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Goppenstein Station

by Giles Della Gana

I have been intrigued by the station at Goppenstein for as long as I have been fascinated by the Bern-Lotschberg-Simplon line. This is because it seems to illustrate in real life a principle widely used by modellers, that of low relief, where only the facade and a short section of the sides of a building form the back-drop to the main part of a model.

Goppenstein lies in the valley of the River Lonza at the southern end of the Lotschberg tunnel. The Lonza valley above this point is known as the Lotschenstal, from which the name Lotschberg is derived. Prior to the opening of the BLS, it was one of the most remote areas of Switzerland, the only access being by mule track. These days the villages of the valley are served by postbuses which connect with the BLS trains at Goppenstein.

Remoteness was but one of the difficulties that faced the lines builders. The station stands at an elevation of 1217m above sea level, which meant that during winter, construction work was frequently carried out in appalling weather. The tunnel entrance was often blocked by snow, up to a depth of 25m on one occasion.

The area is badly affected by avalanches and the necessity for defence against these was demonstrated on 29 February 1908 when the works camp was overwhelmed with the loss of twelve lives. It is these defences that give the station its unusual features.

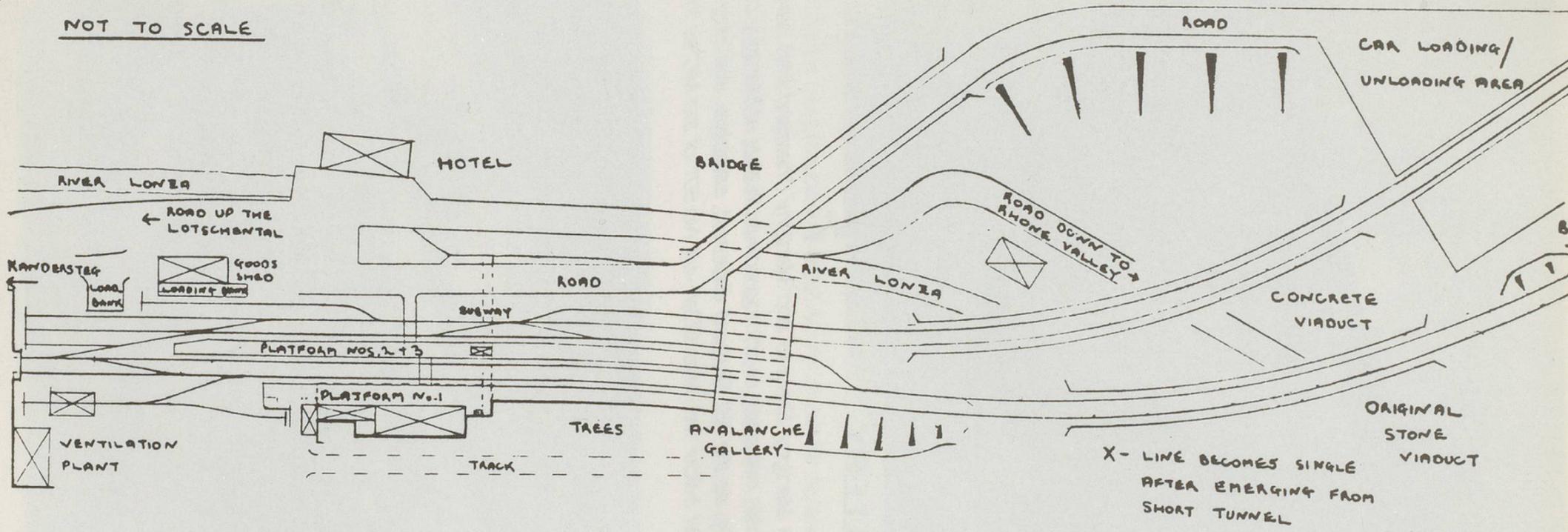
The main station building is set into a massive retaining wall on the western side. It contains all the usual Swiss station features including an office with Integra panel together with both first and second class buffets at platform level, with staff accommodation above. The platforms are connected to each other and to the car park and road by means of barrow crossings and a subway. The only building on the island platform is a waiting shelter, the goods shed is of modern design. The extended car-ferry terminal at the southern end of the station came into use in June 1979; the road bridge and railway viaduct date from this

time, their modern concrete construction contrasting with the stone arches on the original viaduct carrying the main line on to Brig. One original item to be seen is the ventilation plant, one of two, the other being at Kandersteg. They were soon to prove unnecessary, since the BLS used electric traction on this section from the outset.

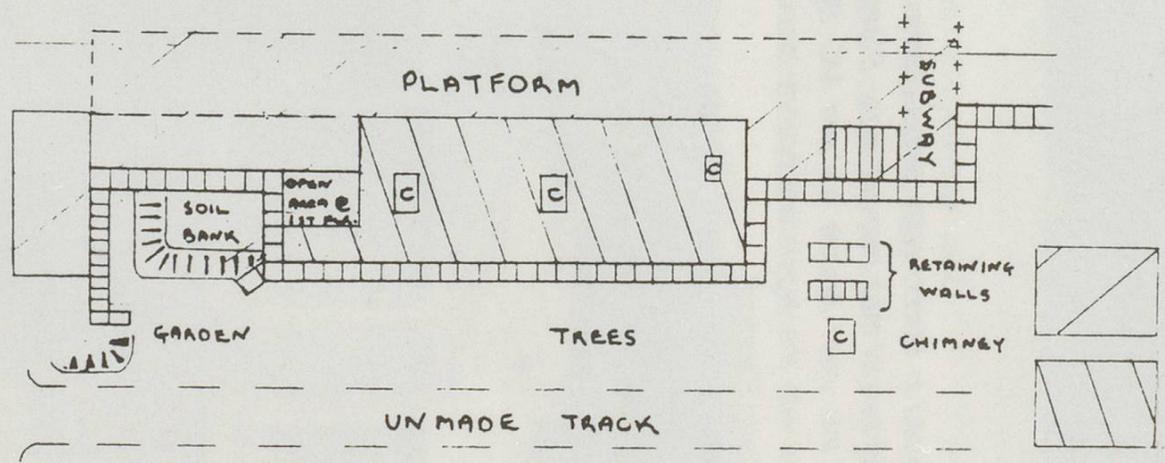
As the railhead for the picturesque Lotschenthal and one of the terminals for the car-transporter trains, Goppenstein is very busy. Nearly all passenger trains using the Spiez-Brig route call there. These services are hauled by members of the BLS Re4/4 class. The many goods trains that pass through are handled by class Ae8/8 or Re4/4. Railcars seem limited to excursions and specials south of Kandersteg. Trains from the car-ferry terminal, their locomotives at the north end, for Kandersteg gain the northbound line by means of a trailing crossover just inside the tunnel entrance. I have not been able to show this on my rough sketch plan owing to lack of space. Shunting is carried out by Te2/3 No.32, one of a pair of 'box-body' locomotives produced by conversion of the power units of CFe2/6 units in 1956.

I hope that these notes will have been of interest. I feel that the unusual station buildings, ideal cover for a controller and a bank of switches, together with the built-in scenic breaks at each end of the main station yard make Goppenstein a good prototype for an exhibition layout. If you do model the station then you must have at least one group of hikers on the platforms!!

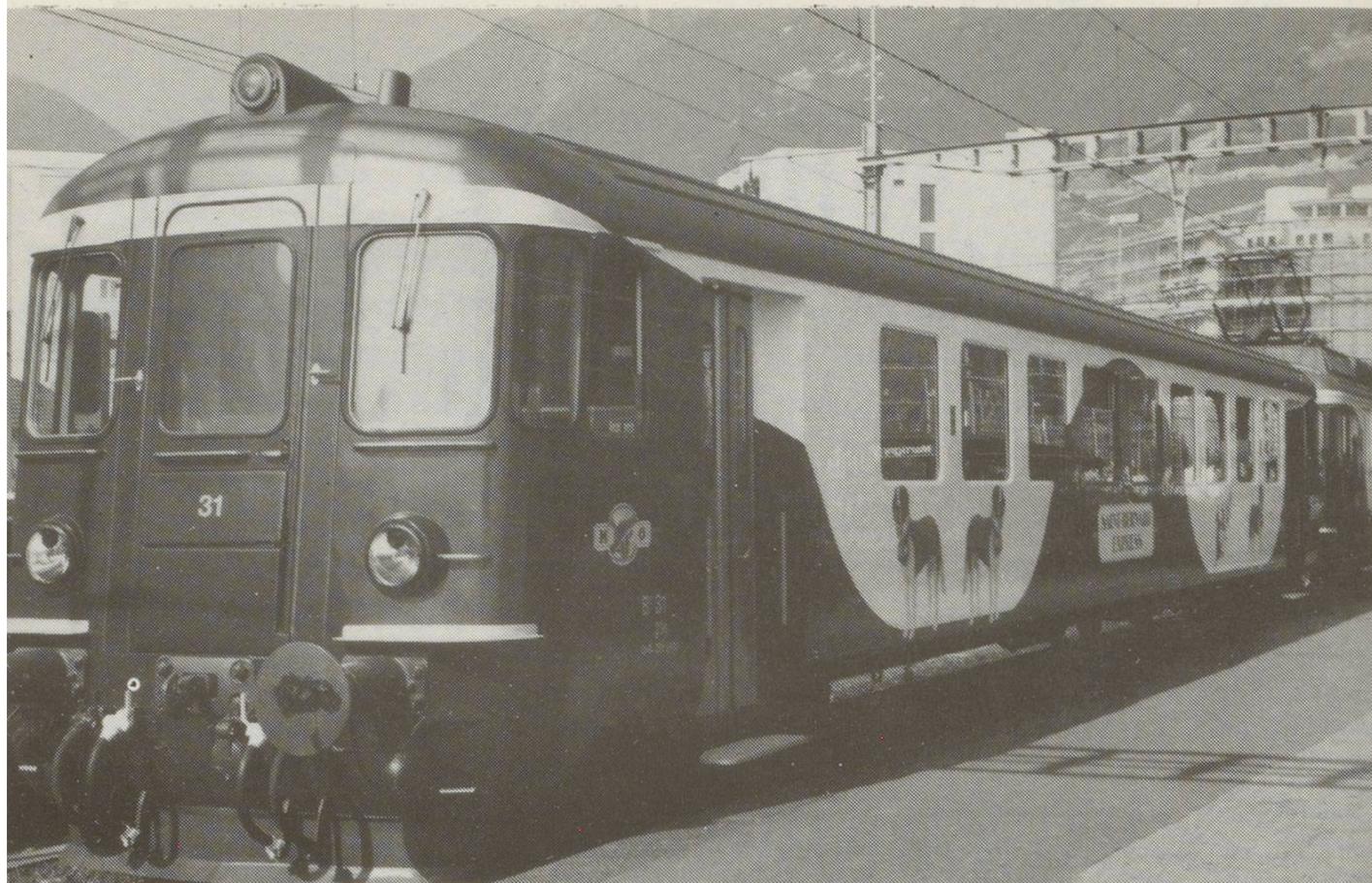
NOT TO SCALE



GOPPENSTEIN (2/9/80)

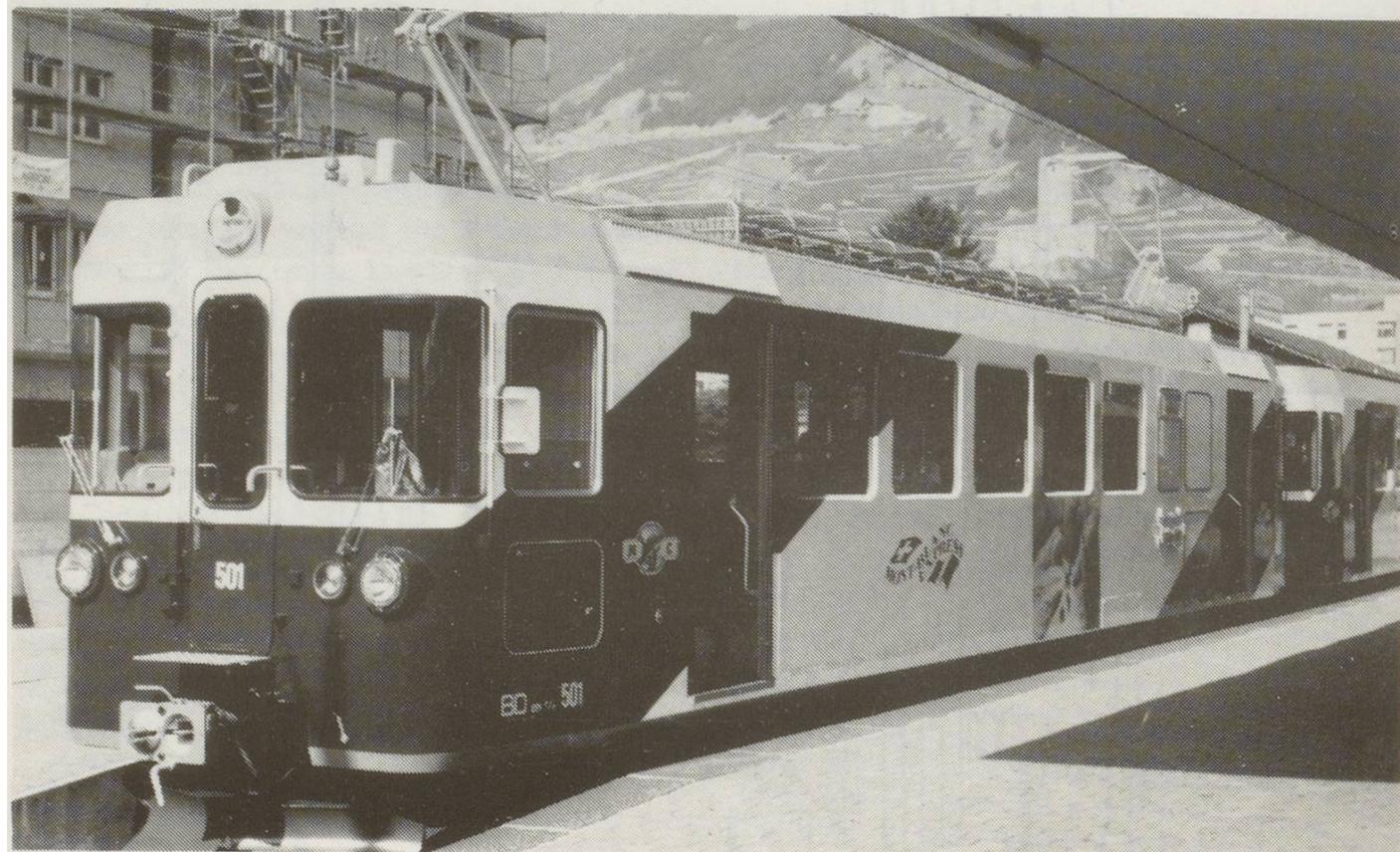


DETAILS OF MAIN BUILDING



GALLERY

As reported in March 1991 Swiss Express, The Martigny Orsieres and Martigny Chatelard lines have enlivened two of their two-car sets. Steve Horobin managed to photograph both sets at Martigny on 12 July this year. Above we see MO Bt No.31 as the "St Bernard Express", complete with dogs, complete with the legendary brandy casks whilst below we have BDeh 4/4 No.501 of the MC as the "Mont Blanc Express".





Above, Jungfrauabahn He2/2 No.11 at Kleine Scheidegg on 6 November 1990.

Photo G.W.Austin

Below. The coffee bar coach that operates on the SE-S route of the RBS metre gauge line between Solothurn and Bern, a route well worth exploring.

Photo Leslie Falksonn

