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UP-DATE ON OBERMUTTEN

By Arthur Crane

In the Swiss Express No. 5 of January 1986 Dave Howsam described the layout Obermitten, and finished his article by saying "Now what we really need is a terminus to join on to the other end of Obermitten". Little did he know what he was starting!

As I had been talked into building my own layout, commencing with the scenic section, I went on to build a station which could substitute for Obermitten and would provide me with a complete home layout. This was loosely based on the track plan of Tiefencastel but, still being a contrary sort, I called it Crandorf and used the Kibri model of Oberried for the station building.

In the meantime Philip Donbavand was embarking on his own layout for home use which was a complex station with a main line and a branch line, both running off to a hidden double fiddle-yard.

Then Steve Crebbin joined in with proposals for another rural section. I think he had been mesmerised hanging out of a coach window while travelling over the Tuola spiral section of the RhB Albula section. His plan was for a spiral section running over viaducts and through spiral tunnels which gave a rise of some 7 inches from end to end. The top level joins on to Crandorf and the bottom level emerges from a tunnel straight into the original Obermitten. On the hidden section Steve has incorporated a passing loop and a short siding - this allows for a bit of sleight of hand where a train disappears into a tunnel and then another one appears at the other end.

Dave then constructed a rural extension to his station which descended gently passing over a road bridge and then a level crossing to link up with Philip's station, Zillis.

As the four participants's homes are scattered round Manchester and Steve lives on the Wirral, a lot of cardboard templates indicating track positions and ground contours had to be circulated to get the various sections to join up. There was pressure building up for completion as we intended to have the whole layout on show at the 1987 A.G.M. in York. The weekend prior to the A.G.M. all the sections were brought together for the first time at my house to see if they fitted together and worked. Half had to be erected in the lounge downstairs and the other half in our son's lounge upstairs.

Those members who attended the York A.G.M. were able to judge how successful we had been, although a great deal of detail work on the scenic side still had to be done. Dave mentioned in his article that the traverser was somewhat inadequate to provide a sufficiently extensive service, and I am afraid this was very evident at York. So back to the drawing board, and Dave and I evolved a replacement for the traverser which provided two tracks forming reversing loops which were able to hold four trains. This has proved itself a great improvement at subsequent exhibitions we have attended. The layout is such that as well as the whole four sections which gives a frontage of 35 feet with a 10 feet section at right angles it is possible to exhibit and operate satisfactorily sections of the layout such as Zillis plus Obermitten. Incidentally, it was very gratifying to be awarded the Visitors Shield at the 1988 Wakefield Model Railway Exhibition.

Steve has also been busy organising a display of photographs, maps and explanatory drawings to put up alongside the layout which gives the public some idea of what the RhB is all about.

If we are waiting for a train at Zillis station we can see activity in the sidings and eventually the train emerges from the tunnel and rounds the curve alongside the branch line and crosses the river negotiating the double slips. After pulling away from the station we cross a road where a car is waiting at the flashing lights and on past a small hotel. The track then begins to climb gently over a road bridge and we see workmen below where a

landslip had occurred. The track has all been reinstated and we curve gently into the first stop at Obermitten where a railcar on a local service is waiting. There is activity here with cement hoppers being unloaded into the overhead silo and the PTT bus waiting to take passengers on up into the mountains. Straight after leaving the station we enter a tunnel and eventually emerge into daylight again, crossing a small viaduct over a stream rushing down the hillside. As we curve round we see an isolated farm on the right above us, and then we pass under a high viaduct carrying the railway above us. Immediately afterwards we plunge into another tunnel and sense we are climbing upwards and emerge into the open again on a tight left-hand curve against an escarpment to cross the viaduct. The track levels out to a gentle gradient and we can see down below on the right the track we have recently traversed in the opposite direction. Immediately on the left there is great building activity going on, and then we slow down to enter Crandorf where logs are being unloaded on the siding on the left and spare stock is standing on the two sidings on the right. Waiting in the station is an express on its way to Zillis and this departs as soon as we have come to rest.

We leave the station and pass under the road bridge and curve round to the right on a gentle falling gradient. Up above the retaining wall on the left we glimpse the church and guest house. If we open the window we may hear the bells ringing in the church tower. Continuing on the falling gradient with the land falling away to the right with an isolated barn on the lower slopes we cross a high viaduct over a stream and road and almost immediately enter a short tunnel bored in a rocky outcrop, and then emerge on to the reversing loop.

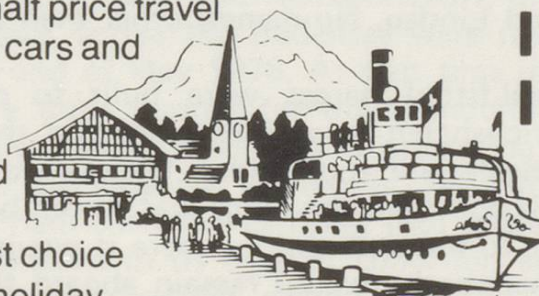
I know I speak for Steve and Philip as well as for myself when I say that we are greatly indebted to Dave for the invaluable help he has given us with our layouts, for he has been involved with them all. There is nothing so reassuring as having an expert close at hand!

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