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VIDEO & BOOK REVIEWS

Blonay - Chamby. MITV Ltd. See ads for details in Swiss Express.

This is different. I wondered how anyone could make an interesting film lasting 45 minutes about a 3 kilometre long line. MITV shows how!

The team was blessed with superb weather when it recorded the celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the first 'museum railway' in Switzerland. There is plenty of action with steam machines ranging from diminutive tram engines to the chunky ex-Furka-Oberalp rack tank which was the motive power for the train providing a vivid sketch of the surprisingly varied scenery along the line.

Electric power included an unusual railcar from the Leuk-Leukerbad line with coupling rods on the bogie and compartments rather than saloons for the passengers. And there were trams, one of which could seat only 16 people as well as larger, more conventional - but still vintage - vehicles.

At Chaulin depot there were busy scenes which included a small electric tractor whose name in English is "The Goat". Inside the light and airy depot, two massive Mallet tank locos from the Zell-Todnau railway could be inspected together with numerous other items of motive power.

For those who like metre gauge, vintage traction and coaches, electric or steam, this film is a 'must'.

Needless to say, the quality of the photography is excellent.

AJP

Railways in your garden. MITV Ltd.

See Ad. for address & price.

Filming model railways sometimes in a confined space or with difficult lighting must have proved a challenge which, as ever, was overcome by the intrepid MITV team who were even able to mount a tiny camera on the buffer beam of a loco.

All the railways are situated in the UK and probably some 10%-15% of the lines or kits owe something to Swiss influence. The ingenuity of the builders to get the maximum use of differing shapes and sizes of available sites is, perhaps one of the most revealing aspects of the film. In addition, all have had to take heed of the requirement to preserve the garden element and some have done this with an artistry which not

only benefits the railway but also adds interest to the garden.

LGB equipment is often the basis for track and rolling stock but there is a great deal of high quality scratch building by the owners as well as specialist suppliers. Some fine 'detailing up' is also evident. Some of the structures, especially bridges, are most impressive.

A variety of methods were used as foundations of the permanent way and the amount of practical information given in the commentary is, in my view, worth the cost of the film. Propulsion is by steam (coal or gas fired) mostly with electronic or radio control as well as conventional electric 2-rail and even battery supply in the railcar.

This should convince the doubtful that one CAN have a garden and a model railway.

AJP

'Tracking across Switzerland' by Diana Nial: £7.95 (Post Free to Members) available from the Author, 12 Grand Court, Littlestone on Sea, Kent, TN28 8NT, or at bookshops.

Audrey read it first. She was absorbed and hardly put it down; from time to time commented on the recipes, the places to visit off the beaten track and odd bits of information like the candles we liked to buy in Migros which burnt so long and well on our dinner table being for use in cemeteries!!

If one is observant and knows Switzerland by rail already, one will re-act with pleasure to the fact that maybe one of the favourite scenes is described; or, as is my case, places not so far off the railway which are really well worth a visit are brought to notice in descriptions which put life in the scene.

Then there are people, the railwaymen, the characters, so well drawn, including the rueful observation that, today, it is difficult to tell a SBB railwayman from the passengers.

And of course, railways figure appropriately with descriptions and useful information dropped neatly into the text.

This is not a textbook, not a guidebook, not a railwaybook - but it is an excellent 'read'. If you liked 'Swiss Meals on Wheels', you may like this even more.

AJP