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DISENTIS/MUSTER

By David Yule PART 1.

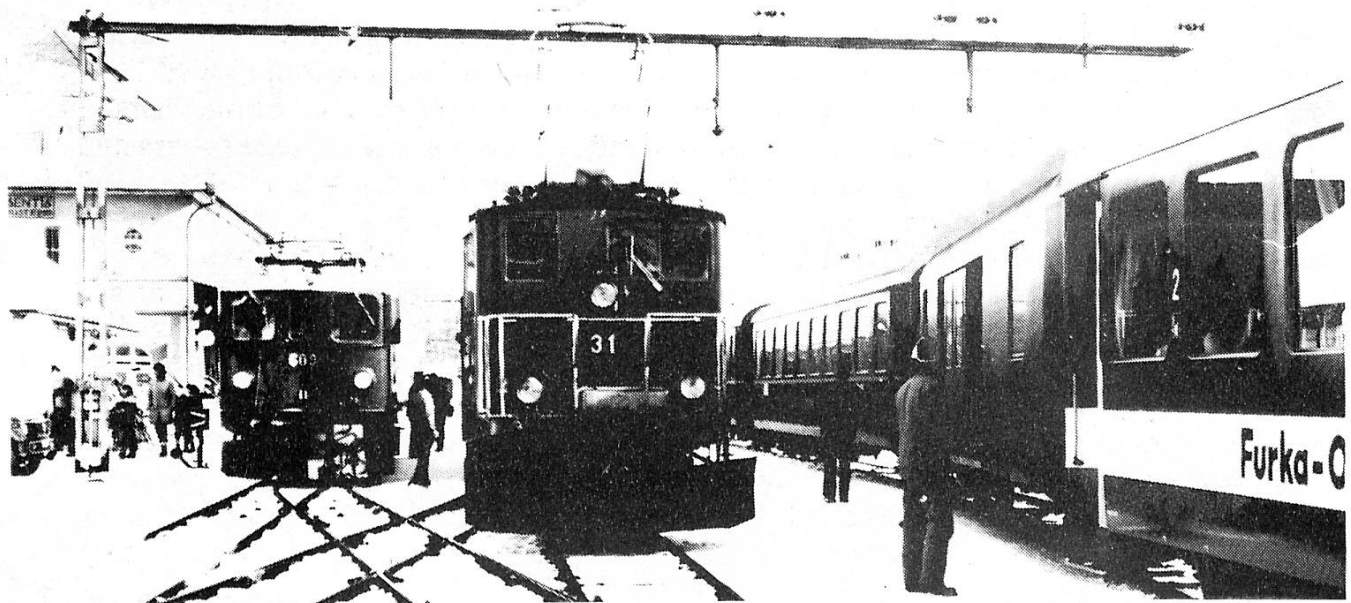
The Prototype

Disentis/Muster is a small town high in the Swiss Alps at 1130 metres above sea level in the Canton of Graubunden (Grisons) in the valley in which the River VoderRhien originates. The town is dominated by a large Benedictine Abbey and Monastery. Today there is an important railway station at Disentis, on a shelf cut into the hillside - the end on junction of two private metre gauge railways: One, the Rhatische Bahn (Rhaetian Railway) RhB, which reached Disentis from the East in August 1912, the other, the Furka-Oberalp Bahn (F.O.), arrived from the west in July 1926. Both Railways were originally steam operated, the RhB was electrified in 1922, but the F.O. did not obtain its overhead wire until 1942. The FO is worked by Rack and Pinion and Adhesion whilst the RhB is Adhesion/hauled only. Traction current on both lines is 11000 volts at 16 2/3rd cycles.

Most trains terminate at Disentis, but because of the different traction methods through trains have to change locomotives. There are six such through trains a day namely "The Glacier Express" of which there are three in each direction between St. Moritz and Zermatt. Freight traffic is made up as follows:

To Disentis - General Merchandise, Fuel Oil, Bulk Cement and Building Materials.

To and from Disentis - Cattle and Military Equipment. From Disentis - Timber.



The Glacier Express exchanges locomotives. Photo. Editor.

The layout looks over complicated with its five loops two scissors crossovers, four double slips and a 13 metre diameter turntable, but all are well used when you consider that trains of up to twelve coaches can arrive from the RhB, and these have to be reformed and shunted. FO trains are limited to six coaches, due to the gradients on this Railway. A Glacier Express only stops for about eight minutes, but in that time the locomotive is changed and the train either gains or loses six coaches depending on its direction.

Motive Power varies. On the RhB side Ge 4/4¹ and Ge 4/4²s haul most of the trains with an occasional visit of a Ge 6/6², the vintage steamers G 4/5s and crocodiles Ge 6/6²s also appear from time to time. For the FO the HGe 4/4s are the most common sight but there is a two car push pull set, Triebwagen ABDeh 2/4 and

Steuerwagen ABt No. 4192. A FO regional train made up of a motor Gepäcktriebwagen Deh 4/4 ², two 2nd class coaches and a ABt ¹ Steuerwagen, some with tail traffic of an additional coach or freight vehicles runs into Disentis from time to time during the day. The shunting Tractor for the station is one of the RhB Tm 2/2's with cab and open platform, it is numbered No. 61. Two types of RhB units are conspicuous by their absence; one the RhB Triebwagen ABe 4/4 Nos. 501-504, the others are the three car Pendelzug Be4/4s Nos. 511-514, the latter, when first introduced, were diagramed to make one visit a day to Disentis. In October, 1985 two FO Snow Ploughs were stationed at Disentis, tucked away at the far end of the RhB locomotive shed, they were FO Xrote 4932 Rotary snow plough and FO X4902 Charge type snow plough.

Passenger rolling stock can include virtually every type of coach from the RhB and FO, but also samples of BVZ (Brig, Visp, Zermatt Railway) coaches can be seen in the Glacier Expresses. Freight Stock: Again examples of all three companies, RhB, FO, and BVZ can be seen at Disentis, but RhB vehicles predominate. The RhB approaches Disentis up a 27% gradient from Somvix-Compadials over a reverse curve and a three arch stone bridge after which the track levels out into the station complex.

On the left is a siding and the two road FO carriage shed, an old timber structure roofed with red pantiles. On the right is another siding with a standard rail weigh bridge, a cement silo with a road weighbridge and attendant compressor house, and wagon wash-down facilities. Two other buildings in this area are the PTT Post Coach garage with an old stable and coach house behind. The next structure on the right is a modern concrete three storey goods depot which replaced a wooden chalet type shed in about 1965. The ground to the left falls away steeply to the river and valley floor. The main station and buffet are the next two buildings on the right, they are both delightful. The main building has buff coloured stucco walls with a hipped roof, originally with stone slates and three eyebrow dormers each side. Some years ago the roof was reclad with grey asbestos tiles and the dormers were made square and reduced to two each side. Shutters to the first floor windows were green in 1984, but were repainted to red in 1985. The Buffet and Kiosk; this building has pale cream stucco walls and grey asbestos tiles with tables and chairs out on the platform - a very pleasant place to take refreshment and still be able to observe the working of the station. Still on the right is a small car park, followed by a siding and yard complete with a standard RhB gantry crane. Opposite the yard on the left is the turntable. The FO and RhB single road timber locomotive sheds radiate to the West with a siding between the RhB shed and main line. The RhB shed has been lengthened to about twice its original length. There is a third intriguing little timber building, roofed with red pantiles, and radial to the turntable; it looks like a mini locoshed, but it has lost its rails. It used to be used to house one of the 'pedal power' inspection trollies, but is

continued on page 30.



Cement Silo. Photo Editor.



Locomotive sheds. Photo Editor.

THE 1986 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Society Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday, 12th April (revised date) in Edinburgh at the North British Hotel, Princes Street (next to Waverley Station). This provides you with a splendid opportunity for a week-end break in this beautiful city. Bring the family, spouse or girlfriend and make a full weekend of it. Spend a day exploring the city or take a trip round the highlands. Why not take advantage of one of the British Rail mini weekend packages, the North British and other nearby hotels feature in these packages. Both Golden Rail and Superbreak offer prices that cannot be beaten, but book now, the hotels hold only a limited number of rooms for these agencies. If you wish to make your own travel and accommodation arrangements there are two possibilities. For those wishing to stay overnight at the North British Hotel, accommodation is available at the following special rates: TWIN ROOM £54.50, SINGLE ROOM £36.50. These rates are per night and inclusive of VAT, breakfast is extra. All reservations for accommodation should be made to: MISS SARAH WESTCOTT, CONFERENCE COORDINATOR, NORTH BRITISH HOTEL, PRINCES STREET, EDINBURGH. EH2 2EQ. TEL. No. 031-556-2414. For those who would rather seek alternative accommodation the City Tourist Office offers a complete booking service. Just send 75p. to: ADVANCED RESERVATION, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS AND TOURISM, 3 PRINCES STREET, EDINBURGH, stating the type of accommodation required (e.g. hotel, guest house, with bath/shower, etc.), the price range and the date, and the booking will be made for you. However, to arrange your accommodation, please book early, the city is a major tourist centre and hotels fill quickly.

Programme for the 1986 A.G.M. is as follows: Waverley Suite 12.00 - 16.00. Exhibition of Swiss Railway models including layouts, books and films 16.00 - 18.00. The Annual General Meeting. Holyrood Suite 19.00 - Special A.G.M. dinner. Menu - Scotch Broth, Spinach and mushrooms vol au vent. Roast Turkey served with onions, carrots and bacon in wine sauce, brussel sprouts with chestnuts and roast potatoes. Baked Alaska. Coffee. The bar will be open throughout the day. Tickets for the dinner are £12.50 per person (drinks extra) and are available from: PETER RIGBY, 28, MANNERSTON, LINLITHGOW, WEST LOTHIAN EH49 7ND. A S.A.E. should accompany all applications and cheques/P.O.'s should be made payable to the Swiss Railways Society. Members may purchase additional tickets for their guests. Please help the organisers by ordering tickets as soon as possible. Items for the agenda should be submitted in writing to the Secretary (address page 2) no later than 1st March. Nomination forms for officers of the Society are obtainable by sending an S.A.E. to the Secretary.

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now used by the engineers to accommodate tools. The main line now curves to the right and enters the FO tunnel with the first rack section starting only a few metres inside the tunnel. The tunnel mouth is provided with wooden doors for use in the winter to prevent snow drifting into the tunnel.

Although there is a track diagram pannel in the station master's office all the turnouts are hand operated. As the Station Master says "When there are two station staff (Shunters/ tractor drivers) on duty, why waste money on point motors?" Signalling is very basic; at the RhB end there is a two aspect colour light starting signal with two co-acting hilfs signals. The FO end only has one hilfs signal but a three aspect colour light starting signal was being installed in October, 1985 for introduction during the winter of 1985/6.

To be continued in a later issue.