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Farewell to the Baby Kroks

by Cyril Freezer

Ge6/6I No 415 beside the goods shed at Samedan, 23 June 1994. Photo Nick Freezer

It was track night at the MRC, officially an evening when members bring their models for display, in practice a time to meet friends and natter, mainly but not exclusively about railways. That evening Henry was bemoaning the departure of steam, claiming that diesels and electrics have no souls. I disagreed but with little hope of changing his mind, it is wholly a question of opinion and no amount of verbal argument is going to change that. Nick had a different approach. He had brought a further batch of his 1994 photos along that evening, so he selected one wallet, thumbed through the pack and produced a print which he handed to Henry. He took one look and said "Now that's what I call a locomotive with character." It was a Rhätian Ge6/6I, the renowned *Baby Krok*. Nick had proved our point.

In my personal list of outstanding locomotive designs, three electric locomotives vie for a high place. One is the classic Pennsylvania

GG1s, conceived at the height of the 1930s Streamline Era, perfect examples of the genre which still looked good fifty years later. The second is the Metropolitan Railway 1200 HP BoBo *Growlers*, again a timeless design with their windcutter cabs, well proportioned grilles, the completely useless handrail and their classic nameplates. The third, of course, is the *Baby Krok*.

As with the other two, we have a classic design, an articulated machine with rod drive, a central cab and an attractive livery. Unlike the main line *Krokodils*, which to my eye are ungainly beasts, the Rhätian machines are a balanced design. Their classic proportions are enhanced by the polished brass numbers on the cab sides while, unlike their larger cousins, they were mixed traffic machines.

The first *Baby Krok* entered service in 1921, to be followed by a further 14 in the next eight years. They took their place alongside the



Table 1
Rhätian Railway Ge6/6I *Baby Krok*

No.	Built	Withdrawn
401	30 June 1921	1974
402	11 July 1921	1984 *
403	19 July 1921	1984
404	30 July 1921	1984
405	19 August 1921	1984
406	16 September 1921	1984 §
407	20 July 1922	1985 ‡
408	12 August 1922	1984
409	29 August 1922	1984
410	24 October 1922	1984
411	26 October 1925	1994 ¶
412	27 November 1925	1994 ¶
413	17 June 1929	1993 †
414	28 June 1929	1994 ¶
415	2 July 1929	1994 ¶

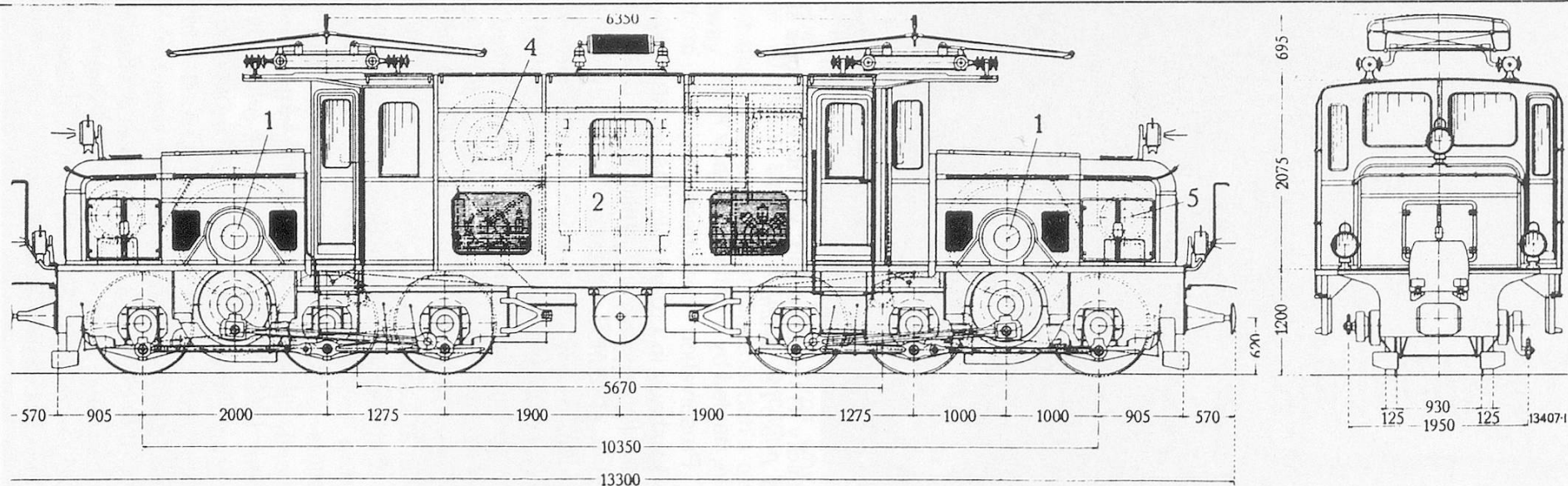
Notes

- * To Verkehrshaus, Luzern
- § To BBC-Werke Oerlikon
- ‡ On display at Bergün, July 1994
- † Withdrawn after bending side rods
- ¶ Withdrawn from revenue service, retained for special duties

Ge6/6I No 413 before its mishap. *Photo courtesy RhB*

seven Ge2/4s and the miscellaneous group of eight Ge4/6s, replacing the G4/5s most of which were exported to Brazil.

For the next thirty years they were *the* Rhätian locomotive, and were featured in innumerable publicity photographs. In 1947 the first Ge4/4s appeared but these displaced the Ge4/6s, and worked alongside the *Baby Kroks*. But thirty years is no age for a well built electric locomotive and it was not until the arrival in 1973 of the Ge4/4IIs that they were finally relegated to secondary services. The second batch of Ge4/4IIs led to the withdrawal of the first ten, 401-10, three of which were preserved. The remaining five, 411-415 settled down to goods duties and were in regular demand for special trains, weddings being a speciality. There is little doubt that a good deal of the passenger traffic on the Guterzugs was made up of rail enthusiasts having a last, and in some cases, first ride behind a *Baby Krok*. Many SRS members are included in this group.

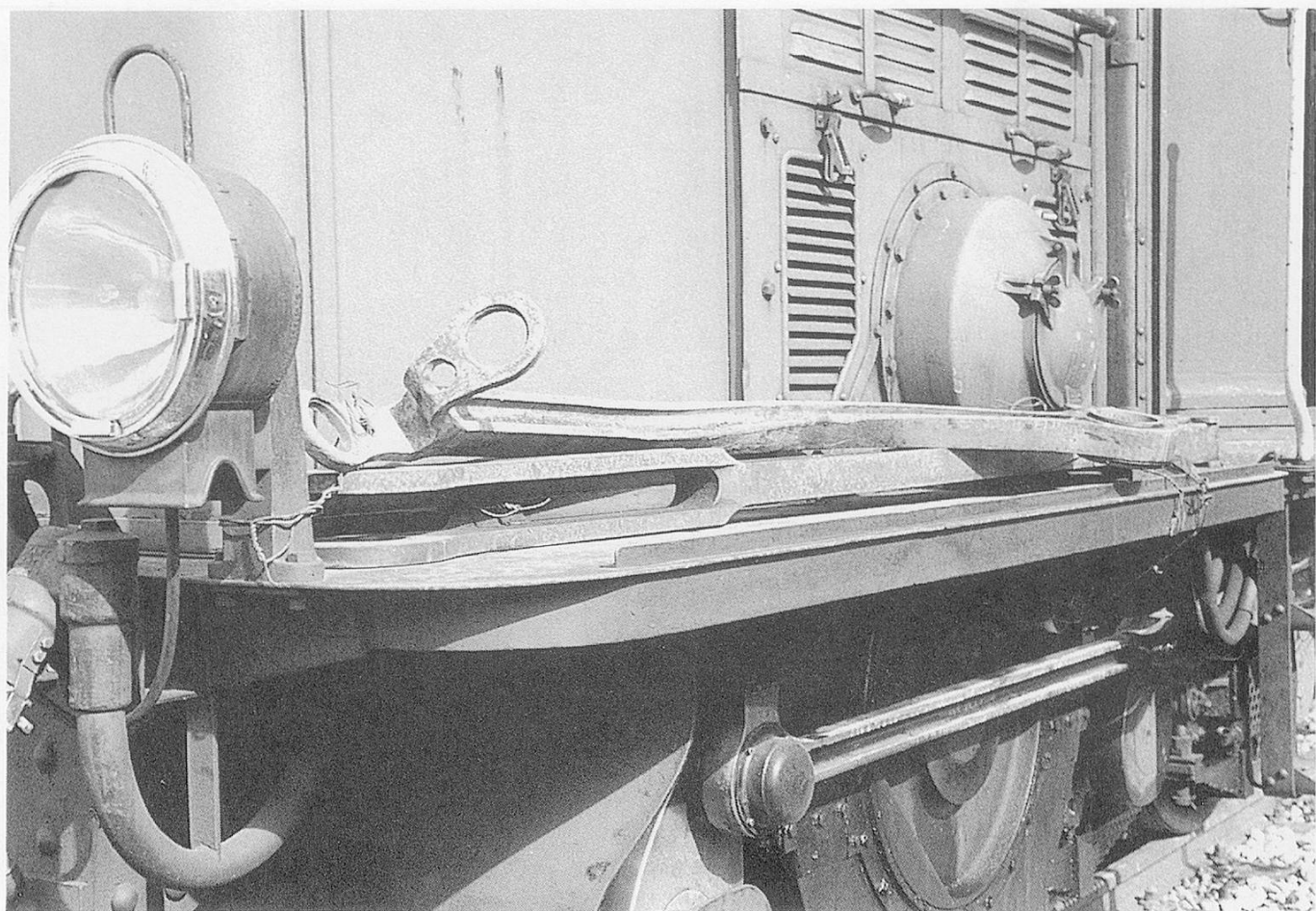


- 1 Motor
- 2 Transformer
- 3 Motor for ventilation fan
- 4 Transformer ventilation fan
- 5 Motor ventilation fan
- 6 Inverter
- 7 Compressor

Length over buffers	13300 mm
Maximum width	2670 mm
Driving wheel dia	1000 mm
Total wheelbase	10350 mm
Fixed wheelbase (bogie)	3275 mm

Continuous rating	794 kw
Tractive effort	108 kn
Gear reduction	1:4.134
Total weight	65.9 t
Maximum speed	55 km/h

Rhätische Bahn Ge4/4' *Baby Krok*



In September 1993 No 413 sheared a crankpin and bent the side rod so thoroughly that it was impossible to straighten it. Replacement was out of the question, not merely on ground of cost but the difficulty of getting a rod forged and machined nowadays. As the remaining four machines were sufficient for the rostered services, 413 was towed to Landquart to supply spares for the balance of the class.

The remaining four Ge6/6's were in steady use during the early part of 1994, but with the arrival of the first of the Ge4/4's, their days in revenue service were clearly numbered and in September they were finally taken out of regular service. There is no immediate intention to scrap any of the remaining machines, though no final decision on their future has been taken.

No.414 is currently undergoing overhaul at Landquart and if finances permit No.412 will be similarly dealt with. At present this appears unlikely.

Their value for special workings has been well proven. Indeed it seems that in Graubünden, the only possible way to send a marriage off in style is to hold the festivities on a special

Unlucky 413 at Landquart, with its badly bent side rod. *Photo Les Heath*

train, hauled by a garlanded *Baby Krok*.

Preservation comprises No 402 in the Verkershäus in Luzern, No 406 at BBC Werke at Oerlikon and No 407, which spent some time hidden at Zurich Altstetten until it moved to Bergün in July 1994 where it now sits, well away from the railway, close to the end of the well-trodden trail from Preda. There is also an effective wall display of component parts from both the Ge6/6's and Ge4/6s on the wall of the buffet at Landquart.

Bemo produced a fine HOm model in 1984, having promised it some six years earlier. Visitors to the Nuremberg Toy Fair watched patiently as further bits appeared on the display model. LGB also produced a well proportioned G gauge version. No model of the Rhätian is considered complete without at least one of these distinctive machines and now that we have the HOm STL balcony ended coaches, we can make a fair stab at a vintage train and, more to the point, assemble a typical Guterzug of their last days of service.



Their longevity has ensured that there can be few people left who can remember the Rhätian without the *Baby Kroks*. It is not surprising therefore that in 1989 the RhB Centenary keyring featured, not the original G3/4 tanks of the Landquart-Davos, nor a Ge4/4^{II} but the distinctive *Baby Krok* which, over 70 years stalwart service, became the most distinctive emblem of Graubünden's own railway.

Above. Unidentified Ge6/6^I at the head of the four ex MOB "Pullman" saloons on the last stretch of the climb up to Preda. *Photo courtesy RhB*

Below. Ge6/6^I 411 at Samedan, 4 July 1994. *Photo D.J.Fullerton*

In conclusion I wish to thank the RhB for their help in supplying the latest information and to the members whose photographs embellish this valedictory account.





The Plinthing of 407

When 407 arrived at Bergün on 1 July 1994 it was, like Gaul, in three parts and carried on low loading and stake wagons. *Photos D.J.Fullerton*





Above Preserved Ge6/6I No 407 at Bergün, viewed from the field side. *Photo P.R.Arnold*

Below. Getting ready for the first lift, 7 July 1994. *Photo D.J.Fullerton*





Above. Ge6/6^I 411 arriving with the 11:00 freight at Samedan 4 July 1994. *Photo D.J.Fullerton*

Below. Two Ge6/6s outside the sheds at Pontresina, 4 July 1994. Ge6/6^I No.411 is at the head of an "bendy" Ge6/6^{II}. 706 *Disentis-Muster Photo D.J.Fullerton*





Above. This shot of 412 at Tiefencastel might have been taken at any time in the past 65 years, but for the presence of the modern platform. Only the front of the train is visible, showing just the green balcony end 2nd class coach that heads the

Guterzug and once headed the RhB's principal expresses. *Photo D.J.Fullerton*

Below. The old and the new. Ge6/6^I 414 alongside Ge4/4^{III} 643 at Landquart running sheds. *Photo Les Heath*

