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Half Term Report

by Stephen Barnes

I was able to spend a short break in Switzerland from 14 to 19 February - one of the English school half term weeks, a common holiday period for many European schools. There had been very little snow in the Alps since before Christmas, some fell in early February but this was followed by a relative heatwave and so by the time I arrived the slopes were rather bare. A huge fall of snow started the day I departed - 19 February - and much continued to fall until early March. I had plenty of time to observe railway matters during my stay.

Rhätische Bahn (RhB)

Train formations on the Landquart to Davos section appeared to be slightly reduced compared to the Christmas/New Year period (See Swiss Express 3/9, March 1993).

A typical example is the 08:05 Davos-Platz - Landquart:

Ge4/4^{II}, A, AB, B, B, B, D

At Landquart the pilot Ge2/4 No 222 added an additional two or three coaches (AB, B, B) to the formation before it returns as the 09:40 Landquart - Davos Platz.

The Davos Platz - Filisur *pendelzugs* were in the hands of Ge4/4^I 602 + Bt 1721 and Ge4/4^I 609 + Bt 1731 during the week of my stay. It would appear that these trains return to Landquart possibly on alternate nights (for servicing?). The 18:08 from Filisur to Davos Platz continues through to Landquart, although this is not given in the timetable. In the mornings the 08:56 from Landquart is a through train to Filisur; this train will return to Landquart *on the following day* as the 18:96 Filisur - Landquart.

On the Engadin line all trains observed on 16 February were in the hands of Ge4/4^Is Nos.603, 607 and 610.

Stock formations observed:

- D, B, AB, AB, B, B (common to all trains)
- One of the formations includes a new second class coach (B2492).
- On the same day the 09:00 Chur - St.Moritz was a massive 14 coaches;

Ge6/6^{II}; D, B, B, B, A, A, WRx2 (3816+3817), B, B, B, B, B, A (Tirano portion; *Bernina Express*).

This train was heavily loaded, particularly with sledgers travelling to Preda. From here there is a superb sledge run (*Schlittelbahn*) down the main road to Bergün, which is closed to all other traffic.

At Filisur it is possible to buy what is probably the cheapest hot drinks in Switzerland. There is no buffet, but a hot drink vending machine sells the usual variations of coffee and Ovolmaltine for only SFr1! The price of coffee from the Mini-Buffets on board train has risen again this year and is now SFr2.80.

SBB Class 460

Three Observations:

- 460 013-6. 17 February 1993 at Killwangen (16:20); driving training at the head of a rake of light steel coaches.
- 460 002-9 18 February 1993 in yard at Winterthur (13:50); it appeared to be part of a freight train formation.
- 460 037-5 18 February 1993 at Landquart (09:30): heading the 08:10 Zürich Hbf - Chur together with an Re4/4^{II}.

S-Bahn

Class 450 from No.450 050 onwards are fitted with dot-matrix destination displays. New passenger stock is similarly equipped. No.450 058-3 was observed in service at Winterthur on 18 February 1993 working an **S12**.

S12 Seen/Seuzach - Brugg.

This service is currently in the hands of Re4/4^{II} with EW I or II coaches so it is presumably the next for DPZ conversion. The service runs 'fast' (non stop) between Winterthur and Settbach.

The use of on-train staff on Zürich S-Bahn services is primarily a customer relations exercise. It is quite reassuring to see the staff patrol the coaches on a very regular basis. They do not however check the tickets, this is in the hands of teams of plain clothes ticket inspectors.

