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A Change of Station on the Forchbahn - New Look to Esslingen

by Alan Pike OBE. Photographs by the Author

This metre gauge railway, which opened on the 29th December 1912, runs from Zürich Stadelhofen, today a station on the Zürich S-Bahn, to Esslingen a distance of 16.58km. It serves what is now a dormitory area for Zürich at least as far as Forch from whence the line descends through a more rural setting to terminate at Esslingen which is the junction of several local roads.

The line shares the tracks of the Zürich tramways as far as Rehalp, 3.37km. from Stadelhofen and necessarily draws current at 600V DC before continuing on its full operating voltage of 1200V DC. Originally the line was in, or alongside, the road for most of its length but recent modernisation has put a couple of stretches underground, notably 1760 metres in the area of Zumikon.

Stadelhofen is 410 metres above sea level and the line finds its maximum gradient at 70‰, or 75‰ depending on source, (1 in 14.3 or 1 in 13.3) between here and the summit of 676

metres at Forch where the extensive and modern depot and workshops are situated.

The line terminated awkwardly in the main road to Wetzikon and lacked a waiting room or booking office in recent years. A new terminus became essential not only to free the roads but also to assist in the interchange between bus and rail. The new station is on a different alignment some 400 metres short of the old one.

The last departure from the old terminus outside the restaurant in the main road took place at 08.41 on 21st March 1995. The new station opened with the 05.01 departure on 23rd March 1995. Track was removed from the old station very quickly as the photo at the end of April shows. The spartan appearance of the new station suggests that on a winter's morning waiting in the hotel/restaurant at the old terminus was much to be preferred.

A.J.P.



Previous page: The old station at Esslingen soon after closure.

Above: Train in the 'sparse' new station at Esslingen.

Left: The new train and bus station at Esslingen

All the photos taken 21st April 1995

All photos A.J. Pike OBE



Dioramas in Luzern

Bucherer's jewellers in Luzern are out to trap SRS members! Their window displays feature some excellent low relief dioramas of various Swiss rail- and cable-car scenes. They are good examples of the genre and it is to be hoped they find a good home afterwards. However, one or two are marred by inappropriate 1:87 models. The worst example is the so called Glacier Express above Andermatt, headed by a RhB Ge4/4", about to descend the zig-zag in record time.