

Klosters in winter

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Objektyp: **Article**

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

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

Heft 2

PDF erstellt am: **10.07.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-854868>

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On February 12th 2000, excitement was high as my family and I left the Edwardian Raddisson at Heathrow, with loads of luggage, including skis and boots for our annual skiing pilgrimage to Klosters. One of the resort attractions is that if the skiing conditions are not up to much there are always the brilliant red trains that trundle through the village!! Forecasts for the region were now good after a rather poor few days in which another metre of snow had fallen. Great news for skiing especially after the disaster of the previous season which resulted in only four days skiing possible out of sixteen due to the abnormally heavy snow which resulted in the closing of the RhB at times "never" you shout, but it did!. This could not happen again or could it?

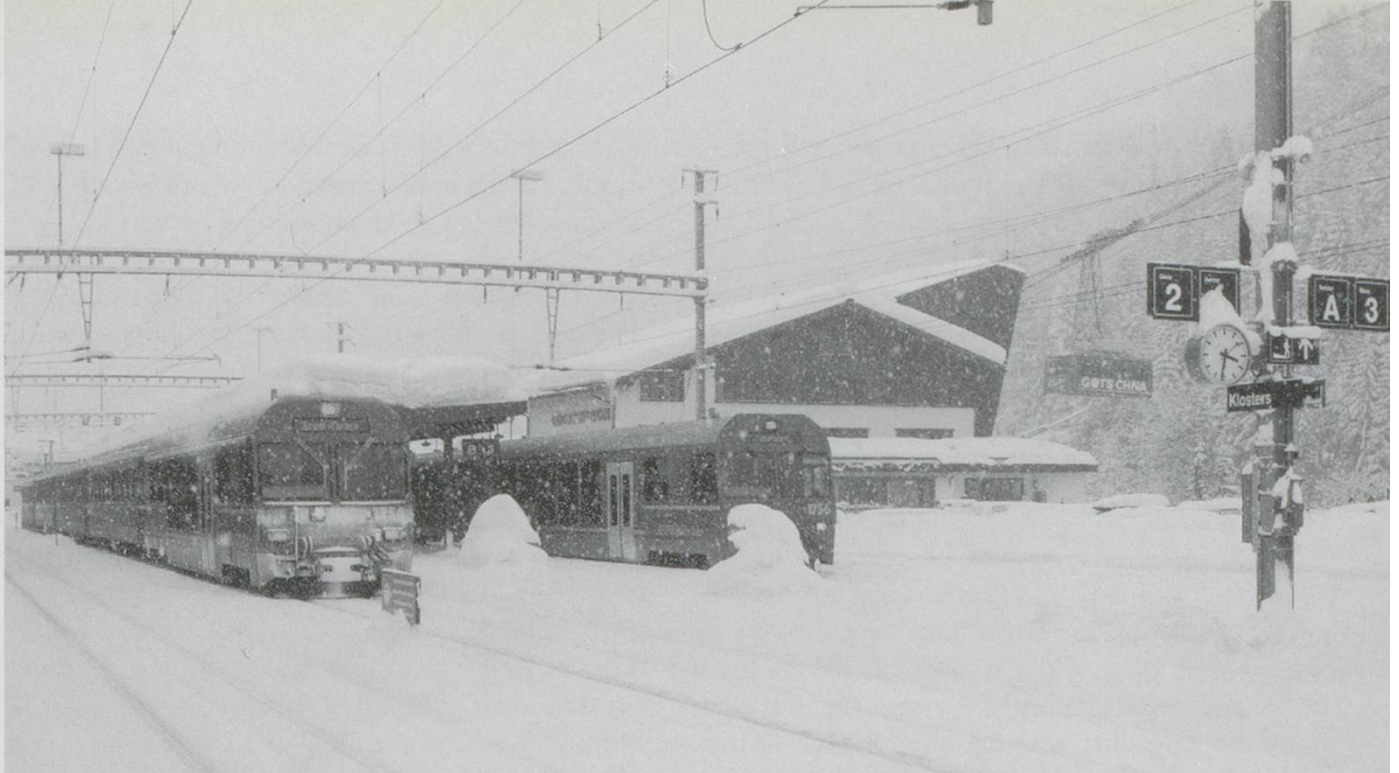
The B.A. flight to Zürich was relaxing and uneventful apart from spilling some champagne in turbulence over Basel. Once at Zürich Flughafen, it was straight down to the subterranean depths of Flughafen station to view the imposing SBB 460s. Surprisingly in the thirty minutes or so on the platform I did not see any advertising locos which was a first. On boarding the 13.25 Lucerne to Zürich this was to change. The yard at MuttENZ had three and another four were noted as we entered Zürich. As well as these handsome beasts there were numer-

ous Re 6/6 and 4/4 in both red and green liveries. Double deck trains were much more noticeable this year and I hoped that one would be available for the 14.04 Chur express. On time 460.067 arrived

with a superb looking double deck train destined for Chur. Although only travelling to Landquart this was to be 90 minutes of total luxury as sitting in the upper deck in sumptuously sculpted 1st Class seats is the epitome of 21st Century railway travel. Floating down from Zürich with a Gin & Tonic on my individual table in almost total silence, apart from the regular electronic, and rather sexy, announcements in German, French and English is rather soporific. In my relaxed state, I took the opportunity to phone our Editor to give him a running commentary of the Swiss scene, which I hope he found useful. Landquart arrived all too soon and we transferred across to Switzerland's Premier metre gauge railway, the Rhaetian Railway. There standing in all its splendour was the 15.35 express to Davos hauled by one of its flagship locomotives Ge4/4^{III} 644 Savognin. This locomotive had been repainted from the striking Radio Grischia to an even more so TV Raetia. What a day so far as everything was working like clockwork but, two full double-deck carriages of first class passengers had disembarked from Landquart SBB and there were only one and a half RhB carriages available! No problem came the response from the RhB personnel and immediately two further first class carriages were obtained from the depot and a Furka Oberalp observation car were attached to the rear of the train and we set off up the Prättigau. The amount of school holiday traffic meant almost every station loop was occupied on the way up to Klosters. At Küblis the Sportzug had just arrived with Ge 4/4 608 Silvretta in charge of three coaches and an original pendulzug DVT. At the back of the station I could just see the bottom of the longest run in Europe from Weissfluhjoch full of skiers. The journey becomes even more interesting from here as we gain height to Klosters at 932m. Two items of interest were the slack of 20kph near Saas over a new bridge and the cement sidings near Serneus serving the building of



RhB Ge4/4^{III} no.652 passes at Preda. February 2000.
Photo: Geoff Turner



Klosters station in a slight snowstorm. Two Driving trailers head to and from Landquart and Scuol via the Vereina. February 2000

Photo: Mad Englishman Geoff Turner. (I had thought they only went out in the midday sun).

the dramatic new bridge and tunnel serving Davos diverting through traffic from the bottle neck of Klosters village. Ge 6/6 Davos was in the sidings together with six cement wagons including one rather tatty BCU liveried version. At Klosters Dorf we crossed my first ever Engadine train in the Prättigau as 629 together with its DVT formed a Scuol to Landquart express. This should not have happened of course, as this should have occurred in Platz if we had been on time!

Although 12 minutes late on leaving Landquart we were only 4 down in Klosters not bad considering the amount of traffic on a single line. Cotswold Line take note.

The Gotschnabahn was running normally and I felt at home as we walked through the village to the Hotel Silvretta Park, just six minutes away from the station. On the way down I looked at the new foot-bridge built exactly on the site of the old 1889 railway bridge which was used for generation of skiers as the route across the river Landquart back into the village from Gotschnagrät at some 9700' high. It was such a shame when this piece of history disappears both for railway enthusiasts and skiers alike, but being Swiss much of the design is very much the same as before! After booking in and enjoying a Silvretta cocktail (1x Bacardi, 2x Bacardi Brown, 1x Vodka, plenty of fresh orange and lemon and finally a shot of local fire water) I had to go to the local tourist office to obtain the local lift passes. This may sound a bit boring to railway enthusiasts but, as already stated the lift passes are totally integrated with rail in this area. The pass itself is interesting, as

it is credit card size with a smart chip within. This enables skiers to be scanned by Siemens equipment when walking through the entrances to lifts or cable cars and if valid the barriers opens and you can proceed, clever! However this pass also covers the RhB from Küblis to Davos Glaris for unlimited second class journeys although you have to show a paper receipt with your lift pass to the train crew. The RhB have not progressed to personal scanning . . . yet. Almost as an afterthought all Post buses from Küblis, Saas, Serneus, Klosters and Davos are also included. Most are mainly designed to give skiers access to the differing peaks of Rinerhorn, Jacobshorn, Parsenn, Madrisa, Pisch and Gotschnagrät in the region but no differentiation is placed. The actual tourist office in Klosters has an interesting address, Alte Bahnhofstrasse, what can this be about as it is some way from the station one thinks? Back in the days of the Landquart-Davos Railway, services were steam and the terminal railway station was situated in the centre of Klosters where a reversal took place for the climb to Davos. This route utilised the current main street and diagonally crossed the current line by the side of the cable car and across the skiers bridge described earlier before climbing to Caverdürli. Another new initiative for the 2000 season was that this pass entitled the purchaser to half price travel anywhere on the RhB and which was to prove a boon later.

Sunday came and much speed was enjoyed on superb snow but cloudy conditions. The highlight being the fastest descent I have ever experienced from Weissfluhjoch to Küblis where the run ends up on the

platform! The Swiss have things organised, I think!! As an ubiquitous Ge 4/4^{II} arrived with a Disentis to Davos express we boarded a refurbished 2nd Class coach and placed the skis in specially designed racks and enjoyed the ride back to Klosters. The best of both worlds comes to mind when relaxing in train travel and looking forward to the exhilaration ahead. Monday was similar but the weather was beginning to fail and the forecast for the next four days was appalling snow, snow, low cloud and more snow!!

Tuesday was exactly as predicted snow. The skis were put away, cameras were charged up, anoraks were worn (honest) and Klosters station was the target. Threats from our Editor requiring input (wasn't that from a film?) inspired me to make notes and report, especially from the workings from the Engadine through the Vereina Tunnel. The normal timetable of events per hour in Klosters runs as follows:

00 Sportzug Küblis to Davos	Ge4/4 ^I Pendulzug with DVT Loco Landquart end
24 Express Disentis to Davos	Ge4/4 ^{II} or Ge6/6 ^{II} Loco Davos end
30 Regional Scuol to Landquart	Ge4/4 ^{II} Pendulzug with DVT Landquart end
32 Regional Landquart to Scuol	Ge4/4 ^{II} Pendulzug with DVT Landquart end
37 Express Davos to Disentis	Ge4/4 ^{II} or Ge6/6 ^{II} Landquart end
59 Sportzug Davos to Küblis	Ge4/4 ^I Pendulzug with DVT Davos end

Platform 1 houses the Sportzug and expresses for Davos, whilst platform 2 is for the Scuol Regionalzugs. Platform 3 hosts the trains for Küblis and Landquart all as listed above. Interesting workings noted on my visit included a regular Scuol to Landquart freight arriving wrong line in platform 1 at 12.45 and Küblis at 13.05. Usual motive power was a Ge6/6^{II} with two PTT low containers, two Cop fridge containers and other wagons as required. 701, 702, 705, 706 and 707 were noted on these duties. In the reverse direction freight from Landquart to Davos arrived in Klosters between 14.45/15.00 behind the usual Ge6/6. The load comprised of oil tankers, waste, water and general freight and was seen dropping cement wagons as Saas for the new road bridge. This freight did pick up in Klosters, arriving in platform 2 before proceeding to the freight siding beside platform 3 to wait until 15.45 after the departure of the Scuol and Disentis trains.

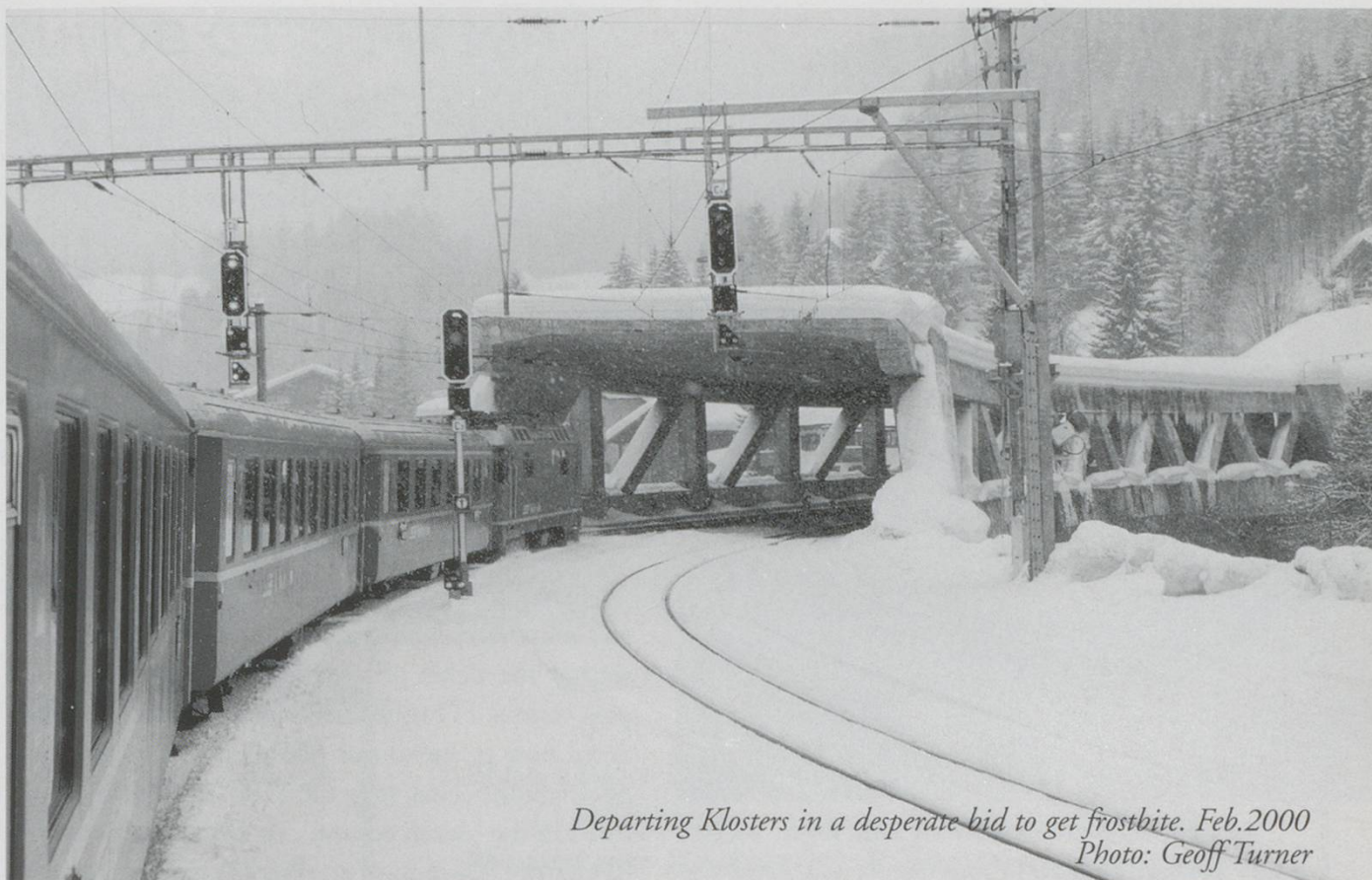
I had the opportunity to discuss the new railway operation in Klosters with particular emphasis on the new Scuol trains. The timetable (as listed above) leaves little room for error and the station operations manager said that it was difficult to path all of the trains successfully and keep everything on time. With only a minor mishap the timetable could fall

apart and the freight operations compound this situation. He did look stressed! Over a two-week period the following observations were noted:

Scuol and return trains were 95% to time, Davos expresses were similar but Disentis trains only offered a 65% success rate. The Sportzug fitted in between these and a special arrangement was tried this season because of late running. The Küblis to Davos Platz trains could be terminated at Davos Dorf if late running was experienced. The RhB organised a Ge4/4^I with two coaches to shuttle between Dorf and Platz to enable the Sportzug to return to Küblis and pick up time. This was particularly applicable during the difficult snowy conditions experienced w/c 12/2/00. This train would continue to Filisur to form the old Davos Pendulzug and run around the train at Filisur to return. At other times esoteric motive power such as a Ge4/4^{III} with a full train would form a local train

from Davos Platz to Filisur and return and then form the Davos Platz to Disentis express!! It only goes to prove that if you are modelling the RhB then almost anything goes!

After watching several movements in Klosters I decided to experience the Vereina Tunnel, something that I had looked forward to for years. The 10.30 Acquilino express behind 619 Samedan to Scuol left on time and we entered the 2172m Zugwald tunnel for the first time. After only a few moments we entered daylight at Selfranga to see the new car carriers and Ge4/4^{III} 643 & 647 awaiting their next turn. The speed built up and soon we were in the new Vereina Tunnel. Mileposts were noted in the tunnel that could prove useful to both photographers and timekeepers alike although for differing reasons. All too soon daylight was experienced and Sagliains was upon us although offered only basic facilities and no character whatsoever. In the opposite platform another Ge4/4^{II} with DVT was waiting with a Scuol to Pontresina express. This of course was formed from a previous Landquart to Scuol train. The rest of the journey was uneventful apart from a lady (in local costume) who promoted the region around Scuol and its dried ham and local deliquesces, samples of which were offered around the train and enjoyed by most. It transpired that she



*Departing Klosters in a desperate bid to get frostbite. Feb.2000
Photo: Geoff Turner*

travelled on certain trains to and from Landquart and had a room within Scuol station for promotional of the region. Within Scuol were posters and models of the Vereina tunnel and its environs which were a total delight and many admired both the models and concept.

After three days spotting in and around Klosters, Davos and Küblis I decided to go to St. Moritz using my under-utilised lift pass. At half price from Davos Glaris, using my pass, the cost was only 25SFr return. The return journey was probably the most exciting and interesting of all journeys experienced on the RhB. 645 and 606 double headed to Filisur, 605 to

Davos Platz and the ultimate in motive power 17.45 Platz to Landquart, 608 and 610 double headed on a typical Pendulzug to Klosters and Landquart. Given the conditions of a blizzard and nil visibility the journey was a magical experience to the enthusiast.

Sunday brought better weather and skiing took precedence to the railway. Monday saw sun for the first time and skiing took over to make up time for the lost due to the poor conditions.

If you have enjoyed the description of my experiences then please go to Klosters in the winter and enjoy. It may be the most exciting experience you ever have.



*RhB Lb-v 7853 together with new Coop refrigerated container. Hardly seems worth the bother to switch it on. Scuol-Tarasp. Feb. 2000
Photo: Geoff Turner*