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BWB CELEBRATIONS by Ron Smith

On Sunday 11.10.98 the Bern Worb Bahn, now part of the RBS, had the final event, to mark this their centenary year. It was a bahn fest at Worb. I was staying in Luzern and decided to go. You won't believe this - but I missed the train! A dash up the moving stairs was just not quick enough by 30 seconds, and the express started moving just as I reached it. The set was one of the orange and grey push pull rakes which I think are very comfortable and smooth. Fairly exasperated with myself, I decided to catch the all stations stopping train to Langnau on the other face of the same platform which departed a few minutes later. This train was a RBe540 motor coach with the corridor connection at one end only, coupled to three coaches which included a driving trailer at the buffer stops. I plonked myself down in the RBe and soon we were off

Even more frustration, I had left the timetable behind. I assumed that a stopper to Langnau would leave me about half an hour there to wait for the next express to Bern which was preferable to waiting a whole hour at Luzern.

The journey passed pleasantly with Luzern

bound trains crossing us regularly, and on time we rolled in to Langnau. Across the platform was a BLS emu making a connection, also all stations stopper, to Bern. Once again a quick calculation was made, and it was still quicker to catch the BLS emu than wait for the express, so I jumped on.

At least this meant that I could change at Gümligen, where the BWB line G stops just outside the station, rather than go into Bern and walk to the Zytglogge terminus.

At Gümligen I alighted and went down to the underpass between platforms, and took this right out into the forecourt. What a surprise! A few men were busily photographing a small brown steeple cab electric loco which was at the head of a short train of small green coaches. At the other end was a chubby attractive 0-4-0 green tank engine which sizzled and hissed quietly, with occasional sharp wheezes from the huge air brake pump bolted to the side of the smokebox. The train was waiting to cross a service heading for Bern, and this rolled in across the road which skirts the station here, cutting the BWB line



twice. This was formed by a veteran green Bern tram and two trailers. With the usual slick working, both trains departed smartly.

With a very intensive service being worked that day, it was just minutes before the regular blue service train swished over the SBB lines and dropped down to the rudimentary station. I jumped in and we smoothly and rapidly made our way up to Worb. We passed other "old timer" trams in nearly every available passing place.

When we arrived at Worb the station was alive with people, trains and trams. An orange 2 car RBS set of line W came carefully in over the gonging level crossing to halt across the platform from the blue line G train and a green "old timer" which had lamps glowing at tables at each window - a bistro tram serving lunches! Later on in the day I saw the blue line G dining car train in operation as well.

The depot is just off the end of the platform, and the fan of tracks leading into it were full of people, another steeple cab loco, trams and trains. I went to investigate. Inside the depot was clean and clear. Stalls were down one side, a few items of rolling stock were down the other side, while long tables with benches filled the rest. At the far end a stage had been erected and

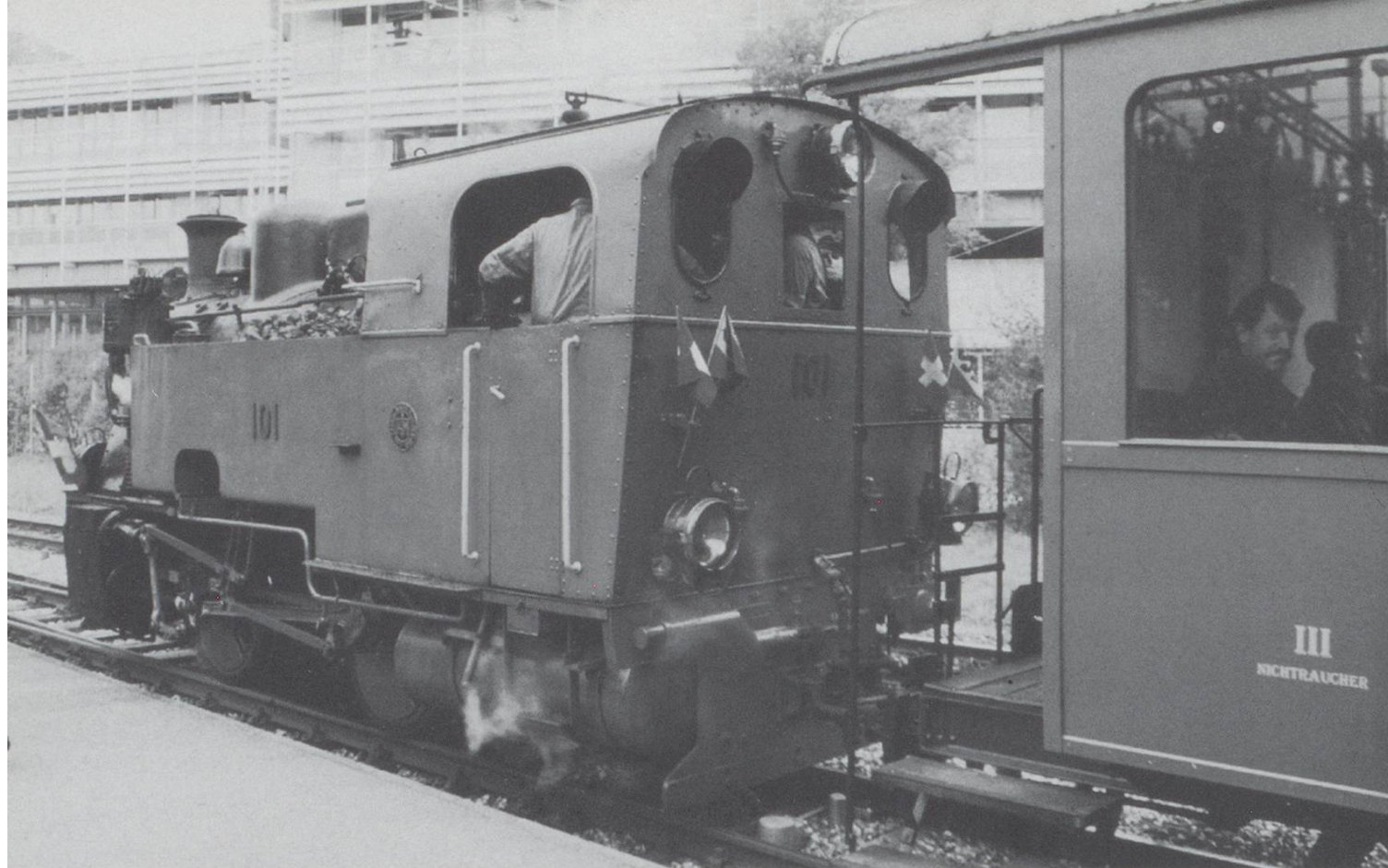
Previous page and above: Two photos taken at Gümligen on the 11.10.98, one of the old and new sets No. 37 and 82.

a 3 piece band were playing Swiss music, with occasional bursts of yodelling. It seemed rather blue and hazy down there, then I realised it was the smoke from the barbecue area in the corner. It was a toss up between examining the stalls, the tower wagon and old loco, or lunch - the inner man won, and I took a place at a table.

Some over worked lassies were rushing about and eventually I managed to catch the eye of one to order my favourite Swiss dish - disaster! - they had just run out of Bratwurst! I had to make do with an enormous Frankfurter in a crusty baton, a tray of chips and a tea. Having got this out of the way the stalls had to be explored. The blue haze level was getting lower all the time. The stage now had a silver band of about 24 players on it, playing splendid music which filled the depot.

The stalls sold all sorts of tempting things, including bits of old trams, indicator blinds, videos, models, cards, calendars, and some societies had working layouts on display.

Having explored all this I went outside again,



took a few more photographs, and jumped on the next Bern bound service. This was an "old timer" tram and trailer. For an old vehicle it went well, and although I was in the two axle trailer, sitting on the longitudinal wooden slat seat, the ride was comfortable even at speed. On the way we passed the steam engine and other "old timers". My service was advertised as running to Bern, Burgernziel. I did not know where this was, but I soon found out.

In Bern, running through the streets intermingled with city trams, we suddenly lurched off to the left and into Bergernziel depot. Another hive of activity! Crowds milled round the vehicles on display. There were trolleybuses, buses of all types, and trams of all descriptions. A green bus with a long bonnet and deep growling engine was giving circular tours of Bern. A large shed contained more stalls, and again had to be investigated.

Various enthusiast societies had set up stands there. There were models and working layouts on display, and a plethora of items for sale, from cotton shopping bags, pens rulers, videos, models, postcards, books, and even bottles of special wine with tram pictures on the labels. I was tempted, but thought it too heavy to carry back to Scotland, so I settled for a set of 6 white wine glasses with green pictures of "Dante

Shoogi" a famous green Basle preserved tram car, on them.

The depot has a loop running completely round the main building, and old trams were carefully manoeuvring in and out of the site. A few more photographs and it was time to go, especially as it was starting to rain a little.

Outside the depot I caught one of the smart new low floor city trams and glided past the old terminus at Helvetiaplatz, over the Kirchenfeldbrücke, and past the Zytglogge line G terminus at Casinoplatz. This is merely a dead end track in the middle of the road. The city tram took me to the Hauptbahnhof where, in 11 minutes time, the hourly express for Luzern departed.

For a day that was uncharacteristically unplanned and untimetabled, it had all worked out well. With so many things going on and so much to ride on, I wished that I had set off earlier. The BWB are to be congratulated on the event. It was also the 25th anniversary celebration of the Tramverein Bern, who had also laid on a great many of the events. The joint effort obviously required a lot of co-ordination and hard work-. I wish both societies all the best for the future, and am confident that they have a healthy future ahead of them.



Previous page: 0-4-0 No. 101 Kraus Maffei built 1948 at Gümligen 11.10.98.

Above and Below: Two views at Bern Burgernziel depot. The old unit in a works livery, and a selection of early to late models. Referred to in the article. All photos by the Author.

