

More ticks in the book. Part 1, Of a railway ramble along lesser lines

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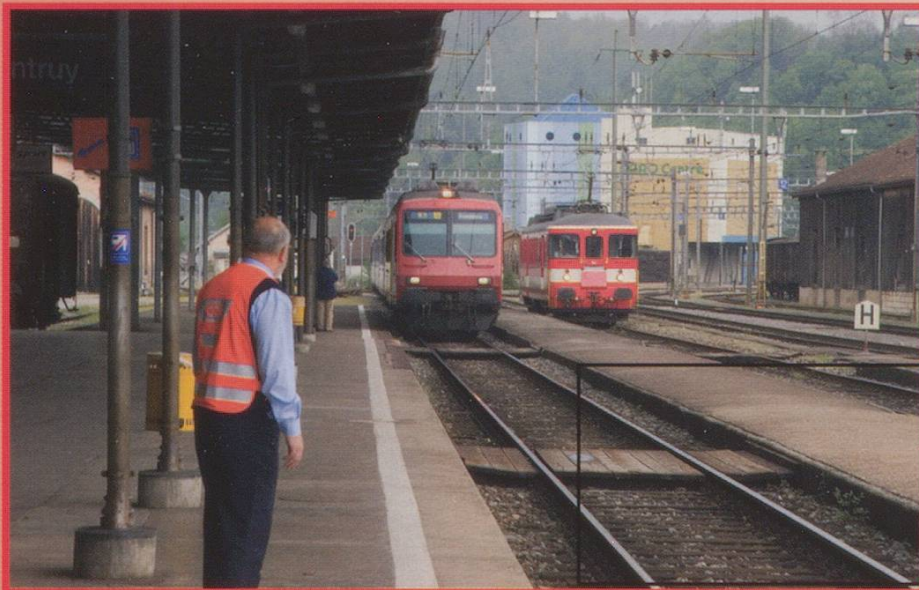
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Gerry Savine

MORE TICKETS IN THE BOOK

Part 1 of a railway ramble along lesser lines



LEFT: Porrentruy SBB. The Delémont train arrives from Boncourt whilst the CJ train waits. Passengers cross to the asphalt platform once the SBB train has gone. 05.05.05

BELOW: CJ 102 waits at Bonfol for departure back to Porrentruy. The driver was taking a break and had cycled into the village. 05.05.05

All photos: Toggenburg except where indicated

and “gorge-ous” travel experience. Arriving at Delémont on what proved to be a fête day, and after lunch in a café opposite the station, I wanted to “tick-off”

With easyJet moving its Swiss hub from Zürich to Basel perhaps fresh areas of Switzerland’s rail system are more readily opening up to our awareness. By using the early flight out from Luton and the late flight back you can add almost two extra days to your stay in Switzerland.

Travelling from Basel by an Intercity tilting train through the valleys of the north eastern Jura to Delémont the route, although not as dramatic as the alpine regions, presents a green

the standard gauge Chemins de fer du Jura (CJ) branch from Porrentruy to Bonfol. The regular SBB services from Delémont to Porrentruy and Boncourt pass through some quite spectacular Jura countryside, utilise two 2,000m-plus tunnels and past views of the River Doubs at St-Ursanne. This ancient village, founded by an Irish Monk, could be worth a stop off from the train. At Porrentruy a red-and-white single car unit was waiting for the trip to Bonfol with just



TOP: One of the two Hotels in Bonfol. If you look very carefully you will see a Märklin sign under the beer glass. The portakabin is also a model railway shop! 05.05.05

CENTRE: ASM, formerly BTI, unit 5031 awaits departure from Biel/Bienne. 05.05.05

LOWER: The farm B&B described by Gerry near Ins.

Photo: Gerry Savine - 05.05.05

two stops on the way. The rural line running through fields and forest was quiet because there weren't any freight movements due to the fête day. Bonfol is a small and an attractive village with a very French feel. The present service stops at the station but the track and catenary are still in place and appear to continue on to the border on the section of line shut in 1970.

Returning to Delémont, a change of train took us on to Biel/Bienne where we arrived in time for dinner at a restaurant close to the station. The final destination for the day was a farmhouse bed-and-breakfast just outside Ins and our transport there was on a modern low floor, almost tram-like metre gauge unit of the Aare Seeland mobil AG (ASm) – formerly the BTI. It sped along the unprotected roadside track for most of the trip to Ins Dorf. in a manner that would have given the HSE in the UK a fit. The farm was our base for the next three nights and cost SFr90 for two, with two bedrooms with bathroom plus breakfast. Who says Switzerland is expensive? Each morning breakfast not only produced a delightful selection of food but also stimulating and informative discussion in English with





the farmer and especially with his wife about Switzerland and Europe. Quite an eye opener!

Ins is an attractive and pleasant village with regular rail services from its main station to all points of the compass. Trains from Fribourg, on what was the GFM standard gauge line (it is now under the Transports publics fribourgeois [tpf] banner) now extend their trips through Ins to Neuchâtel. A coach from the Martigny-Orsières line, with St. Bernard dogs emblazoned on the sides, seemed to have strayed into the middle of one of the units. From Ins to Murten the tpf runs over flat land near the northern end of Lac de Morat/Murtensee but this cannot be seen due to woods. From Murten the line twists backwards and forwards as it climbs steeply up to its destination at Fribourg.

The intention had been to stop off and explore Fribourg which I had only had time for a short visit last year but, due to rain, we changed trains and travelled down the SBB main line to Romont. The station café at Romont has quite a unique atmosphere; it was like travelling back in time to a French café some thirty or forty years ago. After refreshments I moved on once more on the standard gauge tpf route to Bulle. I had now "ticked-off" all the standard gauge routes of the tpf (GFM).

Bulle is the exchange with the tpf metre gauge lines either to Montbovon on the MOB

OPPOSITE PAGE:

TOP: A trn unit arrives at Ins with a service to Fribourg. Since its extension to Neuchâtel it has been operated jointly between trn and TPF, which in turn was formerly GFM. 06.05.05

CENTRE: tpf, formerly GFM, single unit 171 waits at Romont on the infrequent service to Bulle. Access to the asphalt platform is across the line, just like Porrentruy. 06.05.05

LOWER: SBB Cargo Am 843 087-8 shunts at Romont. These locomotives have become a common sight all over Switzerland. 06.05.05

THIS PAGE:

TOP: tpf, ex GFM, 171 waits departure at Bulle. 06.05.05

CENTRE: tpf, but still in GFM livery, 124 reverses at Châtel-St-Denis. 06.05.05

LOWER: VMCV Van Hool trolleybus 4 stops just outside Vevey SBB. 06.05.05

or back to the SBB mainline at Palézieux. The tpf works are located here and these, plus the surrounding sidings, offer an interesting mix of railway stock. Having visited the town in winter, autumn and now late spring I have developed a fondness for this working Swiss community. Following lunch it was on to Palézieux then doubling back to Châtel-St-Denis on a visually unexciting journey.

With a Swiss Pass the transfer to a bus for a ride down from Chatel-St-Denis to Vevey was no problem, although after a previous winding downhill ride on a bendy-bus at quite hair-raising speeds it was with a little trepidation I boarded the vehicle. With an unexpected change of bus part of the way down the ride to Vevey was a little more sedate.

So, except for a run on the short branch to Broc Fabriqué and the Nestlé/Callier chocolate factory, the metre gauge lines of the old GFM were now another "tick in the book".





TOP: Le Train des Vignes leaves Vevey for Puidoux. It's a very pretty ride through the vineyards. 06.05.05
CENTRE: A view of Vevey station showing both Le Train des Vignes and an MOB train for Blonay.

Photo: Gerry Savine - 05.05.05

LOWER: A tpf unit crosses the Neuchâtel service we are on at Murten as we head back to Ins. 06.05.05

The interesting town of Vevey on Lac Léman appeared to be a bit scruffy in places. With a return to the station the bright yellow train of the Chemin de fer Vervey-Chexbres (VCh) line waited for the journey up to Puidoux-Chexbres. This trip gives excellent views over Lac Léman to the French Alps as it rises steeply through the vineyards to its destination. After a wait, with the chance to see a variety of trains passing through the station, we boarded a SBB local service to Payerne that left the mainline at Palézieux and wound its way downhill through wooded countryside into the flat lands of Switzerland between the mountains of the Freiburger Alps and the Jura. With another change at Payerne the route continued on to Murten through agricultural country with small communities along the way. With good connections on to the TPF at Murten the day was completed with the line back to Ins. By seeking-out these less travelled lines there were yet more "ticks in the book".

Editors note. We leave Gerry back at his B & B in Ins and will continue his journey in another issue..

