

And finally... 'Here be dragons'

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number of the supporting illustrations used in this BLS guide had been reproduced from that earlier publication. To complete the author's journey over the Lötschberg summit line he continues into the Rhone valley with the descent to Brig. The booklet concludes with a section on the Lötschberg Base Tunnel, before brief mention is made of the shipping services and train maintenance facilities based at Spiez.

A book dedicated to the workings of the BLS should prove an attractive addition to any library and 'The BLS Today' title will catch the eye of many, especially when linked to the centenary celebrations to come. For me, a more concise route guide would have provided sufficient space for a better coverage of what the BLS represents today. In terms of content, details regarding the BLS operational fleet and significant freight operations were somewhat fragmented.

A map of the BLS network would have been most helpful and a bibliography, including some key Internet links, would have introduced the reader to other publications and/or web pages to browse for more detailed information and analysis. There have been many key changes on the Lötschberg route coupled with significant investment across the BLS since the start of the 21st century. The BLS has re-structured its operational sectors to better cater for business needs, provide an improved customer experience and to exploit potential growth areas, BLS Cargo being a prime example. In summary, 'The BLS Today' as a precursor to the Lötschberg centenary anniversary could have provided the reader with a good deal more to meet the expectation set by the publication title.  DCG



'Here be dragons'

s'Murmeli

I was reminded of this note that once appeared on old maps, on learning that Bm6/6 No.18511 was active in Tavannes, on the Moutier – Sonceboz secondary line through the Bernese Jura. No.18511 is one of only four remaining engines of the fourteen 106-tonne heavy-duty diesel-electrics built for the SBB by SLM with Sulzer engines between 1954 and 1961. This class was originally intended to replace the C5/6 2-10-0 'Elephant' steam engines in the Swiss strategic locomotive fleet. They have lived hardworking, unexciting lives, mainly out of sight except when turned out in emergencies, but are now very elderly. No.18505 was the last on the SBB books, recently based in Brig; two more are in private hands and used to shunt in the intermodal yards at

Aarau and Zürich. By 2009 No.18511 had been withdrawn by SBB Infrastructure, but was then refurbished for hire to track maintenance contractors. Word got round the system that she was working until November 2012 on a night-time maintenance project on this quiet line, and spent the daylight hours laying-over in Tavannes yard. There was no record that such a machine had ever been there before, so on a cold sunny morning, with the occasional snow shower making Tavannes even bleaker than this small town often appears, I rearranged my schedule to find her for Swiss Express. She looked her age, although still truly impressive, and though limited at 75kph this 60-plus loco will still pull anything on the drawbar. Long may she keep working. 