

The letters pages

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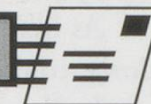
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From: Giles Baker - Lichfield

Rail Fares - London-Switzerland

Further to Martin Rices' Letter re: Rail Fares from London to Switzerland. I checked with Trains Europe, a specialist travel agent in Station Approach March, Cambs. which operates a postal/telephone booking service. The cheapest fare to Basel is now even lower than quoted in my article as it is only £100. The conditions are not too onerous, you need a Saturday away and it is quota controlled. There are three other fares if this quota is sold.

I do not know why the websites and Switzerland Tourism should quote more as this fare is also available from the small number of British train operating company outlets selling the full range of continental tickets.

One problem I did experience is that this fare is set by SNCF. Although the computer would quote the fare to me in 1998 it would not actually issue a ticket with a fare set by SNCF to a station outside France. If you run into this difficulty, book to Mulhouse. These agents will also sell you a separate Mulhouse to Basel ticket.

From: Tim Cadisch - Sherbourne

re: Ian Dodd - Dampfbahn Furka-Bergstrecke no. 9

Dampfbahn Furka-Bergstrecke locomotive "Gletschhorn" was initially allocated number 2 but this was subsequently altered to number 9 as the component parts corresponded more to FO 9. Numbers 2 and 9 are therefore the same locomotive.

Two Type HG4/4 ex. Vietnam locomotives 40-304 and 40-308 are in storage at Altdorf. No restoration work is currently being undertaken due to available funds being prioritised elsewhere. Ex FO 4 is currently undergoing general revision including the fitting of new rack and pinion driving gear. This will be the next important addition to the locomotive fleet on the Furka.

The reason for the emergency service mentioned by your correspondent was that number 9 suffered a broken crank pin to the pinion drive gear leading to severe damage. Pipework was fractured causing a total loss of water from both tanks. The crew had to drop the fire as an emergency measure. The locomotive then remained out of service for the rest of the season.

From: Barbara Jessop - Castle Caereinion

Re: Book Research

I hope that society members may be able to help me with some research for a book. I am Swiss myself and have been living in Wales for the last couple of years. Having spoken to some Swiss in Wales, I found many interesting stories, which gave me an idea for a book.

I am looking for names and stories of Swiss people who made a name for themselves in Great Britain or in connection with Great Britain. It could be some historical figure or a contemporary of ours. Somebody who made an impact all over Britain or just somebody special who made a difference on a more local level being it for their eccentricity or their dedication to a certain cause. I would appreciate any help, even if it is just hear say. I am collecting as much information as I can before hopefully writing a book about Swiss people in Great Britain.

You can either contact me by e-mail Barbara@jessop.org.uk or write to the editor at the usual address.

From: Roger Funnell - Hastings

Swiss vs the Rest

The present chaos on British Railways was inevitable. When privatisation was mooted I pointed out to one politician that the proposals had been found wanting before and drew attention to the amalgamations of 1923. The politician was (a) unaware of what I was talking about, (b) said times had changed and (c) they did not know what they were doing in 1923.

As has been pointed out before, Nationalisation was allegedly necessary because the railways were run down, conveniently forgetting the effects of the Second World War.

I cannot see why the Swiss want to change something which works well. Their half price cards - usable at all times unlike those in this country - encourage train use. Add to that the fact that sensible length trains are run with, almost always, room to sit down and they are kept clean as well as being far more comfortable than what passes for rolling stock south of the Thames and you have all the ingredients for a popular service. Moreover, connections with other forms of transport are efficient.

Over the last 16 years or so visiting Switzerland (with a caravan, its cheaper) I have only encountered two occasions when a train has not turned up more or less on time. On both occasions it was the Thunnersee from Berlin, and on both occasions a twelve coach train was very quickly produced to take its place on the run from Bern to Interlaken. BR and its successors would effectively say "hard luck - you will have to wait for the next scheduled service" and might even add "there is a staff shortage".

This correspondence is now closed.

From - Geoffrey Kichenside - Bovey Tracey

Schnaaggi - Schaaggi, a record?

The photograph of the Schnaaggi - Schaaggi in the June issue recalled my own trip on this train in the mid 1960s. Then the older carriages were painted cream and were adorned with scenes of animals and people from a bygone age painted on panels fixed to the body sides just below the windows, almost in the style of nursery illustrations. The accompanying illustration shows some samples of this livery, which I have never seen on any other coaching stock. Do these panels still exist I wonder?. The leading coach on George Hoekstra's photograph appears to be one of those so ornately decorated nearly 40 years ago but now is plainly liveried in a red-brown.

At the same time a 7" EP record was issued under the Helvetia label, no. H592, entitled " Mit em Schnaaggi - Schaaggi - Bähnli ", a gallop played Max Weilenmann on the Langnauer-orgeli, with music and steam train records.

Two views of the Schnaaggi-Schaaggi train in September 1963. The whole train and a close up of the coach and body sides. Photo: G.Kichenside



From: Eric Reeves - St Albans

Where are they now?

I wonder if any member can tell me the current locations of SPB 17 and WAB 55. The background to this request is that for the last 20 summers I have spent a fortnight or so in Wengen and quite early on developed a keen interest in the WAB/SPB He2/2s. This arose from my finding that there was a morning He2/2 working (usually 61 - down the old line to Lauterbrunnen - to my delight I found that the front coach was always one of the ancient B32-38 batch where you were locked in before departure. However these had end windows and you could watch the antics of the loco as it felt its way down the 1 in 4. This working continued for a few years but ceased about the time of the advent of the BDhe4/8s. I do not think that passenger trains used the old line (at least during the Summer) until 1997 when there were a number of "nostalgia" trips worked by 55.

It appears that there had not been any permanent transfer of locos between the two lines since about 1970 but in 1990 WAB 62 went to the SPB, followed by 61 in 1993 and 63 in 1997 - all have retained their WAB numbers and green livery. Meanwhile in 1993 SPB 15 came back to the WAB and shunted Lauterbrunnen yard for some years until in 1997 it got its old number back (55), acquired a smart black livery and worked the "nostalgia" trips - after which it left (destination unknown to me).

Naming of the SPB He2/2s started in 1994 but was not completed until 1997. The 1998 annual free Jungfrau Magazine contained an article which stated that all 11 SPB locos were now named, four after communities and seven after flowers. All 11. There should be 12. Those named are easily identified - communities 11-14, flowers 16, 18-20 and 61-63. This leaves 17 which still appeared in the 1997 Platform 5 Handbook as in stock but unnamed. I realised that I had not seen it for a considerable time. For four summers I have tried to establish if it is still on the SPB (or on the WAB) - I am pretty certain not the latter. It could be tucked away in Wilderswil works or even in the Zweilütschinen works of BOB. Does anyone know where it is ?

From: Hywel Jones - Cyberspace.

Re: Klosters in Winter - an update

I was most interested in the article by Geoff Turner " Klosters in Winter". Having just returned from a railway holiday organised by the Hotel Stolzenfels in Davos Dorf, I thought I would update you a little.

Firstly, in his article Mr Turner mentions the fact that trains from Davos to Disentis are running late. This still appears to be the case. On two occasions, one of which was my return trip, the Glacier Express due into Landquart at 10.18 did not arrive until 10.30. This meant that the 10.28 (ex Landquart) being the Chur to Zürich train was held at the station for connections. The SBB train must have an allowance built into its running schedule since it was on time leaving Sargans. The cause of the delay seems to be the late running of the trains from Landquart to Davos. It is due to pass the train from Davos at Cavadürli at 30 minutes past the hour but it is alter than this. Consequently as the day progresses, the delays become longer - track work along the line with speed restrictions do not help either. An interesting point that readers may want to note is that to relieve pressure on the line, the RhB combine the 9.45 service train to Davos and the 9.45 Express to St Moritz together, splitting the trains in Klosters. This train has two locomotives and two drivers as far as Klosters. The Engadine express is a named train and goes from Landquart to St Moritz. It runs in summer only.

Secondly, due to the schedule the trains from Davos do not arrive in Klosters in time to make a connection with the Scuol trains. The latter train leaves at 32 minutes past the hour, whilst the Davos train does not arrive until 36 minutes past the hour. In order to overcome this, the RhB, hire a post bus which leaves Davos Platz on the hour from 9.00 until 17.00 expect for the 13.00 and arrives in Klosters at 25 minutes past the hour to connect with the Scuol train. The bus returns to Davos at 33 minutes after the hour after the arrival of the train from Scuol which arrives in Klosters at 27 minutes past the hour - the Davos train having departed at 24 minutes past the hour. My source of information told me that the cost to the RhB of this connecting bus is 250,000 Swiss Francs per year.

I trust that the above will be of some information to members.