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Autor: Oakman, Martin
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A DAY TRIP TO SWITZERLAND by Martin Oakman

A day trip to Switzerland? Well not quite, it actually took 3 days altogether, two days travelling and one day in Switzerland and of course I travelled all the way by train (except for the Dover-Calais part - the tunnel isn't quite ready). My reason for the trip was two-fold, one to travel over lines which I had not been over before (e.g. Rapperswil - Linthal, Pfaffikon - Arth Goldau) and secondly to search for Ae 3/6 and Ae 4/7 locos. My timetable was arranged as follows.

Basel ARR 05.28 (20.00 Ex Calais) Wed, 25 June

						Loco
Basel	Dep	05.52	Zurich	Arr	06.57	Re 4/4 II
*Zurich	Dep	07.31	Rapperswil	Arr	08.21	RABDe 8/14
*Rapperswil	Dep	09.14	Linthal	Arr	10.41	Ae 4/7
Linthal	Dep	12.18	Rapperswil	Arr	13.33	Re 4/4 II
*Rapperswil	Dep	13.40	Arth Goldau	Arr	14.24	Re 4/4 I
Arth Goldau	Dep	15.03	Fluelen	Arr	15.26	Re 4/4 I
Fluelen	Dep	17.23	Luzern	Arr	18.19	Re 6/6
*Luzern	Dep	19.51	Bern	Arr	21.10	Re 4/4 II
*Bern	Dep	21.45	Basel	Arr	23.00	Re 4/4 II

* Indicates route not travelled over before.

Of all these trains only the 19.51 Luzern to Bern was 6 minutes late start waiting connections but the driver left no doubt in anyones mind that he would be on time into Bern (he was). The acceleration with Re 4/4 II 11157 had to be felt to be believed. I travelled from Zurich to Rapperswil via Meilen. This route appears to be worked by emu's only although someone may be able to tell me different. The run along Lake Zurich is pleasant but sit on the right hand side in the direction of travel for views across the lake.

At Rapperswil I spotted the preserved Be 4/6 in the yard but it disappeared light engine shortly after I arrived and I was unable to take any photographs (try again next year?). I now have to admit that having never been to Rapperswil before, my knowledge of railway geography was hopeless. The set for Linthal was in the platform consisting of D/AB/B/B/B and I waited at the end of the platform (lakeside end) to photograph the train loco. It wasn't until near departure time that I realised the loco was on the other end of the train! This involved a somewhat undignified scramble into the train but I wasn't left behind. As the train departed I could see the train loco was an Ae 4/7 no. 10973 as it turned out to be.

I had read about the Linthal branch in Swiss Express (January 1986) and I was not disappointed. At Uznach was another Ae 4/7 on a passenger working. Ziegelbrucke was very busy with the usual Re 4/4 II and Re 6/6 locos but there was an Ae 4/7 with two postal vans. On the Linthal branch proper I saw two Ae 3/6's one light engine and another with one freight van and an Ae 4/7 on a passenger working. I would recommend a trip on this branch. It is very scenic and there are many stations on the branch worth modelling. I am contemplating modelling Linthal itself but in a modified form. If anyone has a track plan of Linthal I would be grateful for a copy. At Linthal I spent the time between trains photographing the station buildings and surrounding area. The weather was glorious and it was very hot. On the way back to Rapperswil I noticed that whenever the loco whistled for the numerous open level crossings the sound echoed around the valley - a typical Swiss sound if ever I heard one. (wish I had my tape recorder). This is one branch line I will return to.

The line between Rapperswil and Arth Goldau is operated by the Sudostbahn although the train I travelled on was hauled by an SBB Re 4/4 II and consisted of all SBB stock. The line between Pfaffikon and Arth Goldau is steeply graded and there are some fine views on the climb out of Pfaffikon across Lake Zurich. During the journey I saw an SOB Re 4/4 II, push/pull set and a single railcar.

At Arth Goldau I saw another Ae 4/7 on a freight outside the modern signal box. Arth Goldau is an excellent vantage point for watching trains and is a busy location.

I travelled to Fluelen on a push/pull set hauled by an Re 4/4 I and spent a pleasant two hours in the sunshine by the lakeside. The procession of trains on the Gotthard route was endless. I saw everything from expresses hauled by Re 6/6's to push/pull sets with Re 4/4I's and many different types of freight trains including one of the HUPAC lorry trains, also a military special hauled by an Re 6/6 and consisting of some very old SBB bogie stock and flat wagons with armoured vehicles on.

The run from Luzern to Bern was lively to say the least however. This route runs through rolling countryside which becomes more scenic towards the end, most of my time on this run was spent hanging on to my seat as the driver made up time.

At Bern it was dark although still very warm, this was my first visit to Bern since the station was re-built and I was quite impressed. Whilst waiting for the Basel train, on the opposite platform was a Swiss soldier with all his gear and rifle - not uncommon in Switzerland to see this but what struck me was he left his gear and rifle on the platform whilst he went to the buffet ! The journey to Basel was uneventful apart from a man sitting opposite me trying to use an out of date season ticket. The ticket collector was not amused !

I finally arrived home at 19.00 on Thursday having left home on Tuesday at 09.00. A tiring but pleasant trip. Next year ? Either the BLS or RhB for the day.

