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It is better to travel than to arrive, so the saying goes. On the last day of a recent two week holiday, and after an early breakfast, I paid the hotel bill and went off to the station to catch the 0843 to Chur (leaving some time pencilled in to visit model shops in Zürich before my flight home) or at least that was plan A. At 0830 I arrived to find an RhB postal train flats with the new containers derailed, just before the final points to the single line to Preda. The loco had disappeared, presumably to Samedan, but in its place stood Ge4/41 "Kesch" with an engineers coach at the Preda end.

It looked as though the first wagon's back bogie section, had come off the rails, as it had already been jacked up on wood blocks using a clever roller strip, a hydraulic jack on each side, together with a cable attached to Turfer (a ratchet lever) in turn anchored to the other rail line. Some village residents had turned out to watch. No Health & Safety regulations here (in the UK you would have been kept well away), just common sense. Keep your distance, and be prepared to run, if it went wrong. I was told that the first train would be at 0943 (so much for the model shops) but still all right for my flight.

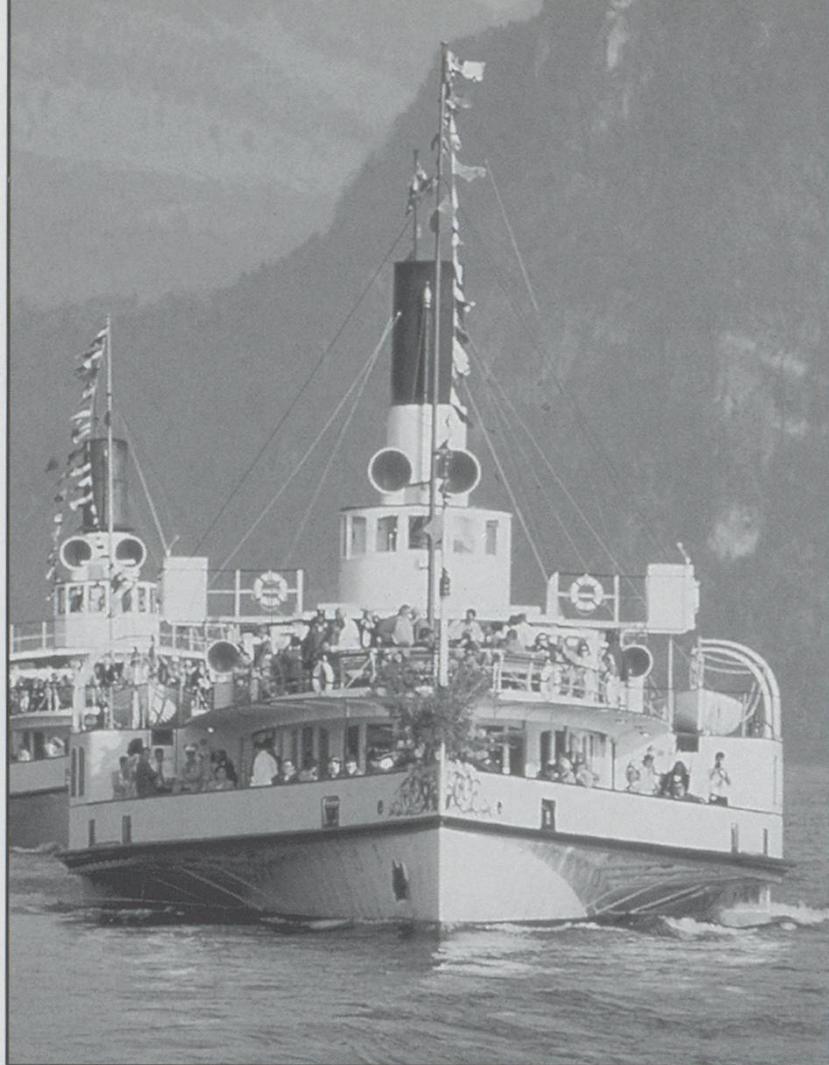
Back to the fun, they very cleverly jacked up the -wagon, used the turfer to haul it back on the rails. In the meantime the rest of the train was parked on line 3, line 1 had some loaded log wagons waiting to be collected, so one line was spare. It looked as though a brake fault on the front wheels of the back bogie had caused the problem. The loco plus engineers coach, then slowly backed up to the wagon and pushed it back on to the rest of train. Three engineers stood on the wagon watching every movement of the wheels. Line 2 which had the clear through road,

then hosted a delayed Bernina Express from Chur, passengers boarded and alighted and off it went up the line with lots of passengers looking out of open windows to see what had caused the delay. All the other wagons were inspected and their brakes tested. The whole train was recoupled and hauled back. The loco then used the spare line to join the back of the train and pushed it back into a siding by the old loco shed. It was now 0920, my delayed 0843 arrived, so I thought I had better join it, as I did have a flight to catch. There appeared to be no damage to the rails, just some marks in the ballast. Regrettfully I cannot end this story, presumably the wagon was inspected more thoroughly in the siding.

Every passing loop and station back to Tiefencastel had a train in it, the guard asked everyone on the delayed train where they were going, full marks to the RhB here. The RhB were lucky it happened where it did, just think of the consequences in the spirals, tunnels or worst of all on a bridge. Most importantly of course nobody was hurt. Full marks to the RhB though for how they dealt with it even though the consequences were felt for the rest of the day.

The Vereina tunnel opens in November, so from then an alternative route will be available. I have walked down the spirals from Preda to Bergün several times, but would not like to walk up it. Finally take a look at the new Kursbuch which shows some interesting new routes in tables 901-960, the RhB seems to be marketing many more specials now.

By the way I did manage to make the flight and even have a quick look at the model shops so it could have been a lot worse.



Just to wet your appetite for next year are two pictures of the SGV Parade on the Vierwaldstättersee held in 1997. Michael Farr is writing an article for the next edition about what promises to be a very exciting Millennium Parade. the date is 15th April 2000

Pictures courtesy of and ©SGV

