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Book & Video Reviews

The History of the Gotthard Railway

Available from: Malcolm Hardy-Randall at 51 School Crescent, Newburgh, Aberdeenshire, AB41 6BH, Scotland. £32.50 (plus £5 p&p UK or at cost overseas).

The author has long held a fascination for the Gotthard line and the result of his research is this *magnum opus* volume. Its value to Society members and followers of Swiss railways in general is that it is possibly the most comprehensive book on a Swiss rail line in the English language.

The 510 pages contain comprehensive information about; the early history of Alpine routes, the growth of railways in Europe, construction of the railway and its tunnel, main station buildings, motive power, rolling stock, fighting against the weather, current day operations and future plans. The first chapter of the book describes "a modern day journey over the Gotthard" with the last chapter looking to the future AlpTransit project. The explanation of the design and building of the tunnel includes references to the personalities involved in addition to the techniques used.

The timetable of the 1850 Basel/Zurich stagecoach service to Milan makes interesting reading compared to today's EuroCity timings. The 1850 timetable shows, for example, nine and a half hours were needed to complete the journey between Zurich and Brunnen.

Useful maps, gradient profiles, station plans, line drawings of locomotives and rolling stock complement the extensive text. Various appendix (more than 200 pages!) provide yet more technical data. The drawings of the bridges, buildings, current and historic track plans may be especially useful to modellers.

There are numerous photographs in the book. All are black and white which does not make the book as visually attractive as it could have been if the number of pictures had been reduced and then at least some reproduced in colour. Several of the modern pictures are a little repetitive and the author apologises in advance for the poor quality of some of the pictures. The archive pictures provide a useful pictorial record of the line through its history. For example, Luzern's

various stations are shown. ADtranz, SBB and others have supplemented the authors collections of photographs.

The writing of this book like the building of the railway must have been a "truly mammoth task" (page 283). As readers and travellers on the line we may be unaware of the time and efforts spent on both. The book makes a valuable contribution to our appreciation of the Gotthard route.

PM

European Railway Atlas; Denmark, Germany, Austria, Switzerland (2nd Edition) by M G Ball.

Ian Allan Publishing. ISBN 0711025509. £13.99.

The original Atlas was published in 1990. This latest edition includes maps of Switzerland on pages 85 to 101. It also features enlargements of the Zurich and Montreux areas.

The Atlas has 128 pages with over 100 detailed maps. For convenience both at the front and rear of the book is a diagram showing the arrangement of the maps. Usefully at the foot of each page there is a miles/kilometres scale line.

The index is dealt with country by country rather than for the entire contents of the book. There is a separate index of tourist lines. Book type atlas's do not provide the same overview orientation as large sheet maps but they may be more user friendly on a packed train!

The maps are clear because they are limited to railway lines and their components such as stations, projected stations, freight yards, border stations and tourist lines. The routes are differentiated between main and secondary lines, electrified and non-electrified, standard and narrow gauge. Because the maps do not show contour lines, roads, conurbations etc. they are quite easy to read although the manuscript station names are sometimes a little faint.

The projected AlpTransit Base tunnels are shown together with the Vereina tunnel route. Most lines under construction carry a date of expected opening. The Danish fixed link across the Great Belt is included together with various new high speed lines in Germany under construction.

A friend recently asked me to locate a

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We do now have a supply of the 1998/99 catalogue available at £5.00p.

Book & Video Reviews (continued)

secondary line station in the Frankfurt area of Germany. I consulted my Thomas Cook European Railway Map and official DB railway maps without success. It was most encouraging to locate the station in this latest Ian Allan Atlas. I can thus recommend this book to students of the European rail networks.

PM

Elektrische Strassenbahn Stansstad-Stans by Christoph Berger.

Verlag Schweizer Schmalspurbahnen. ISBN 3-85884-050-5. Sfr 15.00 plus postage. Available from the Stanserhorn Bahn, Stans, CH-6370, Switzerland (telephone 00 41 41 618 80 40).

This useful little book containing the history of the Stanstad to Stans tramway has 56 pages. The various maps and track plans are clearly presented together with drawings of the tramcars and some buildings. All the text is in German though the pictorial content of the book alone gives a useful insight into this short line. Reproductions of timetables and tickets provide additional variety to the book's contents.

The tramway opened on 26 August 1893 and was closed just a few years later on 30 September 1903. The metre gauge line was 3.47 km long with a minimum radius of 50 metres and a gradient of 10 pro mille.

Watch out for pictures of the still existing Stanserhorn Bahn. This funicular opened in 1893 and now operates as a funicular (now known as the "Oldtimer") and cable car journey to the restaurant and observation platform on the 1900 metre Stanserhorn.

PM

Video Review

Rückblick 150 Jahre Schweizer Eisenbahn; Part 2

Desti Film, D-74179 Obersulm Postfach 111, Germany. Available from; MITV, Southampton, England. £23.95 (plus £1 p&p UK or £4 overseas).

In the Summer 1998 issue of SWISS EXPRESS we reviewed the first part of this two part visual reminder of the 150th anniversary railway celebrations in Switzerland. This 58

minute broadcast quality video production features extensive coverage of the Spanish Brotli Bahn steamings in the Zurich area. These include a memorable excursion into the Zurich train shed on specially laid track. Watch out for the performing acrobats in these sequences!

The footage also includes a wide variety of steam and electric motive power used in the 1997 celebrations. For 460 enthusiasts there is a glimpse of several locos in advertising livery lined up at the terminus end of Zurich Hauptbahnhof. Coverage includes the ICE, TGV and Cisalpino high speed trains contrasting with the extensive archive and current day steam power. This includes one excursion behind Dampfloks C 5/6 and B 3/4.

Again the historical aspect of the various SBB and other lines is not neglected. Desti have found some more good quality archive colour footage which appears to date from the 1950/60's. More RhB and some Crocodiles!

A montage of modern rolling stock is included with a few minutes round up of Swiss railways in the late 1990's including; the Rigi, WAB, Gornergrat, SBB double deckers etc. A visit is made to the August 1997 "open day" at Zurich's Limmattal yard.

As with the first production in this series the picture quality is very good as is the Hi-Fi sound with some music and live sound. The commentary is in German. The recording was again made in collaboration with the SBB as a partner in the 150th anniversary celebrations.

This tape is another useful reminder of the splendid 1997 railway celebrations which took place in Switzerland.

PM

**Please submit articles for the
March "Swiss Express"
by the 10th January**

THANK YOU