

# Private railways in Switzerland. Part 17

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## Postmark Corner

by John Cordingley

Brian Hemming's articles on the Private Railways of Switzerland are always of great interest to me. Over a period of years I have accumulated quite a collection of handstamp markings from stations on a variety of lines across Switzerland - SBB CFF as well as smaller lines. On looking through this accumulation I came across a couple of pages of items from the Forchbahn (*Swiss Express* 5/8 p20). Picking an item that would easily scan, the illustration shows a cancellation from Zollikerberg. This is on an envelope cutout complete with a commemorative Swiss stamp - another of my interests. Most of the printing on the cancellation is self explanatory but all railways are centrally code numbered; the Forchbahn being 046. Stations usually have sequential numbers - Esslingen 3060... Zollikerberg 3067 Zurich Rehalp 3069. These



were the numbers allocated in 1968 the time of the cancellation but like most things there have been renumberings over a period of time.

It seems to me that other members might like having souvenirs of their stations visits by getting a self addressed and correctly stamped postcard cancelled by station staff. They will probably be able to accept the card and forward it to the local post office. Here it might get a post office postmark as well.

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## PRIVATE RAILWAYS IN SWITZERLAND - 17

by Brian Hemming

An expanding standard gauge railway, a standard gauge line now largely devoted to freight traffic and what some people might describe as a toy railway make up the contribution to what is the penultimate group of articles in this series.

The Mittel-Thurgau Bahn (MThB) has in recent years looked across the Swiss/German border for the development of its traffic and has formed a close relationship with Deutsche Bundesbahn (DB). The existing passenger service in Switzerland from Wil to Konstanz has been extended into Germany through Singen to Engen and in fact the MThB now operate all local services on this route. In addition the branch line service from Radolfzell to Stockach has been revived by the MThB. As part of the close relationship with the DB that company now uses its own locomotives fitted with Swiss profile pantographs to work oil trains through to Attigshausen on the MThB. In the last year the MThB has taken over the operation of the SBB "Seelinie" from Romanshorn to Schaffhausen.

In complete contrast to the MThB, the Sursee Triengen Bahn (ST) operates freight services connecting industrial facilities at Büren and Sursee with the SBB Olten to Luzern line at Sursee. Two small diesel locomotives are used

for this traffic, but the company also has two steam locomotives and a small selection of coaching stock which are used for excursions and charter trains. This line is well worth exploring either on foot or with partial use of the Postbus service which operates from the forecourt of Sursee station and passes close to the rail terminus at Triengen on its way to Schöffland.

The ride to the Emosson dam using the Trains Touristiques d'Emosson (TTE) (formerly SATEB) is a travel experience which should not be missed by any member of the family. Starting from a station close to that of the C.F Martigny-Châtelard (MC) at Le Châtelard the journey starts with a funicular ride which is spectacular. This is the steepest funicular in the world having a maximum gradient of 870‰. One arrives at the top station, Château d'Eau with a sense of wonderment. A small train, usually hauled by a battery locomotive, is joined for a short journey to the foot of a modern funicular which climbs to a viewpoint looking down onto the massive Emosson dam as well as providing a breathtaking view across to Mont Blanc. The system only operates during the summer period, but a visit to this system is a must despite the fact that it is not covered by Swiss Pass free travel arrangements.

## MThB Mittelthurgau Bahn.

It was not until December 1911 that the long hoped for connection across Kanton Thurgau between Wil and Kreuzlingen was opened and the MThB started operations. With running rights over the already existing line from Kreuzlingen to the border town of Konstanz, opened in 1875, a through route was provided to Germany. Finance for the enterprise was largely provided by the Westdeutschen Eisenbahngesellschaft which took over the management of the MThB in 1931. Steam traction was used from the outset and the line thrived to such an extent that 50% of its loan capital was repaid in the first 18 years of operations. In order to reduce costs diesel railcars were introduced onto the passenger services in 1938. The ties with Germany were progressively loosened and the head office of the Company was established at Wienfelden. In 1969 a travel office was opened at the Head Office and thus came into being the Reisebüro Mittelthurgau which today is responsible for the organisation of many rail related special excursions.

A further development was the formation in 1993, jointly with the Südostbahn, of a company, Lokoop AG. The purpose of the company was to facilitate the purchase of second hand locomotives from Germany and make them available for hire. The locomotives acquired were of the former Deutsche Reichsbahn (DR) Class 242 which after rebuilding to Swiss standards, mainly by Stadler at Bussnang, were classified Ae4/4. Both the MThB and the SOB operate a number of these locomotives, whilst two are with the GFM

The onset of World War II had curtailed the cross border traffic, but it began to increase again on the cessation of hostilities to such an extent that the MThB had to hire in steam motive power from both the Swiss Federal Railways and the Deutsche Bundesbahn. Passenger traffic also increased, but new diesel railcars were not purchased as it was decided to proceed with electrification of the whole route. The line voltage of the Federal Railways (and the Deutsche Bundesbahn) was adopted and the scheme was



Engen [Germany]: MThB ABDe4/4 N0.536 611-7 waits for departure to Weinfelden.

Photo: Brian Hemming



Weinfelden: MThB Re4/4 II No.21 arrives with a push-pull service from Wil.

Photo: Brian Hemming

opened in 1965. New railcars were purchased to coincide with the electrification, whilst a new Re4/4 locomotive handled freight traffic to the military installations at Bettwiesen and the oil storage depot at Attigshausen. Freight traffic has developed significantly over the years. This is now largely handled by the Lokoop locomotives usually operating in pairs but in addition a number of DB Class 150 locomotives have been fitted with modified pantographs to enable through working of oil traffic from Germany to Attigshausen.

At the start of the 1994/95 timetable a significant development occurred in the history of the MThB when through passenger services to Germany commenced. The operation of the DB local service from Konstanz to Singen and Engen (62 km) was taken over by the MThB and integrated with the MThB service from Weinfelden to Konstanz (42 km). A new half hourly through service was provided between Engen and Kreuzlingen, which each hour was extended to Weinfelden. Of particular interest on this service is that at Konstanz, where the border between Switzerland and Germany is crossed, trains unload one side of the border and load on the other side; the border being a barrier across the

platforms and access to each side is by subway and the border posts. (The author is not sure whether it is permissible to cross the border by train - comments please). The service between Wil and Weinfelden is hourly throughout the day.

A further development by the MThB in Germany was the re-opening in 1996 of the Radolfzell to Stockach branch to passenger services. Three of the then new GTW type diesel railcars were purchased for this service. They are based at Radolfzell and only return to Switzerland for servicing.

Ever mindful of expansion, the MThB extended its activities at the commencement of the 1998-99 timetable when it took over from the SBB the operation of services on the "Seelinie" between Romanshorn and Schaffhausen (74km) which had been opened between 1871 and 1891. With declining traffic in recent years the SBB proposed to withdraw passenger services, and so the MThB obtained a concession with a view to completely revitalising the line. New rolling stock was ordered and considerable investment was put in to renewing infrastructure and modernisation. On the commencement of the 1998-99 timetable the new rolling stock was not completed and so

RBe 540 units were hired from the SBB. All the new stock was available by April 1999, whilst the modernisation works continued apace. By the Autumn of 1998 all the stations had been rebranded with MThB lettering and many had already received new platforms. The service operated by the MThB is hourly throughout the day, reduced to half hourly at peak times. Of significance from a passengers point of view are the connections provided at Kreuzlingen by the hourly meeting of four trains each from a different direction.

The MThB owned line from Wil leaves the main SBB station and passes under the main line before heading north through pleasantly undulating countryside on a gently falling gradient as far as Weinfelden (19.17 km). On this section the military depot at Bettwiesen and the Stadler works at Bussnang are passed. To the east of Weinfelden the line branches to the north and climbs almost steadily at 20% before reaching its highest point at Attishausen (28.75km). A steady descent, again at 20%, follows before the "Seelinie" is joined at Kreuzlingen (40.78km). The line then continues northward after leaving the "Seelinie" to the east of Kreuzlingen to Konstanz where an end connection is made with the DB and passing en route the now largely removed marshalling yards of the DB. The line is single throughout with the exception of passing loops at most of the intermediate stations

The "Seelinie" is also single throughout with passing loops at intermediate stations. It runs from Romanshorn to Schaffhausen, making connection with the steamers on the Bodensee at Romanshorn. It is almost level as far as Kreuzlingen where it makes connection with the lines from Konstanz and Weinfelden and then

follows the Rhine valley all the way to Schaffhausen. Throughout the whole length of the line the gradient does not exceed 12%. At Etwilen connection is made with the line to Winterthur, whilst at Schaffhausen there are connections for Zürich and the DB services north east to Singen and west to Basel Bad.

#### Data

Length: 40.34 km (MThB owned) plus 136km operated on SBB and DB owned lines

Gauge: 1435 mm

Voltage: 15kv 16 2/3Hz AC

Maximum gradient: 22%

Depot: Weinfelden

Works: Weinfelden

Nearest SBB stations: Romanshorn, Schaffhausen, Weinfelden, Wil (all shared)

Kursbuch tables: 820, 830

Powered Stock (liveries: railcars: green & cream, or white, grey and lilac, locomotive: green and cream, tractors: red/brown)

Class	New Nos.	Old Nos.	Built
Tm	236 651	51	1966
Tm	236 661	61	1969
Re	426 621	21	1969
RABe	526 680-689	-	1998-99
ABDe	536 611-616	11 - 16	1965-66
RBDe	566 631-634	-	1994
Bm	596 671-673	-	1996-97
Em	826 641	41	1972
Ee	936 618	16318	1928

#### Notes:

536 616 (16) was ex GFM 171 in 1983

936 318 (16318) was ex SBB 16318 in 1981

### Photographs and slides for *Swiss Express*

The Committee has become aware that a number of members are concerned by the non-return of photographs and slides that they have submitted to *Swiss Express* over the past few years. Would any member who is awaiting such material please contact the Secretary with full details.

Articles for the  
September edition  
of the  
"Swiss Express"  
by the 20th July  
THANK YOU

## ST Sursee-Triengen-Bahn

The first railway to reach Sursee was the Schweizerische Centralbahn (SCB) which opened from Aarburg to Emmenbrücke in 1856. In 1872 a concession was granted for a line from Sursee to the Luzern/Aargau Kantonal border north of Triengen but this failed through lack of finance. A further concession was granted in 1893 for a line from Sursee to Suhr, but this failed again due to lack of finance and also a disagreement between the Kantons over the gauge to be adopted. In 1901 the first railway opened in the Surental was the metre gauge Aarau-Schöftland Bahn (AS, now part of the WSB). Attempts to connect this line with Sursee were not successful and it was not until 1906 that a concession was finally granted for a standard gauge line in Kanton Luzern only. This line would run from Sursee to Triengen and was financed with the help of Deutsche Eisenbahngesellschaft of Hannover, Germany. Construction commenced in 1911 and the Sursee-Triengen-Bahn (ST) was opened in November 1912 for goods and passenger traffic.

The issue of a through railway from Sursee to Schöftland would not go away, and as recently as 1963 a concession was granted for a narrow

gauge line to be built between the two locations. Construction did not commence and by 1969 with the estimated cost doubling it was doomed to failure. The Federation encouraged Kantons Luzern and Aargau to look at the alternative of a bus service between Sursee and Schöftland and so it was in 1971 that after much local protest the ST passenger service to Triengen ceased and was replaced by a PTT bus through to Schöftland. This replaced the bus service which had operated since 1945 between Triengen and Schöftland. The ST continued to carry freight traffic which has been greatly enhanced in recent years by the development of industrial sites at Sursee and Büren.

The ST line opened in 1912 with a stock of two Henschel built steam locomotives. In 1918 these were supplemented by an SLM built steam railcar for the carriage of parcels and post. The locomotives and the railcar maintained the service on the line until the early 1960's, when after a short period of loans of other stock including the now preserved VHB Ed2/2 No.1 two former SBB "Tigerli" E3/3 locomotives were acquired in 1963-64. In 1965 a new four wheel diesel locomotive

*Continued on page 22*



Sursee: ST Loco type E3/3 No.8522 standing in the ST Bay at the SBB Station.

Photo: Brian Hemming

# TTE Trains Touristiques d'Emosson SA

This company was formerly known as the Societe anonyme des transports d'Emosson (SATEB) was formed in 1975 to take over an operation which had been started by the Federal Railways in 1935, but closed in 1973 on the opening of the Emosson dam. The present name, adopted in 1997, reflects more accurately the nature of its operations which consist of two funiculars and a narrow gauge railway linking Le Châtelard on the CF Martigny - Châtelard with the Barberine (now Emosson) hydro-electric dam.

The Barberine dam, which had a capacity of 53.4 million cubic metres, was opened by the Federal Railways in 1923 to feed the Barberine and later (in 1927) the Vernayaz power stations which provided power for the increasing railway electrification in western Switzerland. In 1973 to meet ever increasing demand a new 180 metre high dam was completed which quadrupled the capacity of the Lac d'Emosson to 225 million cubic metres and completely immersed the old Barberine dam wall.

To provide access for manpower and materials to the original dam construction site a funicular railway was built from Le Châtelard to Château d'Eau. This ran parallel to the main water supply pipes and as well as being used for maintenance purposes was later opened in 1935 by the Federal Railways as a tourist line. The water pipes disappeared with the opening of the new dam, but the funicular railway remained and now connects with a small narrow gauge line at Château d'Eau. SATEB claim this funicular line has the distinction of being the steepest funicular railway in the world with a maximum gradient of 870‰. Unlike most funiculars follows the contours of the mountainside. It has one passing loop and because of the variable incline provision has to be made to hold down the cable. Additionally due to the length of the railway and the weight of the cable a rail mounted ballast weight is provided for the top section of the incline which is pushed up by ascending cars and accompanies descending cars.

At Château d'Eau, and at right angles to the funicular line is the terminus of a small narrow gauge railway which has open carriages and is powered by either battery or diesel locomotives. This railway follows part of the

trackbed of what was originally a 750mm gauge line laid in two sections to connect the funicular with the original Barberine dam construction site. The two sections of this original line were 3.4km and 1.1km long and were connected by a funicular line to allow through working of trucks. Motive power was provided by two petrol tractors and 5 SLM two axle steam locomotives. The line was lifted after completion of the construction works and the trackbed was used as a footpath, but most of it disappeared when the new dam was opened. It was not re-opened during the construction period because suitable road access had been established with Finhaut. The remaining trackbed was used for the construction of a tourist line between Château d'Eau and the foot of the new dam which was opened in 1975 under the



*Le Châtelard: Lower Funicular showing the haulage rope lifted well off the guides. Photo: Anne Williams*

auspices of SATEB. It runs on a ledge above the Val du Trient and provides spectacular views of the Mont Blanc massif. In its 1.65km length it passes through five tunnels having a total length of 455m. At the foot of the dam (Pied du Barrage) the line continues for a short distance on the trackbed of the old construction line which is used as a headshunt.

Access to the Emosson dam from the terminal of the railway was originally by foot, but in 1977 a 200m long monorail funicular, similar to those used in vineyards, was built which had a maximum gradient of 800‰ and gave a lift of 115m during its 5 minute journey. Two cars were used on the line, each having a capacity of 5 passengers. With the increasing popularity of the area the capacity of the monorail funicular became a problem and it was replaced in 1991 by a new conventional funicular which has rubber tyred cars running on galvanised steel section track. The lower end is a short walk from the railway, whilst the upper terminal is some 30m above the dam wall.

At Le Châtelard it is possible to buy a return ticket (1998 = CHF35 ) for the whole journey to the Emosson dam, or one may buy a single ticket (1998 = CHF25 ) and either walk down or take the MC operated bus (table 132.15) which runs between the dam and Finhaut Gare. The service only operates in the summer period, usually from

early June to mid October and it is not covered on the Swiss Pass.

**Lower funicular**

Length: 1306m  
 Height gain: 692m  
 Maximum gradient: 870‰  
 Kursbuch table: 2143  
 Journey time: 15 minutes

**Railway**

Length: 1650m  
 Gauge: 600 mm  
 Maximum gradient: 12‰  
 Depot: Château d'Eau  
 Nearest SBB station: Martigny (approx. 1 hour via Martigny-Châtelard and funicular)  
 Kursbuch table: 2143  
 Journey time: 9 minutes

Railway powered stock (livery: red)

Class	Numbers	Built
Tm2/2	4	1940
Ta2/2	5, 7	1952

**Upper funicular**

Length: 261m  
 Height gain: 143m  
 Maximum gradient: 730‰  
 Kursbuch table:  
 Journey time: 2 minutes



Pied du Barrage: TTE Ta 2/2 No.5 with a train from Château d'Eau

Photo: Anne Williams



## Results of the Titlis competition

We are pleased to announce the winners of the two pairs of tickets on Titlis - Bahnen from the competition in the March 1999 issue of *Swiss Express* are **G R Lamb (R102)** of Halesowen and **Mrs M C Smith (P93)** of Harrogate.

The correct answers were:

1. Luzern Stans Engelberg Bahn
2. 1998
3. 10,000 ft (this has been taken from the Titlis publicity literature - some entrants put forward alternative figures based on exact metre/feet calculations so all such participants who answered the other four questions correctly were entered in the draw)
4. Obwalden
5. Once

The Society would like to thank the Obwalden Tourist Office in Sarnen and Titlis-Bahnen for their co-operation and generosity. Contact details of Titlis-Bahnen are given on p11 of the March issue of *Swiss Express*.

### ST Continued from page 14

and three passenger coaches were purchased which took over the passenger service until its cessation in 1971. The locomotive continued in service on freight duties and remained in regular use until 1975 when the volume of traffic necessitated the purchase of a more powerful machine from SLM. The two "Tigerli" steam locomotives and a selection of coaches are retained by the company for use on special trains

The ST line starts from a bay platform at the north end of Sursee SBB station, and after leaving the station area veers off to the right passing the north side of the Münchrüti trading estate to which there is a rail connection to the numerous private sidings. Prior to the opening of this estate in 1975 and its associated roadworks, the ST line curved sharply to the right and passed through a station, Sursee Stadt, before reaching Schlottermilch where the present line continues on its rural route along the Surental through Geuensee and Büron before reaching Triengen. Freight traffic to and from the ST is transferred at Sursee, and frequently an ST diesel locomotive can be seen in the SBB sidings to the south of Sursee station. The connection to the SBB line at Sursee is close to the north end of the station with the Luzern bound track being used by the ST for transfer of wagons.

#### DATA

Length:	8.9 km
Gauge:	1435 mm
Voltage:	not electrified
Maximum gradient:	15%
Depot:	Triengen
Works:	Triengen
Nearest SBB station:	Sursee
Kursbuch bus table:	510.68

#### Powered Stock

(livery: diesels, red-brown,  
E3/3, 5- green & black,  
E3/3, 8522 - black)

Class	Old Nos.	New Nos.	Built
Em2/2	1	828 501	1965
Em2/2	2	828 5021	1976
E3/3	5	-	1907
E3/3	8522	-	1913

5 is ex SBB 8479 - in working order

8522 is ex SBB 8522 - in working order

Loco No.8522 reverted to conventional coal-fired operation with the SBB in 1954 and was sold to the ST in 1964 where it is still used on special trains.