

A trip to Chiasso depot : Fionnbarr Kennedy found paradise for a rail fan

Autor(en): **Kennedy, Fionnbarr**

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A trip to Chiasso Depot



reka rail and Stratego!, to call them by their then applied advertising liveries, are aligned for the photographer.

All photos: Fionnbarr Kennedy

Fionnbarr Kennedy found paradise for a rail fan

Back in 2005, when the Swiss had a more relaxed Health and Safety regime, I made a day trip from Zürich to Chiasso with the express purpose of “chancing my arm” and seeing if I could access the Depot with my camera, having been tipped off that such a thing might be possible. The trip started behind ‘my’ Re 460 No.38 “Hauenstein” - the first HAG model I had bought a few years before. Disembarking at Chiasso station I made the short walk to the depot where I was greeted and made most welcome by the staff there, despite my having no Italian and they no English. From


that point on I was given free rein with my camera and tripod (imagine such a thing today?) with not even a high-visibility vest necessary. The photos that follow reflect the day with its numerous highlights, but to detail three of them they were:-

1. The depot staff, when they realised what I intended to capture, went to great pains to align two Re 460s (Nos.62 and ‘my’ No. 38) for a great photo opportunity.

2. The short-lived experiment SBB Cargo had with the Siemens ES 64 F4s (known as Class 189 and often to be seen today on the banks of the Rhine) was just beginning and there

were three examples of the class in the depot being fitted out. I was given free access to the locos and was able to wander from one cab to the other through the machine room.

3. The Am843s were brand new and some were on shed, still smelling of delivery oil—and that wasn’t all that was new there that day!

All in all, a train enthusiast’s dream! Since then I have had various accesses and passes to other rail locations but I will never forget the kindness and friendship shown by the depot staff at Chiasso. I hope you enjoy the images. 

Here we see Am 843 054 with a new Am 840 092 (a G2000 with full width cabs) behind. Am 843 012 (also brand new) was outside in Infra livery.



Editor's Note: *As someone who in his working life had to investigate incidents that resulted in un-necessary injuries - and worse - I would not recommend doing what Fionnbarr was apparently able to do back in 2005, unless they were using the appropriate Personal Protection Equipment and were accompanied by a supervisor. I suspect that the closeness of the depot to the Italian border may have probably accounted for the slack, even by Switzerland's then quite relaxed standards, control on Fionnbarr's movements. On an 'organised' visit to a working depot to the north of the Alps some two years later I found 'Hi Viz' clothing, sensible footwear, and hard hats were de-rigour, and a staff member was constantly present. The Swiss Railways Society emphasises that it does not encourage members making unannounced visits to normally 'off limits' premises of transport providers.*

1. No's 091, 095 and 098 were on shed that day, being equipped with Swiss-specific equipment. 98 had the SBB cargo vinyls applied, seen here with 91. As an aside, based on this trip I bought the Roco model of 095. It absolutely doesn't require a sound decoder, the sound of the model is uncannily like the prototype.

2. It wasn't all new—a fantastic line-up of Red Re power!

3. The variety of motive power was fantastic to behold—here tucked in between other locos was another brand new loco and the Doyen of the class—Re 474 001.

4. (Virtually) untouched by human hands, the control desk of No. 98.

5. The demonstrator of the class No. 11, brand new in the livery of Dispolok, as the leasing arm of Siemens was known then. Judging by the state of the wheels it had been sitting there a while.

6. Diesel tractor TM ii 911 shunts a HUPAC wagon into the repair works. Another aspect to the depot here—HUPAC wagons were being refitted and repainted.

