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Mailbag

Observations

As mentioned in the current (July 1994) *Eisenbahn Amateur* use of older BLS locomotives is declining. During my recent visit (29 June - 9 July), the following were noted:

Ce4/4: 311, 313 and 315 were in use. I noted 311 being attached to the rear of the morning goods from Interlaken on 1 July.

Ae6/8: 205 and 207 were active on Interlaken goods services. 208 was on duties at Spiez works, 1 July. 206 was not seen.

Ae4/4: 251 and 257 were active. 257 at Zweisimmen on passenger train 6 July. 252 was at Spiez works, apparently out of use while on 1 July 257 was at Spiez depot on duties with 208.

On the MOB, GDe4/4 6003 *Saanen* failed on the *Crystal Panoramic* at Lenk on 3 July and the train was hauled for several days by 6002, which rather spoilt the picture as it is not in the Crystal livery.

The older railcars are going fast. Noted were:

11 in store at Lenk, not in use,

15 the spare car at Les Avants.

Nos. 27 and 28 were in use.

Of the service vehicles, 36 is at Gstaad and 37 is at Zweisimmen. Of the others, 3001/2 were in use in twin sets and 3004/5/6 were seen in service.

P.J.Bowen

Macclesfield

Brig Station Buffet

In response to Paul Russenberger's letter in the June Swiss Express, I had a meal in Brig station buffet in May and had no complaints about the quality of the food or the service. I had not eaten there previously, so I am not familiar with the pre-flood arrangements, but in the menu there was a note asking for customers' forbearance at the temporary catering arrangements, because the kitchens, larders, cellars etc. were destroyed in the 1993 floods. Everything now seems to be at SBB platform level at the western end of the main station building, plus a portacabin at the back of the platform itself providing extra "behind the scenes" facilities.

In the town, many premises have reopened with new shop fronts, but many others remain boarded up. A large part of the upper town is fenced off to all but residents while major excavation works are under way (new underground drainage? underpinning of buildings?). None of the traffic lights in front of the station were working, which makes getting from the station entrance to the town even more exciting than usual. I didn't see what happened when a BVZ train wished to enter or leave across the main road at the western end without the usual traffic light protection. The track at the eastern end of the FO/BVZ platforms leading up to the SBB yard was being relaid in May.

The town to avoid if you are hungry and not a millionaire is Le Locle in the Jura. What appeared to have once been the station buffet is permanently closed, and all the eating establishments in town were either closed or very seedy-looking (as, I felt, was the town in general.) The one exception was a brand-new, very expensive hotel in the middle of town. As the place doesn't appear to be much of a tourist trap, I assume this was built for business travellers visiting the watchmaking factories. I didn't have my dinner jacket with me, so I decided to postpone eating until I could return to my overnight base of La-Chaux-de-Fonds. The station buffet there wasn't particularly inspiring either, but there are alternatives in the town.

Robert Fox

Croydon

Class 460

Referring to the very interesting article by Mr.Hauser-Gubser on the mechanical and drive details of the Class 460, I am not an expert on mechanics, but I have the video made by the SBB and marketed here by MITV on the construction and testing of the Class 460, which gives a broad background to the mechanics of the prototype.

It is interesting to compare the characteristics of the full-sized locomotive with those of the HO gauge model of this type made by Roco. This was reviewed in edition 342 of the French magazine *Rail Miniature Flash* (1993), in some detail. It showed similar traction to the prototype, only the scale speed being slightly slower on the Roco model at the equivalent of

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195 kph. However I can confirm that the model has twin cardan shaft drive (as does the prototype) and behaves in a similar fashion under load - down to almost a crawl at an input of 1 volt, pulling 10 coaches through 385mm radius curves.

Also regarding notes about the Siemens *Eurosprinter* on trials on the SBB detailed in *Swiss Express 4/2*, the tractive power of the Class 460 is confirmed in comparision with the *Eurosprinter*. However it might be interesting to have a trial with the Channel Tunnel *Le Shuttle* locomotive, which I understand has a power rating of 7500 kN and is capable of hauling at least 2000 tonnes at 150 km/h through the Tunnel, with inclines at both ends.

Finally, is the speed of the proposed Swissmetro correct at up to 500 km/h, and what sort of traction unit is to be used for such a speed, with all the noise problems that would probably be enbcountered, quite apart from air pressure waves.

Robert H.Owen
Crawley

As I understand it, the proposal for the Swissmetro is to eliminate air pressure problems by running in a vacuum. This is theoretically possible, though the power needed to evacuate a long tunnel would be considerable. The ill-fated atmospheric system was child's play by comparision, and they had a lot of trouble maintaining some 20 in of vacuum through the pipe over much shorter distances.

A more serious objection is that until we have something approaching the hole borers beloved of Science Fiction writers (which go through igneous rock as easily as a hot wire passes through butter), the cost of tunelling must surely render the proposal uneconomic. One of the basic principles of civil engineering is that you only use a tunnel as a last resort.

However, the crux of the matter is, how many people would be prepared to pay to ride in such trains, once the novelty has worn off? After all, there are plenty who have stated, categorically, that they will continue to use ferries even when the Channel Tunnel is finally in service simply because they prefer a view to a hole in the ground.

CJF

Help wanted

At the moment I am researching the Jouef brand of models and while I am having no trouble with those models of French outline, I am having some difficulty with one model of Swiss outline.

In 1984 Jouef produced, presumably for the Swiss market, a model of the Re4/4^{II} in red. This was a re-decoration of their previous model produced in 1976. It was numbered 11178.

What I wish to find out is:

- a) the catalogue number of this model,
- b) the address of the Jouef Swiss distributors,
- c) when the model was introduced and deleted,
- e) if it featured in any Jouef Swiss literature.

I would mention that I am aware of the Jouef Re4/4^{II} models, Catalogue Nos 8856 (green), 8857 (red/cream) and 8868 (Bourret Psychedelique).

Any information SRS members could provide would be useful.

Bill Thursfield
SNCF Society
45 Sterndale Drive,
Westbury Park,
Clayton, Newcastle,
Staffs ST5 4HS.

Ironic choice

On 13 July the London Area group ran a member's slide evening "No Trains". This produced some interesting pictures with a strong leaning towards paddlesteamers, clear evidence that Giles Della-Gana is not alone in his love of the Swiss lake fleets. Unfortunately, BR (thanks to the signalmen's strike) took much the same theme for the day and less than half the usual crowd were able to attend.

The Wrong Sort of See?

A holiday package recently offered to a bank's customers a stay at the Hotel Internationale, Lugano, with a seaview supplement of £49. The lucky customers might even have seen the "Swiss Navy" in the shape of an armed patrol launch.