

Erstfeld 2009

Autor(en): **Jesson, John**

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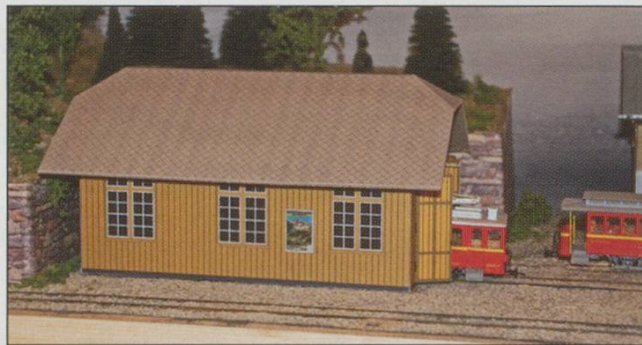
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SERNFTAL STATION MODEL

Ron Smith

The Sernftalbahn Association, which have recently opened a museum at Elm in Canton Glarus, have produced a card kit of Elm station and its adjacent engine (or more properly, railcar) shed in HO scale. It is a good kit of a small Bahnhof for any layout, and is easy to put together, with a picture guide to help assembly. The pair of buildings cost £15 (including post and packing) and are available by sending a sterling cheque payable on a UK Bank to: Ron Smith, Rhus, Banff Road, Keith, Morayshire, AB55 5ET. Ernst Leutwiler will send off the kits from Switzerland. All profits from sales of these models go directly to help the Association maintain its Museum and to preserve the memory of the sadly lost roadside route.



ERSTFELD 2009

John Jesson



The walking group on the Saturday, posed on the viewing platform above the Secken viaduct.

The Society has had *Autumn Meets* before - a social get-together to split the year-long gap between AGMs. This one was different - it was in Switzerland. As with many good ideas Roger "I am never going to organise anything again" Ellis was behind it. The response was encouraging. I was roped-in to plan an agenda based on the popular Hotel Frohsinn in Erstfeld whose proprietor is both a very friendly soul and a

railway enthusiast. We organised an itinerary and crossed our fingers that the weather would be kind to us in September. Expecting some 20 members, despite the financial crisis, it ended up with 28 taking part.

The event began with dinner in the Frohsinn on Thursday 17th followed by a visit to the Erstfeld Model Railway Club, located in the SBB Depôt area. The Club had opened especially for us



A scene on the HOm layout of the Luzern club, EMBL.

and they operated both HO and HOm trains in a pretty crowded building, as most of our group were present. Friday morning started with a visit to Erstfeld Depot, where we split into three groups, each conducted around by an English-speaking driver. The historic SBB items, of which Erstfeld now has a large collection, were of most interest. We were able to board most of these and observe the marked differences between the older and newer locomotives.



One of Erstfeld's historic locos, 11402 "Uri" slumbers in the depôt.

Following this the group went on by train to Luzern and travelled between the Bahnhof and the Transport Museum by Lake Steamer, considered the most "civilised" means of transport in the circumstances. At the Verkehrshaus the Deputy Director, Henry Wydler, met us and described the recent rebuilding, which groups all the exhibits around a common circulating area. One future plan is to install an aerial transport circuit,

possibly a monorail, around the complex. Swiss-based SRS member Bryan Stone (and a museum patron) then took the party on a detailed look at some of the railway exhibits, in particular the C5/6 freight loco which, despite its comparatively small size, had been so successful on the Gotthard.

In the evening all the group met-up at the Restaurant Falken for a meal before visiting the Luzern Model Railway Club (EMBL). At least, we all eventually met up after some confusion between the downtown Hotel Falken and the similarly named restaurant in Ebikon, close to the club premises. The EMBL members made us very welcome, running trains on their HO and HOm layouts in the vast room that was converted superbly from an ex-military warehouse. It has two floors allowing a view down onto the layouts from the upper level. We travelled back to Erstfeld very impressed.



Our "genial host", Paul, explains a fact of life to some of the group.

For Saturday Roger and I had decided at the beginning that I should lead a walking tour of some of the photographic viewpoints on the Gotthard so, with the help of Paul Jans the proprietor of the Frohsinn - who knows everyone - a small bus was organised. As the numbers increased this turned into two buses - one for those happy to walk, the other for those less inclined (or able) to do this. A complex itinerary ensued. I was the guide on the walker's bus, with a professional driver, whilst Paul drove the second vehicle with Carl Waldis, who manages the "Gotthardbahn" website, as the guide. No-one knows the Gotthard and its photo locations better than Carl. Both drivers and guides had copies of both itineraries, so each knew where the other was - in theory! In practice we stuck to them pretty well.

My bus took the more energetic members to a drop-off point to start walking, then picked them up at a pre-arranged location, taking them to the next drop-off, and so on. The energetic walked from Meitschlingen to the Fellitobel, taking in the viewing point of the Secken viaduct, before being transported to Pfaffensprung and walking along the track that runs over the Autobahn to the lower Meienreuss Bridge. There, those who preferred coffee to walking and photography rode the bus up to Wassen, while the hardy remainder continued past Wassen on a path over the lower entrance of the Wattinger semi-spiral tunnel and reached the road again at Wattingen. On the other bus Paul and Carl took their passengers to locations that the casual tourist interested in the Gotthard would probably not have found. The photographers were treated to splendid views of the railway, some from unmade farm tracks, others from meadows shared with friendly cows, prior to the coffee break at Wassen.

Joining-up the buses continued through the Schöllenen gorge to the Devils Bridge, then on past Andermatt and Hospental to the Gotthard summit. This was shrouded in very wet clouds and distinctly chilly. After lunch the buses, together now, travelled down the southern ramp, took the Autobahn at Airolo then re-joined the Cantonal road to visit the Polmengo Bridge at the bottom of the Dazio Grande. Carl, with his timetable graphs for the entire Gotthard was our guide for this part and was able to tell us when to expect the passenger trains as we continued south to the Biaschina and to Giornico Vecchio, the original station for Giornico that provided a nice photographic location. The return trip to Erstfeld was made on the old road, via a stop at Airolo, travelling over the top again, avoiding the 8km northbound queue for the road tunnel.

After the evening meal, Paul closed the restaurant and bar, which became the venue for Carl to show some of his DVDs of the Gotthard, the principal one explaining the history of the building of the line. Carl had translated the soundtracks into English especially for us. In time all the DVDs will be reviewed for *Swiss Express*, and we hope to be able to supply them to members.

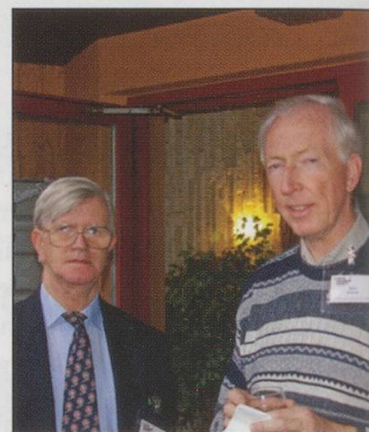
On Sunday some people went their own way, but a number of the group opted for a very early start in order to sample the Dampfbahn-Furka-Bergstrecke (DFB) between Realp and Gletsch. Bill Weber, one of the two Americans in the group, is heavily involved with the DFB and had helped to



Simon v. the cow



The final evening together. Good, healthy complexions all round.



President and Webmaster outside the Hotel Frohsinn.

organise this part of the visit. Travelling by train to Göschenen (not by bus as the SBB website had indicated) they moved on to Andermatt and Realp where, because of the early start, Bill had organised much appreciated coffee and croissants. DFB's Max Weiler showed the group around the facilities at Realp, including the locomotive shed, and then accompanied them on the steam excursion to Gletsch. Despite the forecast, the weather was perfect, as was the scenery that is recommended to all. Max was kind enough to arrange for Roger Ellis to ride in the cab of the locomotive on the descent to Gletsch, and although not a steam fan most detected a gleam in his eye. Following lunch the majority elected for the Post Bus trip over the Grimsel Pass to Meiringen and a combination of the weather and scenery again made that an unforgettable experience. The return to Erstfeld was then via the Brunig Pass and Luzern. Bill Weber Tours Inc. had arranged a super day.

After dinner on Sunday, at the end of the organised weekend where it appeared that everyone had had a good time, Roger breathed a sigh of relief! This was short-lived, because it looks as though he is going to have to do it all again – 2011 anyone?