

# A steam surprise

Autor(en): **Sargerson, Jason**

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75% SBB, 25% HUPAC capital, and offer both intermodal and conventional freight services by block trains on the main Alpine crossing routes. It will thus compete with the now successful and profitable BLS Cargo (which works with DB, and also HUPAC) and it will also market the new services which become possible as a result of the 2016 opening of the Gotthard Base Tunnel.

What remains is the serving of Swiss national clients, who are still dependent upon a dense network of sidings and stations across the country. There is still considerable internal Swiss freight traffic, along with rising imports and exports, especially to the all-important seaports like Rotterdam and Hamburg, Antwerp and Genova. This will remain the task of SBB Cargo, which has now to develop



HUPAC ES64U2-100 at Brunnen on 26th September 2006. PHOTO: Mark Barber

cost-effective ways of maintaining service levels and still being competitive in a now unregulated world. It's not yet clear how this will be done.

For SBB Cargo International, the die is now cast; and we are sure that Hans-Jürg Bertschi, the president of HUPAC and of the European UIRR, has a shrewd idea of how to make a go of it.

## A STEAM SURPRISE

Jason Sargerson

On the last Sunday in June I headed to Lausanne to sample the metre-gauge Lausanne Echallens Bercher (LEB) that runs half-hourly to Echallens, and hourly to Bercher, on its route from its Flon terminus in the city centre. Arriving at Lausanne, rather than take the new m2 metro from the main station, I walked up the very steep hill towards the St Francois church then made my way down a long flight of steps into Flon station where the LEB interchanges with both the m1 and m2 routes. Its trains start out running underground before surfacing in the middle of the main road to Yverdon. There are a lot of stops on the line, some at simple halts, resulting in a possibly tedious 39 minute total trip time. After leaving the streets of Lausanne the railway runs through fields and countryside towards Echallens.

The 23km long line, now electrified at 1500V dc, opened in 1873 as the country's first metre -gauge railway. New Stadler RBe 4/8 units were introduced into service in 2010 and are in the customary LEB green and white livery. Although this new stock is very modern, has plenty of power, and is probably very

A new RBe 4/8 waits at Echallens station on 27/6/2010. ALL PHOTOS: Jason Sargerson





*G 3/3 No 8 "Echallens" at its namesake station on 27/6/2010.*

efficient, I don't think they are as comfortable as the older designs – it seems that either the manufacturers or operators now specify harder wearing, firmer seats – whilst as a photographer, windows that do not open make life difficult. On the Sunday of my visit the new rolling stock was covering all the services with the older Re 4/8 units built in 1985 and 1991 held in reserve.

Passing through Cheseaux I was surprised and excited to see the heritage steam engine in the siding so instead of going all the way to Bercher I got off at Echallens, where the depot for the line is located, to await its arrival. Having

photographed some of the stock there, I worked out the track on which the steam working would arrive, and positioned myself to record the event on video - and of course it arrived on the opposite track! It carried a banner, which I originally thought was for a wedding celebration, but in practice was to commemorate the 100th Birthday of locomotive G3/3 No 8 "Echallens" built in 1910.

There are various walks from Echallens or Bercher that make for a good morning or afternoon trip from Lausanne and I can recommend a trip on the LEB, at least as far as Echallens.

*G 3/3 No 8 "Echallens" and an older RBe 4/8 wait at Echallens station on 27/6/2010.*

