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Autor: Barnes, Stephen
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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^I's 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.

Vereinigte-Huttwil-Bahnen (VHB)

I hadn't travelled on the Wasen-in-Emmental line so in February I made a visit here. It was due to go over to bus operation in May. From Bergdorf to Steinhof the track is currently being widened to double track. From the modern RBDe4/4 *pendlezug* a change was made at Ramsei into a De4/4+Bt formation for the service to Wasen. The weather was a mixture of fog, wet snow and sleet and with a three minute turnaround at Wasen I didn't hang about! The train was the early afternoon 13:42 Ramsei - Wasen, 13:58 return and was patronised by about six or seven people.

Connections from SBB services at Burgdorf or Langenthal are not good. I could not find a way of avoiding a wait at Ramsei of 30 minutes when travelling from Zürich via Burgdorf. Clearly services may be geared to purely local needs so external connections are less important - but a bus can probably meet local needs of low volume?

Landquart - Bad Ragaz

The new track between Landquart and Maienfeld came into use during January, with all traffic transferring to this line to allow new track and catenary to be installed on the old line. Maienfeld station is currently under reconstruction - the goods loop had been removed by mid-February and pedestrian underpasses were under construction.

Bergellerbahn Postscript

Continued from page 30

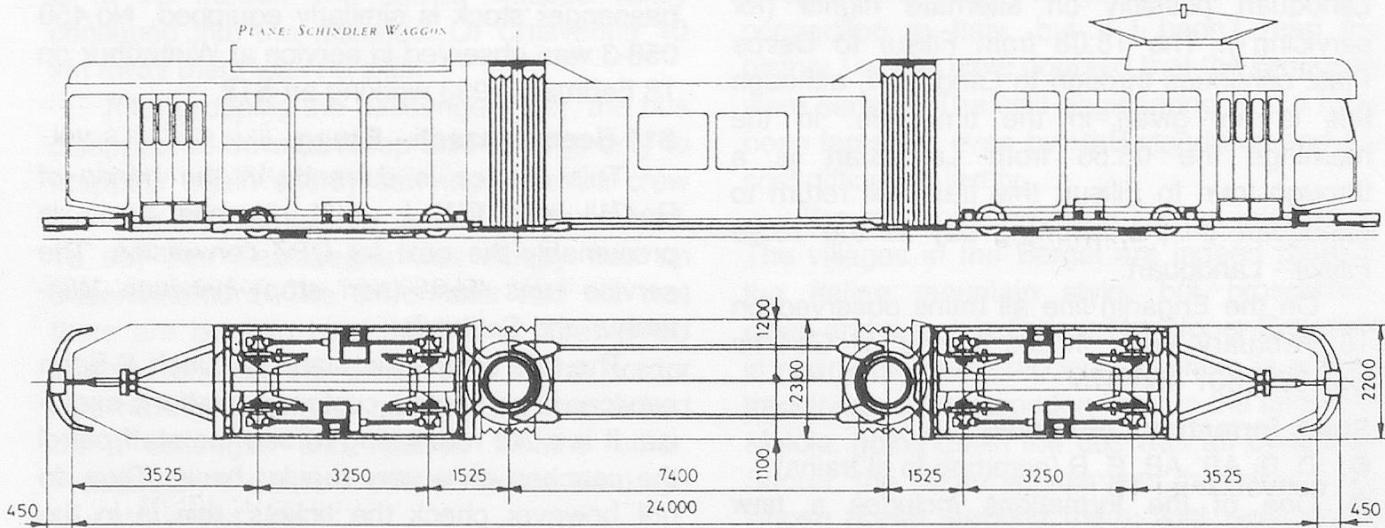
Maloja hairpins, swinging the full width of the road to the accompaniment of imperious use of the horn in true post bus style. At each post office the engine was switched off if we were even the slightest bit ahead of schedule. The drivers, incidentally, addressed the passengers successively in German, what I took to be Romansch and Italian; when a spare one got on they chatted in Schwyzerdütsch. What a ride!

Editors postscript.

Our autumn coach trip last year included an excursion from Lugano to St.Moritz. Taken in a torrential downpour, it was only relieved by the thought that at least, inside the coach we were dry. After negotiating the narrow track masquerading as a road along the north shore of Lake Como, we arrived at Chiavenna where we stopped outside a cafe for a much needed break. It was too wet to explore, but as we passed the FS station it seemed there was little space for the proposed RhB terminus. It was fractionally drier when we stopped on the way back, but we didn't feel inclined to explore. St.Moritz turned out to be St.Moritz Bad, which had a toy shop with a model annex, with a fair supply of Bemo. However Swiss prices are too steep, I prefer to support our advertisers.

Cyril Freezer

Low-floor Articulated Tram for Zürich



The above drawing, courtesy Schindler Waggon, depicts the 3-unit low floor articulated *Cobra* tram which has been on trial in Zürich since mid-March.