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Switzerland to Snowdon



BRB No. 2, SLM of 1891 and coach B1 arriving into Platform 2 at Llanberis to de-train passengers. *Photo: Neil Wheelwright*

Many members of the Swiss Railways Society made their way to North Wales during September to visit the unique event put on by the Brienz-Rothorn Bahn, the Snowdon Mountain Railway and the Switzerland Travel Centre, when a Swiss rack-engine and coach were brought to operate on the SMR. A number (too many to publish individually) submitted their experiences and images to *Swiss Express*. The background to this one-off operation was outlined in September's *Swiss Express*, and elsewhere in



The Switzerland to Snowdon banner displayed at the SMR station at Llanberis. *Photo: Paul Russenberger*

this edition there is a description of the arrival of the BRB's equipment at SMR's Llanberis HQ.

Often during the event the weather in Snowdonia was less than ideal, and on some days no SMR trains were reaching the summit, but the BRB train kept operating at Llanberis. It is Swiss after all! This operation had proved very popular with visitors to

SMR, and additional services had to be put in the timetable. By the end of the month over 5,000 passengers had made the short round trip that provided a great advertisement for Switzerland. A number of STC staff were on-hand to ensure all passengers received a Swiss 'goodie-bag' after their trip. This included a SRS membership prospectus that the STC kindly produced for the society. There were also two 'mini-chalets' at the station that were used by the other sponsors of the event, and also included the SRS's own advertising material.

The BRB was represented during the whole month by two of their regular footplate crew, who had travelled from Brienz along with Michael Ellis who had masterminded, and then project managed, the whole operation. Mike Ellis has noted that despite having researched and tested the proposed route, once they had the BRB equipment on the



Moving day at Brienz.

Photo: Hans Jorg Schweizer

SMR track a test trip was made. Unfortunately they encountered vibrations on the loco and coach. These were due to the wear characteristics on the SMR rack being different to those on the BRB. Rather than damage both the train and track it was decided to operate over a more limited distance where the differences were less of an issue.

Despite this the SMR, BRB and STC have achieved the following:

- They have been the first to bring an operating steam train from Switzerland to the UK and place it in a public timetabled service;
- They have been the first to bring a Swiss steam train through the Channel Tunnel;
- They have been the first to bring a steam train over the Llanberis Pass;
- They have organised the first visit of a train to the SMR operation;
- They organised and ran a very successful event, both on the commercial and media perspectives;
- There were days when the BRB was the only steam service operating on the SMR;
- And it looks as though the BRB worked the final steam service on the SMR this year.

The final word must go to Mike Ellis: *"My thanks to all those who followed the story and made it to Snowdonia to be part of a one-time only event, and the first visit in 120 years of a Locomotive to the SMR. The interest and feed-back was very positive."* 🇨🇭

NOTE. *"Thanks to all the photographers who sent in images from their visits to Llanberis. If your photos weren't used, it's no reflection on you, just that I had a lot sent in."*

Tony Bagwell, our Photo Editor.

1. The BRB coach arrives at Snowdon Mountain Railway.

Photo: Brian Shaw

2. BRB No.2, SMR No.5 "Moel Siabod" and SMR No.6 Padarn" being prepared for duty outside Llanberis loco shed.

Photo: Peter Arnold

3. BRB coach B1, and SMR coach 17, part of a fleet named after famous Welsh people.

Photo: Neil Wheelwright

4. The BRB footplate crew; on the footplate, the fireman Beat Leuenberger and on the platform the driver Lieni Pitschi. It was rumoured to be their first journey outside Switzerland.

Photo: Paul Russenberger

5. Service with a smile as STC's Ivan Rodrigues gives out the goodie bags.

Photo: Paul Russenberger

6. Sarah Howe, Ian Owens, Beat Leuenberger, Lieni Pitsch, Claudia Schönbachler and Mike Ellis.

Photo: John Stokes

