

Zeitschrift: Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal
Herausgeber: Swiss Railways Society
Band: 4 (1994-1996)
Heft: 5

Artikel: Bern Modell Hobby `94
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-855026>

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Bern Modell Hobby '94

by Philip Elwin

Photographs by the author

Last year our annual Swiss holiday was arranged for the last two weeks in September. A few days before departure, the September issue of *Eisenbahn Amateur* arrived by post, and my eye was caught by the advertising for the Bern Modell Hobby '94, which coincided with our visit.

What a pleasant revelation the exhibition turned out to be! We visited on the first day - a Wednesday - taking tram No.9 from Bern railway station to the terminus at Guisanplatz and then walking the short distance to the BEA Expo halls. An hour after opening, there were no queues for admission, which cost roughly £5 each.

Outside the halls, steam was being raised on two 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ in gauge systems, whilst inside two floors of the main building were laid out with Trade and Club stands, a boating pool and a 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ in gauge battery driven train giving rides to children. Modelling in the broadest sense was

The new BLS Class 465 locomotive.

covered, from dolls' houses through to cars, boats, aeroplanes and railways from Z to 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. Stands were spacious, light and airy, with plenty of room to move about without jostling.

Refreshment facilities ranged from restaurants inside to a trailer parked outside serving the ubiquitous bratwurst, grilled to perfection. Alongside, another trailer offered fresh fruit and vegetable juices. As these latter facilities were more suited to our pockets, we soon sampled their products - and very good they were too!

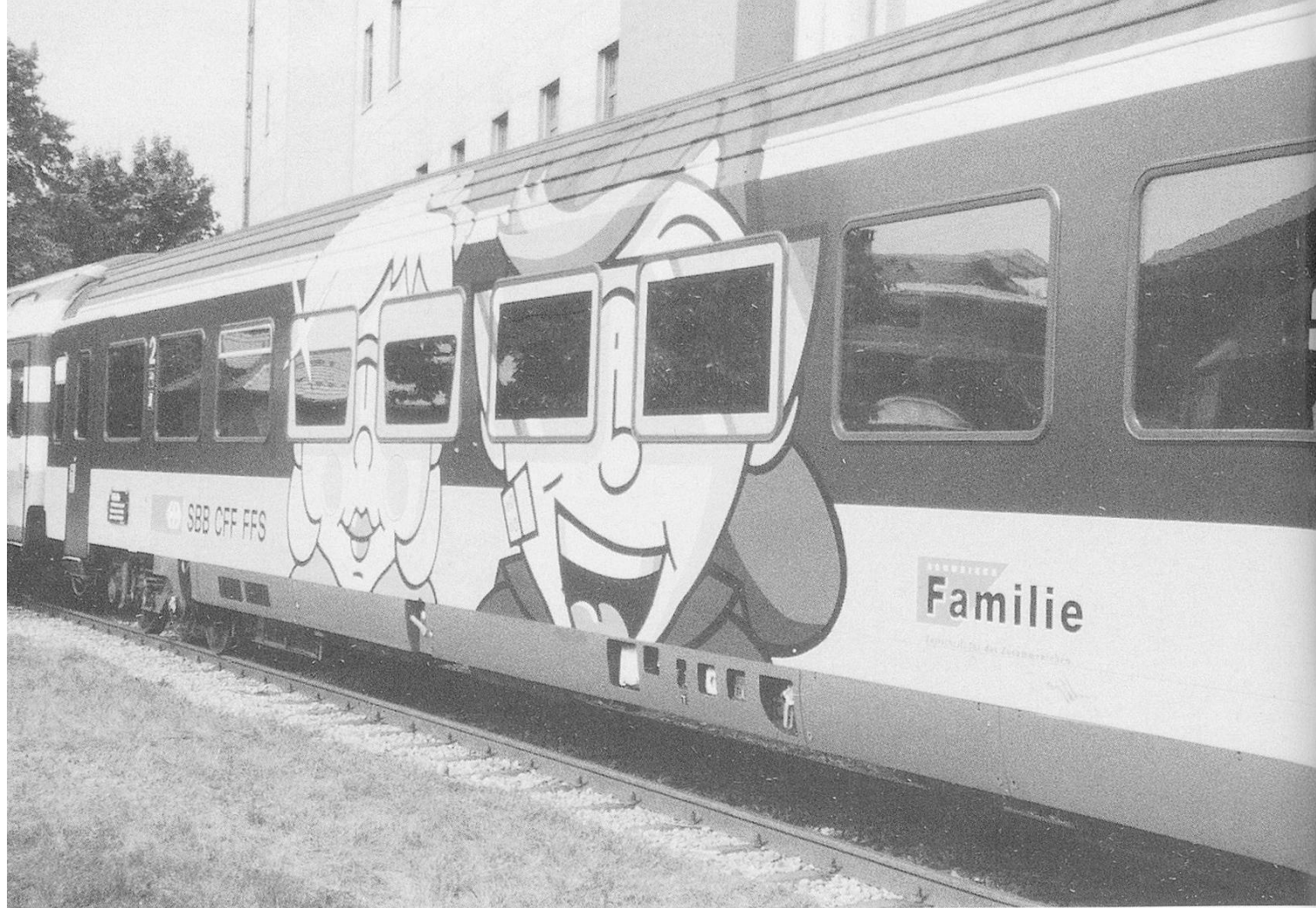
The main hall - to cover just the railway aspect - featured a garden railway in the foyer, around which a number of Märklin Gauge 1 Maxi-Bahn trains were circling. These trains appeared again in the main hall running on a fantasy style layout. A whole floor contained Trade, Retail and Club stands. Brand names ranged from Fulgurex and Lemaco to Fleischmann, Märklin, Roco and Bemo. Superb "glass case" quality models were carefully displayed on spacious stands.



Above : Close up of Märklin "steam powered" 460-017.

Below: Ciba class 460-016, with Agfa in background.





Many working layouts were available for inspection: the Gauge 1 fantasy line already mentioned, beautiful tinplate on Gauge O three rail, a number of HO layouts and a fine club system depicting the southern end of the Bernina line ... open air spiral and all! An overflow of railway subjects reached the upper floor, which had a boating pool, model car track, children's modelling event, battery 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ in gauge circuit and many stands featuring plastic kits, aeroplanes, military models and so on.

Returning to the outside - for it was a sunny day - a ride on the 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ in gauge behind a coal-fired eight coupled tender engine took us around to a rear gate. A short walk gave access to a neighbouring rail-linked industrial estate and an exhibition of full sized electric trains of the latest type. This section of the show was entitled *Eisenbahn & Design*.

Here, in a pleasant lawned area between neat warehouses, access was freely available to both driving cabs and the engine room of brand-new BLS Re465 003-2, straight from the manufacturers. Three SBB coaches, full first, panorama first and *Familie Wagon* second

could be explored, and no less than four SBB type 460 locomotives in special liveries were displayed. These included the magnificent Märklin special, Ciba and Agfa, along with two Hbis type four-wheeled goods vans painted for *Haco* and *Märklin*. The BLS thoughtfully provided an *Info Car* in the shape of a refurbished open end balcony coach, well stocked with publicity material on locomotives, coaches, workshops, footpaths, lake steamers etc.

Returning by miniature train to the main exhibition, the outdoor model car track was in full swing, and a further glass of fresh squeezed juice was consumed while sitting admiring a beautiful model of a Waldenberg tank engine, giving children rides around the edge of a sadly empty ornamental pool outside the main entrance. A final stroll through the main hall concluded the visit before returning by tram to Bern city centre.

On a sunny autumn day, this was a relaxing and memorable experience - quite unlike the usual UK exhibition which is hot, cramped and frustrating. Of course the weekend may have been more crowded, but clearly



the organisers had taken this eventuality into account and allowed plenty of space both indoors and out.

Facing page: SBB Familie coach.
 Above: Märklin van with a more conventional illustration.
 Below: Farmer van.

