

The letters pages

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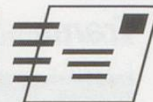
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Letters are welcomed on any relevant subject. Please ensure that when you send an email letter you include your address.

From: Michael Donovan - Gravesend

For the "There's a prototype for everything" department:

Walking up the valley from Erstfeld, intending to reach Wassen, it became apparent there was an imbalance in traffic - more freight southbound than northbound. Noted heading north were: an Re460/Ae6/6 pairing running light; an Re6/6 running light; but, amazingly, one freight worked by two Re10/10 pairs, and another twenty four bogie - vehicles (all empty, except, possibly, the vans) worked by no less than three Re10/10 pairs (six locomotives)! Noted the previous night arriving at Erstfeld was a pair of Re460s attached to an Ae6/6 (all, apparently, under power). One northbound semi-fast passenger service was noted behind an Re10/10 combination instead of the usual Re6/6.

Three Class 482 locomotives (007/008/009) were noted on Erstfeld depot, but they didn't seem to be in favour, or going anywhere. The nearest I saw one come to doing some work was on my third morning, when 482 008 came off shed to bank a steel coil train over the Gotthard. The train followed mine to Bellinzona, but they must have had problems with the 482, because, by the time it came through, Ae6/6 11463 was banking it! (Train locomotives were 11680 and 11185).

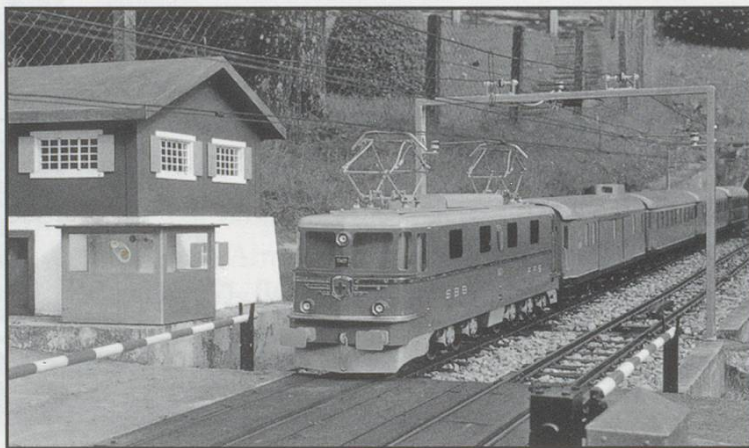
For the person who wants to model Swiss railways, but can't be bothered with the operating bit: Just south of Amsteg, the line emerges from a tunnel high above a side valley, runs across a viaduct, then dives into another tunnel. Below the viaduct are a stream and some charming buildings, and the view up the side valley is excellent. All that would be needed is a few trains (an InterCity, a Pendolino, a semi-fast, and a few freights), and holding spirals at either end of the layout. Given automatic train control, the modeller could concentrate on modelling the scenery, and leave the trains to run themselves!

From: Norman Laird - Farnborough, Hampshire

A new member catches up

As a new member catching up on some past copies of *Swiss Express*, Frank Hornby's "Vintage Switzerland" in the June 2001 issue reminds me that I first saw Switzerland in August 1946, with a party of school leavers just after taking the then Higher Schools Certificate exams. We stayed a week each at the Park Hotel Gemmi, Kandersteg, and at the Hotel des Alpes, Spiez, at a cost of SFr12 per day, full board, and then a week at the Alpenrose, Wengen, at a cost of SFr15 per day, again full board. There were SFr 7 to the pound. Most days we would take packed lunches, which we were welcome to eat in cafés, provided that we had a bowl of soup or a drink from them.

There was no cable car to the Stock at Kandersteg, so we had to walk up the very steep path prior to walking over the Gemmi Pass to look down on Leukerbad. Well-to-do people would travel in a Gemmiwagen, pulled by a mule, the single occupant sitting between the wheels, facing rearwards. Similarly, after walking from the Schynige Platte to the Faulhorn and past the Bachalpsee, we walked down to Grindelwald, as the First chairlift was installed in 1947, to be replaced later by the present *Gondelbahn*.



The model railway mentioned by Norman Laird in his letter. I am unable to credit the photo as it comes from an anonymous postcard

John Farmer - *SE* December 2001 - reports having seen a tank engine fitted with a pantograph. In *The Railways of Switzerland*, published in 1947 by the *Railway Gazette*, there is a photograph of one of the two 0-6-0 tank engines so fitted during the 1939-1945 war, when Switzerland was short of coal for its steam engines.

The article and letters about the STI trolleybuses made me think of the trams preceding them, running sometimes with up to six vehicles coupled together. Other tramways running in the area in 1946 were the Spiez Verbindungsbahn, from Spiez station to the quayside, and the Meiringen-Reichenbach-Aareschlucht tramway.

After a visit to the Swiss Transport Museum in Luzern about 1981, my wife and I went up an ancient funicular in the direction of the golf course to find a garden railway, one-tenth full scale, displayed commercially by the owner. Does anyone know if it is still running, and if so, its location? I would like to see it again.

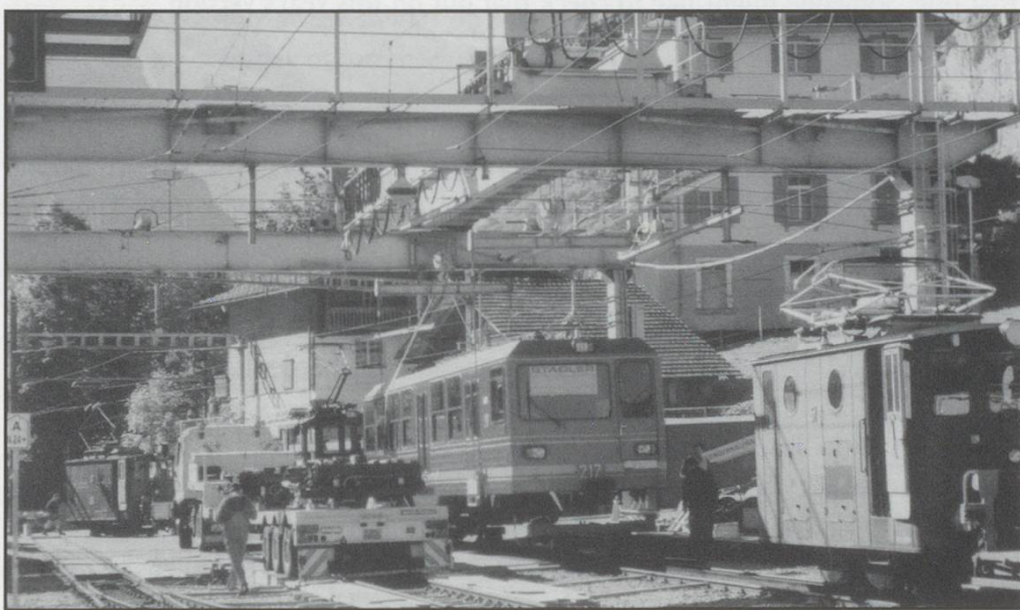
From – Bob Little - Newcastle under Lyme

The new Jungfrau units at Lauterbrunnen



A new Stadler Jungfrau Unit being lifted off an articulated lorry trailer at Lauterbrunnen. The photo was taken from a WAB train entering the station, 17/09/2002.

Photo: Bob Little



Unit 217 being lowered onto temporary wheels at Lauterbrunnen Station, 17/09/2002.

Photo: Bob Little

The family and I were leaving Wengen at the end of our holiday. As we approached Lauterbrunnen on the train down from Wengen I noticed a red coach in the station yard. As a result I was ready to take a photograph out of the train window. This shows the unit being lifted off the flatbed truck. Then, when the train stopped further down the platform, I rushed back up the platform taking photos as I went. These three photos show the unit being lowered onto its temporary wheels. The proper bogies can still be seen on the flatbed.

I just had time for these three as the BOB train for Interlaken was approaching and the family would not have been amused if I had missed it!

From Lester Weeks – Cyberspace

Some points of interest

Just a few points arising from my recent stay in Switzerland which may be of interest.

1. The very latest version of the synoptic map given out with the Swiss Pass has restored the dotted red line for the Leuk/Leukerbad bus route, but has removed it from the Davos/Lenzerheide route. However, this latter route is operated by Postal Buses from the Chur district and there should be no question about Swiss Pass validity.

2. The RhB appears to have closed - at a stroke - all station restaurants. (As far as I am aware, these were all individual franchises.) In some cases the interior seems to be intact and menus and opening times are still displayed. Outside chairs and tables remain set out. In the case of Samedan the building has been gutted, but a prominent sign continues to proclaim the presence of a station restaurant. Just one may be still open, namely, that at Alp Grüm, in that I saw people going in and out. But they may have been going in and out of an empty space! Nil points for the RhB. The SBB have, of course, been guilty of the same, but perhaps they did it more gracefully. Two of the very good ones (Chur and Sargans) continue to flourish and the former restaurant at Arth-Goldau is now a decent Bistro/Aperito.

3. But the SBB gets a large bouquet for the new 23 seat upper-deck restaurants being introduced in the DSWs (*Doppel-Stock Wagen*). The layout and ambience is better than one would have ever dreamed possible and the menu is larger and more varied than expected. I encountered this just by chance on a Geneva Airport/St Gallen via Bern service. According to the steward, there are just two examples in service at present. Hopefully more will come on line quickly!

From: Andy Micklethwaite – Belper

The longest journey challenge

You have successfully goaded me into having a look at the rail journey challenge. Much as I dislike disagreeing with Malcolm, I do not feel his journey satisfies the original request of "fastest and most direct route". My suggestion does owe its destination to him though: Gornergrat to Campocologno via the FO: 11hrs 5min. on the summer 2001/2 timetable, with surprisingly good connections!

I had thought it might be quicker via Zürich, but it didn't appear to be. I couldn't get the timetable programme to cooperate on that one! Someone might like to check that out on this year's version.

From: Steve Bratt - Crewe

The longest journey challenge

STATION	ARR.	DEP.	TRAIN
Campocologno		7:50	R 440
Pontresina	9:49	10:00	R 740
Samedan	10:07	10:16	D 540
Brig	16:36	17:26	IR 328
Martigny	18:12	18:40	R 38
Le Châtelard-Frontière	19:26		
Duration:	11 hours 36 minutes		

Having completely forgotten to enter the longest journey challenge announced in the June *Swiss Express* until I saw the reminder in September's edition, I've squelched home from Switzerland, dried out my *Kursbuch* and come up with this! I'm not sure that both Campocologno and Le Châtelard-Frontière are in Switzerland but they do count as the border for railway purposes.

I think at some point someone should have shouted "Mornington Crescent"!! These are summer schedules so by the December edition won't apply! I've assumed that by "longest journey" it means duration not distance as the latter would be a geography question rather than timetable. The rule about fastest and most direct route is also a bit ambiguous since, as any computerised system will tell you, fastest (i.e. time) and most direct (i.e. distance) are not always the same so the rule is sometimes impossible to achieve - at other times of the day the fastest route for this journey will be via Zürich, which is much longer in distance. So, if anyone wants to attempt a winter journey, the rules should be longest duration journey whilst making use of fastest connections for the time of day (i.e. no deliberate detours or hanging around).

I would also like to thank those people who answered my query regarding faulty Lima Re6/6 wheelsets. As I suspected I was not alone in suffering from this problem and it affects other models as well. The two solutions that emerged were specially made replacements or a type of Loctite glue which is very expensive

and virtually impossible to acquire retail. Either way, to fix the Lima model makes it more expensive than the Roco version - something to bear in mind if you're thinking of buying.

From: Jim Paterson - Castle Douglas

The Arosa line

My wife and I have recently returned from summer holiday based in Arosa (our fourth), and would like to share our enthusiasm for that part of Switzerland with your readers. Some may find it strange for a railway enthusiast to base himself in such a remote outpost, but it is possible to make a day excursion to any part of the RhB system as well as a number of scenic bus journeys, and to begin and end each day with the delights of the Arosa branch, and to see it in various moods.

Our appetite whetted by Mark Evans's, article in the June *Swiss Express*, we arrived in Arosa on Sunday evening 11th August to learn that it had been raining since the Friday, and that flooding was widespread in neighbouring countries. A chance visit to the Bahnhof on the Monday afternoon led to the discovery that the railway was closed, and on the spur of the moment, we enjoyed our first road journey to Langwies and back on the *Bahnersatz* bus. For those who have not heard about the Arosa road, it reputedly has 360 bends in the 30 km from Chur, and is definitely not for the faint hearted. Much better to let the train take the strain. At Langwies, we saw the engineer's train with Ge4/4 611 propelling crossing the viaduct to attend to the problem. There had been a small landslide just above the track between Langwies and Litzirüti, the site of which was duly covered with grey plastic sheets, and the train service was reinstated by the following morning. The site of the much larger landslide problem of last year is still clearly visible just above Untersax about six km from Chur.

The normal service on the Arosa line is maintained by three *Pendelzug* sets, two red sets consisting of ABt, AB, B and DZ, and the blue Arosa Express set, which differs slightly. The blue set is strengthened by an additional B for the designated Arosa Express journeys (one each way), and the red sets frequently have open *Aussichtswagen* attached during good weather. For most of our stay, one of the red sets was missing its ABt, necessitating running round but also meaning that the *Aussichtswagen* were accessible from the rest of the train.

Locos noted on the branch during our stay were 611/3/4/7/8. On the morning of our departure from Arosa, the 08.02 from Chur and 09.04 from Arosa were double headed by 613/8. As only the normal *Pendelzug* set was attached on arrival at Arosa, I can only assume that some heavy freight had been dropped off en route, possibly at the sidings on the outskirts of Arosa. Although double heading is presumably rare now, it was an everyday occurrence until 1997 when the dc power cars were pensioned off.

Since our last visit to Arosa, Arosa Bus has two new Neoplan standee single-deckers for the free local service. They are in the same blue livery as the Arosa Express set, and which was first seen on the Weisshorn (LAW) cable car. They are numbered 2 and 8 and are the entire active fleet in summer, although four older vehicles were stabled in the depot.

Reference in the September *Swiss Express* to the temporary closure of the line between Aigle and Le Sépey reminds me of the afternoon in August 2000 when a train from Aigle had to make an emergency stop. The line was obstructed by a large tree branch brought down by a thunderstorm earlier in the afternoon. The train was single-manned, and as the branch was too large for the driver to move by himself, an American tourist and a member of SRS assisted him. The train was delayed by about 10 minutes, as was the service in the opposite direction. The passengers who assisted had to wait until Les Diablerets to clean large amounts of red soil from their persons.

From: R. Williams - Dyserth

Correction

Re: page 54 September *Swiss Express*. I note that there is an error in the part attributed to myself. The Dutch website is as follows: <Treihen.StartTips.com> with 'T' 'S' & 'T' upper case.

There is a vast amount of railway information on it. By the way, German / Austrian / Swiss analogue programmes can be found at the end of the satellite TV guide found in Supermarket paper stands.