

# Sidetracks... a miscellany of items

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● Although many SRS members are interested in steam navigation on the lakes of Switzerland some may not have realised that *ds Concordia*, the only working steam ship on Lago Di Como, has been undergoing repairs at Tavernola. At the time of writing it was hoped that the *Concordia* should be back in service from May 25th to October 5th operating a Como to Colico round trip on Thursdays and Sundays. There are a number of motor vessels working on Lago Di Como including the large ships *Orione*, *Volta*, *Manzoni* and *Milano*. For more information on the 2008 schedules and the *Concordia* log onto [www.navigazioneelaghi.it](http://www.navigazioneelaghi.it). In addition to the *ds Concordia* there is another steam ship on the lake, the *ds Patria*, but unfortunately this vessel has been out of service for some 18 years. Efforts are being made to bring the ship back into service and the group working on this project have recently been in discussions with the SGV at Luzern and with the operators of the restored *ds Hohentwiel* on Lake Constance.

● The SBB workshop at Biel / Bienne employs 150 people. The SBB had entered into a joint venture with Alstom to create a new company that would maintain and repair shunters, service vehicles and tank wagons. However, Alstom have withdrawn from this plan, as they do not see enough potential business to make it viable. SBB will continue with the workshop for now, while they examine other options. *From the SBB Cargo magazine.*

● In 2007 the Swiss intermodal traffic operator Hupac transported some 690,000 road consignments on its trans-alpine routes which represented an increase in transport volume of 12.6%. *From a Hupac press release.*

In contrast to the good news from Hupac losses of SFr190m have been reported by SBB Cargo, although the company carried 12.3 billion net tonne km of traffic in 2007. This poor financial performance has

resulted in the company looking to cut 400 jobs from its 4,400 workforce. The redundancies are planned at Basel, Fribourg and Bellinzona along with a further 200 staff being requested to move their job location. These plans had led to a lengthy strike of SBB workers at Bellinzona – a very un-Swiss action.

● The website [www.swisstrains.ch](http://www.swisstrains.ch) is well worth a visit as it shows in real time the actual positions of all trains that are operating on the Swiss network. By clicking-on each symbol it brings up the service and destination of the individual movement. Fascinating – and a great time waster! Another time wasting website is [www.map.search.ch](http://www.map.search.ch) which gives you close-up views from space of the whole of Switzerland. The detail is so good that you can see all the points at most railway stations – no need to buy track plans any more.

● It would seem that the plan for the world's deepest railway station "Porta Alpina" (as reported in a previous Swiss Express) has been shelved due to its high cost, linked with the realisation that it would be little used. SBB was not too enamoured with the idea either.

● We have several articles in this issue about services operated by the TPC. There is an organisation called l'Association ferroviaire du BVB Promotion that produces a splendid calendar each year with great images, both modern and from a few decades ago, of railways in the TPC group. This is available at some manned stations in the area served by the TPC. The publishers can be contacted on [bvb-promotion.ch](http://bvb-promotion.ch) or at CP 221, 1880 Bex, Switzerland.

● The Rhätische Bahn is awaiting a decision from UNESCO as to whether it will succeed in its bid for sections of its infrastructure to become World Heritage Sites. There is a lot of information about this on a dedicated section of the RhB website [www.rhb-unesco.ch](http://www.rhb-unesco.ch).

Members have asked where they can obtain the Swiss Kursbuch in the UK. It is available from:- European Rail Timetables, 39, Kilton Glade, Worksop,

Nottinghamshire, S81 0PX.

Tel: 01909 485855.

Email: ghertmpp@hotmail.com

Price: £17.70 without buses or £22.70 with.

## MEASURING THE TRACKS Ernst Leutwiler



In November 2005 the SBB took delivery of a new measuring car from Mer Mec Monopoli in Italy. It is numbered Xtmass 99 85 9 160 001-5. This machine is 23.9 metres long, weighs 64 tonnes, and has two 6-cylinder Cummins diesel engines of 336kw, powering two of its four axles. It can operate at 120 kph, and be towed at 160 kph, while measuring the track. This operation is carried out over the whole SBB network twice a year, in spring and autumn. It is also hired-out by other standard gauge railways in Switzerland. Fully fuelled, it can operate for 2000 kms before needing to return to base.

With modern long welded rail, concrete sleepers, and better ballast, track can expect to have a longer life, and so regular checking is necessary to ensure that it conforms to the desired standards. When in operation, this machine has a driver and two technicians on board. It measures - and records on video - contact wire geometry, rail surroundings, gauge, rail geometry, vegetation, rail section, and eddy current inspection. It also measures the rail surface and so identifies any gauge corner cracks. The results from this machine are then used to identify any work that needs to be carried out on the track.

This is probably the cleanest and best maintained vehicle of its type anywhere. It was photographed at Linthal in May 2007. In addition to this splendid piece of equipment SBB also took delivery of an "Eurail-Scout" measuring car at the end of 2007.