for photographs arose at Serneus, Schiers and Grüsch with stops to allow scheduled trains to pass. At Landquart we disembarked and made our way to the *rotonde* where a number of RhB locomotives were already on display and some old favourites, such as Ge2/4 222, were shunted out of the shed for us to enjoy. Afterwards we could roam the depot freely and see, amongst others, the two RhB steam locomotives, G4/5 107 and G3/4 1 *Rhätia*. A small packed lunch provided us with some light refreshment and after about an hour we headed back to the station to take our seats once more on the Alpine Pullman Express.

A pair of Ge4/4's 604 and 609 headed us towards Chur and the Arosa section of the RhB. Transfer to this section of the RhB is much easier now that the electrical supply corresponds with that on the RhB mainline. After arriving at Chur main station we soon reversed back for a few hundred metres in the direction of Landquart. We then came forward again,



Ge4/4's 609 and 604 with the Alpine Pullman Express wait for the up train at Lünen-Castiel, 25/08/2002

across the SBB tracks, to reach the Arosa line that runs from the forecourt of Chur main station. I believe this was the first time that these Pullman coaches had travelled on the Arosa line and therefore this was a true Rhätische Rarität that certainly attracted attention as we passed through the streets of Chur.

The journey from Chur to Arosa took just over an hour. After a short stay, time to move the locomotives to the other end of the train and grab a cold drink or an ice-cream at the station kiosk, we began the final stage of our four-day feast of the Rhätische Bahn as we headed back to Chur. Further photo stops at Litzirüti, Langwies and Lünen before arrival back at Chur around 16:30 where, after saying our goodbyes and unloading the luggage, we went our different ways.

For me this had been the culmination of many years of enjoyment which the Rhätische Bahn has provided over the last twenty and more years, and I still had a complete day left to observe this marvellous railway. When organising this four-day trip the RhB tries to provide good photographic opportunities for enthusiasts while experiencing the pleasure of travelling on historic trains. However by staying in good class hotels and offering pleasant dining experiences it makes the whole occasion an even more

memorable experience. Perhaps this also encouraged about 25 ladies to accompany their partners. Overall nearly 100 took part in Rhätische Raritäten and I was somewhat surprised to find no other British SRS members on the trip; perhaps many have been in previous years. However, I did have the pleasure of meeting three members of the SRS from the USA, including Jim Easley, the North American membership coordinator, and his wife Lydia. Jim had brought with him a photo-

album of his large RhB-based LGB garden layout and many of us enjoyed looking at the photographs during the trip.

I can thoroughly recommend the trip, which was excellently organised, and would like to thank Herrn Rohner und Rufer from the RhB and Herr Haudenschild from the Dampfverein for organising and assisting in its execution. This event will not take place in 2003 due to the 100th anniversary of the Albula Bahn; instead there will be a trip to Zermatt with the Alpine Pullman Express. Assuming the standard trip will resume in 2004, and you are interested, I would suggest you book early, since apparently a very high percentage of the participants return year after year. One final tip, although I booked through the Dampfverein, bookings could also be made through Graubünden Ferien or directly with the Rhätische Bahn. These latter options may in fact be preferable since payment can be made by credit card, thus avoiding bank charges for transferring Swiss Francs.

JS Videos digitally recorded the whole trip on video and a copy of the final production will be made available to participants later this year. I now look forward to that as yet another reminder of a fantastic four days.