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## STANDARD GAUGE TO INTERLAKEN by Giles Della Gana

The line from Spiez to Interlaken is the most important branch and the oldest section of the BLS group. As I have covered the history of this route in an article published in the last issue of the Swiss Railway News (Vol. II No. 2) I would just remind readers that the section from Darligen to Interlaken West opened on 12th August 1872, the extension, via Interlaken Ost, to Bonigen coming into use on 1st July 1874. The link from Darligen to Thun and the rest of the Swiss railway system opened on 1st June 1893.

### The Route Described

Trains bound for Interlaken use platform number 1 at Spiez. The route out of the station area is fairly straight, dropping from the main line which bears away on a sharp curve to the right. A recently built feeder station and a new under-line road bridge are so arranged to allow a second running line to be laid as far as the first stop at Faulensee. This is a pleasant little station with a loop and single siding (see rough layout plan). To judge by the film of rust on the rails, the loop does not see much use.



*Station building at Darligen. Photo B.L.S.*

Leaving Faulensee the line continues to drop through pleasant meadow land toward the Thunersee which now appears to the left after having been out of sight in the Spiez area. A passing loop is encountered at Krattighalde, some 5 km. from Spiez. By the time the second station, Leissigen, is reached the railway has been forced close to the lake by the encroaching flanks of the Morgenberghorn. Leissigen is quite a large station, though not too big to be modelled, the through lines being an interesting feature. I cannot say how much, if any, use these tracks see as at the time of my visit there was a departmental coach and shunting tractor stabled on the northern one. The main station building is a pleasant, mainly timber structure as are the two separate goods sheds on the southern side. The eastbound platform, waiting shelter and subway are of recent concrete construction.

To my mind the highlight of the journey is now reached. The line, just above the level of the Thunersee is forced to follow its shore in a series of fairly sharp curves. The narrow

strip of land between railway and lake seems given over to jolly out-door pursuits, at least during summer weekends. Seventeen kilometers from Spiez we come to the station at Darligen. Dramatically situated at the point where the Thunersee turns from its longer north-west/south-east axis towards the north-east. On a clear day it is possible to look through the cleft occupied by Interlaken and see the mountains above the north shore of the Brienzersee beyond. View apart, Darligen is an interesting station and would make a nice model. A short illustrated article on it appeared in the March/April 1986 issue of Continental Modeller.

As the railway follows the Thunersee it turns with the shoreline. Soon the end of the lake is reached and the route heads across a flat plain. To my mind this is a dull section of line, the mountains are really too close to be seen to advantage and such views as there may be are obscured by trees and roadworks. However, Interlaken West station is soon reached, 23 kms from Spiez. This seems to be the town's main station, there being such facilities as a large booking office and a restaurant available. To the left-hand side, that is across the running lines from the station buildings, is the lake steamer landing stage. Vessels using it reach Interlaken by means of a 2.75 km canal running from the end of the Thunersee.

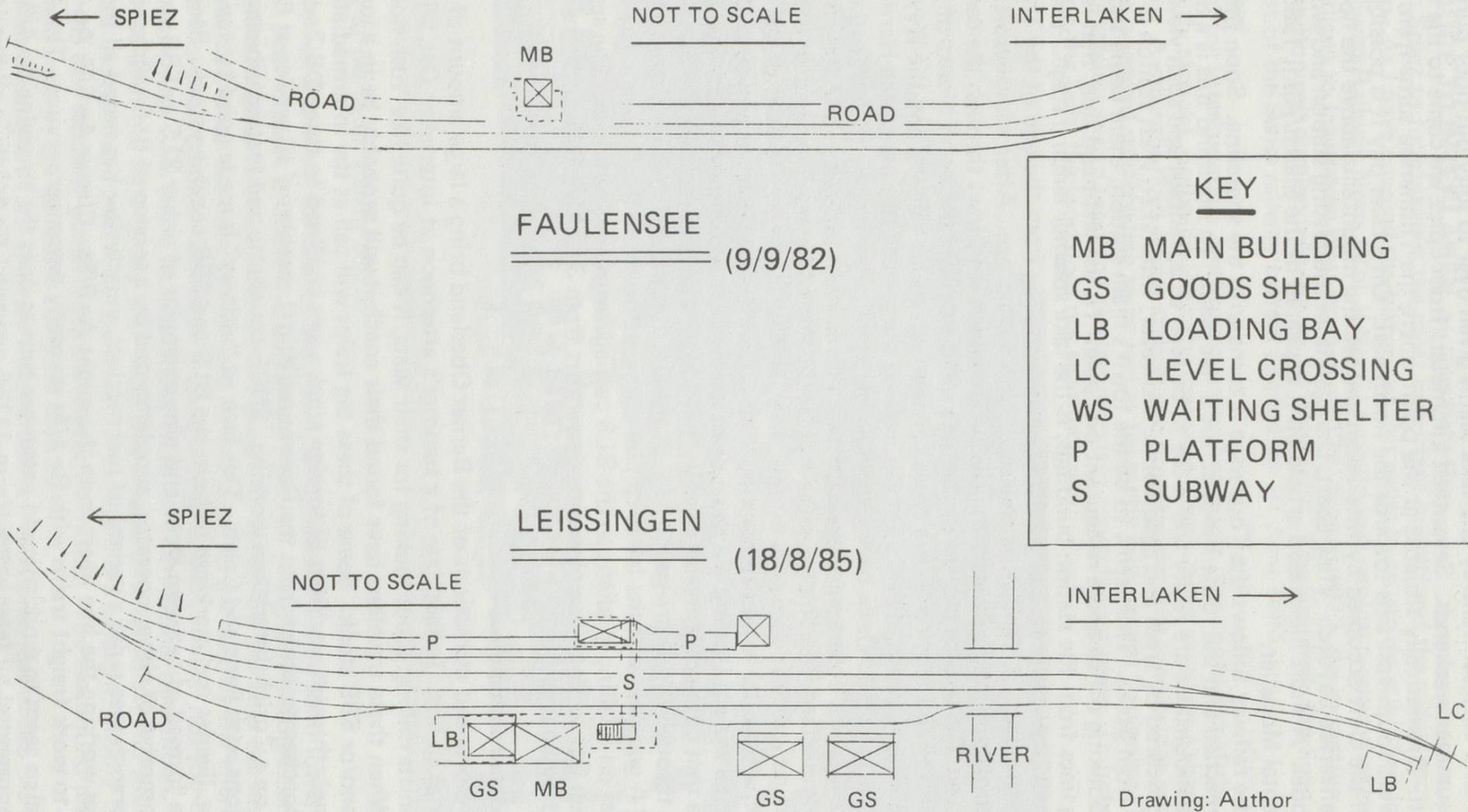
The railway now changes its character with a vengeance. After a level-crossing at the end of the platforms the line meets the river Aare which it follows through the centre of Interlaken. The view is mostly of the backs and sides of hotels and blocks of flats. My own impression of this section is of a cross between an alpine railway and the Weymouth Quay branch! The Aare is crossed and after passing the lower terminal of the Harderbahn funicular, recrossed. Once back over the river the line swings to the left, negotiating a final level-crossing and enters Interlaken Ost station.

This important interchange is the end of the line as far as passengers on the standard gauge are concerned. Journeys by rail may be continued on the BOB or the SBB's Brunig line. If the traveller would rather stay with the BLS, as least as far as Brienz, their Brienzersee vessels' landing is a short distance away at the end of the canalised section of the Aare that connects Interlaken with that Lake. The BLS reaches the Brienzersee after running through the metre-gauge lines at the Ost station and diverging from the carriage sidings. A good view of the latter can be obtained from the Brunig line. The branch continues on a falling gradient to the BLS carriage works at Bonnigen. The section from Interlaken Ost to Bonnigen closed to passengers from 31st May 1969 and services are now provided by boat or bus.

#### Trains and their Locomotives

The resorts and attractions of the Berner Oberland bring a large amount of traffic to the Interlaken line. In fact, late of a summer's afternoon at Interlaken Ost, with herds of excursionists milling about looking for their seats, it can be quite like 'rush-hour' back home. When these travellers have found their coach it will probably be in a long formation of BLS and/or SBB stock. Some of these big trains will call at the intermediate stations. Surprisingly through workings of foreign stock seem confined to three DB 2nd class seating coaches detached from the Dortmund/Brig 'Lotschburg' IC service at Bern to go forward on a Zurich/Interlaken working. SNCF couchette and seating vehicles provide connections with Paris and Calais. This lack of "visitors" is made good by variations in the types, liveries and markings of both the BLS and SBB coaching-stock. Stopping trains are formed of between three and nine examples of either BLS or SBB stock hauled by a locomotive of either operator, supplemented by a service of BLS railcar sets.

The branch sees quite a variety of locomotives, your writer has noted all the current BLS types working the line apart from the might Ae 8/8s. Classes Ae 6/8, Ae 4/4 and Ce 4/4 seem to work freight trains with Re 4/4s on many passenger services. The Ae 6/8 and Ae 4/4s also seem to work the odd passenger turn as does the surviving De 4/5 van. The SBB is represented by later batch (from 11156 onwards) Re 4/4 IIs in all liveries, old



green, new reds and TEE red/cream. The dread 'pop art' liveried 11181 has worked the branch on at least one occasion! During August 1985 I noted two Ae 6/6s, one, 11474 Vevey on a long passenger train from Interlaken and the other, 11442 St. Gallen on a train of hopper-waggons bound for the Interlaken branch, both at Spiez.

#### Modelling and Information

With its sinuous lakeside single track and variety of trains and locomotives, the Spiez/Interlaken line has, I feel, modelling potential. Comments made in my previous articles on BLS group lines apply equally to the Interlaken branch. Suitable SBB locomotives and stock are produced by a number of manufacturers.

The station building at Darligen forms the prototype for a new kit in HO scale by Vollmer. Darligen and Faulensee stations bear a 'family likeness' though the latter is somewhat smaller and does not have a goods shed attached. As with the Bern Neuchatel line, the track of the Interlaken branch is flat-bottom rail laid on wooden sleepers. The type of rail used has a very narrow foot and would, I think, be best represented in HO by bull-head. The Spiez based HRF company produce Basel/Bern/Interlaken Ost route coach plates in O (ref.0048) and HO (ref.1048).

There seems to be little information on the Interlaken line in English. Writers seem to concentrate on the Thun/Brig route together with the metre gauge lines of the Berner Oberland and pass over the link between. There are some photos taken along the line in the Orell Fussli albums 'Bahnen der Voralpen' (pages 126-131) and 'Simplon Lotschberg' (new edition, pages 115-118).

#### Footnote

Since the above article was written Verlag have published the first in what promises to be a most interesting series of books on the BLS and its constituents. The title is *Die Bahnen Der BLS Gruppe - Geschichte und Rollmaterial (Band 1.1) - Bodelibahn/Thunerseebahn/Spiez-Frutigen-Bahn*, the author being Dieter Schopfer. Drawings of station buildings put up by the companies listed in the title including Faulensee, Leissigen and Darligen are included. .

#### Train Formations

Train No. 425  
Paris/Interlaken  
Date 19/8/85

11274 Locomotive SBB Green  
51 85 59-70 564-4 SNCF B1/Gry  
B50 85 20-34 331-2 SBB Green  
50 63 92-33 557-2 BLS Green  
50 63 20-33 806-0 BLS Green  
50 63 20-33 803-7 BLS B1/Cm  
B50 63 20-33 791-4 BLS B1/Cm  
50 63 20-33 843-3 BLS B1/Cm  
50 63 39-33 813-5 BLS B1/Cm  
50 63 18-33 800-7 BLS Green  
50 85 18-33 304-4 SBB Green  
B50 85 20-33 297-6 SBB Green  
50 85 20-33 134-1 SBB Green  
50 85 20-33 391-7 SBB Green

Train No. 1627  
Dortmund/Interlaken  
Date 21/8/85

186 Locomotive BLS Brown  
51 80 22-90 651-6 DB B1/Cm  
61 80 22-94 066-3 DB B1/Cm  
61 80 20-94 251-1 DB B1/Cm  
50 85 92-33 654-1 SBB Green  
A50 85 20-34 120-9 SBB Green  
50 85 20-33 104-4 SBB Green  
50 85 20-33 233-1 SBB Green  
50 85 18-33 548-6 SBB Green  
A50 85 18-33 204-6 SBB Green  
A50 85 20-34 108-4 SBB Green  
A50 85 20-33 600-1 SBB Green

Train No. 424  
Interlaken/Paris  
Date 21/8/85

11317 Locomotive SBB Green  
51 87 82-70 100-8 SNCF Grn/Gry  
61 87 30-70 034-0 SNCF Corail  
51 87 44-70 317-5 SNCF B1/Gry  
51 85 59-70 016-7 SBB Green  
51 85 59-70 017-5 SBB Green  
50 63 20-33 800-3 BLS Green

Train No. 2797  
Bern/Interlaken  
Date 21/8/85

164 Locomotive BLS Brown  
50 85 00-33 854-8 PTT Green  
50 85 18-33 561-9 SBB Green  
50 85 20-33 338-8 SBB Green  
B50 85 20-33 676-1 SBB Green

Train No. 1645  
Basel/Interlaken  
Date 19/8/85

189 Locomotive BLS Brown  
50 63 92-33 552-3 BLS B1/Cm  
50 63 20-33 899-5 BN B1/Cm  
B50 63 20-33 815-1 BLS B1/Cm  
B50 63 20-33 818-5 BLS B1/Cm  
50 63 18-33 804-9 BLS Green

Parties' Special  
For Interlaken  
Date 9/9/82

11187 Locomotive SBB Green  
50 85 20-34 046-6 SBB Green  
50 85 29-33 637-4 SBB Green  
50 85 29-33 055-9 SBB Green