

Zeitschrift: Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal
Herausgeber: Swiss Railways Society
Band: 5 (1997-1999)
Heft: 2

Rubrik: Video reviews

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Video Reviews

THE FRIBOURG RAILWAYS; GFM 1; The Gruyere Line. MITV, Southampton, England £19.95

The video production concentrates on the metre gauge lines of the GFM from Palezieux to Montbovon including the branch line from Bulle to Broc-Fabrique.

The history of the line is covered with black and white stills and clear maps. During the recording there is a comprehensive narrative interspersed with the usual MITV music. Pictures include; in the cab footage, trackside, within the carriages and helicopter views of trains within the landscape. Along some parts of the line the road runs adjacent to the railway which has enabled some good train "on the move" sequences. The film footage was taken in Springtime - the rolling countryside is covered in fresh green foliage and wildflowers.

Watch out for; a visit to the Nestle chocolate factory at Broc-Fabrique and some superb medieval castles. Whilst the landscape does not possess the dramatic alpine scenery familiar to users of the Lotschberg route, for example, this gently undulating farming area is certainly soothing upon the eye! However for those who long for the mountains there are several sequences which contain distant views of alpine peaks.

The tape includes a visit to the locomotive works and depot and a review of all types of motive power using the line. The metre gauge passenger rolling stock carries a grey and orange livery. We visit various stations and note with interest the distinctive station name boards.

Picture quality is very good. The running time is 50 minutes. There are now 18 MITV Granite Alp tapes - this is a useful addition to the range. The remainder of the Fribourg Railways network will follow in part 2 of this double series tape.

P.M.

THE CHANNEL TUNNEL - THE INSIDE STORY. Tandem TV & Film Ltd. 10 Bargrove Avenue, Hemel Hempstead, Herts. HP1 1QP. £12.95

This production concentrates upon the story of the building of the Channel Tunnel itself rather than the wide range of trains which now use it each day. The cover photograph shows one of the Le Shuttle trains and the history of these wagons

and locomotives is covered in some depth but Eurostar and the freight services are only mentioned briefly.

During the recording there is an informative but witty narrative by Willie Rushton which is interspersed with music and interviews with personnel involved in the construction project. Pictures include "in Tunnel" footage from both sides of the Channel together with helicopter views of the visible parts of the project.

The recording follows the history of the project from the signing of the initial agreement between Mrs. Thatcher and French President through numerous tunnelling opening occasions (watch for more enthusiastic French celebrations compared with the British) onto the journey through the Tunnel by Her Majesty The Queen.

The graphics showing the course of the Tunnel (3 bores actually) under the Channel are well done. The work of the TBM's (Tunnel Boring Machines) is covered in detail along with the narrow gauge rail network which was needed to supply men and equipment to the tunnelling operations and remove waste material therefrom.

The sheer size of the two crossing caverns within the Tunnel network is evident together with the huge number of Tunnel concrete sealing rings required to complete the job. A visit is made to the Isle of Grain manufacturing plant together with a "fast forward" rail journey from the site to Shakespeare Cliff where the UK landside operations were based. Even the sea wall built to add 73 acres to the UK to accommodate the Tunnel waste was one of the world's largest projects of its kind. At various times during the tape visits are made to the British and French Le Shuttle terminals at different stages of construction. The large loading gauge of the Le Shuttle wagons and locomotives is apparent.

The human element of the interviews and humorous narrative certainly broaden the scope of this production. It is not just a railway tape! Picture quality is good and with a 75 minute running time it is excellent value for money at £12.95. For anyone wishing to possess a step by step video recording of the building of the Channel Tunnel this is the best your reviewer has seen to date. It is not one of those railway tapes you will watch just once. It is thoroughly recommended.

P.M.