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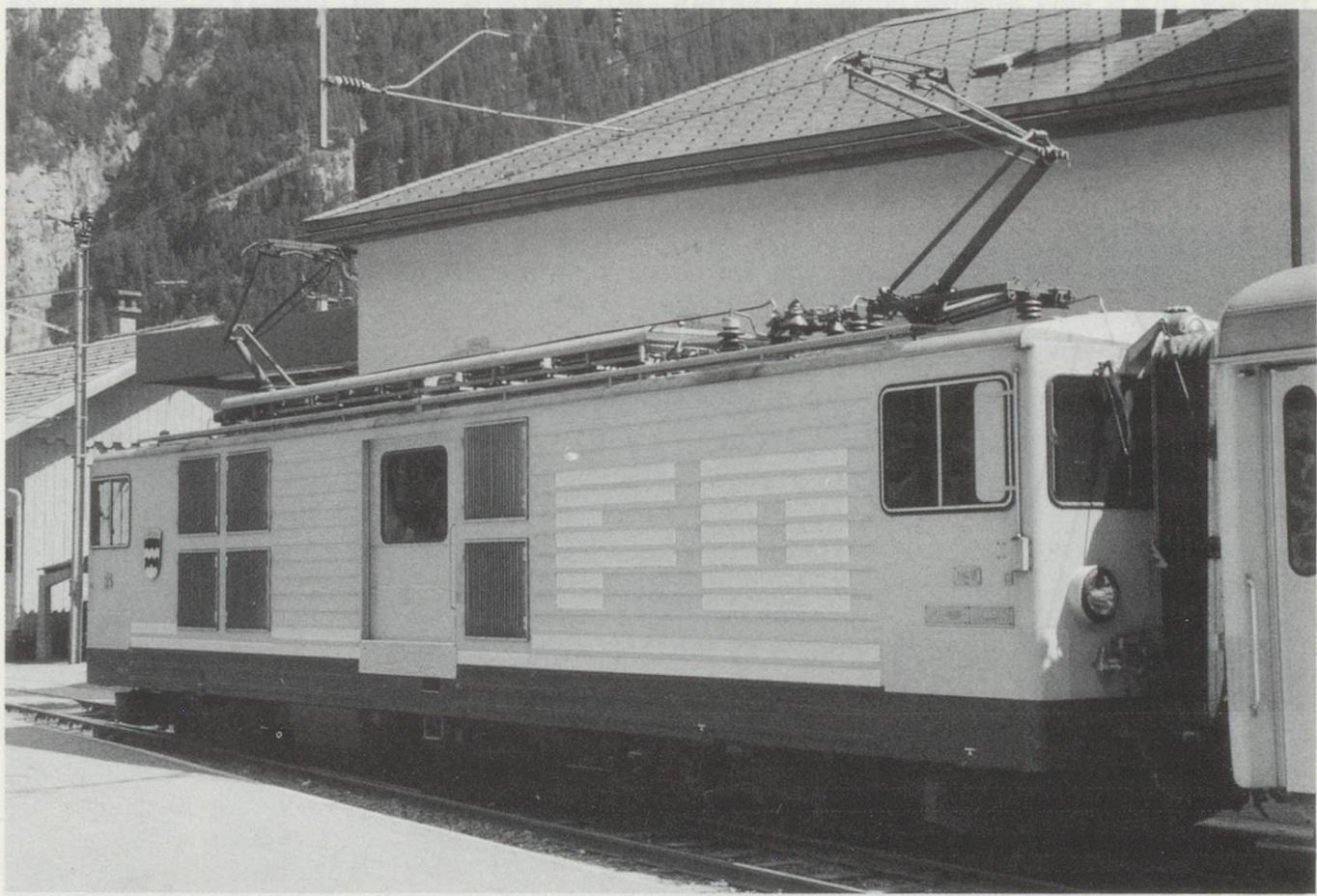
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FAILED AGAIN

By T. Bigley.

Why Failed? Well, in my previous article in the May 88 "Swiss Express" describing my first trip on the Glacier Express from Chur to Brig, I made some rash and reckless statement about vowing to return one day and complete the whole journey from St Moritz to Zermatt. This ambition was in direct conflict with an invitation to fly out to Zürich for a circular round trip, First Class, via the Gotthard North Ramp, onto Andermatt to pick up the "Glacier Express" to Chur and then back to Zürich. However, I am sure you would agree that **that** was an invite no red-blooded Society member could refuse.



Furka Oberalp Bahn. Triebwagen Deh4/4 No.94 at Göschenen.

Photo: T. Bigley.

So Thursday 10th August saw the aircraft with our little party aboard pushing back from Terminal 1 at London Heathrow airport, some ten minutes late on the days first departure to Zürich. The delay was significant as our host, who was meeting us at Zürich, was concerned that we caught the train out of Flughafen for Zürich Hbf only some 18 minutes after the scheduled arrival time. Should the connection be lost, the whole itinerary involving six trains became very precarious, and put in jeopardy the return to London by the last flight that night. However, our British Airways Boeing 757 made up the delay and we arrived in Switzerland on time and, after queuing through Immigration, were met by our host who led our party down through the shopping levels to board a train, consisting mainly of B.L.S. coaches, with just 2 minutes in hand. Ten minutes later, saw us into Zürich Hbf with a good view of the re-liveried TEE (Now Eurocity Express) RABe units in the

coach sidings. After a quick platform change we boarded the Eurocity Express EC83 "Hermann Hesse" (06:48 ex Stuttgart) which was bound for Milan at 10:07. The train, headed by Re6/6 No.11673 "CHAM", was mainly made up of a mixture of DB and FS UIC stock, and some SBB Type EW^{IV} coaches, which being nearly empty afforded us the most comfort for our journey up the Gotthard North ramp to Göschenen. The early part of the trip down the west side of the Zürichsee was uneventful, and only after passing through the 3359 metre long Albis tunnel and onto Zug and Arth-Goldau, did we reach new (for me) territory.

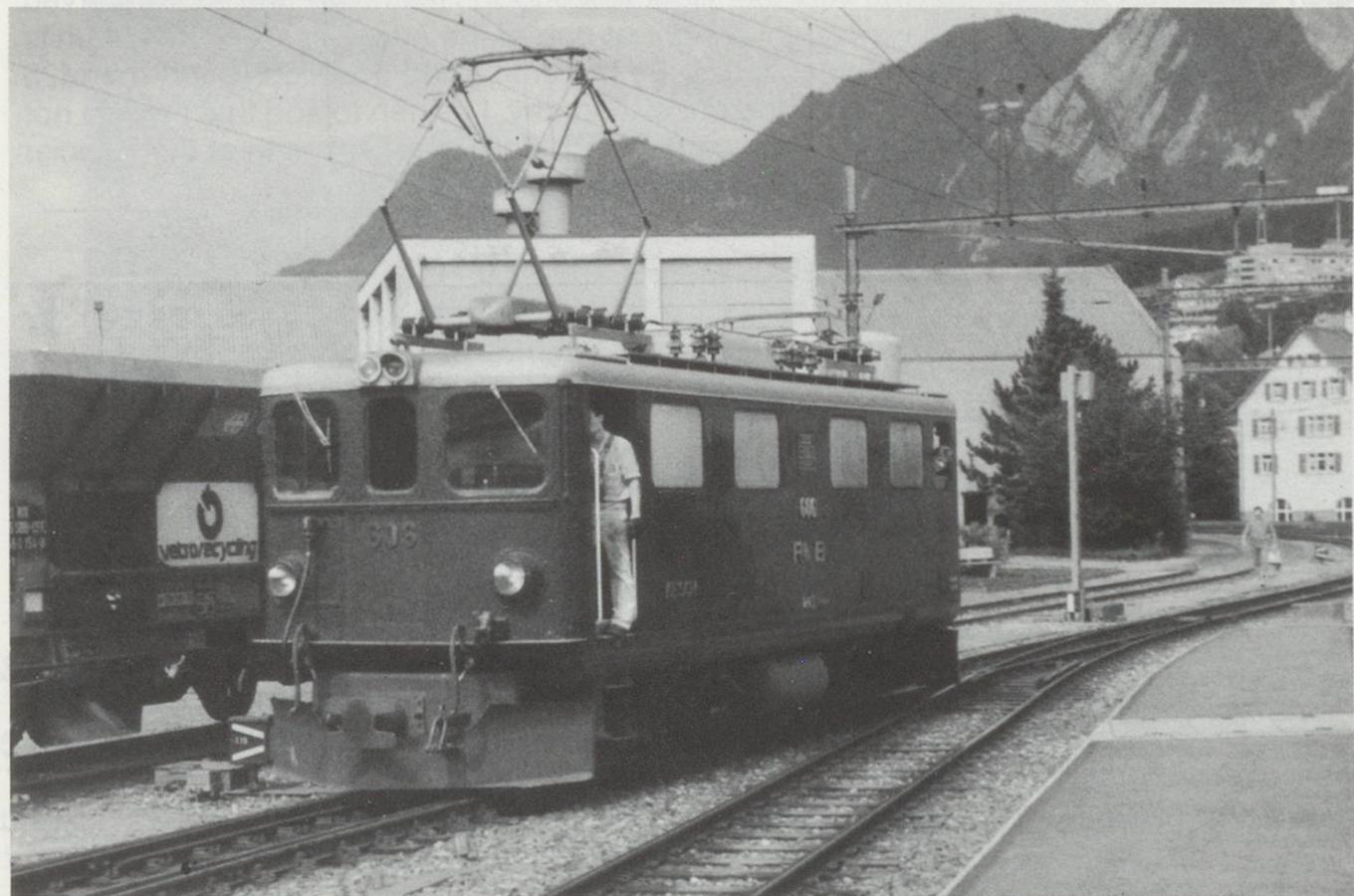
The mountains closed in on either side as we approached the North ramp of the Gotthard. Erstfeld was my main interest on this section - hoping to glimpse some of its preserved residents, but all were safely tucked away inside and all that could be seen was the green Ce6/8 No.14270 in its permanent display position. The Re6/6 was now well into the climb and on to the spectacular spirals at Wassen, and soon we reached Göschenen where we disembarked with just enough time to walk to the south end of the platform to watch the train disappear into the Gotthard Tunnel. High above and to the right of the tunnel portal could be seen the red F.O. Triebwagen Deh4/4 No.94 "Fiesch" gingerly leading its two coach "Pendelzug" train down the 3.75km long 17.9% gradient from Andermatt. We had 20 minutes to wait before it returned up the Schöllenen Gorge, giving us some time to watch the multitude of trains on the Gotthard main line. Our party of ten boarded the bright red coach ABt No.4182, and commenced the 20 minute climb up the gorge, gaining 110 metres in altitude for every kilometre travelled. While mostly in tunnel or avalanche shelter this short trip is not lacking in spectacular views, especially the bridges both old and new on the St Gotthard road.



F.O. Bahn HGe4/4, No.32 with Glacier Express at Andermatt.

Photo: T. Bigley.

Andermatt was very active with the Tm2/2 No.4973 busy on station duties and two westbound trains waiting in the station for the line to clear. Our train, "Glacier Express C", eventually arrived and we boarded a BVZ coach for the two hour journey to Chur little knowing the violent fate awaiting two of us. We found ourselves crammed into one half of the coach due to an error with the reservations, since most of us wanted to take photographs on the spectacular climb from Andermatt to Nätschen two of us made our way into the other half of the coach which was occupied by a sole elderly lady. Setting about taking photographs of the incredible climb being made by the train as it journeys upwards to Disentis, we were, in consequence, taken wholly by surprise when we found ourselves being attacked about the head by the aforesaid lady with a "Glacier Express" brochure! As our host had returned from checking our lunch reservations, and being fluent in German, we left him to pacify the lady and explain that we did not want the seats. We settled down to enjoy the scenery over the Oberalp. Disentis/Muster was soon reached, and in the station lying in the shadow of the huge Benedictine Monastery we swapped traction from the F.O. HGe4/4 No.32 to a green liveried RhB Ge4/4¹ No.606 "Kesch" for the remaining 83km downward run to Chur. Very pleasing to see the older HGe4/4's in full use during the summer peak, and in fact we saw as much of them on our short journey as their newer brothers.



RhB Locomotive Ge4/4¹ No.606 at Chur.

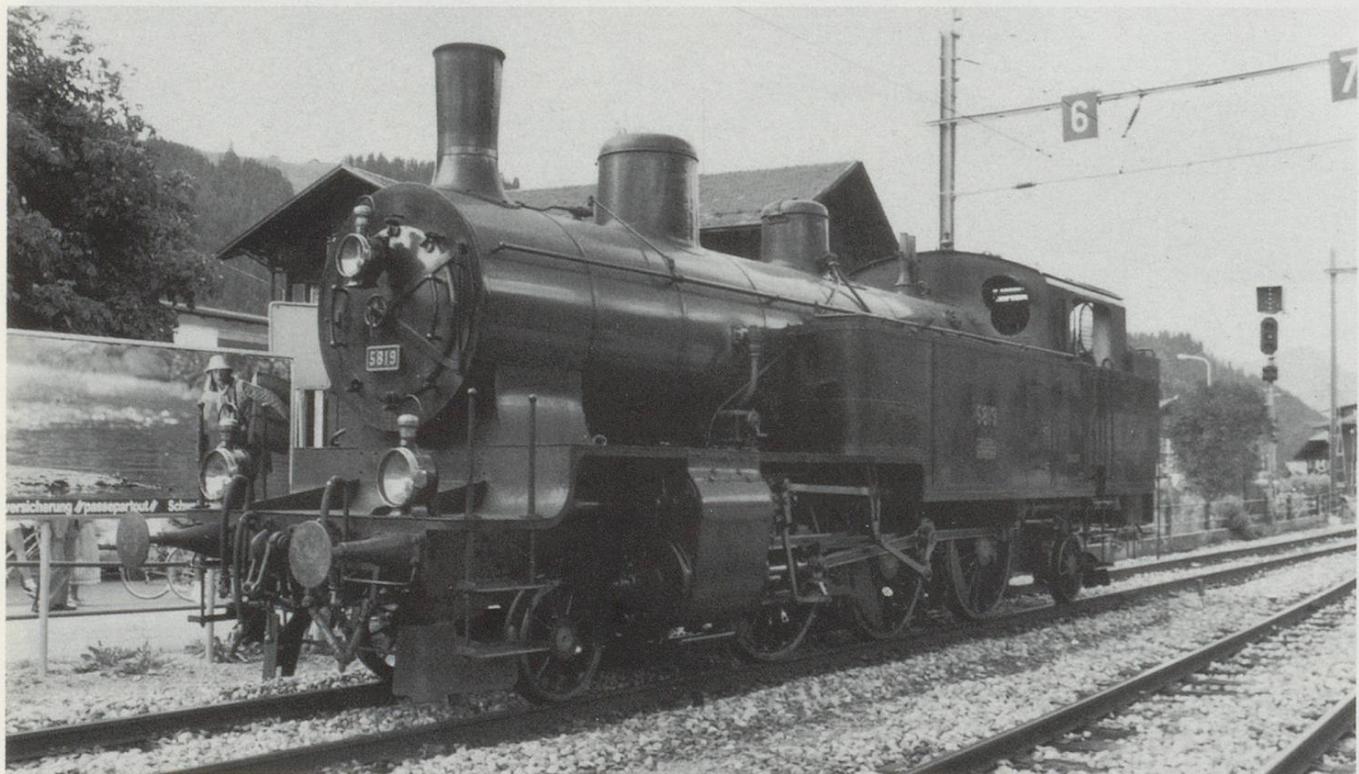
Photo. T. Bigley.

Much of our journey down the Vorderrheine was spent in Restaurant Car WR3812 and here the consumption of liqueurs after lunch, poured from a height by the waiters, separated those of us whose interest in Swiss railways was greatest and therefore required a, relatively, clear head to enjoy the 25 minute wait in Chur. It was as well that we did as it was a hive of activity on both the standard and metre gauge lines, and it was with great reluctance that at 1625 we boarded IC186 bound for Zürich Hbf. My great regret was

that my second visit to the Rhätische Bahn had still not allowed me a glimpse of a "Krokodil" - a type I have a wish to see and photograph more than any other. I feel that I have to settle for second best and make a trip to the Verkehrshaus in Luzern to see their "Stuffed" one.

The trip back to Zürich was smooth and comfortable and the combined effects of apres-lunch, an 0500 hrs start that morning and the sun, which had blessed us all day, streaming in the window had a very relaxing effect which only the two most enthusiastic (i.e. lunatic) of us fought to resist. The others would not have been too concerned at missing the Süd Ost Bahn Triebwagens as we approached Zürich in the early evening rush hour.

We reached the Hauptbahnhof well into the rush hour and most of our party continued on to Flughafen to catch an earlier flight home. Two of us, however, showed our dedication by spending the last possible hour watching and photographing the evening rush. The weather was perfect for photography so we stayed "upstairs" on the main line platforms and ignored the new underground SZ and S-Bahn lines. We were rewarded with a constant stream of Re4/4's, Re6/6's and the "Nostalgic Orient Express" presented itself in front of our lenses. Locomotives were about half and half red and grimy drab green but no computer renumbered stock was seen during the whole day. All too soon we had to catch a train to Flughafen for the very last flight to London Heathrow, and as we curved away towards Zürich Oerlikon we caught a sight of one of the new Class 450 Re4/4 units in charge of a rake of double deck coaches. By the time I had travelled round the M25 motorway to home it had been a very long but elating day, I hasten to add that I would not have to be asked twice to repeat it. As for my failure to travel the full length of the "Glacier Express" on my second attempt, perhaps third time lucky.



SBB Type Eb3/5 Locomotive at Zweifelden.

Photo. P. Kloss.