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Mailbag

EMUs and Transfers

Since writing to you I have found out more about the EMU in my photographs taken at Kandersteg. Although it is an ABDe4/8, the number is 243 (not 273) and it appears to belong to the Oensingen-Balsthal Bahn. This railway is a fair distance from Kandersteg, so maybe the unit was working a day excursion.

The transfer problem has been solved as *Fox Transfers* make a range of alphabet sets in three different type faces and three sizes. They may not be absolutely perfect, but they should give the right impression.

M.Axford

Wootton Bassett

Eichhof Brewery

Members may be interested in the following as a postscript to the short article in the December *Swiss Express*, "Visiting the Eichhof Brewery" (misspelt in the magazine, two "h"s)

I was fortunate to visit the brewery in August 1993 and I can certainly confirm that the hospitality was excellent. The brewery is one of Switzerland's largest, but it is still independent of the large companies such as Feldschlösschen or Calanda/Haldengut.

All malt is delivered by rail and the company has nine rail wagons used to distribute beer to rail-served depots. Local distribution is by road and for special occasions, horse drawn drays are used. The horses are British born Shires, each horse carries its name and a Union Jack on a plaque in the stables.

After the visit we were treated to a beer sampling session - I tried a glass of each of their brews - and a meal. To top this, each member of the visiting party (20+ people, mostly Swiss), were given a presentation pack containing one bottle of each Eichhof brew and a glass.

There was also an opportunity to purchase other beer glasses and souvenirs (such as the Märklin beer wagon) from the "canteen".

Incidentally, all Swiss beer bottles, those sold in supermarkets, shops and many bars, are 58 cl capacity (not 50 cl), which approximates very closely to a pint!

It is worth adding that the December

Schweizer Eisenbahn Revue contains a very full article on all aspects of freight operation on the RhB; a route by route, commodity by commodity account.

Stephen Barnes

Colchester

From the President

I would like to comment on some items in the December 1993 issue of *Swiss Express*.

Spreading the Load (p.44)

Krauss Maffei is building 30 locomotive bodies without ends or roofs, bogies or electrical parts for SLM. This is due to the short delivery times required by the federal Council to open the Hucklepack Corridor. Siemens has no stake in ABB nor in Sulzer/SLM.

Letter by Dr.David Pearson (pp 46,48)

I very much appreciate your comments regarding the RhB and would like to add that it has always been the philosophy of the RhB management to run many, but comparatively light trains for two main reasons:

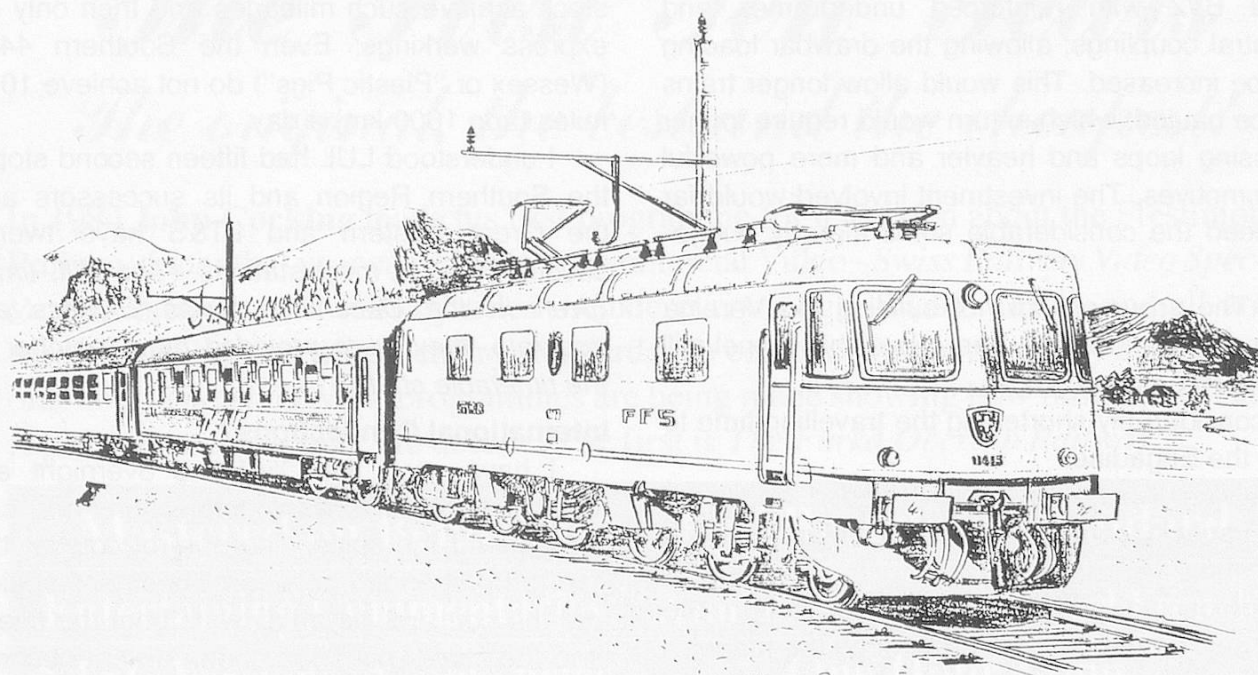
- a) to serve the customers, whether passengers or shippers of freight as often as possible and
- b) to offset the limits set by the steep gradients, low drawbar loads, short station lops and sidings and the traffic peaks.

In April, for instance the number of passengers is as low as 10,000 per day, whereas in high season (July/August or January-March) the passenger numbers reach 50,000 to 70,000 a day at weekends. Therefore many trains have to be run in duplicate or even triplicate.

The locomotive turn document acquired by Dr.Pearson is the essence of daily planning established on the basis of former years experience. The ever-changing traffic volumes make it necessary to assign locomotives to other duties than originally planned, for instance, extra freight trains.

I will give one by no means uncommon scenario. If on a summer day the passes to the Engadine are closed by a sudden snowfall. Immediately a large number of irate car drivers turn up at Thusis demanding transport facilities. This means that Ge6/6^{II} locomotives are needed to haul the car-carrier trains, whilst passenger trains are double headed by Ge4/4^{II}s where necessary.

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An alternative would be to provide coaches, freight wagons and locomotives of the RhB, FO and BVZ with reinforced underframes and central couplings, allowing the drawbar loading to be increased. This would allow longer trains to be hauled, which in turn would require longer passing loops and heavier and more powerful locomotives. The investment involved would far exceed the considerable sums already budgeted.

The argument for not building the Vereina tunnel is an incorrect one, since this tunnel will serve three main goals:

- a) considerably shortening the travelling time to the Engadine,
- b) giving the railway much needed additional capacity combined with still higher flexibility and
- c) producing additional business through the new car-carrier service through the tunnel.

Letter from Steve Bratt (p.50)

In my opinion there is a misunderstanding about the price of £20.00 for a family party on an Alpine Postbus mentioned by Mr.Bratt. According to the information received, this sum has to be paid for one family round ticket (2 adults, 1 child) over the Furka, the Nufenen and the Gotthard passes, a journey of 105 km. For a foreigner, this price may appear to be high, but it is important to bear in mind that, according to the Swiss National Bureau of Statistics, the average gross monthly income of a Swiss worker with a three year apprenticeship is about SFr.4,500 or roughly £1,800 (£22,800 pa). If the family lives in a rented apartment, the chances are good for a low priced holiday.

A.E.Hauser-Gubser

Hettlingen.

Regional Trains

While I concur with much of what is said about the stupidity of proposing to withdraw these services, and while concurring with the view that costs should be reduced by investment and de-manning (BR invested in DMUs and didn't cut staff costs at the time of Beeching), there is an obvious flaw in Table 4. How can a regional EMU achieve 1600 km/day? Based on an average day of 16 hours that requires an average of 100 km/h inclusive

of stops and turn rounds, - 62.5 mph to Imperialists. Only Inter-City 125s and similar stock achieve such mileages and then only on express workings. Even the Southern 442s (Wessex or "Plastic Pigs") do not achieve 1000 miles (app 1600 km) a day.

I understood LUL had fifteen second stops, the Southern Region and its successors and the Great Eastern and LT&S have twenty second stops at most stations. (*The LUL times given in the December Swiss Express are accurate, they were provided by a member of the timetable staff.*)

International Connections?

I have used the Olau line overnight en-route to Köln for forward connections and can recommend the ships. There is, of course, the gap to be spanned between Sheerness station and the port and it's a tidy walk from the check in to the ship. Trains to London do not become well filled until Gillingham and most have spare seats as far as Chatham.

Airline Merger

According to the Press, this has been blown out of the air; one of the partners wanted more concessions than the other three. (*This information was correct at the time of going to press, roughly 6 weeks before publication. This is an inevitable consequence of club magazine publication.*)

Observations

Surely Dr.Pearson doesn't really think one locomotive is permanently allocated to one diagram? Some extended diagrams in Britain and elsewhere have locomotives running for days on end before returning to their starting point/depot.

Increasingly, maintenance on locomotives and multiple units has to be done at night. Consider Bournemouth, "owner" of class 442. Two units are available for maintenance all day, plus one in works for overhaul. Half the remaining fleet is maintained each night, the remainder being outberthed at Fratton, Clapham Yard and Weymouth, with first aid available at Fratton. Salisbury's 159s, with a maintenance learning curve still going on, cover eighteen diagrams each day, with two units for local maintenance, one for local manufacturer's maintenance and one unit at works. This

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maintenance allocation is likely to drop. Only two units return between peaks for light maintenance. These examples are far from unique but I can quote the numbers for them.

Michael Donavan
Chatham

Oberfriedhof

I feel I must reply to the letter of M.J.E.Daboo in *Swis Express* 3/12.

The name of our layout *Oberfriedhof* comes from the location of the clubrooms of the Furness Model Railway Club, of which we are all members. The clubrooms are situated over the gatehouse of the main cemetery in Barrow in Furness, hence the name *Oberfriedhof* was adopted. It was more a question of what to call the layout than anything else.

I.D.Edwards
Ulverston

Swiss Layouts on View

Oberfriedhof

26,27 Mar. Perth Green, Jarrow
21,22 May Keighley
20,21 Aug. Redcar
28,29 Oct Leeds
2,3,4 Dec Manchester

Review

Swiss Meals on Wheels

By Diana Neal

Littlestone Publishing, 12 Grand Court,
Littlestone-on-Sea, Kent TN28 8NT

ISBN 0 9522026 0 3 £5.95

Everyone who has used Swiss trains at all extensively will know the cheerful rattle of the SSG Mini-bar offering welcome refreshment. Many of us have marvelled at the ingenuity and determination of the SSG staff, who seem blithely unconcerned by differences in level between platforms and trains and regard such obstacles as an apparent disconnection between the main train and an attached party coach as a minor difficulty to be surmounted.

Few of us have any conception of what it is like to serve meals on a train and therefore this book, by an Englishwoman, resident in Switzerland who made a comparatively late career change into rail catering at the sharp end, is a welcome addition to the small selection of English language books on Swiss Railways. Whilst providing an insight into the work of the catering staff, it is also an account of journeys taken and places visited. We can recommend this modestly priced book to all members.

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