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INTERNATIONAL

The first through service between Kobenhavn and Italy via the Gotthard Freight Corridor ran on 12th January.

Schweizerische Bundesbahnen (SBB)

The surprising outcome of the sectorisation of the SBB into passenger and freight areas is the allocation of all the Re460's to the passenger sector. Only 100 Re4/4^{II}, all 114 Re450 and all 118 Re460's are going to the passenger sectors, the remaining 402 main line locomotives of types Ae6/6, Re4/4^{II} Re4/4^{II} and Re6/6 going to the freight sector. The allocation of all the Re460's to the passenger sector, where their high speed capability will not be fully exploited until 2005, is likely to have a serious effect on the freight sector, who will have to completely rethink their policy for the Gotthard Line - they may not be able to maintain the planned throughput in the available paths with only Re6/6 power.

Track in the disused Letten tunnel in Zürich was lifted in December.

The SBB Cargo sector was formally converted to a subsidiary company, SBB Cargo SA, on 1st April 1999. In due course it is planned to merge this company with the FS (Italian State Railways) cargo division.

On the 'hit list' for early withdrawal are the remaining Ee3/3 with only one shunters platform, Nos. 16331...16350 of 1930/31.

While the standard first class seating arrangement for modernised EW Type I A s is 2 + 2 seating, a batch are being turned out with 2 + 1 seating for use on the Bellinzona - Locarno shuttle service. Two EW IV Pendelzug formations have been moved to the Luzern - Basel service, displaced from the Zürich - Luzern line by the introduction of double deck stock in January.

RBe4/4 1401 was used to test signalling equipment in west Switzerland in December 1998, taking it to the byways of the private railways. This included being dragged over the de-electrified section of the Sensetalbahn between Gümnenen and Laupen behind an STB tractor.

Bern-Lötschberg-Simplon (BLS)

When the eight RBA 525 NINA units enter squadron service in June, they will be mainly used on the Bern - Neuchâtel line (S-Bahn Lines S5 / S51 / S55) but at evenings and weekends they should appear on S2 services between Schwarzenburg

and Langnau. Up to four units can be run in multiple.

Canton Bern has provided credit for the doubling of the Gurbetal line between Belp and Falkenhaus and the provision of a halt at Steinbach.

OTHER STANDARD GAUGE

Regionalverkehr Mittelland (RM)

Be4/4 102 is now classified as an historic locomotive.

Sihltal Zürich Uetliberg Bahn (SZU)

Solar power panels have been fitted to Giesshübel shops.

METRE GAUGE.

Centovalli Line (FART/ SSIF)

The Italian (SSIF) section of the line between Domodossola and Re is at long last to be equipped with fixed signals, using Swiss pattern for compatibility with the FART section.

Furka-Oberalp Bahn (FO)

The loop at Mompé Tujetsch for Gotthard Basis Tunnel traffic was commissioned on 1st December 1998. This section, from Disentis to Sedrun, was shut from April 5th to May 13th for work on the new alignment at Disentis.

The FO is another company to benefit from the reduction in the Brünig line passenger fleet, having bought 6 centre entrance coaches. In the 1998 / 1999 winter season these were employed as a block train on Brig - Andermatt ski services; over the summer they will be rebuilt to FO standards for strengthening main line services - they will not be allowed down to Göschenen.

Luzern - Stans - Engelberg (LSE)

The former Brünig balcony coach, Bi 40, was retired on 31st December 1998. The 1964 - built EW I's B 41 - 44 are being renumbered 81 - 84 when re-entering service after stretching to include Panorama windows.

Meiringen Innertkirchen Bahn (MIB)

Treibwagen No. 6 has been fitted with a larger diesel motor in the passenger saloon, and the pantograph removed. Reclassified Bm 4/4 No.6, its primary use will be on goods trains.

Regionalverkehr Bern-Solothurn (RBS)

The second track between Schönbühl and Moosdorf is now in use.

Ex SZB BDe4/4 6 and Bt 223 are being restored to 1950's condition for heritage services - the

Treibwagen has recently been used on extra services on Line W to Worb.

Rigi Bahnen (RB)

The company has abandoned the plans to replace the Arth Rigi section with a cable car. Instead, a new station is proposed for Arth / Goldau. Parallel to the SBB platforms and linked to the station subway, it will replace the present overtrack station.

Rhätische Bahn (RhB)

ABe4/4 501 is the last active unit of the 1939 quartet of lightweight railcars. 502 is stored with accident damage, while 503 and 504 were broken up in 1998.

Stock for the Intereggio services through the Vereina Tunnel will be formed of Ge4/4^{II} powered Pendelzug formations with new low floor driving

trailers. Intermediate coaches will be provided by rebuilding the 16 EW I AB s, series 1519 - 1534 into 8 A s and 8 B s by combining the appropriate halves of the donor coaches!

Car trains for the Vereina tunnel will be formed of 12 flats marshalled between 2 loader wagons, powered by Ge4/4^{III} locomotives; 3 rakes, with one spare loading wagon, built by Bombardier at their Vevey and Aachen works. From January, they were on trial between Trimmis and Haldenstein. Trials through the Vereina Tunnel itself were due to start in May.

Wynental und Suhrentalbahn (WSB)

Proposals have been made to reroute the line between Reinach and Menziken over the parallel alignment of the Beromünster branch of the SBB's Seetalbahn.

Snowfall closures

The heavy snowfall in February caused severe disruption to Swiss railways, as indicated in the following table: This table tries to indicate the areas affected and the period of closure - but is not necessarily complete!

Railway Section		Close	Open	Notes
ASD	Aigle - Les Diablerets	18/2	19/2	
BLS	Brig - Frutigen	9/2	10/2	
	Brig - Kandersteg	18/2	19/2	
BLM	Lauterbrunnen - Mürren	18/2	6/3	Bridge demolished by avalanche
BOB	Zweilütschinen - Grindelwald	9/2	12/2	Avalanche risk
		18/2	26/2	Except Grindelwald relief trains
	Zweilütschinen - Lauterbrunnen	18/2	19/2	
BVZ	Brig - Stalden	18/2	6/3	
	Stalden - Zermatt	18/2	27/2	
FO	Fürgangen - Andermatt	18/2	3/3	
	Andermatt - Sedrun	18/2	6/3	
	Andermatt - Göschenen	18/2	3/3	
JB	Kleine Scheidegg - Jungfrauoch	18/2	19/2	
MC	Finhaut - St Gervais	9/2	17/2	
	Finhaut - Chamonix	18/2	?	
MGN	Caux - Rochers de Naye	18/2	19/2	
MO	Sembrancher - Orsières	18/2	19/2	
MOB	Les Avants - Montbovon	18/2	19/2	
RhB	Küblis - Davos Platz	18/2	26/2	
	Davos Platz - Filisur	18/2	6/3	
	Cinuos-chel - Scoul	18/2	26/2	
SBB	Schwanden - Linthal	9/2	11/2	
	- Linthal	18/2	?	
	Erstfeld - Airolo	18/2	19/2	
Brünig	Giswil - Meiringen	9/2	10/2	Avalanche risk
	Giswil - Meiringen	16/2	4/3	
	Brienz - Interlaken	9/2	6/3	Lake steamer service provided
WAB	Wengen - Kleine Scheidegg -			
	Brandegg	18/2	19/2	

The BLS and FO both managed to run "extended car train services" on periods when their lines were open but the roads blocked by snow.

On February 2nd, BLS car trains were run between Kandersteg and Brig, while on February 11th the service became Frutigen to Goppenstein.

From 19th February, car trains operated over the whole of the mountain section between Frutigen and Brig at up to half hour intervals. On the FO, the Furka tunnel car carrying services were extended to Andermatt on 11th February, on the following day a car carrying service was provided between Realp and Hospental.

Later in February, earth slides caused by melting snow blocked the following sections of line:

Cheyres - Estaveyer la Lac

(Yverdon - Payerne line)

Giswil - Kaiserstuhl

(Brünig line)

Zug - Arth-Goldau

Gotthard line. Trains diverted via Cham/Rotkreuz or the Aargau Südbahn through Wohlen.

Bauma - Fischenthal
(Tossthal line, Winterthur - Rapperswil)
Wittenbach - Häggenschwil
(St Gallen - Romanshorn line (BT).)

Late News

RhB

On the 8th March train number 231 en route to Disentis from Chur was in collision with a small rock that had just fallen onto the track between Trin and Versam.

The rock became lodged under the buffing plate of locomotive Ge4/4 III No. 647. A repair team was sent from Reichenau on goods train 5835 hauled by Ge6/6 No.411.

When the rock was removed the Ge4/4 III returned to Reichenau and on to Landquart for repair. Passengers continued on to Ilanz by bus and then to Disentis by relief train.

SBB

Since 29th March locomotives, of the type Re460, attached to assist in banking [schiebedienst] Gotthard line freight trains are unmanned and operate under the control of the driver of the pilot locomotive via a radio link.



HOTEL FROHSINN

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For brochure and reservation details:

Hotel Frohsinn. CH 6472 Erstfeld Switzerland

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Château d'Oex: MOB Be4/4 No.5002 with AB307 and ABt5302 on a special working from Zweisimmen for the Hot Air Balloon Rally. Photo: Peter Bowen



Zweisimmen: BLS Ae4/4 No.251, brought out of storage due to locomotive shortages, works a Zweisimmen to Interlaken express. Photo: Peter Bowen