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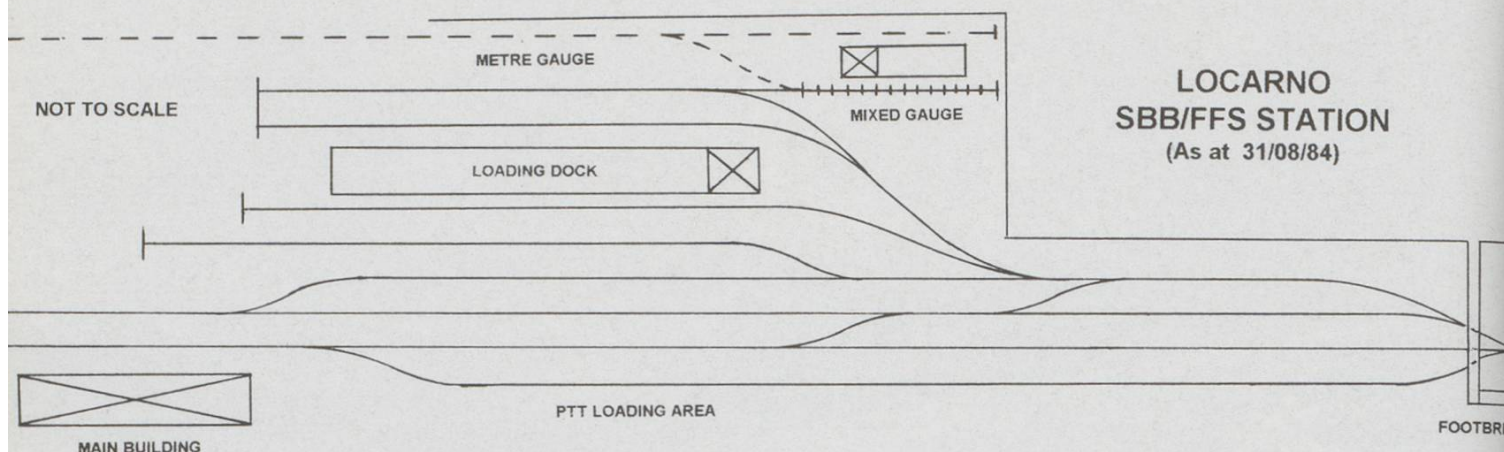
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Locarno SBB/FFS station by Giles Della Gana

I find the SBB/FFS station at Locarno interesting on two accounts, first it is one of the few standard gauge branch terminus in Switzerland. Second, it is the standard gauge railhead for Della Gana country. Fear not, it is only on the former that this article will be dwelling.

Running through easy country, the branch to Locarno was one of the first parts of the Gotthardbahn (GB) to come into operation. The line between Bellinzona and Locarno opening on 20th December 1874. The impressive station buildings at each end of the line were designed by the GB's chief architect Professor A. Goller, that at Locarno being based on a design for Romanshorn by the Nordostbahn company's architect J. Breitingner.

The branch leaves the Gotthard main line at Giubiasco, three kilometres south of Bellinzona and heads west. The section on to Cadenazzo, junction for the line down the eastern shore of Lago Maggiore, has been double-tracked since 17th May 1953. The remainder of the route, still single, runs along the northern end of the lake and into Locarno. An unusual feature of this section is the line side 'fencing' consisting of upright stone slabs.

As can be seen from the accompanying sketch-plan, in 1984 the station layout consisted of a set of run-round loops and four dead-end sidings together with exchange facilities for the Ferrovie Autolinee Regionale Ticinesi (FART) taking the

form of a metre gauge line and short mixed gauge siding. The two longest lines from the passenger roads with a 'platform' between, used as the main platform, on the main building side. The end of the PTT loop nearest the buffer-stops is actually set into the platform's surface, presumably to increase the useable length.

In 1984, when the photographs were taken, passenger trains were almost entirely push-pull workings from Bellinzona. A short freight, presumably a trip working from Bellinzona, headed by Ae 6/6 11418 was noted. (A photo of this train was published in the May 1988 issue of 'Swiss Express'.) By 1990 there were through workings, composed of series IV stock dropped off Gotthard main line workings at Bellinzona, from the north.

I feel that Locarno could form the basis of an interesting standard gauge terminus, much more practical than either Luzern or Zurich HB. By invoking only a small amount of modeller's licence, expanding the through working concept to include foreign coaches such a layout could be a showcase for quite a collection of rolling stock.

Sources of Information:

Apart from my own observations, I have drawn on information kindly supplied by former 'Swiss Express' editor and Gotthardbahn expert Malcolm Hardy-Randall, together with Schienennetz Schweiz.