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SWISS GOODS TRAINS WITH PASSENGER ACCOMMODATION

by Victor Isaacs

For those who might like a change from the well-known Swiss joys of travelling a modern and co-ordinated transport system, the lesser known enjoyment of sampling goods trains with passenger accommodation can be recommended. These trains can be found by searching through the Timetables for the symbols G or M. This is one of many interesting non-standard features to be found in the "Indicateur Officiel" notwithstanding the general regular interval nature of services. Most of the 'trains de marchandises avec voitures' run in the early morning. They run on some main lines as well as some branches, and on some private lines as well as the Federal Railways. The Timetable warns that they run without guarantee of adherence to their schedules or of maintaining connections. Observers of the Swiss scene will know that the official description is somewhat arbitrary because in fact some of the "goods trains" in practice sometimes run without freight vehicles, and many secondary "passenger trains" will, when convenient, convey freight vehicles. This article records journeys on five goods trains which did live up to the description.

Friday 4th October 1985: The 0631 from Lausanne to Vallorbe being the first stopping train of the day mainly conveyed workers. Upon alighting at Le Day there was no sign of any connection to Le Brassus. However, within a few minutes it appeared around the curve from Vallorbe. It comprised of Re 4/4 II 314 one passenger carriage, and a long line of freight vehicles. The passenger carriage was second class with wooden seats and end platforms. It belonged to the Compagnie Pont-Brassus (PBr) with "Valle de Joux" painted on the sides. It is possibly the only PBr passenger vehicle in regular use (albeit for only one round trip on a day) because other services on the branch are provided by CFF train sets. The train departed on time at 07.16. At Le Pont the rear three wagons were detached by the station's small shunting locomotive. At Sentier-Orient (headquarters of the PBr) the train arrived five minutes early at 07.53, and departed fourteen minutes late at 08.17. In the intervening time wagons were detached from various parts of the train and shunted around the yard, the CFF EMU going in the opposite direction was "crossed", and the driver spent a few minutes in the carriage talking to the passengers. Upon arrival at the terminus of Le Brassus a few minutes later only three passengers were left.

Due to the time taken to shunt and prepare the train, the return journey commenced twenty minutes late at 09.05 and because of this, the crossing with the opposing CFF EMU was at Le Liev instead of Le Pont as scheduled. The only shunting en route was at Sentier-Orient. Arrival at the terminus of Vallorbe was at 10.00 (ten minutes late) providing plenty of time for a connection to Lausanne at 10.37. This by way of contrast, was by the TGV "Lutetia" ex Paris.

Monday 7th October 1985: CFF has international "trains de marchandises avec voitures" running to and from Pontarlier. On this day the 15.03 from Neuchatel comprised RE 4/4 1259, van, first/second carriage, second carriage, three FS open wagons, and six bogie open wagons. All except the first two wagons were detached to be loaded with timber at Les Verrieres, the last station before the border. The return journey on this day with a similar load is only available for passengers from Pontarlier to Les Verriers. The trains ran on time throughout.

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Timetable No.	Departure Time	From	To	(Dist. km)	Railway	Comments
100	05.54	Sion	Brig	54	CFF/SBB	Mon-Sat
"	08.30	Brig	Domodssda	32	SBB/FFS	Daily
"	04.08	Brig	Sion	54	SBB/CFF	Mon-Sat
						Conveys Carriage to Lausanne
131	07.03	St. Maurice	Bouveret	22	CFF	Mon-Sat to Monthey-CFF
"	13.37	St. Maurice	St.Gingolph	26	CFF	Sun-Fri to Monthey-CFF
140	05.10	Brig	Zermatt	44	BVZ	Daily
"	12.40	Brig	Zermatt	44	BVZ	Mon-Sat
"	12.23	Zermatt	Brig	44	BVZ	Mon-Sat
"	17.32	Zermatt	Brig	44	BVZ	Mon-Sat
201	07.17	Vallorbe	Le Brassus	26	CFF/P Br	Mon-Sat
"	08.45	Le Brassus	Vallorbe	26	PBr/CFF	Mon-Sat
220	16.45	Pontarlier	Les Verrieres	14	CFF	Mon-Fri
"	07.00	Neuchatel	Pontarlier	53	CFF	Mon-Sat
"	15.03	Neuchatel	Pontarlier	53	CFF	Mon-Fri
223	06.55	La Chaux-de-Fonds	Le Locle/Col-des-Roches	9	CFF	Mon-Sat
"	18.15	Neuchatel	Corcelles-Peseux	3	CFF	Mon-Fri
						Conveys carriage ex Bern
225	05.13	Biel/Bienne	La Chaux-de-Fonds	44	CFF	Mon-Sat
226 & 230	04.43	Delemont	Sonceboz-Sombeval	36	CFF	Mon-Fri
230	12.05	Delemont	Laufen	16	CFF/SBB	Mon-Fri
237	05.21	Tramelan	Tavannes	13	CJ	Mon-Sat
251	04.24	Lyss	Payerne	42	SBB/CFF	Mon-Sat
255	05.22	Bulle	Romont	26	GFM	Mon-Sat
"	06.00	Romont	Bulle	26	GFM	Mon-Sat
257	07.24	Flamatt	Laupen	12	STB	Mon-Fri
298	04.50	Bern	Thun	31	GBS	Mon-Sat
300	05.33	Kandersteg	Brig	59	BLS	Daily
"	22.03	Spiez	Brig	101	BLS	Daily
"	00.07	Spiez	Brig	101	BLS	Daily
"	04.34	Brig	Frutigen	85	BLS	Daily
						Conveys carriage to Spiez
"	06.33	Brig	Goppenstein	36	BLS	Daily
411	07.48	Moutier	Gansbrunnen	12	SMB	Mon-Fri
"	14.48	Moutier	Solothurn	29	SMB	Mon-Fri
"	06.33	Langendorf	Moutier	25	SMB	Mon-Fri
"	13.00	Gansbrunnen	Moutier	12	SMB	Mon-Fri
"	13.25	Solothurn	Gansbrunnen	17	SMB	Mon-Fri
412	07.30	Balsthal	Oensingen	4	OeBB	Mon-Sat
"	10.13	Oensingen	Balsthal	4	OeBB	Mon-Fri
"	16.13	Oensingen	Balsthal	4	OeBB	Mon-Fri
"	17.11	Oensingen	Balsthal	4	OeBB	Mon-Sat
440	05.20	Ramsei	Langnau	12	EBT	Mon-Fri
"	05.30	Konolfingen	Thun	19	EBT	Mon-Sat
441	08.46	Zell	Wolhusen	22	VHB	Mon-Fri
442	09.30	Ramsei	Huttwil	27	VHB	Mon-Fri
"	14.58	Ramsei	Huttwil	27	VHB	Mon-Fri
"	09.58	Huttwil	Sumiswald-Grünen	21	VHB	Mon-Fri
"	14.57	Huttwil	Ramsei	27	VHB	Mon-Fri
460	05.03	Wolhusen	Langnau	37	SBB	Wolhusen - Escholzmatte Tues-Sat
"	05.13	Luzern	Langnau	58	SBB	Mon-Sat
"	10.11	Wolhusen	Langnau	37	SBB	Mon-Sat
470	06.16	Giswil	Meiringen	16	SBB(Brunig)	Mon-Sat
"	07.14	Giswil	Luzern	29	SBB(Brunig)	Mon-Fri
"	18.36	Interlaken Ost	Meiringen	29	SBB(Brunig)	Mon-Fri
474	11.33	Meiringen	Innertkirchen	5	KO	Mon-Sat
"	15.40	Meiringen	Innertkirchen	5	KO	Mon-Sat
"	09.55	Innerkirchen	Meiringen	5	KO	Mon-Sat
"	16.25	Innerkirchen	Meiringen	5	KO	Mon-Sat
480	06.09	Stans	Engelberg	19	LSE	Mon-Sat
"	12.44	Luzern	Stans	14	SBB/LSE	Mon-Fri
700	23.32	Basel/SBB	Zurich HB	88	SBB	Daily
754	17.41	Wald	Ruti	7	SBB	Mon-Fri
760	??	Eglisau	Schaffhausen	20	SBB	Sat only
850	00.05	Winterthur	St. Gallen	58	SBB	Mon-Fri
880	11.37	Rorschach	St. Gallen	15	SBB	Mon-Fri
902	05.00	Glarus	Linthal	16	SBB	Mon-Fri
"	05.33	Glarus	Schwanden	5	SBB	Sat only

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Tuesday 8th October 1985. The 13.37 St. Maurice to St. Gingolph consisted of old electric: Ae 4/7 10954, one second class carriage and three open wagons. The wagons were all detached at Monthey - CFF, leaving the train rather short and over-powered.. The train arrived at Gingolph at 14.18 (one minute late). This is a very strange village, being half in Switzerland and half in France, with only a little creek between. The station is also strange, comprising only a platform, there being no run-round loop or siding. The train therefore had to push back empty the four kilometres to the preceding (and more important) station of Bouveret.

A full list of all goods trains with passenger accommodation attached as at the Summer 1985 timetable. It will be seen that some mainline journeys are quite lengthy. The longest being 101 kilometres over the entire length of the BLS mainline-- but the journeys are often at strange hours of the night. The "trains de Marchandises avec voitures", can, however, be recommended as providing insights simultaneously into passenger and freight working, and often including usual workings. For example, of the three runs instanced above, that to Le Brassus gave travel on goods trains in both directions on a partially Federal partially private branch, with plenty of shunting along the way to and from Pontarlier offered international working and that to St. Gingolph produced a run behind an elderly locomotive.

BOOK REVIEW by Nigel Heath

"Tramways & Light Railways of Switzerland and Austria". Author R.J. Buckley. Published by Light Railway Transit Association. Size A5, paperback 120 pages. Price £3.50 from Swiss Railway Society Book Sales.

This volume fills for me a gap in available information. It covers Tramways & Light Railways including some funiculars. Of necessity it excludes metre gauge systems such as the Rhaetian Bahn as virtually Main line railways, but it includes some standard gauge DC powered lines. The author has applied an arbitrary rule of thumb in doing so, but then the distinctions between tramways, light railways and full railways were always blurred at the edges. What for instance is the Newcastle Metro ? the answer depends upon your definition and viewpoint.

There are no pictures, except for an illustration of a city tram and bus ticket, but there are a mass of routemaps.

The book includes sections on ticket arrangements, rolling stock classification and each line grouped by Tramways, Electric Light Railways and Tramcar Preservation. There are separate parts for Switzerland and for Austria, of which the part on Switzerland is by far the largest. Comprehensive Indexes detail both the lines included and lines excluded, and also Funiculars & Museums. This even includes a warning of the museums, all municipal, which are not open to the public. Though why have a museum if you don't let anyone come and see what you have got ? beats me !

The section on the lines includes rolling stock lists, descriptions and timetable information where appropriate.

This is a useful little book with a vast amount of information for its size. For anyone wanting to explore the Tramways & Light Railways of Switzerland, it could easily be taken with them and would be invaluable for planning trips. It contains plenty of warnings on the perils of the ticket systems and inspectors which could easily save the price of the book in fines avoided. Mr. Buckley has clearly put an immense amount of work into this compilation and is to be congratulated on a fine job. be congratulated on a fine job.