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CIBA-GEIGY SUCCESS WITH BR

COMPOSITES ON TOP

With an eye to economy, British Rail are about to refurbish the ceilings of many of their older carriages. They will be using a novel system of low weight, high stiffness composite sandwich panels.

The Bonded Structures Division of Ciba-Geigy has received confirmation of an initial order in excess of £½ million for these new style panels in British Rail's Kent coast passenger stock.

The composite panels are to be made by Bonded Structures Division in their bonding facility at Duxford, near Cambridge. Their Fibredux glass fibre reinforced composite material possessing special fire resistant properties will be used in conjunction with their Aeroweb honeycomb core.

Structural composite sandwich construction techniques have been well established for many years throughout the aerospace industry and are now becoming increasingly important to cost conscious and forward thinking general engineering industries because of their many advantages.

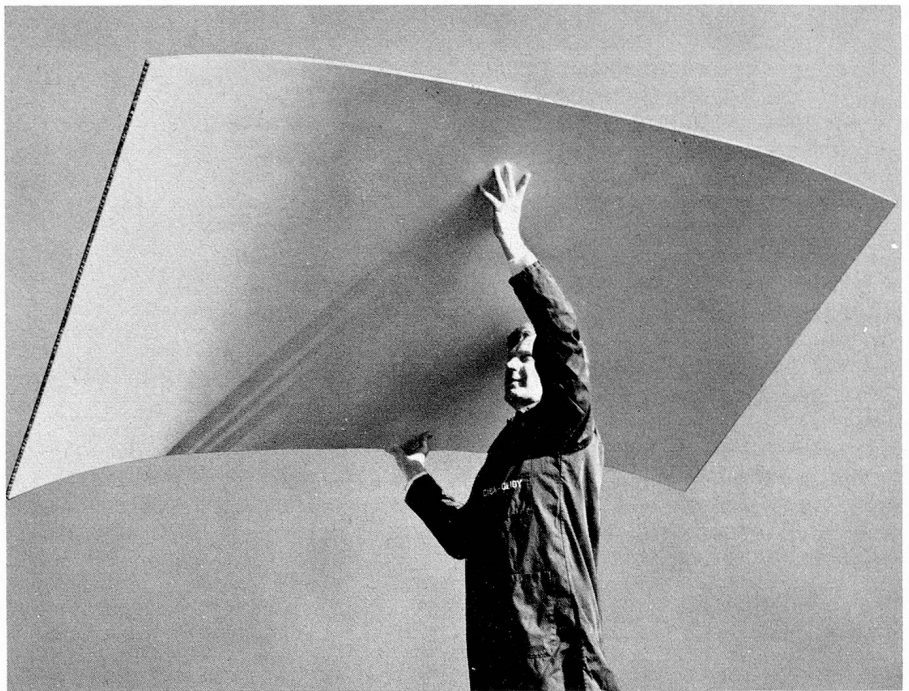
RESEARCH

Extensive development in collaboration with British Rail was necessary on this project in order to produce just the right blend of materials, with the right characteristics and above all to optimise the design for cost effectiveness.

Ease and rapidity of installation was a prime consideration to minimise labour costs. The light weight and rigidity of the material enables the panels to be self-supporting across the whole width of the carriage and this enables the installation to be carried out quickly and easily. Once installed the shallow profile of the ceiling panels gives the carriages a modern wide bodied look and the melamine facing of the panels gives an easily cleaned surface.

REPEAT ORDERS

The order follows on from previous contacts between British Rail and Ciba-Geigy who have supplied similar panels for the experimental refurbishing of carriages which have been in daily use on the Nottingham-Derby-Crewe line for several months now. Ciba-Geigy have also supplied flooring panels for a number of Mark 3 carriages for the HST.



Bonded composite sandwich panels combine lightness, stiffness, ease of installation and cost effectiveness.



Prototype replacement ceilings made from lightweight composite sandwich are already in use on the Nottingham-Derby-Crewe line. The Kent coast carriages will incorporate very similar ceilings having just the same profile.

BIG NAVAL ORDER FOR A SWISS FIRM

The American firm General Dynamics recently placed a very big order with the "Ateliers de constructions mécaniques de Vevey" (ACMV). Earlier, in 1974, this Vevey firm received an order from a naval shipyard in the Boston area.

Today, the firm has been commissioned to plan and build for the United States various plants for the mass production of very big parts for ships.

Each plant will make it possible to mount and weld simultaneously the various elements forming the part to be manufactured. In addition, all the equipment will be provided with the latest technical improvements. Thus, particularly for the welding, recourse will be had to electronics, as well as to hydraulic operation.

PRIVATE INSURANCE IN SWITZERLAND IN 1977

In spite of the slowing up in the economic situation, private insurance companies in Switzerland are thriving. An examination of their activities shows that, even in 1977, this important branch of the Swiss economy was able to maintain its growth on Swiss and foreign markets.

Its annual contribution to the balance of revenues is estimated at

400-500 million francs. Overall, Swiss insurers and reinsurers took in 18.5 billion Swiss francs (17.7 in 1976). Of this amount, direct and indirect insurance premiums from abroad can be put at 10.1 billion francs (9.8 in 1976), divided up as follows: accident and damage insurance 3.3 billion francs, life assurance 1.5 billion, reinsurance 5.3 billion. Switzerland thus remains an exporting country in the field of insurance and reinsurance.

PURCHASES OF CARS IN 1978 - A RECORD YEAR

1978 was the "best year of the car" so far in Switzerland. According to the figures available at the end of September 1978, the number of new licences issued amounted to 270,000 compared with 259,000 in 1972, the previous record year. The number of cars on the roads totalled 2.342 million, i.e. 7.3% more than a year ago and a million more than at the end of September 1968.

On average, this works out at 325 private cars per thousand inhabitants in Switzerland. In the list of suppliers, West Germany comes first with 43.6% of the private cars licenced in Switzerland. Next comes France with 20.1%.

One in every nine cars is Italian, and one in every twelve English or Japanese. In addition, 4.5% come

from Sweden and 2.7% from the United States.

This breakdown of imports differs very little from that of the previous year. Most of the private cars have a cubic capacity of 1151 cm³ to 2250 cm³, the models with capacities of between 1151 and 1650 cm³ being the most popular.

LEISURE TIME ON TWO WHEELS

Off-the-beaten track villages, viewpoints, fortresses and castles — all these can be discovered by bicycle in Switzerland. The Swiss Touring Club's various Cycle Centres have set up a network of signposted cycling routes in Contone and Mendrisio (Ticino), Grosswangen (Lucerne), Kallnach (Berne), Mettmensstetten (Zurich), Oberägeri (Zug), Rebstein (St. Gall), Saignelégier (Jura) and Yens (Vaud). Cycles can also be hired at these centres. The Swiss Cycling and Motorcycling Federation in Zurich has also devised a network of marked secondary roads away from heavy traffic. Escorted cycling tours are on the resort programmes at Lenzerheide/Valbella and Weggis while Welcome Swiss Tours of Lausanne organises one-week bicycle tours round Lake Geneva. In addition cycles can be hired (generally by advance booking) at 600 larger and smaller Swiss Federal Railways station, or at SNTD, London.

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