

Zeitschrift: Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal
Herausgeber: Swiss Railways Society
Band: 1 (1986-1987)
Heft: 6

Artikel: A Swiss phantasy
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-853682>

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A SWISS PHANTASY by J. Hedley Robinson

At the time of writing I can look back over some seventy years of interest in model railways, but such memories would perhaps be interesting material for another article. For the present purpose, I take up the story at the end of the war in 1947, during which I was in a reserved occupation and then declared unfit for military service. This gave me the opportunity to make models of Southern Railway (British) H.O. gauge in the dark when evening air raids etc. permitted and time was available, in anticipation of erecting a system at the end of hostilities. These models were all to 3½mm scale, and it soon transpired that commercial parts etc., when they became available, were OO gauge in 4 mm scale. However, it was too late to turn back. It was found that the third rail system was not altogether satisfactory, needing a deal of adjustment and cleaning.

Holidays in Switzerland suggested that overhead wires would be more reliable, and it was decided to try the system out. Soon after this we moved into a bungalow with a large loft, which we decided to turn into spare bedroom etc. My wife asked me what room I would need for a satisfactory railway layout, remarking that the remainder of the loft could form the spare bedroom. What a wife ! This was a chance not to be missed.

The next decision was what type of layout it should be. Continuous running round and round the houses is not really railway like. End to end requires a good deal of length of run unless one is satisfied with the wedding cake type in which the trains are constantly climbing over other tracks and dodging in and out of tunnels. What we needed was something more representative of true Swiss practice with open country main line running.

It will be seen from the plan herewith that this has been accomplished by making one loft represent the Swiss lowlands with the large town of Rocesse, and the other one to be a mountainous section, with the station Grindel therein. Two continuous loops are available if desired.

Rocesse is French speaking while the Grindel area is German. This last paragraph opens up the much discussed matter of names of stations. Now, to model a real situation to H.O. scale in anything but the largest loft is out of the question. Also, to simplify the layout and foreshorten all dimensions, then to name it after some actual place is equally illogical. So, it was decided to model an imaginary tract of country, and to enable favourite models to be run, it was to be a joint section incorporating the Gotthard and the B.L.S. Where this occurs in Switzerland I do not know, but it pleases us; and that is what it is all about !

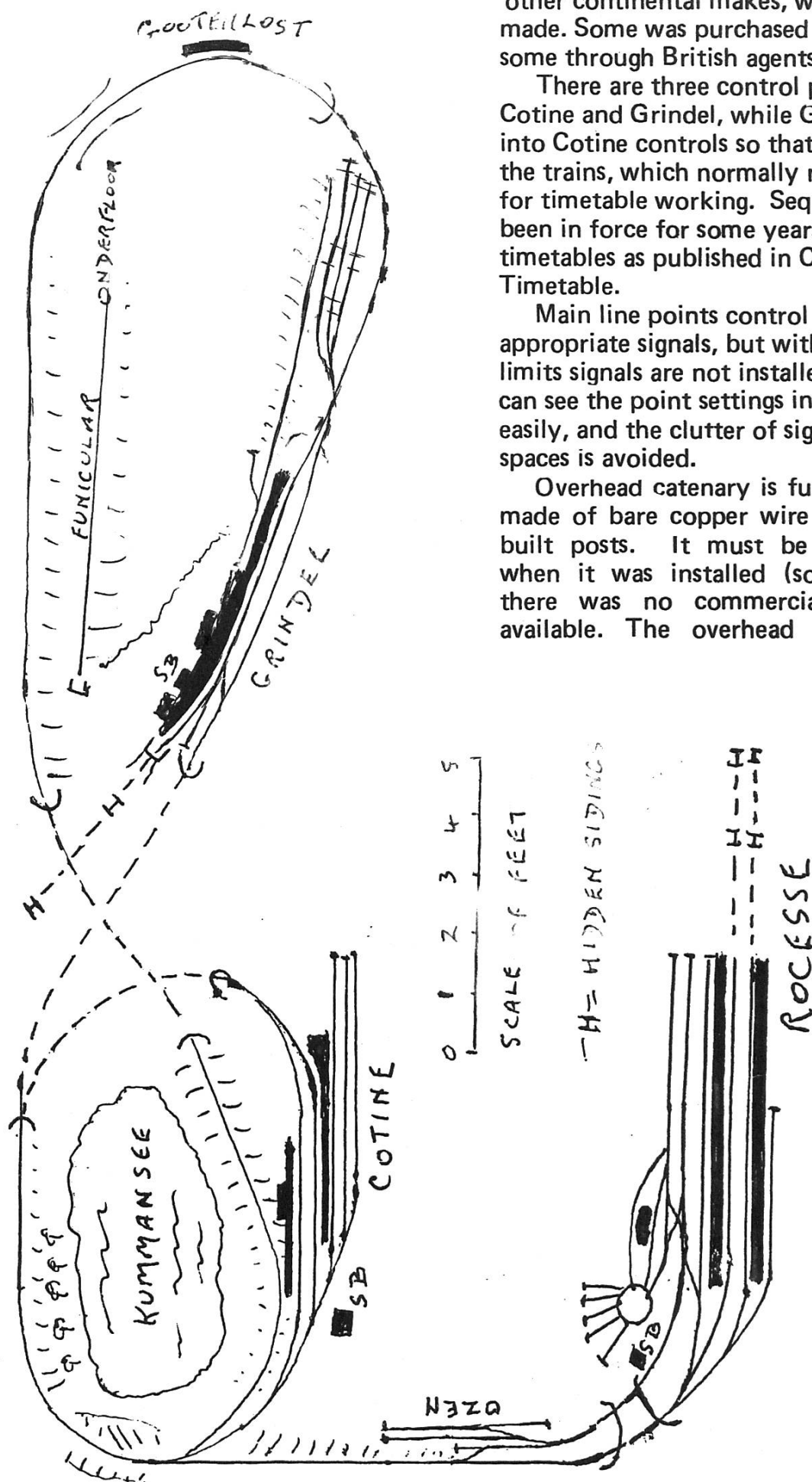
But what about those station names ? Here arises the opportunity for a little harmless fun. What was required was a set of white printed names on a blue background. So a look out was maintained for many months for suitable printed material. We came up with the following:- ROCESSE (pROCESSEd) cheese), COTINE (sec COTINE), OZEN (one dOZEN matches), GRINDEL (GRINDELwald) and we are searching for suitable material for the little halt in the mountains beyond Grindel which we call GUTENLOST, for good and lost it is !

The actual track is a mixture of Wrenn steel track which is what remains of the old Southern Railway layout and forms the station area of Rocesse. There is some very old brass track, and the remainder is Peco. Track is laid on cork carpet underlay cut into strips, and not only looks well, but provides just that amount of spring needed.

Buildings are scratchbuilt incorporating some Faller details over a number of years. It was soon found that Faller windows etc. could be used with card bodies, and so produce a number of buildings from one kit of parts.

Locomotives and rolling stock are very mixed both in types and age depicted. Some locos are Kleinbahn, some scratchbuilt on Hornby Dublo chassis and others on various bogies. All round they represent the variety seen during 1959 to 1968, when on holiday in Switzerland. At this stage it is only right to acknowledge the most helpful assistance received from S.B.B. and B.L.S. in the matter of publications and photographs, which have been most helpful.

Passenger and goods rolling stock is not only numerous but varied; some is Marklin and



other continental makes, while some is home made. Some was purchased in Switzerland, and some through British agents as advertised.

There are three control panels :- Rocesse, Cotine and Grindel, while Grindel can be linked into Cotine controls so that two people can run the trains, which normally needs three persons for timetable working. Sequence running has been in force for some years based on actual timetables as published in Cooks Continental Timetable.

Main line points control and operate the appropriate signals, but within station yard limits signals are not installed. The operators can see the point settings in front of them quite easily, and the clutter of signals in the confined spaces is avoided.

Overhead catenary is fully operable and is made of bare copper wire supported on rail built posts. It must be remembered that when it was installed (some years ago) there was no commercial apparatus available. The overhead wire is suitably

sectioned and connected to switches on the appropriate control boards. The switches are coloured and matching colour patches are painted on the masts for identification. This helps strangers to operate the system. Current return is via both running rails which are cross bonded. This ensures good contact with loco wheels and together with the generous current supply results in reliable operation. Current is supplied from a large power unit capable of supplying four locomotives simultaneously at full throttle. Resistances are formed from 1,000 watt fire bars with sliding contacts. It was found early on that ordinary dimmers could not carry the current involved. The full power potential is about 12 amps, but this is reduced by the controller resistances to the usual values in running. The result is good reliable running without constant rail cleaning, and plenty of power for hill climbing. The layout can be left unused for weeks on end, and immediately it is switched on the trains clean the rails themselves and reliable running results. Sparks under the wheels add to the effect.

Night expresses are lit inside from the restaurant car pantographs. This may not be correct practice, but it works, and can be used with any locomotive available. Some locos have working headlights for use at night, when the main lights are switched off and blue lamps supply a dim background illumination necessary for safe running. To see a night express making its way through the mountain section is a most impressive sight. The motive power is comprised as follows:-

Number	Wheel arrangement	Type	Remarks
(SBB Locomotives)			
1	1-B-B-1	Be 4/6	Buchli drive Rod drive Buchli drive By Kleinbahn By Jouef Bowed ends By Kleinbahn By Lima
1	2-C-1	Ae 3/6	
1	2-C-1	Ae 3/6 II	
1	2-D-1	Ae 4/7	
2	Bo-Bo	Re 4/4 I	
1	Bo-Bo	Re 4/4	
1	Bo-Bo	Re 4/4 I	
2	Co-Co	Re 6/6	
1	Co-Co	Ae 6/6	
1	B	Steeple shunter	
1	B0-2	altered from Hornby 0-4-0 Motor coach	
(BLS Locomotives)			
1	Bo-Bo	Ae 4/4	As built in 1955 " 1926-43 With side rods Twin set
1	1-Co-Co-1	Ae 6/8	
1	B-B	Ce 4/4	
1	Blue Arrow	ABFe 4/8	
1	Parcels car	nominally Co-Bo	

All are homemade excepting where shown, and total eighteen units. Homemade bodies are mostly built in sheet zinc to avoid magnetic field troubles, and covered with card masks, which after painting have been found to stand up well in use. Roofs are of balsa wood which insulates the pantographs.

Passenger vehicles include three dining cars, and three CIWL sleepers of different types.

The scenery is composed of wood formers, with chicken wire in some places, covered with discarded blackout curtains as obtained from a church at the end of the war. This was in large sheets as would be required for church windows, and after suitable tailoring and fixing they were painted with distemper and ceiling white.

Trees are a mixture: some home made, some came from Christmas cake decorations purchased at the local Woolworth store in goodly numbers for use in the mountain sections, and suitably altered to introduce variety. Personnel are from Preiser unpainted. They were painted by my son who is talented in this kind of work and the detail is magnificent, even down to including waistcoat buttons. In all it can be claimed that although domiciled in South Devon, the Swiss atmosphere is apparent.

An imaginary trip on the line will illustrate the character of the system and if ever you find yourself in the town of Rocesce, take a walk up the Rue de Remarque (rude remark) leaving the cathedral on your right and enter the terminus station. Here we can take a local stopping train to Cotine after admiring the international expresses drawn up under the train shed. We leave from Voie 4 passing the goods yard and loco depot, and thread the short tunnel under a spur of the alps, which brings us to the 1 in 50 climb through lush farming territory and past the Ozen industrial site. At the top of the climb we pass the church of St. Bingo who is a sincerely regarded character revered by many followers in Britain seeking financial blessing !



Cotine and tunnel entrance – Oberderbiggun. Photo Author.

We thread the cutting leads to the Bois de Nord where the line descends to the tunnels under Derbiggun. We take the right hand bore into Cotine, which is an attractive village where the B.L.S. meets the S.B.B. Here we change into the B.L.S. Blue Arrow and again pass St. Bingo and the adjacent riding stables, through the Bois de Nord again, and now take the left hand bore under Derbiggun which brings us into Grindel. This is a very pretty village of Swiss chalets with its church Schloss and the Eerwiggo falls. We note the mountain tramway leading to the ski slopes and the funicular down to the hamlet of Onderfloor.

Here, at Grindel, we can take an international express back to Rocesce through Unterderlittlun tunnel to pass Gootenlost, and cross the viaduct from which we can see Onderfloor some 180 scale feet below. We now climb the Nordrafter ridge to Uberderbiggun tunnel, which brings us out on the southern shore of the Kummansee, which we skirt once again to enter Cotine station. Here our train reverses and makes its way to Rocesce via St. Bingo and Ozen.

We have time to admire some of the Swiss, German, Italian and French vehicles standing in Rocesce station before we make our way back into the town of Rocesce, with its commercial activity and hotels, in one of which we can stay.