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'Don't they all look the same?'

Neil Wheelwright looks at the new metre-gauge EMUs in the Swiss Romande



TPF EMU AB4/12 Nos.105 and 106 at Chatel St Denis.

Photos: Neil Wheelwright

I've heard it said that the new passenger trains being introduced in Switzerland all look the same. However, whilst this is true to an extent, anyone who recalls the 'identikit' metre-gauge stock built in the 1960s will know that this is nothing new. Another example of 'standardisation' is the Vevey/ACMV units built in the late 1980s and early 90s. This commonality is usually a result of railway companies combining orders under guidance from the funding organisations, usually the Cantons, in order to obtain better prices. The most recent set of deliveries is from Stadler and although, as the photos show, they look very similar there are some not so subtle differences when studied carefully. In addition to the equipment being built to different lengths depending on railway curvature and capacity requirements,

the units are also designed to work on different voltages, systems, etc.

There are three distinct design approaches, the GTW variant, the EMU variant, and the Independent Power Cars.

The GTW variant – This is Stadler's design using a central two-axle power unit flanked by 'driving coaches', which are articulated off the power unit

- MVR (Transports Montreux-Vevey-Riviera SA) – Six sets (with Strub rack for the Blonay-Les Pléiades section) have been ordered, and here we see unit ABeh2/6 No.7505 at Vevey. These units have been nicknamed 'Surf'(!).

- TPC (Transports Publics du Chablais) – This group has ordered seven of this variant for their AOMC line to Champéry. These are rack fitted for the Abt system that now has replaced the Strub rack on this line. These would, in theory, enable them to operate on the group's Aigle-Leysin (AL) and Villars-Bretaye (BVB) routes. Beh2/6 No.546 is seen at Aigle. Curiously, these units are identified as AOMC-ASD although the ASD (Aigle-Les Diablerets) line does not use any rack assistance.

The EMU variant – These would be termed 'semi-permanently coupled sets' in the UK.

- TPF (Transports publics fribourgeois SA) – These six EMUs, delivered from

MVR GTW ABeh2/6 No.7505 at Vevey.



2015, are designed as three-car sets with the driving cars only having one powered bogie each. Unit ABe4/12 No.105 is seen at Châtel St Denis alongside similar set No.106 in an advertising livery.

- TRAVYS (Transports Vallée-de-Joux - Yverdon-les-Bains - Sainte-Croix SA) – This group has ordered three sets formed of single ended power cars sandwiching a new coach for the Yverdon - St Croix line. Unit Be4/4 No.3001 is seen at Yverdon.

- MBC (Transports de la région Morges – Bière – Cossonay) – This group has taken a similar approach with a set seen at Morges. In this case the centre coaches were delivered a couple of years earlier.


- NStCM (Compagnie du Chemin de fer Nyon – St-Cergue – Morez SA) – This line uses four 2-car EMUs with one power bogie per car. ABe4/8 No.401 is seen passing the depot at Les Plantaz.

Independent Power Cars.

- CJ (Chemins de fer du Jura SA) – The CJ has only purchased five single ended power cars to use with existing driving trailers. Here Be4/4 No.655 is at a rather damp Saignelégier.

- MOB (Compagnie du Chemin de fer Montreux Oberland Bernois SA) – The MOB has designated their four pairs of single ended railcars as ‘Alpina’ units when they work together with pairs of refurbished coaches. The MOB units have also been ballasted to improve adhesion and are designed to run with up to 9-coaches – including *Panoramic Express* equipment - between a pair of railcars. Here Be4/4 No.9201, with ABe4/4 No.9301 at the other end, heads the first of four sets.

As can be seen from the selection of images some superficial design changes to the bodywork, plus the interesting modern liveries, all help to ensure that these items of modern rolling stock do not look too similar.

Editor's Note. For my money the MVR GTWs look the smartest and the most sophisticated! 



TOP: AOMC-ASD GTW Beh2/6 No.546 at Aigle.

MIDDLE: A Travys Be4/4 EMU at Yverdon.

BOTTOM: MBC Be4/4 unit at Morges.

LEFT: NStCM EMU ABe4/8 No.401 at La Plantaz.

More photographs on page 22.



CJ Be4/4 655 at Saignelegier.



MOB Be4/4 9201 at Montreux.




The restaurant "Wilhelm Tell" moored at the same place as the first 'Tell', January 2018.

Photo: Mario Gavazzi

In 1908 the Vierwaldstättersee welcomed the new two-deck paddle steamer "Wilhelm Tell". It joined the very similar "ps Schiller", which had arrived in 1906 – both products of Sulzer, Winterthur. In 1970 the withdrawal of "ps Wilhelm Tell" initialised the popular movement to save the historic steamboats operating on Luzern's lake. Two years later, the association 'Dampferfreunde Vierwaldstättersee' (www.dampfschiff.ch) was founded, whilst in that year "Wilhelm Tell" was inaugurated as a floating-restaurant at the Luzernerhof pier. Private owners, the Family Räber, have since then successfully operated this beautiful restaurant with great success. Also the "Wilhelm Tell" acts as a good 'marketing tool' for the five SGV steamers (www.lakelucerne.ch) its withdrawal helped to save.

I found this very old picture, that shows an earlier paddle steamer named "Wilhelm Tell", in an antique-market. Before today's 'Tell' was inaugurated, another, smaller one-deck steamer had been sailing on the Vierwaldstättersee since 1864. In 1908, with the advent of the new ship, its name was changed to the "Reuss", and 100-years-ago in 1918 this

vessel was scrapped because of the bad condition of the engine and boilers. It is a special coincidence that the spot where this historic photograph was taken is the same location where its namesake-floating restaurant is now moored, Pier 9 at Luzernerhof. The restaurant is open all-year except during closure in February.

As we see the name "Wilhelm Tell" is full of history and stories! 

The first "ps Wilhelm Tell" (undated).

Photo from collection of Mario Gavazzi

