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1998 Swiss Steam Notes

by Peter Arnold

Gornergratbahn (GGB)

As noted in *Swiss Express* (Autumn 1998) an SLM steam rack loco has been displayed in the station forecourt at Zermatt this year, on loan from Cataluna Railways. As stated, this loco (SLM Works No.748 /Built 1982), which is very similar to those of the same vintage still at work on the Brienz Rothorn Bahn, was used during construction of the Gornergratbahn from 1897. Incidentally, the correct name of the loco is "Julian Fuchs" - not "Johann Fuchs"! From the several German language information boards arranged around the loco's plinth, I managed to glean further details of the loco's history:

1897 - 1920

The locomotive worked on the Gornergrat Railway during the line's construction and later was kept in reserve. It was used on works trains and to assist in repairing the route prior to

Above: No 1 "Furkahorn" at Realp with 13.05 departure, FO base tunnel in background. (24/7/98)

Photo: Author

reopening after the winter closure period for an average of 10 days each year. Also during this period, in 1912, it was hired out to the Villars-Bretaye railway for working construction trains.

1921 - 1957

The locomotive was sold to the Monserrat Railway (FMGP) and was used there in normal service. In the meantime, in 1930, it was also used on construction trains on the Ribes-Nuria Railway in the Pyrenees. In honour of their Swiss chief engineer it was named "Julian Fuchs". 1972

It was decided to preserve the locomotive for display in a proposed CataluÔa Transport Museum. 1981

The locomotive was put back into operation to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Ribes-Nuria railway. Since then, it has remained in the loco shed at Ribes.



Above: No 1 "Furkahorn" taking water at Tiefenbach with 13.05 ex Realp. Train on left, hauled by NO. 2 Gletschorn, was ex 13.05 Furka. (24/7/98)

Photo: Author

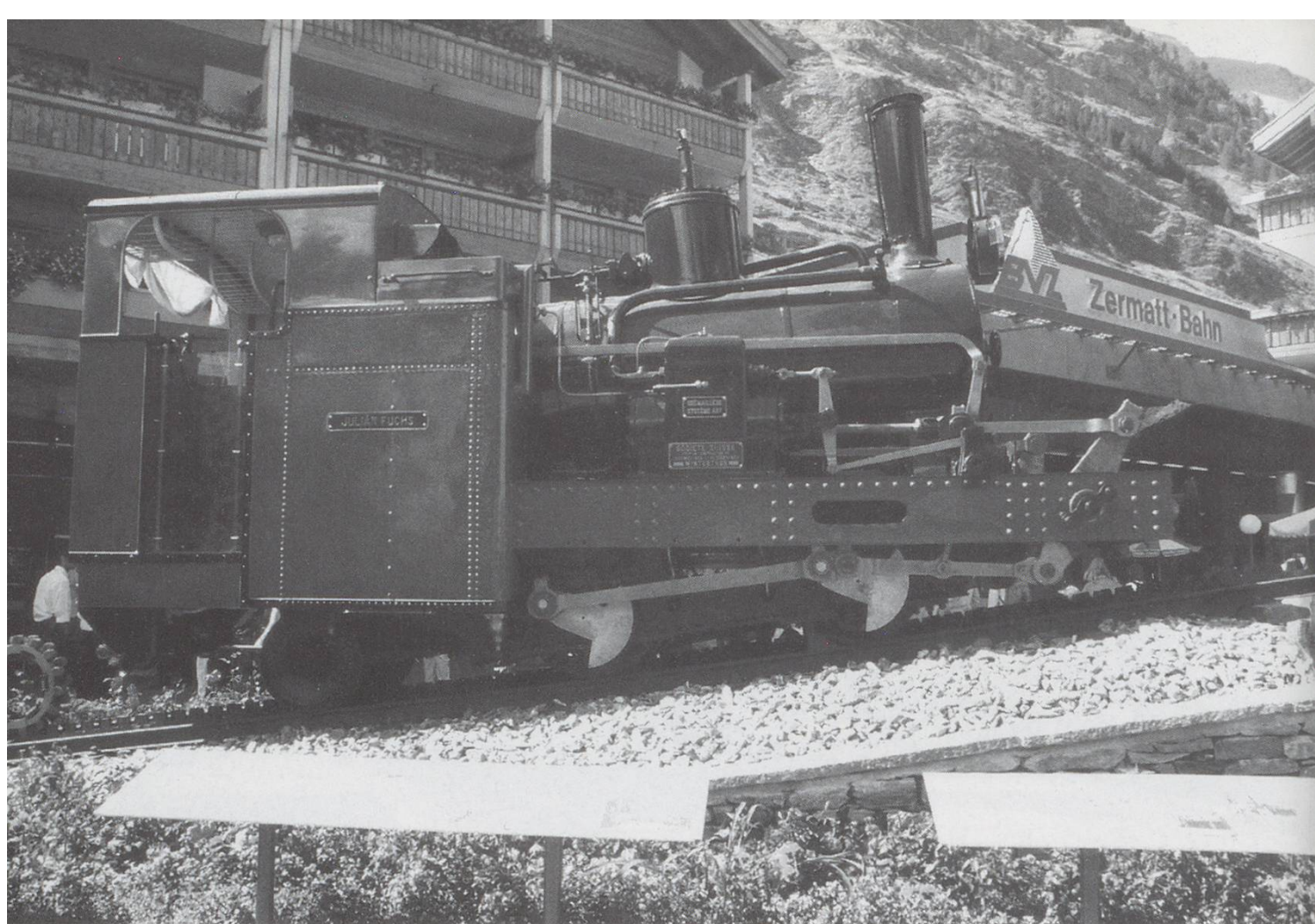
Furka-Berestreeke (DFB)

During a fortnight's holiday in Zermatt the opportunity was taken to fit in a visit to the Furka-Bergstrecke. Having consulted timetables, it proved possible to reach Realp, ride the DFB and return to Zermatt in a day so we chose Friday 24th July - as it turned out, just six days before a works train reached Gletsch.

Although we had visited the DFB at Realp in 1992, this was the first time my wife and I had managed to fit in a trip on the line. We had a very spirited ride on board a three coach train hauled by DFB No. 1 "Furkahorn" which appeared to make light work of the 1 in 9 climb up the rack through the solitude of the Furkareuss Valley. For those readers who haven't yet experienced this trip, we can thoroughly recommend it.

Walking distance from Realp (F0) Station has

been reduced with the opening of the new DFB terminal station last year. This consists of two platforms, one of which has a bay. In the bay track on the island platform are two carriages which are used for sales and buffet respectively. There is a booking office at the entrance to this platform which is also equipped with a short canopy, probably essential in a mountainous area prone to sudden changes in the weather! The other platform, which is single faced, serves the track used for running round - this track also has a headshunt used for storing spare carriages. With typical Swiss efficiency there is a separate building to cater for essential bodily needs! In 1997 DFB passenger figures increased by 29% to a total of 36,791 and this was largely aided by the new terminal station together with the increasing fleet of passenger carriages.



Above: SLM 748/1892 at Zermatt (25/7/98)

All photos: Author

From leaflets collected during our visit, I have learned that DFB is raising more funds during 1998 by a further share issue totalling 600,000Sfr which, when fully subscribed, as seems likely, will take the Company's issued capital to 11,230,000Sfr. These new funds will be used to finance outstanding work on the section from Muttbach to Gletsch as well as the repair of steam loco Nos. 4 & 6.

Currently two steam locos are in operation both of which were part of a group of six locos purchased by DFB and repatriated from Vietnam in 1992. These were completely rebuilt, incorporating parts of ex-FO locos Nos. 8 & 9, under contract by the former East German State Railways (DR) workshops at Meiningen. These locos are both former FO HG 3/4 locos built by SLM in 1913 and are now identified as No. 1 "Furkahorn" (SLM No.2315) and No.2 "Gletschorn" (SLM No.2316). Prior to these locos entering DFB service, trains were hauled by the smaller HG 2/3

former VispZermatt Bahn loco No. 6 "Weisshorn" (SLM No. 1410) built in 1902. No.6 is now in need of further work before she can run again. Similarly in need of work is HG 3/4 former FO loco No.4 (SLM No.2318) which has been presented on free loan to the DFB and is still in original condition. By the turn of the century DFB hope that trains will be running through to Gletsch. For this service they will need three train sets in service, hence the need for repairing Nos. 4 & 6.

Still awaiting rebuilding are two HG 4/4 locos built by SLM in the 1920's which DFB brought back from Vietnam with the ex-FO machines in 1992, the remarkable discovery and retrieval of which is a story in itself.