

Sidetracks... a miscellany of items

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● Gremlins – again!

Our apologies that the photo of a HUPAC loco on P15 of SE 104 was credited incorrectly to Mark Barber rather than to David Jones.

● Puzzle not solved

On P30 of SE 102 we asked if anyone could identify a loco and its location in an old B & W photo. By SE 103 we knew that the loco was an Eb3/5 but the location had eluded everyone. Our expert friends in Switzerland then took up the challenge but even they cannot positively identify where the photo was taken. Hans Wägli, who draws up those wonderful books on gradients, track layouts, distances, etc., apologized that he did not know. Other opinions were divided but favoured either Neuchâtel or Oerlikon, the latter which Hans-Karl Pfyffer remembers re-signalling in the style shown during the late 1950s. Let's leave it there.

● MOB publicity vans

More follow-up on the items in SE 102 & 103. By the summer 2009, the roof of the former Pepsi van (Gk 562) at Les Pleiades had badly sunk and it was taken to Chernex Works. The roof has been partly repaired, though it is obviously not watertight as it has been seen covered in a large polythene sheet. The other van at the top station of the CEV line from Vevey, Gk 509 BVA/AWZ remains in use there as a Ski-hire store. A limited run of models of this van was produced by Bemo for BVA when the livery was launched in May 1992, but supplies are now exhausted.

● More haste less speed at the ZB...

The rationalisation of the Zentralbahn (ZB) was a radical process, quickly removing supposedly redundant passing loops and station facilities. However, the plan to improve services with new trains and to increase frequencies on the 16km mountain section between Meiringen and Giswil was then introduced. The mountain section includes four long rack sections at 1 in 8 and 1 in 9 that result in slow passage and capacity problems. Now Brunnenflüh, above Meiringen has been constructed as a new crossing place, Käppeli (between Brünig-Hasliberg and Lungern) has been re-opened

A new centre platform with barrier was installed at Brünig-Hasliberg and inaugurated on Nov 20, to separate up and down trains.



whilst Kaiserstuhl (above Giswil) has been re-equipped. At Brünig-Hasliberg a new centre platform with barrier has been installed and was inaugurated on November 20th.

...and a new MD

On the 22nd December the Board of the ZB announced that from the 1st July 2011 Dr Renato Fasciati will become the new Managing Director of the Regional Railway that was formed by a 2005 merger between the SBB Brunigbahn and the LSE. The Engadin-born 35 y/o moves to the ZB from SBB Cargo, and a previous spell with the SSG rail catering company, taking over from Josef Langenegger who is retiring.

● The smallest part

The 13km long Waldenburgbahn (WB) Liestal from Waldenburg, is effectively a roadside tramway with a maximum gradient 1 in 29. It is the only line to have been built in Switzerland to 750 mm gauge. There have been various suggestions regarding the removal of this anomaly, now acute because new rolling stock risks being disproportionately expensive. Kanton Basel-Land (BL) has now decided neither to convert it to metre gauge or (if the gauge was converted) to extend it to Pratteln for through running of trams from Basel. The current plan is however to recondition the track and, as they fall due, to rebuild structures to metre gauge clearances hence keeping the conversion option open. Since BL has its own financial troubles this may be the end of the story for a while, however we suggest that you go and see the 750 mm WB at Liestal while you can.

● Tram news

Basel gave approval on October 27th to a proposal for 300 m of new tramline to be built in 2014. This is in fact a long awaited link to connect the Birsigal line 10 of BLT to the BVB's Basel City network at the Dorenbach viaduct by using the 'Margarethenstich' slip road. A small project in itself the new link will avoid a circuitous journey and will reduce journey times by 6 minutes. Bern had already assured 40% of the CHF13m building costs.

● Timber trains terminate

On the 7th January Austrian company Mayr-Meinhof announced that its timber processing plant at Domat-Ems outside Chur had entered bankruptcy with 130 people losing their jobs. The plant, which received block trains of timber from all over Switzerland and was the biggest integrated sawmill plant in the country, was only a few years old. It had been built with substantial local funding so there will be considerable political repercussions in the Graubünden. The closure will have an impact on rail freight throughout the country as timber cargo was brought "in the round" by from all parts, and the finished products were exported by rail. The mixed gauge section to Domat-Ems, worked as a single line for SBB freight trains, was installed on the RhB main line in Dec 1959 to give access to the Emserwerke, a large chemical plant in Domat-Ems. When the sawmill was constructed it was at a lower level so extensive works were needed to connect its (electrified) sidings to the system. However, as the RhB 11 KV ac traction current cannot be used by more modern SBB locomotives, the freight trains serving the plant had usually been worked by pairs of Class 843 diesels.

● WSB in Aarau

Another 3 km of street running disappeared on November 20th. Following the closure of the SBB (former Nationalbahn) connection from Aarau to Suhr the WSB metre gauge trains were diverted from the 'Tramstrasse' in Aarau on that date to run on new tracks laid on the old SBB/Nationalbahn alignment, connecting up in Suhr through a new underpass with the WSB line to Menziken from the 22nd. The flat crossing in Suhr of metre gauge WSB and standard gauge SBB tracks, and elaborate catenary switchgear, will disappear. WSB will take over Suhr station.



WSB line Aarau to Menziken, on the 3 km street running section just before this was replaced on 20/11/2010.

● Double track rack

A CHF9.6m project started in September 2010 will result in a 900m long section of double-track on the WAB above Wengen being available from the December 2011 timetable change. Thanks to the double track the line will be able to maintain a regular half-hourly service and long waiting times at Wengen station should also be a thing of the past.

● Xrail wins award

The Xrail alliance of SBB (Switzerland) CD Cargo (Czech) CFL Cargo (Luxembourg) DB Schenker (Germany, Netherlands and Denmark) Green Cargo (Sweden, Norway) Rail Cargo Austria (Austria, Hungary) and SNCB Logistics (Belgium) has been awarded the Swiss Logistics Award 2010 for innovation. Xrail is designed to increase international wagon load freight traffic by improving efficiency and is planned to be rolled out across Europe progressively. More details at www.sbbcargo.com and at www.xrail.eu

● Rhaetian Railways order more trains

At Samedan on the 20th December 2010 RhB's retiring Chairman Herr Erwin Rutishauser signed a CHF110m contract with Stadler for seven 6-car fixed-formation articulated train sets for the Albula line. The units will have two 1st Class and four 2nd Class coaches one of which will have a wheelchair accessible low-floor section and toilet, another will feature a family/children's area. The units will be loco-hauled hence allowing for additional coaches to be added in busy periods. They are to be delivered from 2013. The contract was signed during Herr Rutishauser's farewell trip, which included setting a new metre gauge speed record of 145 kph on the south side of the Vereina tunnel. This is Stage 3 of the RhB's renewal programme. Stage 1 was for the fifteen 3-car dual-voltage Stadler "Allegra" emus costing CHF 150m, currently being delivered for operation on the Bernina, Arosa and Davos lines. Stage 2 is for five 4-car single-voltage emus for Schiers – Rhäzüns and Chur – Thusis local services. Costing CHF 50m these will come into service in 2012. Delivery of the first Allegras has already led to withdrawal of Ge4/4 No 601, the pioneer locomotive of 1947, and the rest of the class will follow.

Information supplied by: Bryan Stone; Ron Smith; Michael Farr; Bodensee; s'Murmeli; Paul Russenberger; and Swiss Media Sources. ☒

MEMBER'S LETTER

From "Bramble" – The Doghouse, Switzerland

It was good of you to publish my notes of a Bramble Tour taken by a SRS member. We went out to the Jura, which I like, because Zürich is all streets and Bern is all arcades, very beautiful but nowhere to get comfortable - and I've heard they have Bears there! Les Brenets is pretty remote, but there's room to run around, and lunch wasn't bad. We always look for water, but there aren't the drinking fountains there used to be.

I'm often out on the train like this, because I have an all-year Swiss Transport Dog Pass, valid on trains, trams, buses, boats, wherever my person goes, and in 1st Class as befits a pedigree Irish Setter lady. I meet a lot of friends. That gives me an idea. Any time next year, when you're travelling in Switzerland, if you see me, with my person, and come up and say 'Hello Bramble' you will get a free coffee in the nearest station. Get it wrong, and people will perhaps think you're crazy.

Here's a clue: I'm always around Brienz for the last two weeks in June, when I am often near Interlaken Ost; I spend the summer near Basel; and I go once or twice to Bergün in the winter as my person seems to like it there. He also works with steam trains (wooden seats, just fancy) in the Franches-Montagnes.

I'm campaigning for bones to be sold from the Minibar, but I'm getting nowhere, only coffee and Mars Bars. Can the SRS help? Happy New Year. ☒

