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LANDSLIPS and CELEBRATIONS

by C.J.Freezer

We have just returned from a very enjoyable visit to Switzerland, where we not only dodged the dreadful weather that afflicted England for most of June, but had the pleasure of travelling over the Oberalp pass in the Glacier Express A during a heavy snowstorm - in mid June! This is probably what comes of appealing for snow scenes for our December issue!

The most significant news item of 1991 was, undoubtedly, the landslide which obliterated the BVZ below Randa on 9 May. Fortunately the massive rockfall - where the face of the mountain simply dropped into the valley, creating some 31 million cubic metres of rubble, extending over 1.25 Km along the valley - was foreshadowed by an earlier fall on 18 April which allowed everyone to be evacuated in good time to avoid any loss of life and to allow the BVZ to make provision by moving by the old road (the line having been cut by the smaller fall) 13 second class coaches, Deh4/4 Nos 21/23 and Tm No.73 up to Zermatt to assist in operating the shuttle service.

The main landslip completely blocked the Matter Visp valley, destroying both road and rail and blocking the river, which quickly rose to flood Randa village and station before pumping equipment could be installed to get the water round the obstruction. Zermatt was cut off until a new and extremely tortuous road was completed round the slip. This allowed contractors to get down to the business of restoring the railway and, more importantly, cutting a new bed for the river.

A visit to Zermatt on 8 June allowed us to see the BVZ's revised service in operation. North of the break, passenger services were working to the Kursbuch and being hauled by the new HGe4/4's and ABDeh8/8 No.2041 as far as Herbriggen. The replacement coach service is working well under normal circumstances. At Herbriggen the coach park is across the main road, and a light controlled pedestrian crossing, operated by the railway staff, has been provided to allow the passengers to cross safely. Also at Herbriggen the parcels depot in the main station building has been turned into an improvised buffet, which we found most welcome on our return trip. The coach trip provides a good view of the works and we were able to get a number of photos of the site as we drove past. The tortuous nature of the road gives one ample opportunity to see the disaster from various angles. At Randa the station and village is off the main road, which now crosses the valley on an inflatable pontoon bridge which normally rests on the old road surface.

Above the landslip the normal service is maintained by the new Zermatt-Tasch shuttle trains, operating between Randa or Tasch and track 2 at Zermatt. As these are designed for work from raised platforms, the fall plates were less effective at Randa. When we visited the line a small amount of new track was in place and it appeared that an entirely new alignment on the other side of the valley is being laid out. Good progress is being made but one cannot expect reinstatement to be a speedy process and whether the BVZ will be able to stage their Centenary display this year is open to doubt.

Power was provided on 8 June by ABDeh4/8 Nos 2042/43 and an unidentified ABDeh8/8 with HGe4/4 16 spare; two Pendelzug sets were present at Zermatt with Deh4/4 Nos 21/24, as was HGe4/4 No.11 and Tm No.72. Tm No.73 was at Randa. The shuttle service adds twenty minutes to the trip times, arrivals and departures at Zermatt being adjusted accordingly - but the Gornergrat hadn't fallen into line when we got there and the train had left just before we got to the BVZ station. Very frustrating, to say the least.

If the rockfall was not enough, on 16/17 June a torrential downpour led to the suspension of services above St.Niklaus on the Monday. By the afternoon, Randa station was under 2 metres of water and all that could be seen was the cab of the forlorn Tm No.73 which was by no means improved by its immersion in the Randasee. Certainly, the shuttle service had to be

ROCKFALLS AT RANDA, BVZ

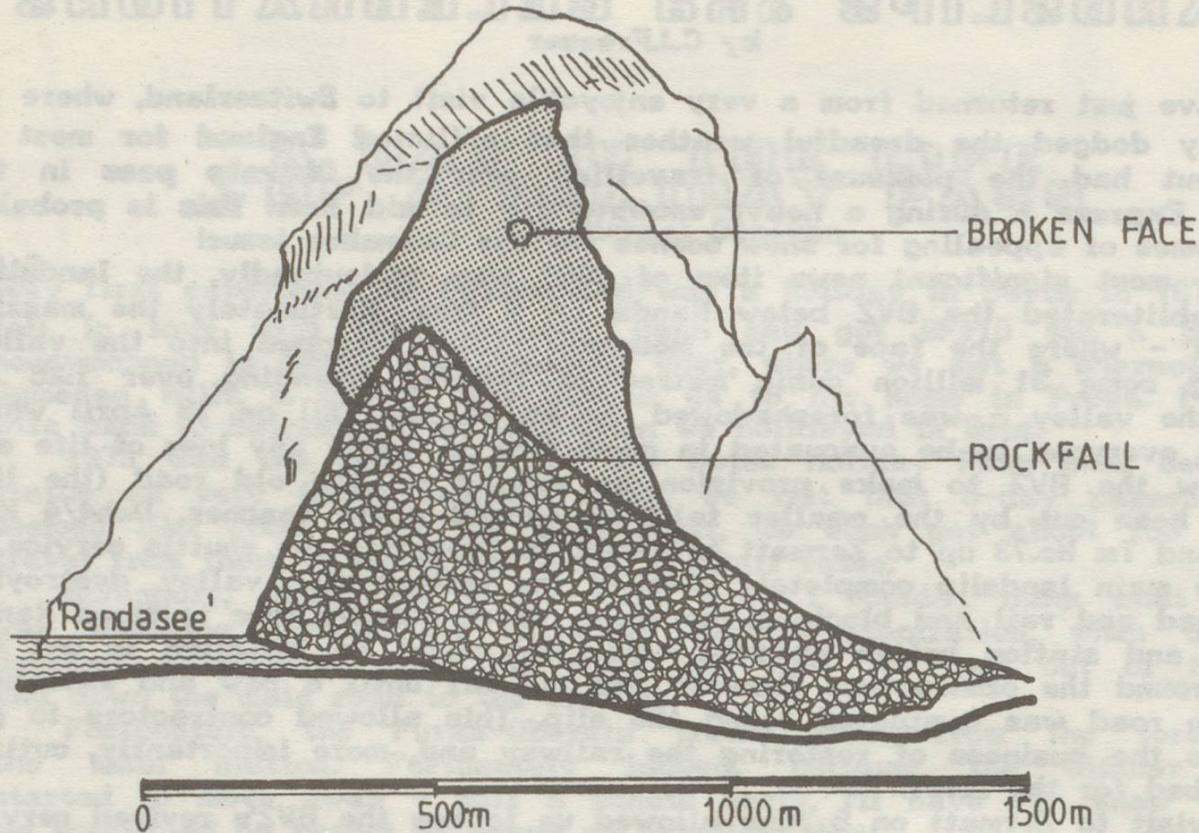


Diagram of rockfalls at Randa, BVZ

modified until Tuesday 18 June at least. All in all, not the way the BVZ wished to celebrate its Centenary.

We had planned to visit the BVZ Centenary celebrations over the weekend of 15/16 June and had booked into Brig. We didn't miss out on a special event, for the SBB had staged a display at St.Maurice in celebration of the 700th Anniversary of the Confederation, and on that week-end were running steam excursions to Bouveret. The event was advertised as *A Toute Vapeur*, which can be loosely translated, "All Steamed Up". This even extended to the sugar sachets on offer in the station buffet and, for all we know, elsewhere in the town. The display was provided in conjunction with the *Rive Bleu Express* from Bouveret, who also supplied the stock for the special train, and *Vapeur Val de Travers* from San Sulpice.

It was obvious that the schoolchildren of St.Maurice had been busy for weeks beforehand providing a fine range of banners with a railway flavour. Most shop windows incorporated some very distinctive wooden "steam locomotives" in their displays and an exhibition was staged in the local cinema. This incorporated a small N Gauge layout, a large LGB system, a good collection of models, badly lit, and a very interesting display of period postcards with a local railway flavour. The main display was at the depot, the roundhouse being host to the following items of stock:

In the roundhouse

SBB Ce6/8^{III} "Krokodil" No.14305
 SBB "Red Arrow" RAe2/4 No.1001
 RBE (SNCF) BB diesel No.71010 *Naomie*
 SBB Ae3/8^I 10284
 RBE 0-6-0T No.2 *Hansli* ex Sihlthalbahn
 SCB BC^I No.151 of 1865
 VVT Sales van

Outside

SBB A3/5 No.705
 SBB Re8/6 No.11473 "St Maurice"
 VVT (SNCF) 4-8-2 No.241 A65
 VVT (DB) 4-6-2 No.01 202
 SBB AB "Heavyweight" coach No.2856
 SBB lightweight coach, repainted.
 SBB Sales coach



The landslip at Randa, 9 June 1981. Some idea of the scale can be gained from the partially demolished houses at the foot of the slide.

Photo C.J.Freese



Above: Work progressing on the realignment of the BVZ above Herbriggen, 8 June 1991.

Below: New bridge girders awaiting placement on the BVZ Herbriggen-Randa landslip deviation, 8 June 1991.

Photos C.J.Freeseer

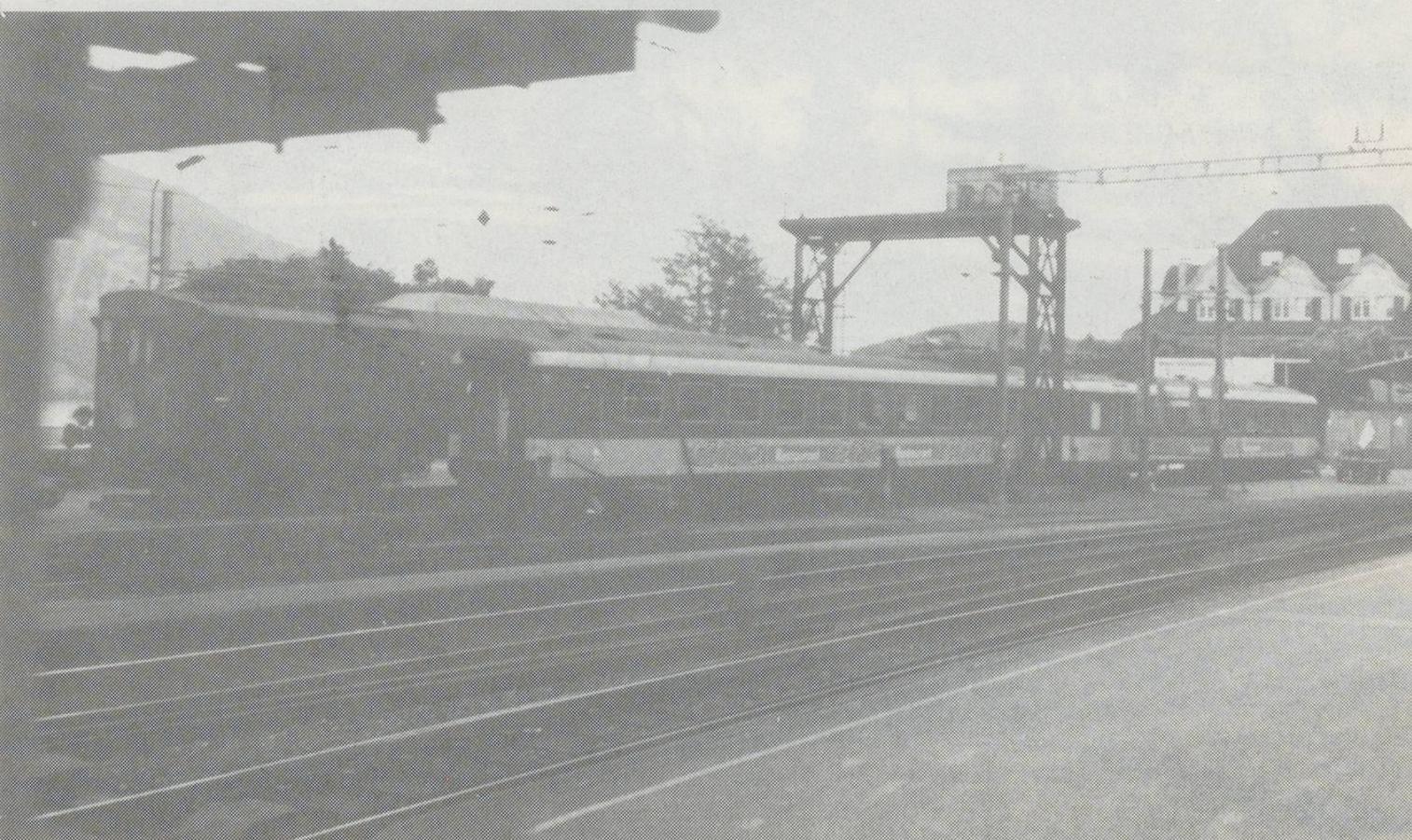




Above: TSOL train at Renens, 9 June 1991.

Below: "Chez Perron", the improvised station buffet at Spiez, 10 June 1991.
See "Swiss Express" June 1991 page 26.

Photos C.J.Freezer

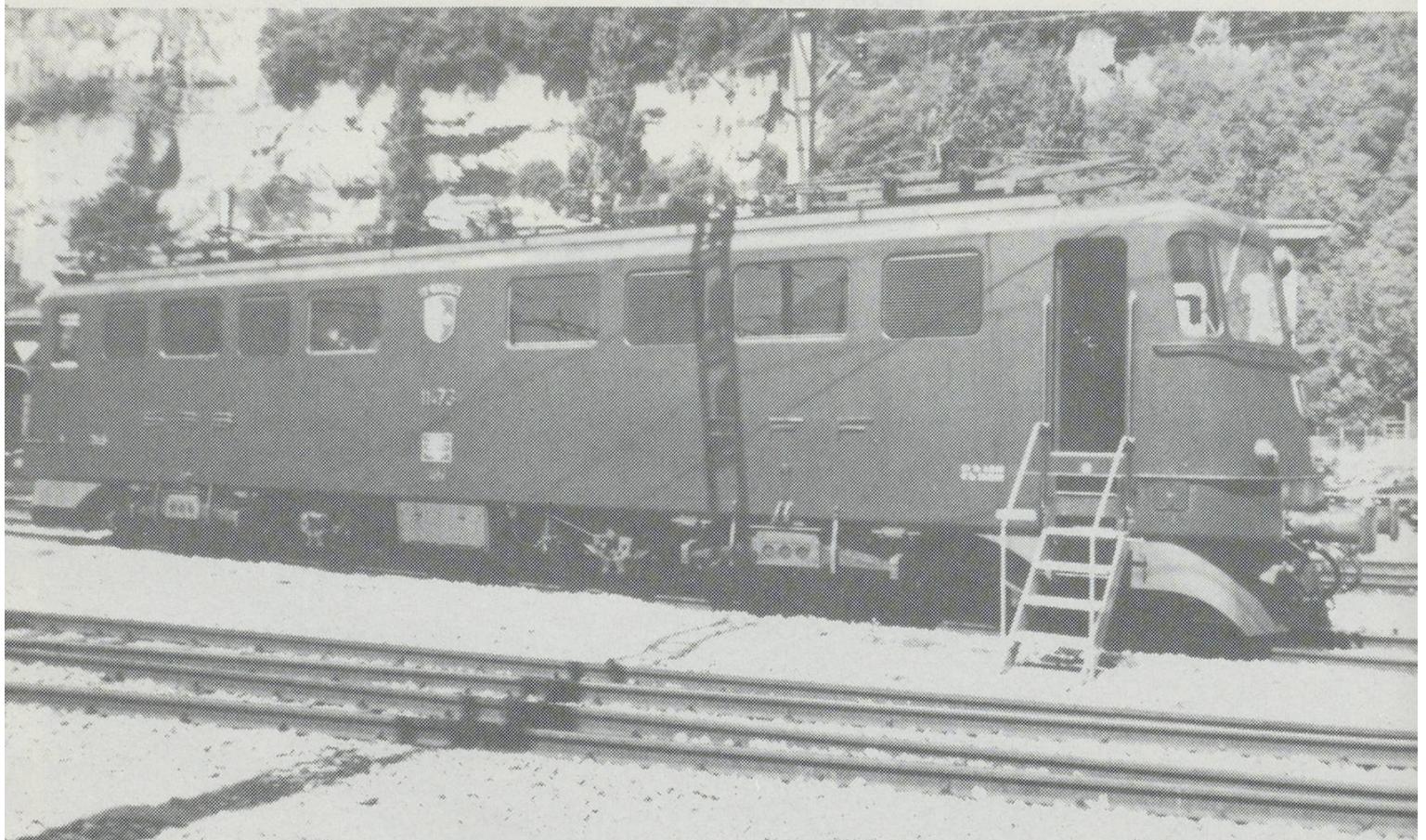




Above: SBB A3/5 No 705 at St.Maurice, 15 June 1991. The locomotive is about to back onto its train for a special steam working to Bouveret.

Below: SBB Re6/6 No.11473 "St Maurice" outside St.Maurice roundhouse on 15 June 1991, a prominent part of the display of stock on view during "A Toute Vapeur".

Photos C.J.Freezer



The SBB sales coach was there, with as fine a collection of junk - sorry, relics - as anyone could wish to find. Only the problem of bringing it back kept us reined in. Alongside this was a coach which had been completely covered in rather poor graffiti - we suspect the local schoolchildren had been given cans of paint and a free hand.

Our steam hauled trip to Bouveret was interesting, though the near-straight nature of the route prevented us getting any shots of A3/5 No.705 in action. On arrival we were tempted by Vapeur Parc, a fine array of miniature gauge steam locos on a passenger carrying line, but we spotted the Rhone on its way to the landing stage. It was a hot day and paddle steamer cruise over a placid Lac Leman was far too tempting to resist, as was the cold beer on the sunlit upper deck.

We managed a quick trip over the TSOL on its second Sunday of operation. Possibly the heavy user was largely made up of those who, like us had come along for the ride, at all events the train left Flon packed to the doors.

Later we made two important discoveries. The first is that whilst, in theory, you can get from the landing stage at Zurich Bahnhofstrasse to Stadelhofen and catch an eastbound S-Bahn train in ten minutes, it depends on not watching the No.2 tram move off as you reach the side of the tracks. Rather more important, we don't advise sending luggage from Lugano to Brig and expecting it to get there in under 12 hours. You have been warned! ☑

"A Toute Vapeur", St.Maurice May-June 1991. From left to right, Ticket for exhibition, sugar packet from station buffet, ticket (reduced fare for Swiss Pass) on steam special to Bouveret.



St-Maurice

A toute vapeur

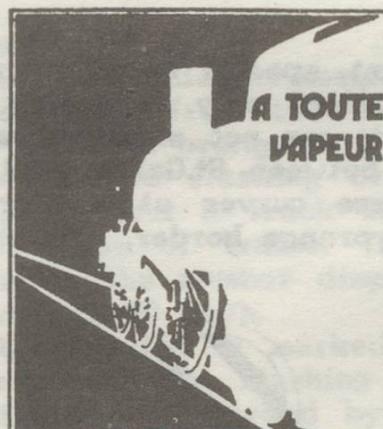
Entrée
aux expositions

Rotonde

Roxy

Adulte Fr 2.-

00383



ST - MAURICE
MAI • JUIN • 1991



700 Confédération Helvetica



A toute vapeur

1/2 Abo / ☑

Supplément train à vapeur

Valable le 15 juin 1991

seulement avec

un titre de transport

St-Maurice - Bouveret

ou vice versa

Fr 5.-

00196

SRS at German Society Shows

The Swiss Railways Society has accepted invitations to attend two Model Railway Exhibitions organised by the German Railway Society at Felixstowe Leisure Centre Complex on 7 September and at Oxford on 21 September. Times of opening are 10:00 to 17:00, full details will appear in the Model Press.