

Sidetracks... a miscellany of items

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● Gremlins return

After a gremlin-free spell they crept back into the last magazine. On P7 a caption went missing, whilst on P23 the “local” train on the Sierre – Crans/Montana funicular takes half-an-hour, not the hour stated. Our apologies to both Gordon and George for these errors. On P46 the figures giving the speed of the MGB train which crashed were transposed. It was 56kph not 65kph. On P45 we should have noted that the work on the Engleberg Tunnel “re-commenced in 2006”. The original start date was 2001 with an estimated cost of CHF68m.

● A summer of incidents

After July’s Glacier Express derailment (see SE103, P46) the rest of the summer was not good for rail safety in Switzerland. Early in August the first scheduled train of the day into Zürich Hbf was signalled into a platform occupied by a works train, resulting in a slow-speed collision and several slight injuries. On the 24th, an unusual mishap occurred on the RhB. A rail-mounted works crane, involved in erecting a temporary bridge, required to cross a gap while a permanent bridge was rebuilt between Fideris and Küblis, fell into the hole it was bridging. Fortunately no-one was hurt but the line was closed for 72 hours and buses were drafted-in to maintain the service. On the 27th August six passengers were injured when two ASD trains collided (see item on P24). Then on the 15th September at St Maurice in the Rhône valley two SBB trains collided when the driver of an empty stock working apparently passed a signal at danger, hitting a train to St Gingolph and injuring one passenger.

● MGB crash – the outcome

The cause of the Glacier Express derailment has now been confirmed by the investigating authorities as being as described in the provisional report we carried in SE 103. There is a background

feature though. The MGB with, in summer, a high density of fast and local trains on its single line sections, has been campaigning against accumulating delays which then create havoc at crossing places. It was suggested that pressure on its staff to save odd seconds was increasing. Serious improvement to the infrastructure is needed and this needs serious investment, whilst the demand for more trains is growing. The MGB records just 345 persons known to have cancelled their Glacier Express trip after this incident. The rest of the season was, despite recession and exchange rate problems, again successful.



BRB H 2/3 No. 16 waits at the summit station.

● Presidential perambulation

SRS joint president Alan Pike took advantage of a private visit to Switzerland last April to represent the Society at the AGM of Schweizer Verband Eisenbahn Amateur (SVEA) in Lausanne, following a personal invitation from their President. Alan was back in territory he knows well, as he lived and worked in the area in the 1970s. Alan notes this area, on the shores of Le Léman is still, some 35 years on, a hotbed of varied transport interest including the innovative new m2 operation in Lausanne itself, on which the SVEA delegates had a guided tour. He compares this regional variety with the once interesting Gotthard route, where the passenger services are now dominated by EMUs of various classes

and the recession has hit transit freight traffic. On his trip to and around Switzerland he was pleased to meet several society members, unfortunately sometimes just in passing. As always Alan has supplied us with a number of photos taken on his meanderings, and we hope to bring some of these to you in the near future.

● Allegra breakdown at Filisur

At 17:45 on Saturday 7th August Allegra No. 3501, operating the Davos Bernina Express, failed above the Greifenstein tunnel blocking the Albula line. At 18:45 the 18:10 Davos Shuttle, complete with passengers, was dispatched from Filisur to offer assistance returning at 20:00 with the stranded passengers. A bus replacement service was then in operation between Filisur and Bergün, where trains were being turned, this continued until the end of service at 22:00. Two engineers arrived on the 21:00 train from Chur and proceeded to walk up the line to the stricken Allegra unit, where they were joined by the Ge 4/4 III loco that had brought the 22:00 train from Chur. This loco dragged the Allegra into Filisur station at approx 01:00 (and by the noise it made with its brakes full on) and parked it on track 4. A failed attempt was made on Sunday morning by a diesel tractor to tow it

H 2/3 Allegra No. 3501 stuck on track 4 at Filisur on Sunday morning 8th August having been dragged down at 01:00 that morning.

PHOTO: Glyn Jones



towards Chur. Further attention by engineers resulted in the Allegra moving under its own power at 14:30, just in time to clear track 4 for the arrival of a steam special from Davos to Chur.

● Clean SBB grain wagons

On July 13th Frauenfeld in Kt. Thurgau saw the opening of what was claimed by Jürgen Mues, the boss of SBB's Asset Management organisation, to be 'The most modern washing plant in Europe for cereal hopper wagons'. Built by local contractor Müller, who specialise in work for SBB that includes developing new technologies for points, switches, maintenance, etc, it is hoped that private wagon owners will also use the facility. Thurgau is an agricultural area with substantial cereal traffic, so building a plant for cleaning such wagons to a supervised standard near the point of re-loading clearly speaks for SBB's intention to compete actively in future for potential business.

● SernftalBahn Update

The SernftalBahn Association are making progress at their museum in the former StB goods shed that is now part of the bus stop and depot at Engi, Kt. Glarus. Between May and July a track bed was prepared on a strip of land by the site on which 25m of metre-gauge track donated by the RhB (Rhaetia Bahn) was laid. At Engi there is also the chassis and steel body framing of a former SernftalBahn K36 two-axle closed van. This will be placed on the track, and a dedicated team of members will rebuild the body over the next two years. Pictures of a K type van, the track, and the museum, can be found at www.sernftalbus.ch/verein.htm

● Arosa sandwiches

It would appear that the RhB are also using "locomotive sandwich" workings on the Arosa line although on a more ad-hoc basis than at Davos. This summer Ge4/4II locos on the head-end were



The traditional view from Poststrasse of a train beginning the long descent to Chur.

PHOTO: Jim Paterson

sometimes assisted by another loco slotted-in at the rear together with two extra coaches.

● New SBB hybrid locos

SBB Cargo has placed an order with Stadler for 30 Class Eem 923 hybrid locomotives that will be powered either from the electric overhead supply, or will use an on-board diesel engine where this is not present. Basically they will be similar to the new all-electric Class Ee 922, but longer and heavier. Delivery is planned for 2012/2013.

● DB ICE at St Pancras International station 19 October 2010

After the successful test run through the Channel Tunnel the previous weekend, Deutsche Bahn presented an ICE 406 in London for the first time on the 19th October.

Last weekend evacuation exercises were carried out on the ICE in the Channel Tunnel in cooperation with the infrastructure operator Eurotunnel and under the supervision of the safety authorities, thus starting an important safety process three years before service commencement. Further approval measures will be carried out in the coming months. Regular ICE services are planned for the new

timetable beginning in 2013. This will incorporate three return train journeys (outward and return) between London and Frankfurt via Cologne, Brussels and Lille. These will include connections from London to Amsterdam via Rotterdam. The journey time from London to Cologne should take less than four hours and from London to Frankfurt just over five hours. Journeys from London to Amsterdam should be possible in less than four hours.

Deutsche Bahn has ordered 15 ICE 407 high-speed trains with a top speed of 320 kph from Siemens for a total of €500 million. The first trains will be delivered in 2011, with the final trains expected to be with DB by summer 2012. Subsequently these trains will undergo authorisation tests.

Deutsche Bahn already offers ICE connections in six European countries in cooperation with European partner rail companies: Austria, Switzerland, France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Denmark. Some 80 European cities are directly linked to Germany. The 220 services (70 per cent of which involve ICE or other high speed trains) are used by over 40,000 passengers a day.

When the new timetable takes effect in December 2010 the service between

PHOTO: Peter Marriott



Brussels and Frankfurt will include a further ICE return train journey, increasing the number of outward and return journeys to four each day. In cooperation with the SNCF, direct connections from Frankfurt to Marseilles via Strasbourg, Mulhouse and Lyon are planned for December 2011.

Information supplied by: Alan Pike; Bryan Stone; Ron Smith; Michael Donovan; Michael Farr; Jim Paterson; Peter Arnold; Glyn Jones; Peter Marriott and Swiss Media Sources.

Spiez 2011 -

An update from Roger Ellis

Members will be delighted to know that due to the good offices of member Bryan Stone we now have an additional excursion on Wednesday 31st August. A few minor alterations have taken place involving the other days, but basically the programme is very similar to my original article.

Wednesday 31st August. Steam hauled trip up the Briez Rothorn on the 'Sausage Train' mentioned by Bryan in his article in this magazine. We also hope to include a Depot visit. In the evening a meal in Thun followed by a visit to the 'O' gauge BLS layout at the Thun Model Railway Club. Maximum additional cost of the 'Sausage Train' for Swiss Pass holders is CHF35.

Thursday 1st September. Our 'Tram Day' organised by Neil Wheelwright who has confirmed we can visit the Bern Tram Depot (the new Depot if it is open in time), plus in the evening the Bern Tram Museum. It may be possible to have a ride in one of the vintage trams and during the afternoon Neil is asking if we can see the RBS Depot in Worb. The 'Tram Day' gang will probably eat together in Bern.

Friday 2nd September. Guided Tour around the Lötschberg Basetunnel Emergency Centre and a trip inside the

tunnel. The BLS have advised us that the maximum number in the party will be 28. Cost CHF 20. Afterwards we can visit the Spiez Depot and Signal Box. Cost around CHF10. In the evening the Model Railway Club MEFEZ has invited us to a barbecue with 'Bratwurst' plus drinks, at Zweilutschinen with an opportunity to operate their large HO gauge layout. Cost CHF5.

Saturday 3rd September. Our 'Walking Day'. Those less able could visit the Blue Lake for a Guided Tour. Cost CHF15. For the energetic, Andreas from the BLS has suggested a walk from Blausee to Kandergrund with the possibility of an en-route barbecue, meeting back in Frutigen to walk along the new Promenade Ferro-viaire. However, several members would like to attempt the South Ramp from Hohtenn to Lauden so we may have to split the party. In the evening we are having a meal at a hotel in Interlaken with a film/slide show afterwards by Andreas' father who used to work for the BLS. Cost unknown but around CHF30/35.

Sunday 4th September. Trip to the famous Blonay-Chamby preserved railway. This involves an early start at Spiez around 08.00am so that members can make the most of the day - also travel onward to Geneva if they have return flights.

As I write this article over 30 members have expressed a wish to be in the Spiez area to come on all or some of our excursions. Hotels booked already include The Bellevue and Seegarten in Spiez and the De La Paix in Interlaken. My personal view would be that B & B would be the best option as we hope to eat together for the majority of days. It promises to be a great 5 days and I cannot thank Bryan, Neil and especially Andreas enough for all their help and to John Jesson for his advice and encouragement.