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International

The SBB have hired out a DS IC rake (8 coaches with two spares) to the Danish State Railways (DSB). It will remain in Denmark until early 2001, when it will return for the Expo 2001 services.

From November 28th the Bern - Frasne services provided by the surviving RABDe EC Grey Mouse units for connection into or from Lausanne - Paris TGVs have finally been withdrawn, to be replaced by through TGVs. This gives two return Bern - Paris services daily, along with the single return Zürich - Paris service and the five return Lausanne - Paris services.

Work is continuing on the completion of the rolling motorway across Switzerland between Freiburg am Breisgau and Novara via the Lötschberg and Simplon tunnels, still on course for introduction in March 2001. Gauge enlargement is now complete on the Simplon section between Varzo and Preglia; at least one line between Iselle and the Novara terminal is scheduled for completion by September 2000.

In another international joint venture, SBB Cargo are going into partnership with the Hamburg-based Transrapid AG to form ChemOil Logistics, providing transport and logistic services for the petroleum and chemical industries. The new company is scheduled for launch in October when an Re 460 locomotive and tank wagons will appear in the new ChemOil livery.

Schweizerische Bundesbahnen (SBB)

From the May 2000 timetable change, freight services over the Basel - Chiasso axis will be reorganised. Head end power will be provided by 2 Res in multiple (2 * Re460 or an Re10/10 formation) throughout, with a radio controlled helper (Ref460) cut in over the Gotthard section. 17 Re460, 30 Re4/4 and 30 Re6/6 are being equipped with the radio equipment.

The last few weeks of service for the RABDe EC Grey Mouse units on the Bern - Frasne service was due to see some workings covered by pairs of units, bringing back memories of their employment on the TEE Gottardo up to the mid 1980s. Due to be withdrawn at the end of November, it is expected that one unit will be returned to TEE condition for special services.

SBB train crew has, unsurprisingly, been divided into passenger and freight sectors. While most crew depots will be split up, some (for example, Erstfeld) will go completely to SBB Cargo.

SBB Cargo locomotives to be painted into a new livery, expected to be in a mixed turquoise green and white style. An initial treatment has been applied to Re 460 074.

An interesting S-Bahn extra has been provided on the eastern section of route S5. Train 18036, starting from Bubikon at 07 24, calls at all S5 stops to Stadelhofen (07 49), Hauptbahnhof (07 53) and terminates at Hardbrücke at 07 57. This is formed of a 6 coach IR formation, originating as train 2701, the 04 48 IR Bern - Zürich Flughafen, which runs direct via the Altstetten - Oerlikon link. From Flughafen, the empty stock runs via the Effretikon - Wetzikon branch to reach Bubikon, where it reverses; after detraining at Hardbrücke station, the stock continues via Oerlikon, Otelfingen, the Wurenlos - Killwangen spur and back along the main line to the carriage sidings at Zürich Hardbrücke

The Fête des Vignerons at Vevey between 29th July and 15th August saw major modifications to scheduled services along the Vaud Riviera, with a special regional timetable issued. (Details of the alterations to lake boats, by contrast, were actually published in the Kursbuch!). Special trains were operated from Geneva, St Maurice, Biel and Bern (via Chexbres), and local services enhanced.

Track modifications to the Linthal branch mean that no loops or goods sidings now exist between Schwanden and Linthal.

To cover for late running InterRegio services from Milano, an Re460 and a set of seven UIC ABm coaches are based at Brig. It is not clear what will happen if consecutive trains run late!

Goods traffic to Beromünster has now stopped to allow the conversion of the section between Reinach and Menziken to metre gauge to accommodate the WSB line from Aarau. The last revenue earning services to Beromünster were specials in conjunction with the Bahnhoffest at Beinwil am See on 21st and 22nd August, either a steam service worked by Ed3/3 3 Beinwyl, built for the Seetalbahn in 1884, or a Kolibri.

Bern-Lötschberg-Simplon (BLS)

Work on the Mittholz end of the Lötschberg base tunnel formally started on July 5th.

SwF 2m has been allocated to further avalanche protection works on the Lötschberg south ramp.

The last of the 8 RABe525 NINA units was delivered in August.

The BLS has taken over six IC Bts built for the SBB, Bts 28-94 954-959.

To release Re4/4s for Autumn goods traffic and Lötschberg base tunnel construction trains, two 7 coach Ae4/4 powered Pendelzug have been formed for the Zweisimmen line RegioExpress services.

Die Post

The AppenzellerBahn is an addition to the list of metre gauge lines carrying postal traffic published in the last Swiss Express; they provide a service between Herisau, Gonten and Appenzell. There have been problems when the service train to which the van is attached runs late; to avoid delays during unloading, a extra train formed of De4/4 50 (with the post in the baggage compartment!) is used to carry the Gonten traffic.

P15 "Güsti" previously reported as having been leased has been acquired although retaining its white livery. It is allocated to Daillens and is correctly numbered Tm 237.951.9.

Reorganisations

The SBB was reincorporated as the SBB AG on 12th July 1999, effectively placing it on the same level as all other Swiss rail transport companies.

While the SBB is being divided into its component parts, more of the private railways are being amalgamated by formalising their existing working groupings. In addition to the amalgamation of the four companies which formed the TPC group in 1977 (Swiss Express 5 / 11), the following new companies have been formed:

Aare Seeland mobil AG (ASm)

This company comprises the three railways which formed the OSST group - Biel Täufellen Ins Bahn (BTI), Regionalverkehr Oberaargau (RVO) and Solothurn Niederbipp Bahn (SNB), together with the regional bus company OAK.

Transport Régionaux Neuchâtelois SA (TRN)

This amalgamation, formalised on 2nd September but backdated to 1st January 1999, brings together the CMN (CF des Montagnes Neuchâtelois), RVT (Regional Val du Travers) and VR (Transports du Val du Ruz - an erstwhile regional tramway and then trolleybus operator)

Other Standard Gauge

Gruyère Fribourg Morat (GFM)

The GFM have hired Martigny Orsières B 41 to strengthen peak hour services on the Fribourg - Ins section. In full Saint Bernard Express livery, it stands out while stabled at Fribourg during its midday break.

Mittel Thurgau Bahn (MThB)

The MThB Weinfelden - Kreuzlingen section has been closed between Kreuzlingen and Bernrain for track renewal.

A Tm¹ tractor has possibly been acquired from the SBB. Tm 236.662.3, newly painted in brown livery, was observed on the "Seelinie" in June at Kreuzlingen Hafen.

CF Pont Brassus (PBr)

This company celebrated its centenary by hiring in a BLS NINA and a MThB Low Cost railcar to work its scheduled services over the weekend of 21st and 22nd August. The PBr Kolibri and the Vallée de Joux steam group provided special services over the company's line during these days. On 19th August, both PBr Kolibri went off on a day trip to Bulle (GFM) via Lausanne, leaving SBB units to cover the passenger service.

Regionalverkehr Mitteland (RM)

Since the May timetable change the 5 Re4/4^{III} (Re 436 111-113, 141, 181) have been repainted and refitted as standard SBB Re4/4^{III} for transfer to freight work over the Gotthard; they are being replaced on RM freight services by Ae6/6s. However, they were still available for special services on the RM network during the summer.

Sihltal Zürich Uetliberg Bahn (SZU)

Aggregate trains to Zürich Brunau are now running at the rate of 12 to 14 trains daily, formed of 18 Fans carrying 900 tons of gravel from Ratzerfeld (near Huntwangen - Wil). These trains service the base for the SBB Zürich - Thalwil tunnel, and the parallel tunnel for the A4 / A20 autobahn. The steep gradient on the link from Zürich Wiedikon to the SZU at Geisshübel necessitates the use of an SBB Re10/10 formation on these trains.

Recently restored Uetliberg line Ce2/2 2 (with trailer C41) has been used on a regular working during the summer, leaving

Zürich Hbf at 18.17 on Thursday and Saturday evenings for Uitikon Waldegg. Running through to Uetliberg is not practicable - since remodelling, it is not possible to run round at the summit!

Voralpen-Express (VAE)

A new company has been formed under this name to manage the hourly joint BT / SBB / SOB service between Luzern and Romanshorn via Rapperswil and St Gallen. The service pattern requires 6 sets - planned to be formed Re4/4 / A / Br / B / B / BDt, requiring a fleet of 30 Revvivo coaches excluding spares. A new livery has been designed, but the stock will remain in the ownership of the parent companies - and can be distinguished by the UIC company number in the normal way. A press launch on 19th August unveiled the first 2 coaches - Revvivo A 223 (BT) and BDt 975 (SOB, ex WM Bt 11)

Metre gauge.

Appenzeller Bahnen (AB)

On 30th August, the AB ran a very different Rollböcke service, with Ge4/4 1 heading 2 SBB Ds carrying bicycles to Gossau for a school party. After transfer to the standard gauge, the party went forward to Domat/Ems, at the end of the RhBs mixed gauge.

For the Open Monuments day on 11th September, the AB turned out its diesel triebwagen BCFm4/4 56, with Säntisbahn trailers C13 + C14, as well as the historic SGA formation.

Brig Visp Zermatt Bahn (BVZ)

ABDeh8/8 2042 has been modernised and modified to work with the Täsch - Zermatt shuttle driving trailers. Sister units 2041 and 2043 are scheduled for the same alterations.

Furka-Oberalp Bahn (FO)

The halt at Bitsch, the second station east of Brig, has been converted to a crossing station with a 140m long island platform and subway access at a cost of SFr 6m. The 370m long loop, capable of taking two standard length trains, has taken over from Naters as the station where the Goms local trains pass, improving the reliability of the timetable.

The new depot and workshops at Brig Glisergrund were officially opened on 11th December 1998.

Rhätische Bahn (RhB)

ABe4/4 503 and 504 were withdrawn towards the end of 1998 leaving only one of the class, ABe4/4 501, ostensibly in serviceable stock. 502 was however photographed in service in September (see accompanying picture) despite having notes as withdrawn earlier this year.

Veteran ABe4/4 no.502 rests at Samedan between Pontresina shuttles. 02/09/99

Photo. Neil Townend



Bernina Line ABe4/4 36 and 37 have been modified to works motor coaches Xe4/4 9924 and 9923, based at Pontresina and Poschiavo respectively.

The first driving trailer for the Vereina tunnel Pendelzug arrived at Landquart from Stadler AG on 22nd June.

A bicycle van, converted from Cargo Domizil van Gbk-v 5545, has been employed on Bernina line trains 415 (09 05 ex St Moritz) and 480 (15 30 ex Tirano) during the summer.

The RhB added two two axle vehicles to its heritage fleet in Summer 1999, one passenger coach and one van. C 2012, now carrying its 1911 number, was built in 1888 (part of the original Landquart - Davos order) as C 34, and was employed as overhead line van X 9034 from 1940 until 1988. D 4052, rebuilt from X 9028, the mess van for ballast regulator C312 since 1986, was built as F 4043 in 1912.

For summer 2000 the RhB are intending to run a tourist train, the Engadin Star, over the route Landquart - Vereina - St Moritz - Albula - Chur. The press release suggests that there will be one train each day in each direction.

The Vereina Tunnel opening is scheduled for a three day bash, Friday 19th November (the official opening, at the Selfranga terminal at Klosters), and a festival on 20th and 21st November, based on the two car terminals at Selfranga and Sagliains, with the RhB providing the traintertainment link.

Transport Publics du Chablais (TPC)

Construction work started in June on a new workshop for the Aigle-based lines, located on the outskirts of Aigle on the AOMC line.

The May 1999 timetable sees all trains on the ASD line call at the branch terminus at Le Sèpey for the first time since May 1993.

Trams

Basler Verkehrsbetriebe (BVB)

The Swiss Standard bogie cars are now largely restricted to the Bruderholz routes 15 and 16. The last trailer to be stretched with a low floor centre section was completed on 28th August.

Transports Lausannois (TL)

Tenders have been invited for 10 rubber tyred automatic cars for the planned north east metro line. An option for up to nine additional cars has been specified.

Transport en commun de Neuchâtel et environs (TN)

Derailment - damaged Be4/4 502 + Bt 552 has gone to the VBZ workshops at Zürich for repairs, due to their experience with the Tram 2000 suburban design to which the TN stock is built.

Städtische Verkehrsbetriebe Bern (SVB)

The note in last months Notepad about the Combino tram working on Route 9 was slightly misleading. The Siemens built prototype was only on trial at Bern over the period 28th June to 7th July. In the meantime, the SVB hired Be4/4 607 from the TramVerein Bern group after a tree fell on a Be4/8 unit on 2nd June.

Preservation

TEE Classics

The RAM TEE rake repatriated from Canada was on public display at Luzern Bahnhof on September 11th, the Swiss Open Monuments day. The day was marked by a visit by RABe EC 1055, on a railtour to promote the preservation of a Grey Mouse unit after their retirement from normal service at the end of November.

Alpine Classic Pullman Express

The RhB has launched a new concept for its Pullman fleet, under the above title. These will be available for hire over the whole network including the Bernina line. As well as the Pullmans and the RhB saloons, WR 3814, repurchased from the DFB group, will be used after refurbishment. Sponsorship for this restoration is being arranged by the Pro Salonwagen AG organisation. A service to Zermatt will be marketed under the title Orient Express der Alpen.

Blonay Chamby (BC)

Further to the note in the last Newsletter, visitors to the line in the 1980s and early 1990s will find it hard to recognise the old souvenir shop in its newly restored form as Berninabahn As2!

Industrial

Yet more Stadler Low Cost GTW 2/6 railcars are nearing completion, this time for DB Regio. The sets designated 646 (power

unit) and 946 (passenger sections) are being completed by Adtranz at the Berlin works.

The Chemins de Fer du Jura (CJ) has approached Canton Bern for credit to purchase four GTW 2/6 units for their narrow gauge section.

Late News

Railway safety is very much in the news at the moment and information on the following which is highly topical has been provided by Alan Pike, Andrew Russel and a couple of Websites. At about 1757 on 01/11/99 an SBB NPZ on Rte. S3 heading for Thun

from Weissenbühl ran into the side of a RegionalZug on line 33 entering the station and travelling in the opposite direction.

The NPZ ploughed into a 2nd class coach in the RegionalZug killing a woman and baby. 25 more were injured.

All reports say that the S3 driver left Weissenbühl against a red signal.

Severe disruption was caused both here and also the same day near Wettingen when a natural gas pipe exploded. Main line trains were diverted via Lenzburg and buses subbed the S trains.

SBB Re 4/4ⁿ no.11302 at Sion, 08/09/99, with the new parcel containers mentioned in September's Notepad.

Photo. Peter Rose



RhB Tm 2/2 no.83. Another digital image by Jonathan Plotnek



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