

Celebrations on the Rigibahnen

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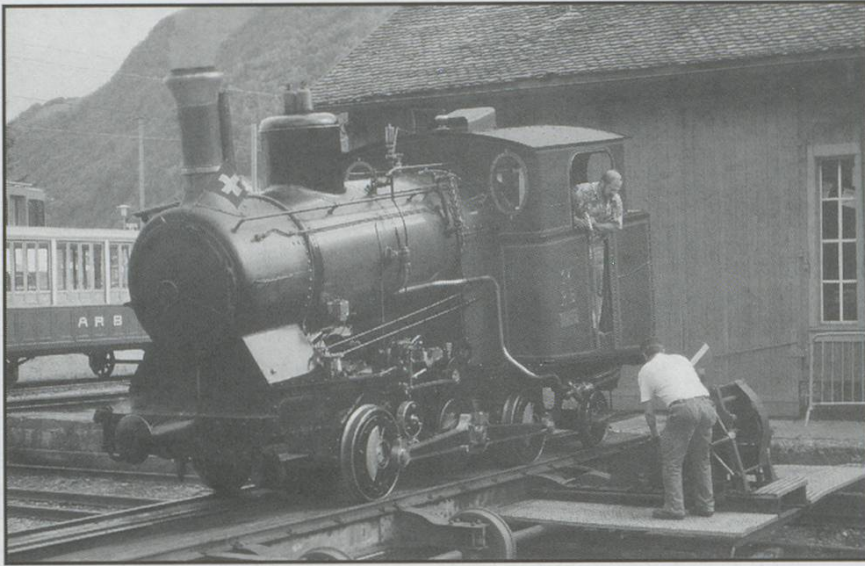
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VRB No. 17 on the traverser at Goldau. June 2000. Photo: The Ayres

In June, as part of our four-country rail tour, my husband and I were based in Goldau for a week. Our hotel was five minutes from the lower station of the ARB. The quickest way to the SBB station lay along its platform and so we managed to see a fair amount of this interesting Rack line. Arriving on Friday 2nd, we were pleased to discover that the line was celebrating 125 years of its existence that weekend, and we found them busily preparing for the Festival. Beer tents were being erected, strings of flags were tied to the railings all round the station, and a line of Portaloos appeared

Rigi Bahn train Bhe4/4 no.22 crossing Rigi Strasse near Goldau. June 2000

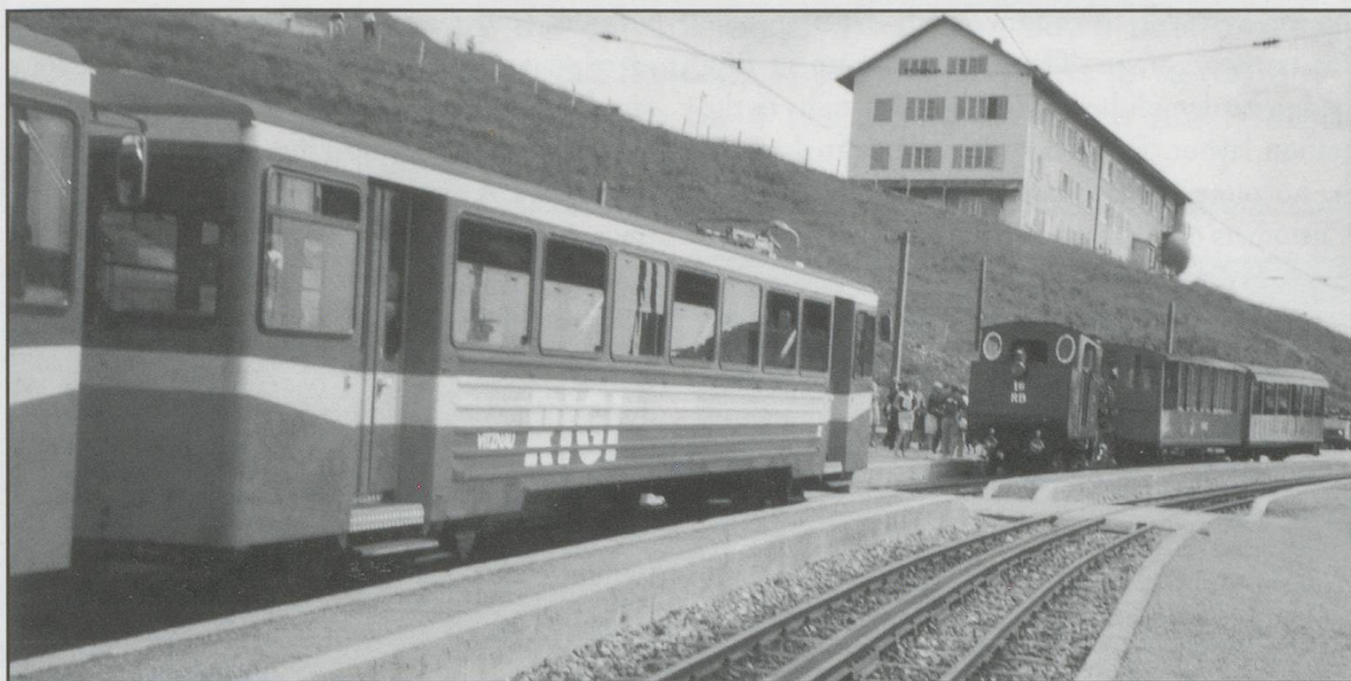
in the station yard. Further up the lane a large marquee had been put up, to house a dinner for invited guests the following evening. Next morning, we bought a book on the line from the RigiBahn Shop, and after our evening meal in the Goldau Buffet, went to join in the Celebrations which were then in full swing despite the drizzle. The steam engine, No. 17, was shunting its two replica coaches into the carriage shed by using the traverser. It then went to the far end, coaled up from a road lorry using a conveyer belt and a man with a shovel, then backed into the shed. Inside this there was a display of historical photos, and a film of the line which included their plans for the proposed new concrete station to be built next to Goldau SBB Platform 8. Sadly, the picturesque overbridge and original approach tower will then be demolished. We feel this will result in their losing all the individuality of the area while only gaining a level site with an all-over roof. Too modern and soulless! As everyone was allowed to wander where they liked, we took the opportunity to

Photo: The Ayres



make a close inspection of No. 17 in the shed, and also of their twin blade rotary snowplough and other rail machinery in the yard, before ending our day with a welcome glass of beer from the hospitality tent.

Kulm, the mist was really wet and nasty, views of the scenery were , non-existent, and the shop was shut: so we got in the waiting VRB single car to ride down the other side of the mountain. At Freibergen, we caught up with the previous serv-



Ancient and Modern meet at the Rigi Kulm. 30/6/2000

Photo: Alan Pike

There had been special steam trips up the Rigi during the day, but as we were elsewhere at the time, we planned a morning ride two days later for our last day in Switzerland. It is now possible to ride up to the top from Goldau and down the other side to Vitznau all on the one ticket. However, on waking up to rain, and with the mountains all hidden from view by clouds, we decided to defer the trip until the afternoon and to go to Luzern instead. After lunch we returned to Goldau to take up our original morning programme in the hope that the weather would have improved by this time.

The rain had indeed stopped and visibility was better than in the morning, with just a light mist. Our lady driver had to halt at the Goldau A4 request stop because works train No. 7 was just ahead of us. We followed this to Krabel, where the open truck behind the motor coach derailed while crossing the facing point onto the siding.

This led, surprisingly, to only a ten minute delay while the workmen got it back on the track. (In England, this would have led to cancellation of the entire journey! When we reached Rigi

ice, and all the passengers transferred to our train, leaving the empty one in the siding. We did not find out the reason for this manoeuvre, but we then saw steam "special" No. 16 pushing two full coaches up the hill. We were lucky to be able to photograph the loco taking water before we went on to Vitznau where the shop was open for us to buy 20 postcards of the line.

We then visited the VRB Depot, and had time for a coffee in the nearby cafe before the paddle steamer, the "Stadt Luzern" arrived to take us across the lake on the 70 minute journey to Luzern. In common with most of the passengers, we were mesmerised by the movement of the paddles, but also took time to look out of the windows to, appreciate the scenery in this most peaceful corner of Switzerland. In spite of the poor weather on this particular day, we had a great time riding on the Rigibahnen and joining in the celebrations. It was very much a local affair, although we are sure lots of SRS members would have attended, had they been made aware of the event.