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BT 94 *Herisau* waits outside Luzern for its next duty on Sunday 6 October 1992.

The North West Bit Part 2

Further Afield

by John Jesson

Concluded from page 18, March 1993 Swiss Express

Photographs by the author

The weather had been getting better all through Saturday and by Sunday had reached the clear blue sky stage, so I left the lowlands and headed for the Gotthard. For me, a holiday in Switzerland without a ride on this, the premier Alpine route, would be unthinkable. Despite the replacement of the Gotthard local trains by buses, I caught a local train from Luzern which was going all the way to Bellinzona - all stations! I travelled as far as Faido and for a lot of the way was looking through the cab windows of the lobby of the ABt at the head of the train. Aren't the tunnels a funny shape now they've been opened out to take bigger lorries?

I know at least one other member of the Society who will remember the way from Faido station up to the Dazio Grande. It's an interesting walk, with several photo opportunities on

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the way, but watch out for road traffic. It is possible to avoid some of the traffic by taking advantage of some old road routings, still safely accessible to walkers.

The best time of the year for recording the Dazio Grande on film is midsummer, as the gorge lies almost exactly east-west and is overshadowed by mountains to the south. It is nevertheless possible to get some decent shots in September. Re6/6 No.11611 turned up, in red with chrome sticky-tape flashes at one end, similar to 11401-25. One of them had already fallen off, if you want to model this variation, it's the middle one under the non-driving side.

The return journey to Luzern was on one of the hourly semi-fast services. For once the announcement got it wrong about where the first class was, but there was perhaps some excuse. Instead of the usual booked six



In sparkling new livery, Ae6/6 No.11414 *Bern/Berne* waits for the road at the north end of Olten,
7 September 1992.

coaches, the train had 14, 1 x D, 2 x A and the rest Bs. The second class was fairly full when the train arrived at Faido about five minutes late and about 30 more passengers got on. At Airolo they were waiting 10 deep on the platform, all with knapsacks and we were ten minutes late away. Another huge crowd was waiting at Göschenen and it looked as if the SBB would have to employ Japanese style "pushers". We were now some 16 minutes late.

At Arth-Goldau we ran into track 5 and the EC for Zürich, which had been chasing our tail, ran into track 4 for cross platform interchange. About 500 passengers were involved each way and they met in the middle.... We were now 18 minutes late, but were only 14 down when we arrived in Luzern where I met SRS member Ruedi and his charming wife for a meal, a good chinwag and an inspection of the latest developments on Ruedi's model railway.

Very much later, I arrived at Olten to catch the last Regionalzug to Sissach. Some odd things can be seen late on a Sunday night; the train was headed by Re4/4^{II} No.11170 and a

rake of BLS EW-IV air-conditioned stock. Modellers, please note.

I surfaced a little late on Monday to find another fine day. Originally I was to have met up with friends from England but their arrival had been deferred for a day. Instead I, spent the day unashamedly watching trains, mostly at Bern. I would think that most members are familiar with the massive bridge which crosses the river Aare just outside the station, if not from personal experience then from photographs. It has certainly featured in many SBB publicity shots.

A convenient distance from the railway bridge is a road bridge, only a ten-minute walk from the station, which provides a splendid view of the railway's comings and goings. It would be unfair to say that the railway bridge bounces, but there is certainly a noticeable vertical movement as traffic crosses it. During my sojourn an endless variety of trains provided plenty of camera material, but the two highlights have to be BLS Ae6/8 No.205, identifiable because it carries the full company name instead of only the initials, and an NPZ



Re4/4^{IV} No.10103, *Luino* leaves Bern with EC 101 *Matterhorn*, Wiesbaden - Brig on 7 September 1992

hauling an old CIWL Pullman coach in blue/cream.

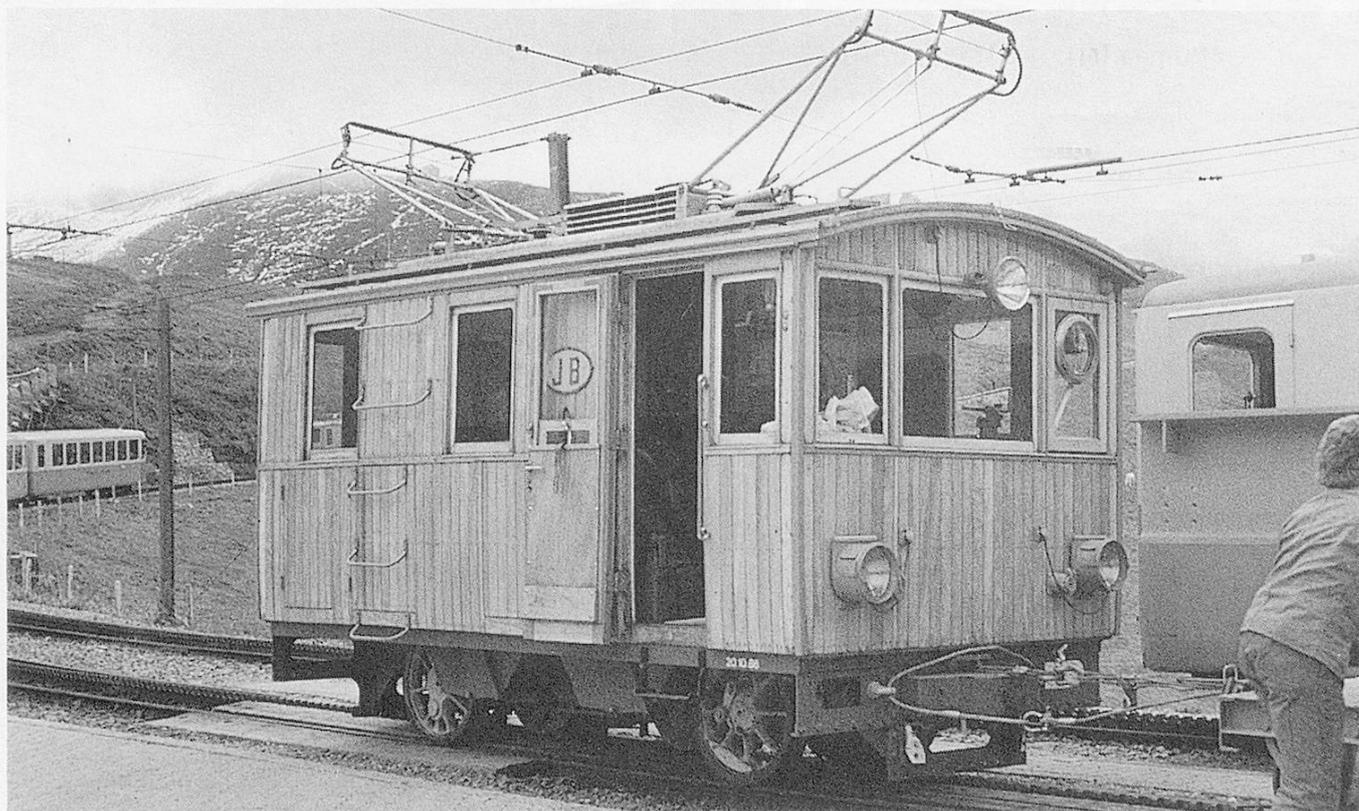
Bern Weyermannshaus yard lies a couple of kilometres in the other direction from the station. Photographic viewpoints along the way are not numerous but there are nevertheless opportunities. I eventually found my way to the far end of the yard, where an Ee3/3 was energetically bustling around, accompanied by a cheerful group of shunters. Every few minutes a train would pass on the main lines; the Fribourg and Neuchâtel lines diverge a little way further on. These trains were mainly passenger, but an occasional freight added variety. BLS 205 turned up again, having worked a freight back from wherever it had been. Locomotives working the yard from Bern station have to shunt to where I was perched, before running back through the yard to the depot. so I had another opportunity to record the beast on film.

One of the subjects which had come under discussion during Sunday evening had been station restaurants. It seems that it is recognised that one of the two best such establish-

ments in Switzerland is at Olten. Thus it was no effort to decide to sample this gastronomic emporium for my Monday night session of gluttony.

However, I first took time to watch the working at both ends of Olten. This is an excellent place to watch trains; not for nothing is Olten called the turntable of Switzerland. Trains arrive from all directions every few minutes, including freights, which may run through under the train shed or round the back on the river side of the station buildings. It is quite easy to photograph them in either case. One of the passenger trains I saw presented a colourful appearance. Headed by Re4/4^{II} No.11124 in red it was followed by SBB D (green), DB A (red/cream), SBB EW-II B (green) SBB EW-IV B (green/white), SBB EC A (grey/grey), FS B (grey/red), FS B (grey), 2 x FS B (grey/red), SBB Couchette (blue). Seven liveries in a train of ten, plus a loco in a different colour again.

Olten is also a good place to see the various Hauptsignal aspects, all of the categories appearing on one signal or another,



Jungfrau He2/2 at Kleine Scheidegg on 8 September 1992. To the right can be seen the steel girder mounted on a pair of wagons, while on the left is one of the trains waiting to enter the station.

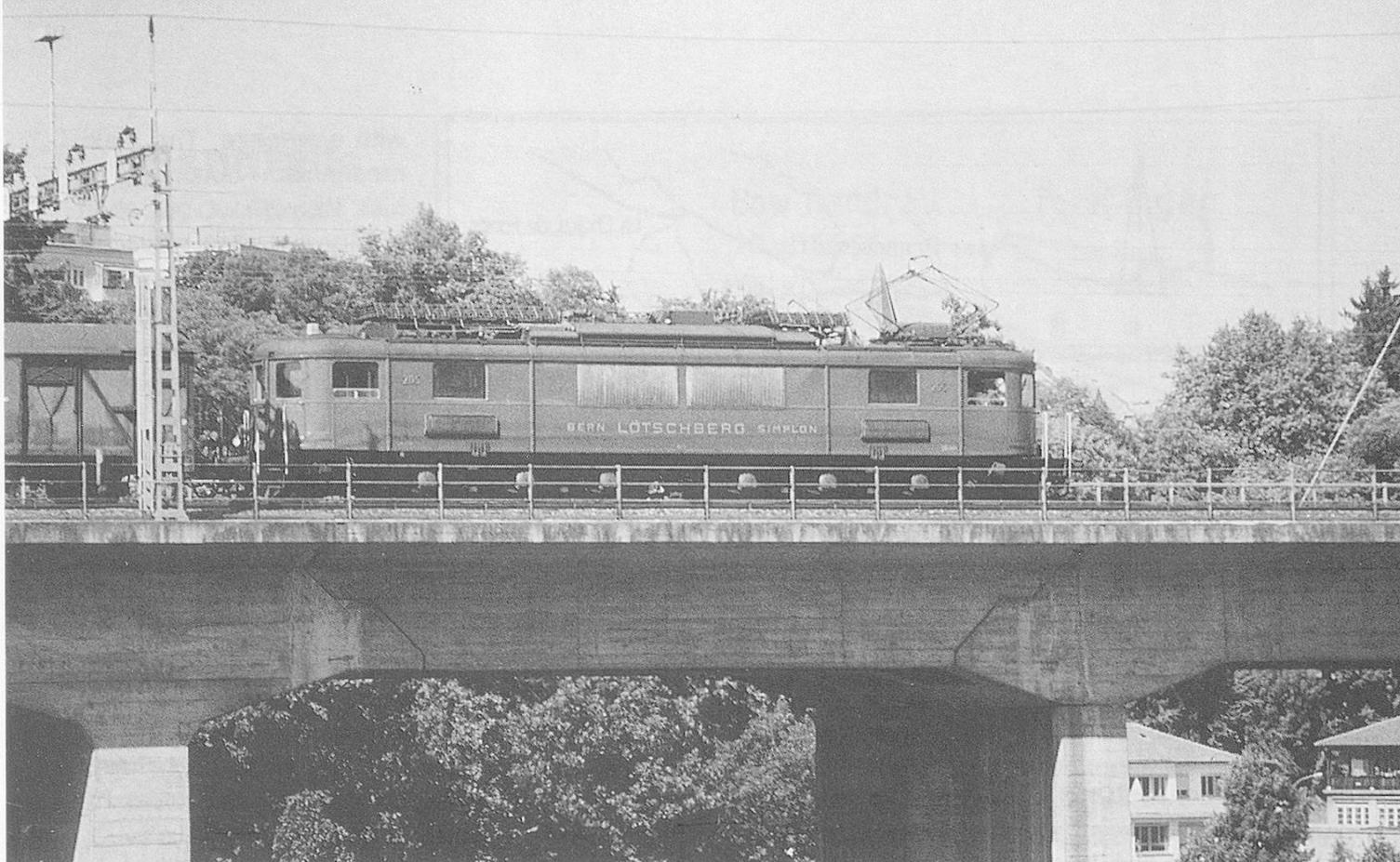
depending on the routes set. By watching the signals, I became aware of something rather odd, which highlights a major difference between Swiss and British signalling practice. A Swiss Hauptsignal displays an aspect permitting a set maximum speed according to the route set. How then can the aspect change after the signal has been cleared to show a different (less restrictive) aspect? In Britain, the route cannot be altered once the signal has been cleared and I do not doubt that the same applies in Switzerland. I have, of course, instigated enquiries.

In glorious late summer sunshine I watched and photographed for some time. My tummy kept reminding me it wanted to be fed and eventually I succumbed. The restaurant is certainly a pleasant environment for a meal, ten minutes later I was happily ensconced with a little something to quench my thirst. Happy, that is, until a train of Intraflug preserved stock with an Ae4/7 appeared, stopping briefly before disappearing southward. This was followed by one of the double Ae4/7 freights. Oh, the crosses we enthusiasts have to bear! However

I can confirm that the Olten station restaurant really is very good - my venison was anyway.

Tuesday was the high spot of the holiday - Jungfrauoch. On the journey to Sissach I kept an anxious eye on the weather, which had again taken a turn for the worse. My friends joined me at Spiez and we decided to chance it to the top. It costs a lot, but is worth it. On a sunny day it must be terrific - even with cloud cover it is an experience. Fortunately the cloud was clear of all but the tips of the mountains and visibility was very good. In addition, the inclement weather had deterred all but the most optimistic from making the pilgrimage.

Just to prove that Network SouthEast doesn't hold a monopoly on cock-ups, the Jungfrau Bahn managed to get itself dog-knotted. Two trains were sitting in the loop at Kleine Scheidegg, waiting to ascend. In the platform were one of the old wooden bodied locos and a pair of wagons. These were coupled by a lengthy steel girder, which was being painstakingly adjusted by means of a fork lift truck. The wagons were attached to the loco by several pieces of steel cable. Down the



Old and impressive, BLS Ae4/8 No.205 crosses the Aare bridge just outside Bern on Monday 7 Sept. 1992

mountain came two more trains, but there was nowhere for them to go. So outside they waited, for about fifteen minutes, while the girder was finally positioned and gingerly propelled by the loco towards the depot.

In the end, we had the best of the indifferent weather. By the time we had returned to Kleine Scheidegg the cloud had closed

in. By Grindelwald it was raining again. Spiez, where we parted and I stopped off for a meal (in the station restaurant again), was very wet indeed. Murphys Law would decree that the next day, when I left Switzerland to visit friends in Germany, that the sun would be shining again. It was, just to prove once again that Murphy is *always* right.

Birseckbahn tram and trailer at the Münchensteinerbrücke on 5 September 1992

