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INTERNATIONAL

Cisalpino has taken on the operation of all (standard gauge) daytime trains between Switzerland and Italy. From December 2005, Simplon line services to and from Milan are worked by Re484 014 – 018 hired

from SBB Cargo.

Fret SNCF (4)37001 and (4)37004, equipped for operation in Switzerland, were trialled over SBB tracks in December, in advance of the class's introduction on freights between Alsace and Basel Rbf, replacing the BB 20200 class of 1969.

SBB CFF FFS

The first Doppelstock Treibwagen (DTZ) set for the Zürich S-Bahn, RABe 514 003 was displayed to the public on 2nd December at Zürich Hbf. The first sets are due to enter service on line S14 from May 2006.

Re4/4^{II} 11101 has moved to Basel for ECS workings.

RABe 521 'Flirt' units went into service on the Basel S-Bahn in December 2005 following successful trials of up to four units in multiple in early December between Solothurn and Grenchen Sud.

The name 'Romont' has been restored to Ae6/6 11485, as a trial of special fixings which should prevent theft.

SBB Cargo is intending to radically reduce wagonload depots from May 2006 as part of a restructuring plan intended to make the service break even in 2007. Depots will be reduced from 510 to 323, leading to concerns about increased lorry movements within Cantons Jura and Thurgau.

Heavy snowfall (80cm) south of the Alps between 26th and 28th January severely disrupted services in South Ticino and Northern Italy. The worst disruption was a level crossing collision involving Railion 185 121 and a stuck car in Lugano. On 28th, Gotthard Line services were terminated from the north at Bellinzona, with local connections provided southwards.

SBB's BENEDIKT BAILS-OUT

- Swiss Federal Railways boss takes fast track to retirement.

Benedikt Weibel is leaving after more than 13 years in the driver's seat as the Chief Executive of Swiss Federal Railways (SBB). Herr Weibel, joined the Swiss Federal Railways in 1978 and became its head in 1993.

Herr Weibel, aged 59, is set to leave at the end of 2006 and take early retirement having, as he wanted, chosen the moment of his departure himself. Weibel had a big hand in shaping railway reform in Switzerland and led the transformation of the SBB from a federally controlled agency into a shareholding company owned by the state. Having overseen this, the railways' biggest shake-up in modern times, he aims to sign a renewed collective contract with the Unions before leaving.

Herr Weibel also steered the railways through its most ambitious revamp ever; Rail 2000. As readers will be aware, Rail 2000 - a forward-looking railway project rolled out in December 2004, cut journey times on major routes, plus substantially increasing the number of trains and connections on the national network. However, the overhaul was not without its problems. More delays and cancelled trains were soon being reported, and there were mutterings about whether the SBB had been too ambitious.

The darkest moment came on Wednesday June 22nd 2005 when the entire network collapsed, leaving hundreds of thousands of travellers stranded for hours. It was the worst blackout in the history of the SBB and Weibel had the unenviable task of apologising for what media commentators described as a national trauma, although survived calls for his head.

According to board chairman Thierry Lalive d'Epina "The position of the SBB among the population, its employees and in the eyes of the politicians, and in Switzerland as a whole is superb." It will be difficult to find someone of the same calibre to replace Benedikt Weibel.

This article is based on a *swissinfo* article dated 24/2/06 and was edited by Hugh Edgley

Further snowfall on 5th March north of the Alps caused delays of between 10 and 20 minutes.

SBB CFF FFS

bls

6 more Re4/4^{II}s, 11102 – 11107, were transferred to the BLS in December 2005. These have been numbered Re420 508-12 / 507 in order, grouping the five prototype engines together at the end of the BLS series. Of the newly acquired engines, 11103 went into Bellinzona Works for a Christmas overhaul and repaint, leaving Re 420 512 (ex 11106) as a BLS branded engine in 'Swiss Express' livery. The new acquisitions will be used with 5 vehicle Pendelzug sets (formed of BLS EW I intermediate coaches with an ex-SBB Dt) on Interlaken – Zweisimmen, Spiez – Reichenbach, Goppenstein – Brig and Kerzers – Lyss – Büren an der Aare services

The NINA and NPZ units released by the Pendelzug sets will be moved to the overloaded Bern S-Bahn routes. 10 further 'Jumbo' six axle centre cars and 13 middle sections have been ordered from Bombardier Villeneuve to lengthen more NPZ and NINA units respectively.

The Up (northbound) Starter Signal at Frutigen is a circular black disc with a light at each quarter hour position, presumably installed as part of the Lötschberg Base Tunnel project.

Freight workings over the Lötschberg are mainly double-headed with Re4/4 or class 486, either in old or new versions of the BLS livery.

On the Bern to Thun section work continues between Wankdorf and Gümligen including cutting-side reinforcement, soundproofing, track improvements and signalling work.

SBB CFF FFS

SÜDOSTBAHN

Following many years of discussions, the peculiarities of shared ownership on the former Bodensee Toggenburg lines have been addressed. From 1st January, St Gallen became a purely SBB managed station, while SOB took on management of Lichtensteig, Wattwil and Ebnet-Kappel stations together with the former SBB lines between those stations.

On 13th January the evening 'Gipfeli Express' from Zürich Altstetten to Einsiedeln was exceptionally worked by SBB Cargo Re 482 016.



The last De 586 in RM service, 357, has been withdrawn.

Three coach Pendelzug set BDe576 250 / B 551 / ABt 991, last used by the OeBB and finally stored at Hüswil, is now privately preserved at Zell.

THURBO

RABe 526.7 GTW 2/6 units are now working into Germany over the Singen – Schaffhausen line. The first 4 car 'Flirt' unit for the Konstanz – Singen service was delivered on 23rd January; despite carrying a THURBO number (526 65xx series) the units are painted in SBB livery.

Die Zentralbahn.

A halt opened at Ewil Maxon between Sarnen and Sachseln on 11th December.

All 10 ABe130 EMU's are now in service, with three based at Meringen and seven at Luzern.

The road/rail bridge on the former LSE route to Engelberg, washed away in the August 2005 floods, was back in service in early March.



trogenerbahn 

The four 'Appenzell' lines should have merged on 1st January under the title 'Appenzeller Bahnen', although the companies' websites show no sign of this amalgamation! This change will facilitate the desire to establish an S-Bahn service between Trogen (TB) and Teufen (AB), and money has been allocated to investigate the replacement of the remaining AB rack section between St Gallen and Riethüsli by a non-rack fitted alignment.



RBe 4/4 205 (ex SBB Re 540) is out of service with a transformer failure and has been replaced by RBe 540 069 on hire.



The old Pendelzug sets have been sent away for asbestos removal and scrapping. Be4/4 3, Bt 212 / 216 went in October, with buffet TW 4, 21, 22 and 23 following in November.

AARE SEELAND MOBIL

Canton Solothurn has formally rejected a petition to close the Solothurn – Niederbipp section; instead, they are taking forward the long-standing proposal to extend the line to Oensingen to link up with IR services there, and have placed an order for three FLIRT units with Stadler for the SNB section. Two further GTW2/6 units have also been ordered for the BTI section, allowing the service to be increased to quarter-hourly.

Editor: There was a former line between Niederbipp and Oensingen but this was totally closed by 1943. Does anyone know if the alignment is still in place?

Rhätische Bahn

Altlöser loop, between Igis and Zizers, was commissioned on 18th November 2005. Its 350m length allows the short loops at the two stations to be taken out of use.

The new *Panoramawagen* have been trialled in passenger service during the winter, making a daily return journey on one of the routes out of Chur on most weekdays between the start of February and the end of April. An introductory price of SFr35 allowed the passenger to travel one way in a first class *Panoramawagen* and the other way in second class in a conventional coach. The stock is planned to enter service on the Bernina Express in the summer.

JUNGFRAUBAHNEN

WAB

BDeh4/4 104 has been re-equipped at Lauterbrunnen with Vossloh Kiepe equipment using IGBT inverters to power four AC motors from the 1500v DC traction supply, and was approved for passenger service in September 2005. Multiple working remains available with the existing trailer fleet.

BOB / WAB

On the weekend of the Lauberhorn ski race (12th to 14th January) the traffic day for the Interlaken - Wengen via Lauterbrunnen and Zweilütschinen - Grindelwald lines was extended until 02.30 on the Saturday and Sunday mornings.

NOTEPAD is compiled by Nick Freezer and includes contributions by Brian Hemming, Toggenburg, John Eve and others. Send your observations direct to Nick. NJFreezer@aol.com

TRAMS



Transports publics genevois On 11th December, a fifth tram route started in Geneva. Route 17 operates between the Gare Eaux Vives turning circle and Lancy Pont-Rouge terminus, and will be extended to Les Palettes, together with Line 15, when the link opens on 21st May.



An open day on Sunday 22nd January marked the closure of the Lausanne – Ouchy line for its conversion to a rubber-tyred metro. A 10 minute service was operated by He 298 822 and 298 823 between 10.00 and 15.40, running at capacity during the early afternoon. During the day, both Lausanne – Gare units Bhe 598 811, and 598 812, were stabled at the LG Gare platform. The last round trip, formed of Bt 5 and 1 and He 298 823, left Ouchy at 15.51, returning at 16.20, packed solid! After the service finished, the celebrants were allowed to walk the line.

The seven passenger vehicles have gone into store outside Lausanne, leaving the three locomotives to power works trains until the end of March. An offer has been received for the stock to go to a proposed rack line at Villards de Lens in France.



The last of the 23 Tram 2000 units 'stretched' with low floor centre sections entered service on 30th November. These trams operate on Lines 6 and 10 throughout the week and on Route 10 at weekends.

The first production 'Cobra' Be5/6 tram was completed by Bombardier Villeneuve on 22nd December. The series, numbered 3007 – 3074, was expected to be delivered at a rate of 2 to 3 per month from March 2006.

TIMETABLING & SCHEDULES

From 1st April, a new company, based in Bern, has been set up by SBB, SOB, BLS and VOeV (Verband öffentlicher Verkehr or L'Union des transports publics) to manage the allocation of train paths across Switzerland, replacing the traditional procedure where each company was individually responsible for allocating paths over their own network.

BERN MOBIL BERN TO RIVAL CHICAGO AS THE WINDY CITY

The Swiss capital's fleet of 100 buses will soon be switching to sewage gas - a cheaper and cleaner alternative to diesel. Construction work is underway on a SFr2.3 million pipeline to connect the Bern sewage works to the natural gas network, which will supply the city's bus depot.

The sewage will be turned into biogas, a sustainable alternative to non-renewable energy sources. It is carbon dioxide neutral and generates lower emissions of nitrogen oxides and fine particles than fossil fuels. Purified biogas is around 40% cheaper to produce than fossil fuels and much cheaper to buy.

Organic waste from one person can produce 30-35 litres of fermentation gas per day. The resulting sludge from sewage works treatment is fed into bioreactors, where it undergoes a digestion process from which biogas is produced with an average methane content of 65%.

In the past few years the Bern plant has been producing more gas than it can use due to deliveries of waste from the food industry and stiff competition from other producers, including 73 Swiss farms, to find industrial clients for their biogas. As a result a portion has had to be burnt off.

Instead of wasting fuel, the biogas is now upgraded so that it has its relative methane content increased to 96%, the same methane content as natural gas and can thus be fed into the natural gas network. The upgrading process also removes carbon dioxide and water and harmful trace components such as hydrogen sulphide.

Bernmobil, which runs tram and bus services in the capital, expects the first 32 Volvo gas-powered buses to be delivered in May 2006. As the rest of the fleet becomes obsolete, gas-powered buses will replace them.

Basel, Geneva, Lucerne and Lausanne all have gas-run buses, but so far only Lucerne uses biogas from a sewage plant. Bern expects to more than double the performance of the central Swiss plant, with a predicted annual production of 13 billion kilowatt hours.

The Swiss government is keen to encourage the use of gas rather than diesel to combat increasing concerns over traffic pollution. From 2007, natural gas will no longer be subject to government fuel taxes, while petrol and diesel taxes will increase.

"The amount of nitrogen emitted into the atmosphere from the new gas-powered fleet will be reduced from the current annual level of 75 tonnes to 34 tonnes," Beat Ammann, Bern sewage plant director. Gas-powered buses have other advantages over diesel; they are quieter and their fuel tanks are more resistant to damage. "If the gas should escape, it simply dissipates, whereas spilled diesel tends to pool on the ground and present a further fire hazard," stated Jean-Marc Hensch, director of the Swiss Gas Industry Association.

Biogas production is clearly a growth industry, but it may take a long time before it can supply enough fuel to run 1% of Swiss buses and cars on biogas, as part of the 10% target to be powered by natural gas.



Based on an article from Swiss Info adapted by Hugh Edgley.

The photo is ©bernmobil and shows a Volvo B7RLE articulated bus of the kind that will soon be delivered in May 2006 and powered by sewage gas



HUPAC SHIFTS MORE THAN HALF A MILLION TRUCKS OVER TO RAIL

The Swiss company Hupac Ltd, Europe's leading operator of transalpine combined freight transport, had an excellent year 2005. The opening of the expanded terminal at Busto Arsizio-Gallarate, and the new production model of integrated rail traction made significant contributions to intermodal traffic growth and the road to rail modal shift.

DOUBLE-DIGIT GROWTH IN UNACCOMPANIED COMBINED TRANSPORT

Following a good year in 2004, 2005 was even more successful: Hupac's traffic levels rose last year by 15.9% to 519,160 consignments. In its core business Shuttle Net (unaccompanied combined transport) the combined transport operator achieved record growth of 17.2%. With an increase of 13.3%, transalpine traffic between Italy, or Ticino, and northern Europe showed significantly higher growth than in the previous year. "After a restrained start in the first half, demand in the second half of the year grew strongly", explained Bernhard Kunz, Director General of the Hupac Group. "The additional traffic, including new train services, could be handled at the new Busto Arsizio-Gallarate terminal, (North-East of Milan) which opened in September. This shows once again that for a sustained shift in transport mode, sufficient transshipment capacity is of decisive importance. There is a need for increased handling capabilities both north and south of the Alps."

The supplementary service Rolling Highway, which forms 5% of Hupac's traffic volume, showed a reduction in traffic of 6.6% in 2005. The reason for this is the low track profile on the Gotthard stretch that limits the transit of trucks to those with a corner height not exceeding 3.80 metres. "Using special wagons, we can carry trucks of up to 4 m corner height (normal European vehicle height) between Basel and Lugano", says Bernhard Kunz. "However, these extra low-slung wagons are only approved for use in Switzerland, they can not be used for the Freiburg-Lugano and Singen-Milano services which cross into Italy and Germany. This underlines the need for a harmonised type approval procedure in Europe."

INDEPENDENCE AS A STRENGTH

Hupac is working consistently to liberalise rail transport in Europe. Hupac Ltd, with headquarters in Chiasso, Switzerland, was founded in 1967. It is a member of the International Union of Combined Road-Rail Transport Companies (UIRR) as per Kombiverkehr (Germany), Cemat (Italy) etc. It is 72% owned by logistics and transport enterprises, and 28% by railway companies. Thanks to this capital structure, the organisation can act independently in the interests of its customers in the liberalised marketplace.

INTEGRATED TRACTION

The positive traffic trend in the last year is also due to the successful implementation of integrated traction. This innovative production model improves the quality and efficiency of train transport and helps to better exploit the development potential of intermodal transport. In 2004, Hupac launched an international call for tenders for the traction of their trains, thus being one of the first operators benefiting from the opportunities of rail reform. As of 2005, all Hupac's transalpine trains run across frontiers from the source to the destination with integrated end-to-end responsibility for performance. Hupac's rail partners; SBB Cargo, Stinnes Intermodal (DB AG Railion), Trenitalia (FS), Ferrovie Nord Cargo (FNM) and Rail4Chem, were able to reduce the number of interfaces and increase

productivity. "This production system amounts to an epoch-making innovation in railway operations," emphasised Bernhard Kunz. "SBB Cargo took a pioneering role, as the only railway company in Alpine transit with everything under its own control. The first improvements were in punctuality, though we have not yet achieved our quality goal of 90% punctuality."



INVESTMENTS FOR THE FUTURE

Over the last year, Hupac has expanded its wagon fleet by 14.2% to 4,019 wagon modules. "We are investing year-on-year to acquire new rolling stock," explained Peter Hafner, the Swiss group's head of finance. "In 2005, Hupac ordered 500 wagon modules to a value of around CHF 45 million. The wagons were developed in close cooperation with the wagon manufacturer and meet the ever-changing customer and market requirements." The new V pocket wagons are designed for Mega trailers with an internal height of up to 3m. Because of the low-slung loading surface, high cube swap bodies and piggyback Mega trailers can be run on rail routes with limited loading profile heights.



NEW SERVICES

During 2005, Hupac introduced many new routes including; Frankfurt-am-Main-Busto, Genk (Belgium)-Busto, Zeebrugge-Oleggio (near Busto), Zeebrugge-Segrate (Milan), domestic Swiss service Basel/Aarau-Chiasso/Stabio, as well as the connection to Padua via Busto (Busto acts as a gateway to FS Italian domestic intermodal services). On the Rotterdam-Novara (Milan) and Taulov (Danish hub for Scandinavian services) -Busto services, train frequency was increased to match demand.

*Based on Hupac press release, Chiasso, 19th Jan. 2006 and edited by Hugh Edgley.
Photos©Hupac*

bls

Goppenstein, Hohtenn, Ausserberg, Eggerberg, Lalden and arriving at Brig 08.24. From Brig, trains will leave hourly from 05.38, making the same stops and arriving at Spiez at 06.47. Three trains each in both morning and evening peaks will run through to Bern. Good connections are assured at both Brig and Spiez. In the long run, the future of the summit service will depend both on patronage and the willingness of Kanton Bern, to pay for the service. Use it or lose it...

(Hot off the press from GMH).

REVIEWS REVIEWS REVIEWS

GELB FAHREN – 100 JAHRE POSTAUTO

Authors: Marc Valance and Michael T. Ganz.

Published by WERD Verlag A.G., Zürich. Language: German. 176 pages, over 180 photographs, all (except for the historical ones) are in full colour. Format 8½ x 11 inches, hardback. ISBN 3-85932-498-5. Price: SFr.69 or €46.

Right in time for the 100-year celebrations of postal coach transport in Switzerland, WERD Verlag has come out with a book about the typical Swiss PostAutos. More than half of the book consists of pictorial impressions of five typical routes, which together give an excellent impression of the huge variety in everyday postal coach operation. They are: Brig - Saas Fe, a mountain valley route; Delemont - Montsevelier, a school run; Zürich - Muri, a suburban run; Susten - Furka - Grimsel, a typical tourist route and Chur - Bellinzona, a long-distance route. I am sure many of you have travelled on at least one, or maybe more, of these routes and will fondly recognise many of the locations. All of the photographs in this section were taken by Herbert Steiner, a photographer from Interlaken, who works mainly in tourism promotion. Reproduction of all photographs is in a pleasing satin half-gloss. Many are printed full page, or even as a double-page spread. Even someone who does not have any knowledge of German at all, can fully enjoy this part of the book. There is no text at all in this section, just an indication of the location.

The other part of the book is written by the two authors, who are both freelance journalists and writers working in Zürich. History, development and everyday life are covered in four sections: "Enterprise PostAuto" - the development of the biggest player in Swiss Public Transport; "From coach-and-horses to postal coach" - 100 years of history; "Brakes, tyres and motors" - a postal coach consists of many parts, all of which have to be maintained in winter as well as in summer; "The yellow *ta-tue-ta-too*" - stories of the people who make it all work, the drivers and others involved in the postal coaches. The photographs in these sections are from other sources, mostly from the archives of the Museum of Communication in Bern and from the files of PostAuto Schweiz AG themselves. It is clear, that at least a working knowledge of German is needed to appreciate these sections. I keep saying this - learn German, as you will enjoy Switzerland so much more too!