

Zeitschrift: Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal
Herausgeber: Swiss Railways Society
Band: 5 (1997-1999)
Heft: 4

Artikel: 3 days in September 97 : the Golden Pass - Interlaken Ost to Zweisimmen, metre gauge - third rail! ACTS wagon system of the BVZ - BVZ drink handling! Naming of Furka-Oberalp locomotive HGe4/4 108 "Eurotunnel"

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-854500>

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3 days in September 97 by Les Heath

The Golden Pass - Interlaken Ost to Zweisimmen, metre gauge - third rail!
 ACTS wagon system of the BVZ - BVZ drink handling!
 Naming of Furka-Oberalp locomotive HGe4/4¹¹ 108 "Eurotunnel"

I spent a very interesting three days in September this year. The first day being spent at a conference in Interlaken called by the 'Golden Pass' consortium to present to the press and public its proposals to build (install) the third rail between Interlaken Ost and Zweisimmen allowing the metre gauge running of trains from Luzern to Montreux without changing trains.

There were representatives of the SBB Brunig line, the BLS, and the MOB, as well as the bank and tourist offices along the route.

It seems that the original price of about 300 million Swiss francs has now been revised and it seems the new cost is about 55 million Swiss francs. A third rail rather than a new metre gauge line reducing the cost dramatically. Also in the past has been the reluctance of the BLS to want the line to come into being, but, a change of management has now allowed the plan to be considered, in fact encouraged by the BLS..

The main stumbling block as, always, is financing the proposed line. The tourist offices in the different regions have got together and the various communes (regions) are each raising funds. One million francs from Saanen & Gstaad, 125,000 francs from Chateau d'Ouex were two presented at the meeting with further sums forthcoming from Luzern, Montreux, Interlaken etc.

If the Communes and/or tourist offices can raise 6 million Swiss francs (and it seems they will) the Cantons involved will contribute a further 20 million Swiss francs, the Banks will then loan 29 million Swiss francs thus completing the total of 55 million.

It is proposed to run three services in each direction every day using MOB Regional Panoramic stock and SBB Brunig Panoramic Express stock, MOB 8000 locos running from Montreux to Meiringen then Brunig locos over the



pass to Luzern, Brunig locos will work from Luzern to Zweisimmen, then MOB locos to Montreux. Both companies running Ost to Zweisimmen. As reported in past issues of Swiss Express. MOB coaches that pass through Chernex (MOB works) have been fitted with a coupling box to allow easy change over to SBB Brunig type couplings and all the electrical connections will connect to the Brunig stock. It is only necessary for some electrical work (software etc) to allow MOB 8000 locos to operate over the SBB/BLS system.

Day 2

Having moved from Interlaken to Visp it was the turn of the BVZ to show us their way of handling the transfer of metre gauge wagons from the BVZ over SBB rails to a drinks warehouse. The handling of drinks, beer, wine, soft drinks etc. either in crates or cartons is a time consuming and costly business. Off loading from metre gauge to standard wagons for onward movements has been overcome on the BVZ by constructing a low floored standard gauge wagon with two rails set in the bottom with an end ramp that drops down and connects to a loading dock come metre

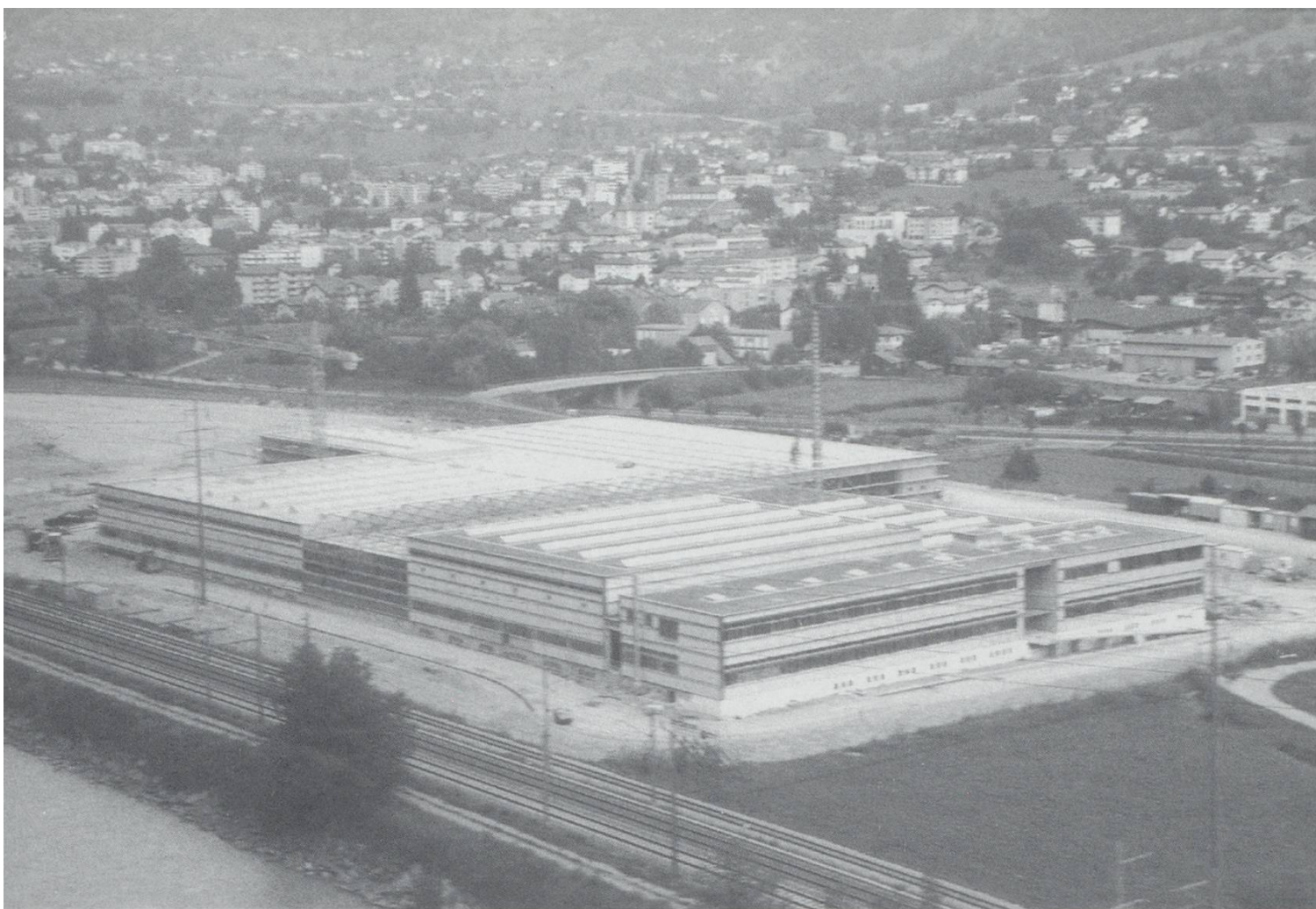
Previous page: Robet Malpass of Eurotunnel naming HGe4/4 108 at Realp. 12.9.97

Above: The FO band and Alpine horn greeting the guests to Realp

Photo: Les Heath

gauge siding thus allowing two BVZ wagons to be pushed onto the wagon and shipped a few kilometres to the warehouse. That then off loads the sliding side wagons at its loading dock just the same as standard gauge wagons saving the need to double handle the loads. The returned crates of empty bottles etc. are off-loaded and new consignments are loaded and the process is reversed. The tractor takes the standard wagon back to Visp station and the metre tractor pulls the wagons off the low loader and attaches them to trains of the BVZ to deliver to the towns and villages between Visp and Zermatt. Photographs of the wagons are to be found over the next few pages.

Also at Visp was the ACTS wagon loading system. Metre gauge flat wagons have been constructed to carry container type bodies that can be transferred between wagon and lorry at the side of the line. All you require is a flat site alongside the railway line and the lorry driver. A leg swings out from the side of the wagon this is



Above: The new depot at Brig is well under way, the exterior is finished, it is hoped to fit out the interior over the winter, 11.9.97
Photo: Les Heath

adjusted in height to stabilise the wagon, the load is swung out at about forty-five degrees, the lorry is backed up to the wagon and using a winch on the lorry the container is pulled onto the flat back of the lorry. The container is pulled along rails to keep it under control. By running the winch cable through a pulley you can off load onto the wagon from the lorry. No cranes, no loading dock, allowing easy change overs in many remote areas. Although we only saw open containers (similar to tipper lorries) it is possible to handle any suitably sized open or closed container. Again photographs over the next few pages.

Day 3

This was the naming ceremony of the Furka-Oberalp loco HGe4/4^{II} 108 "Eurotunnel". I met up with two colleagues (I use the term loosely) Peter Marriott and Bob Sweet (he usually covers British railway events, has he seen the light!) at Brig, FO station. We were greeted by a smiling Stefan Rechsteiner of the FO and shown aboard one of their beautiful Panoramic coaches for the journey to Oberwald where the naming was to take place. This was the third of four Swiss

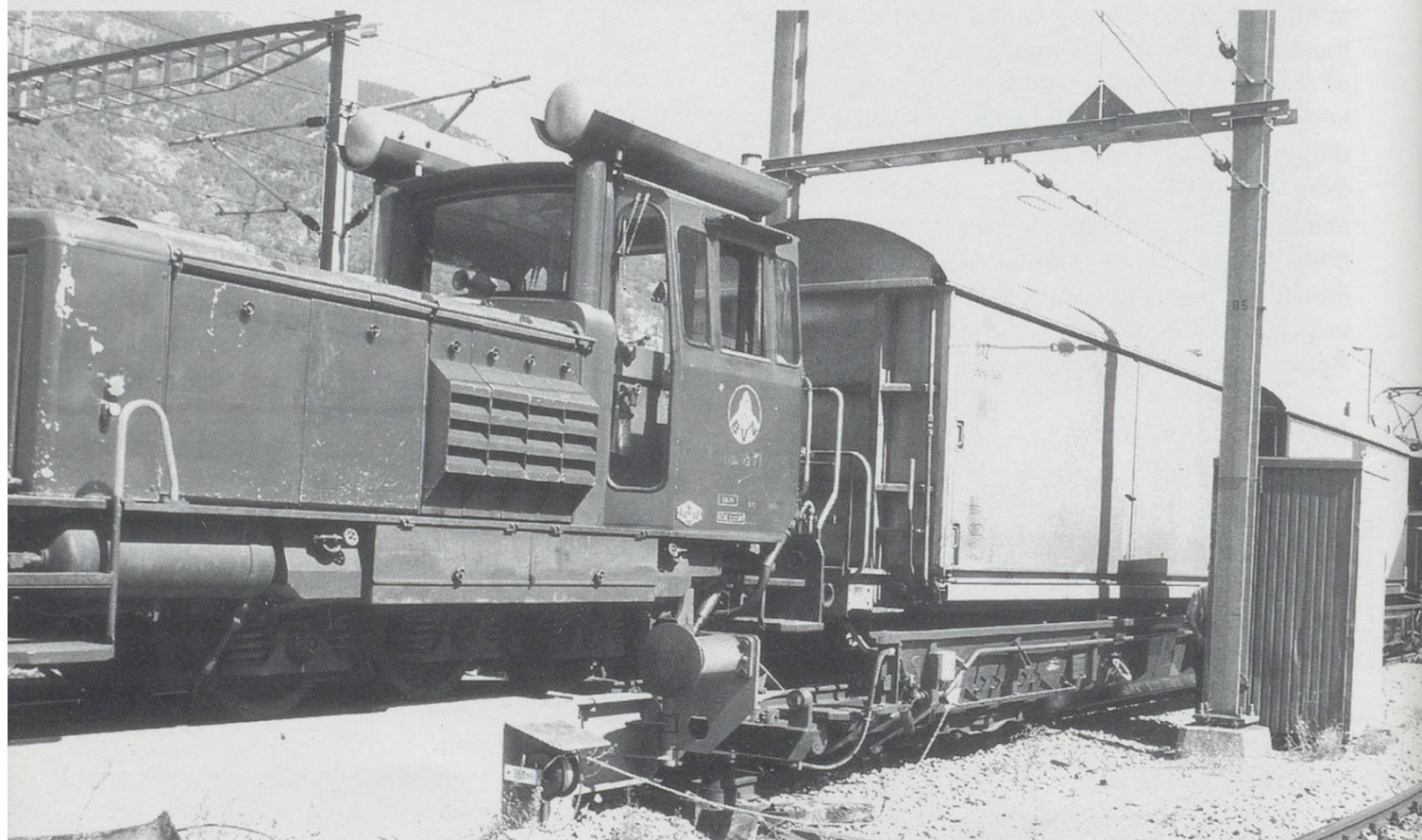
'Eurotunnel' namings. It was a glorious day and the FO were generous with refreshments. At Oberwald we were met by the sound of the FO band accompanied by ladies and gentlemen in Swiss traditional dress. After speeches by the president and director of the FO, Robert Malpass of Eurotunnel performed the naming ceremony and accepted a plinthe model of HGe4/4^{II} 108.

We were then taken by coach onto the car carrying train pulled by '108' through the Furka base tunnel to Realp, after unloading the coach took the guests by road to Hospental. After the speeches we were treated to a very fine Swiss meal with Swiss wine. There then followed a guided walk around the beautiful village of Hospental. Rejoining our coach we then travelled to Goshenen with a stop at the devils bridge. At Goschenen we took the train back to Andermatt where we rejoined our panoramic coach for the return journey to Brig.

I would like to thank the FO, especially Stefan Rechsteiner, for a wonderful day.



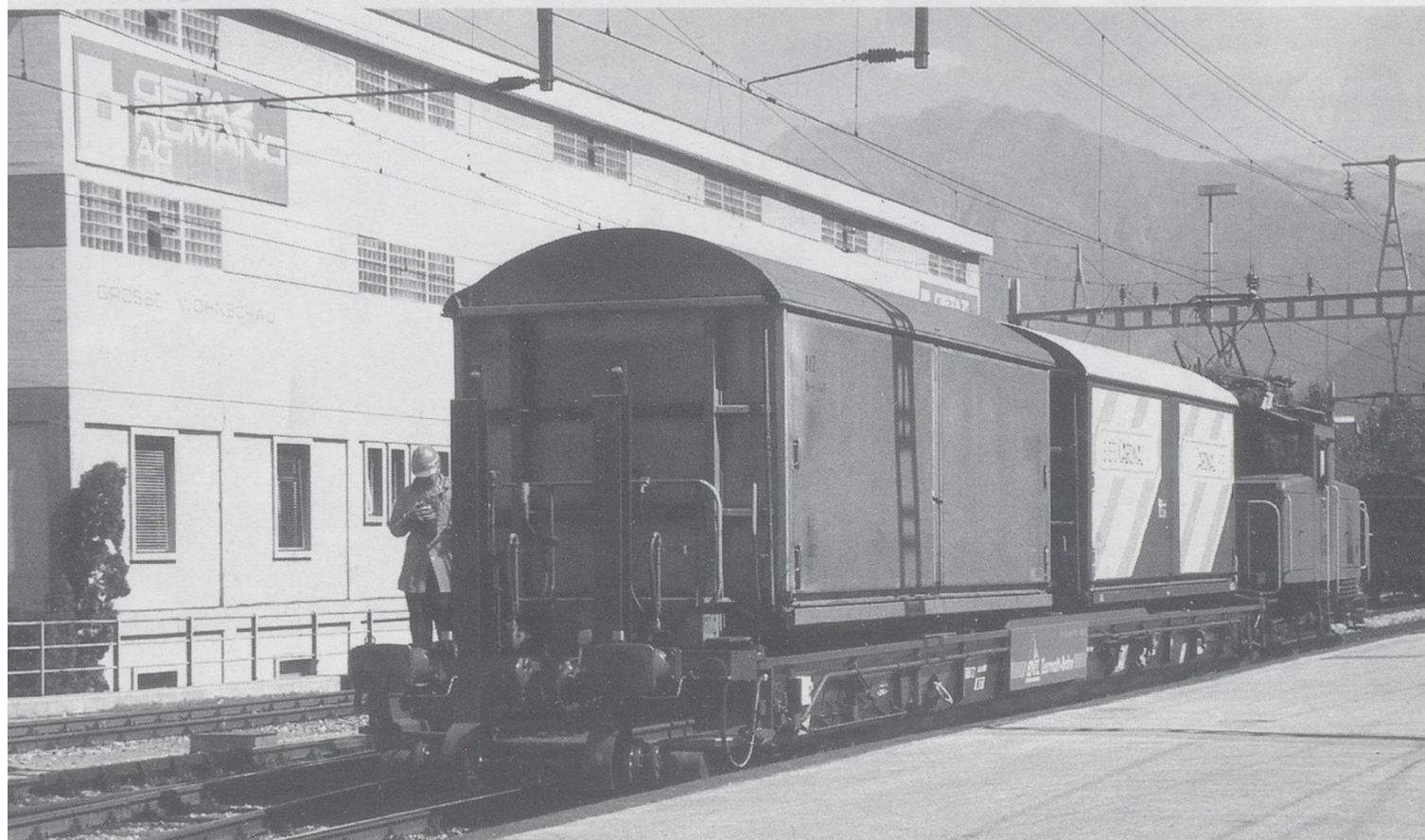
Above: The standard gauge wagon parked at the metre gauge loading dock. Note the buffer beams swing out for loading, then the rail/ramps are lowered. Below: The metre gauge shunter pushes the metre wagons onto the standard gauge wagon. Note the position of the buffers. Photo: Les Heath

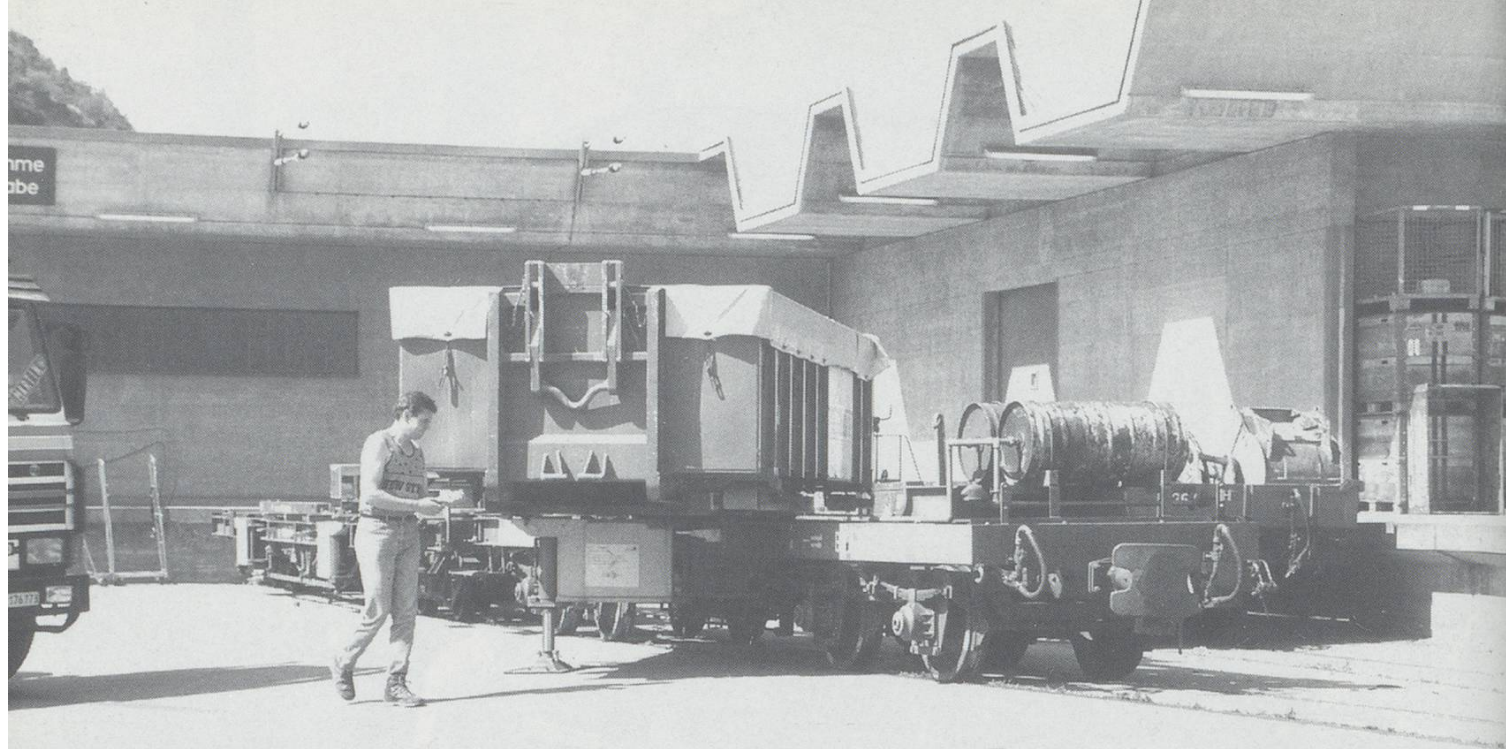




Above: The rails/ramps are raised and lowered hydraulically. The wagon is ready for movement. *Below:* The standard gauge wagon makes its way to the warehouse propelled by the station tractor.

Photo: Les Heath

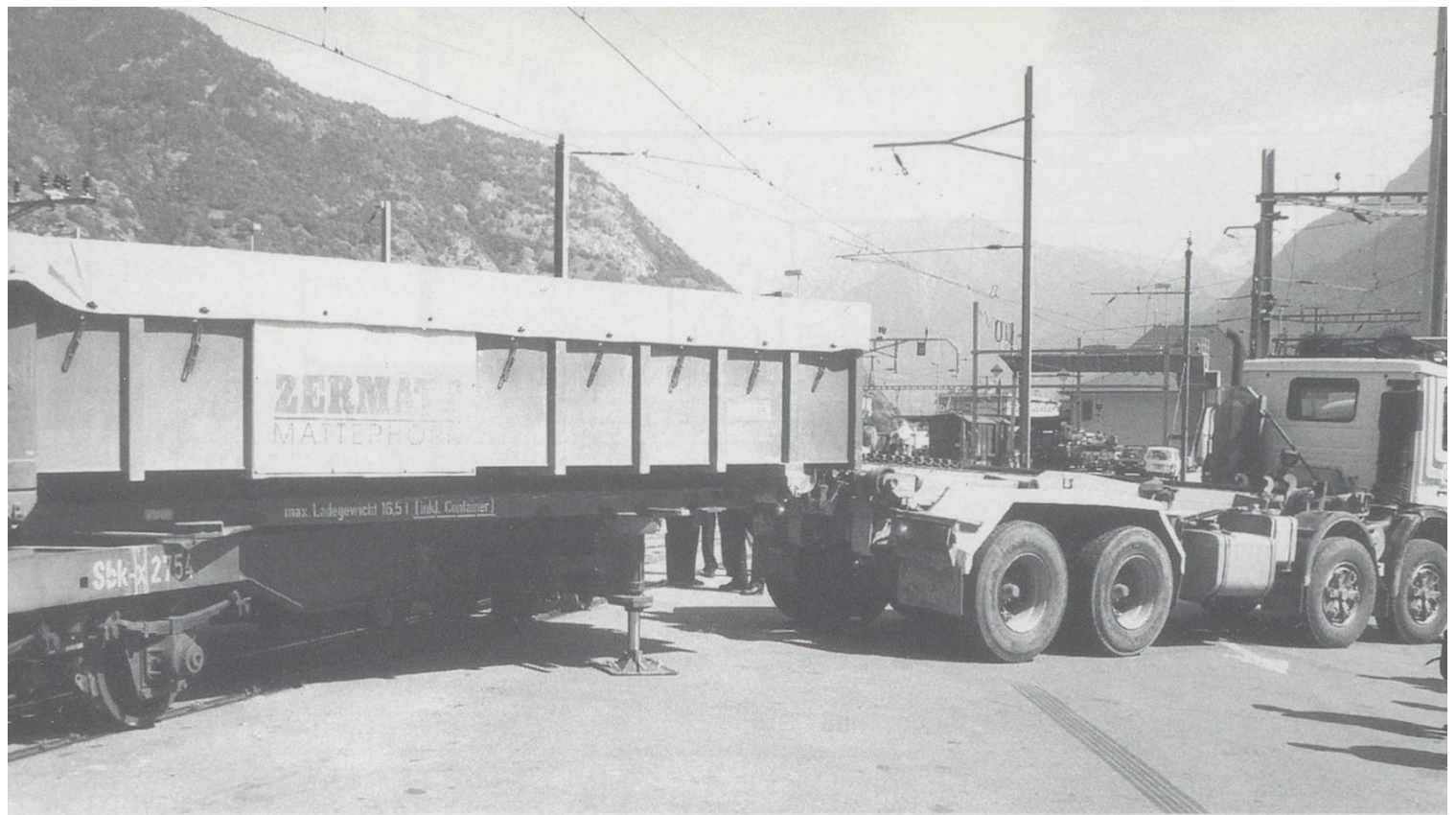




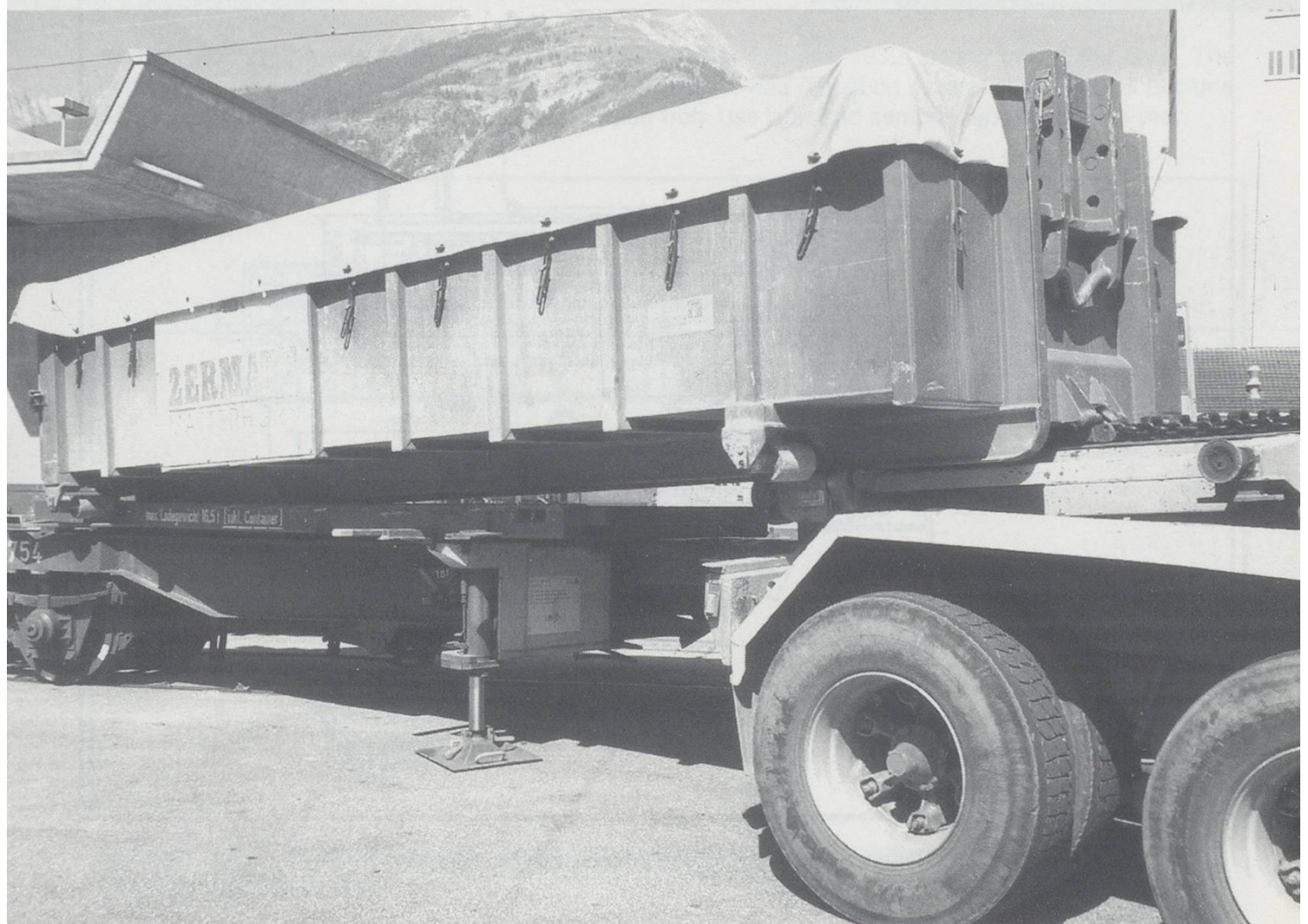
Above & below: The wagon is available in single and double load lengths. Two views of the single length rail wagon at Visp. There is a leg on both sides allowing unloading to either side of the road or yard.

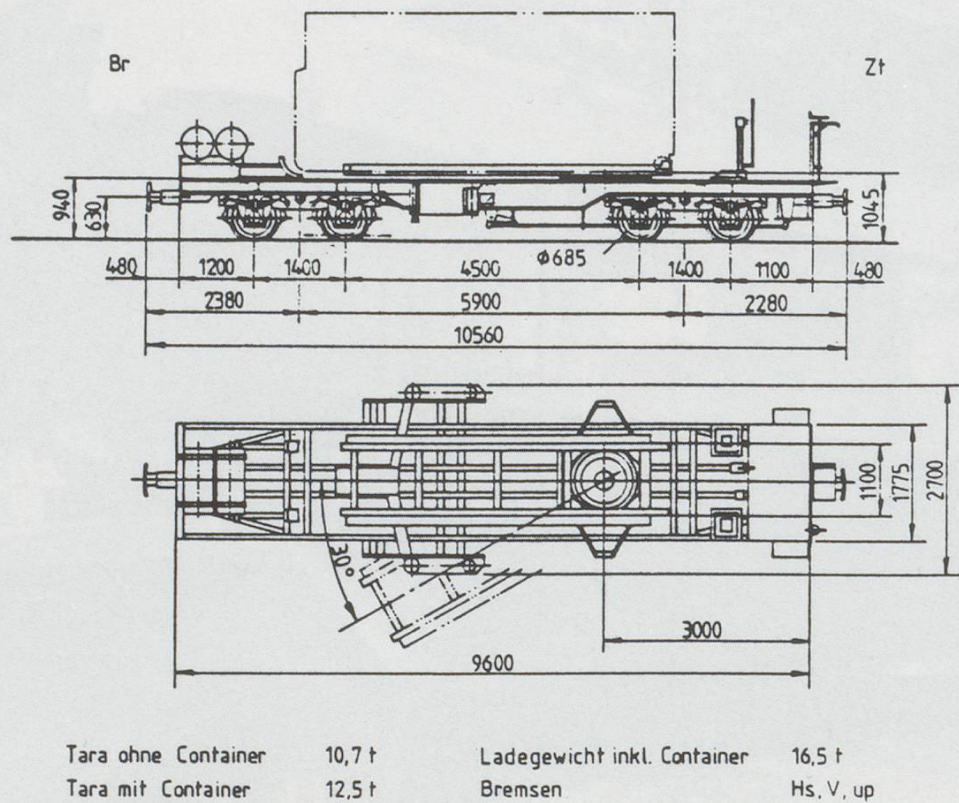
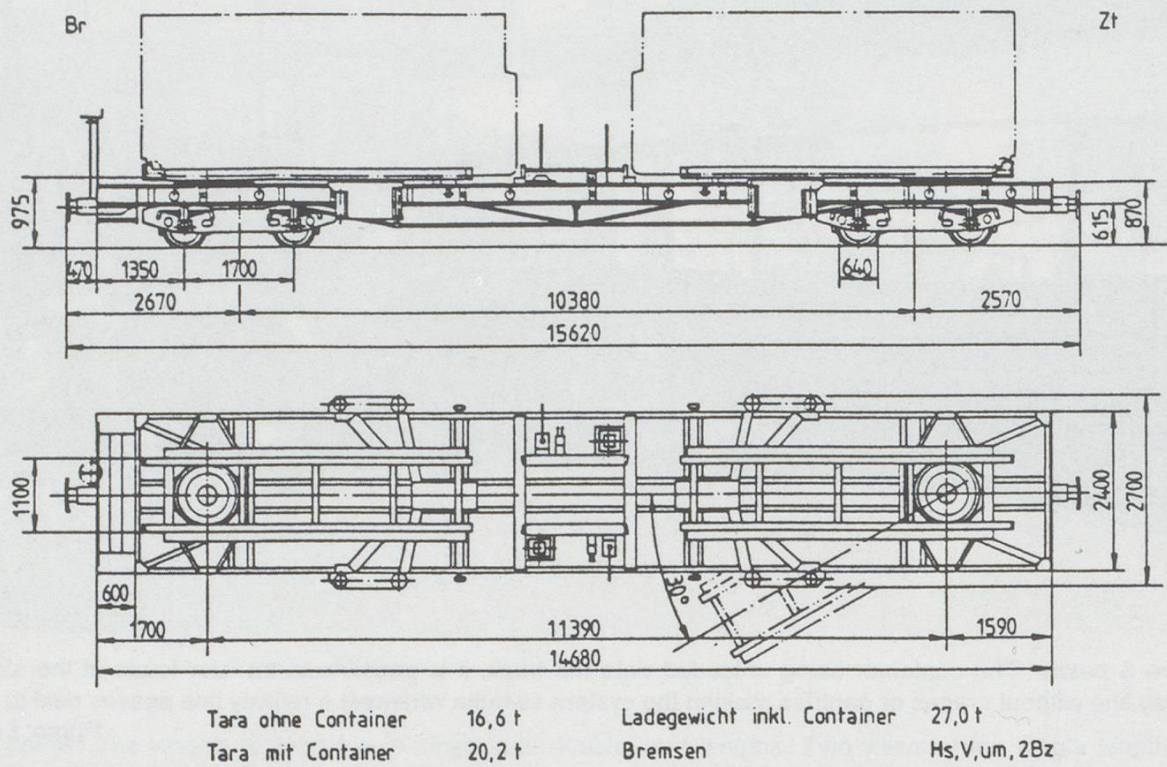
Photo: Les Heath



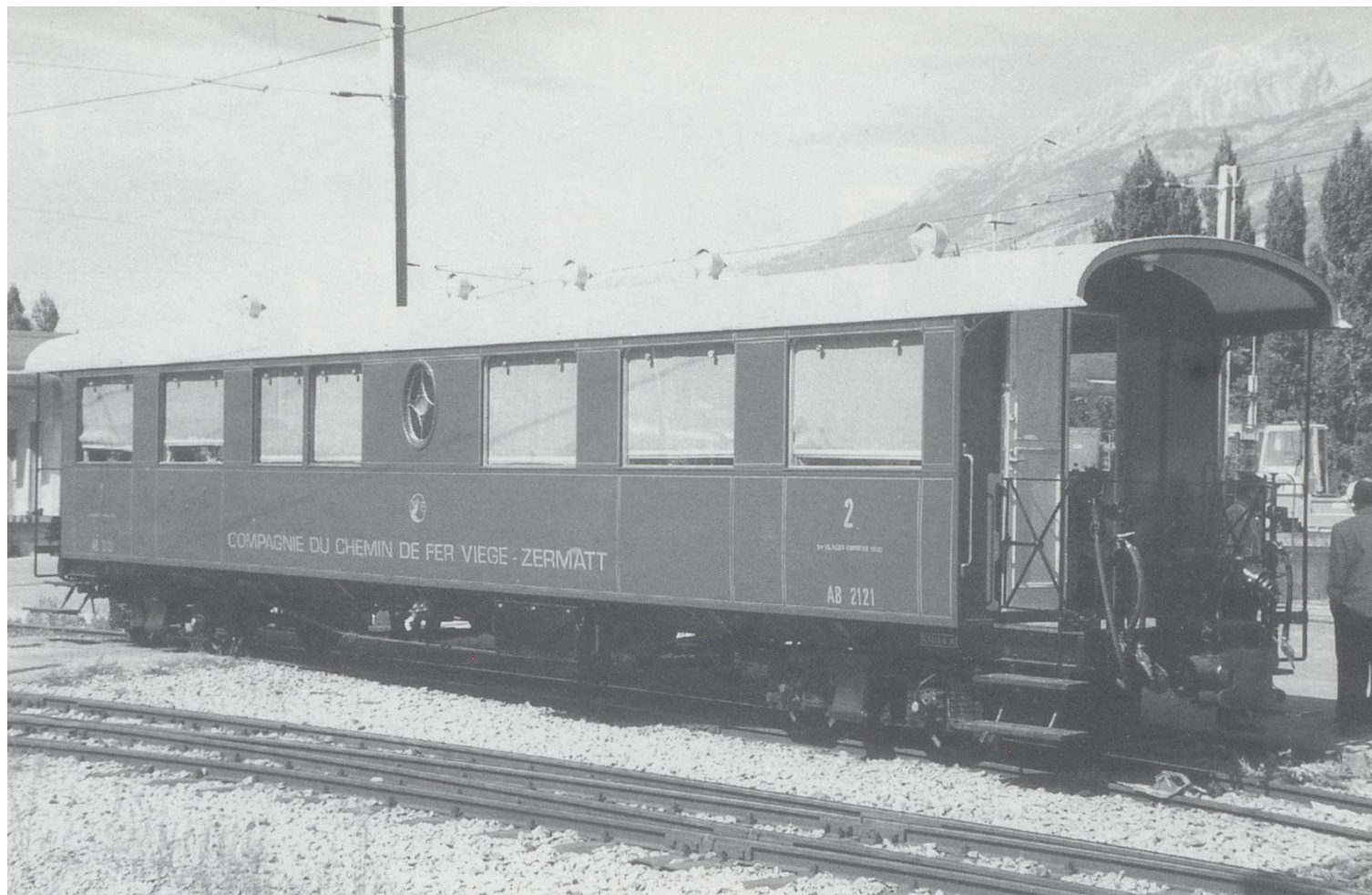


Above & below: The container being unloaded onto the truck. it is possible to transfer loads at the side of the railway line without cranes or gantries making the system suitable wherever a railway line passes next to a road.
 Photo: Les Heath

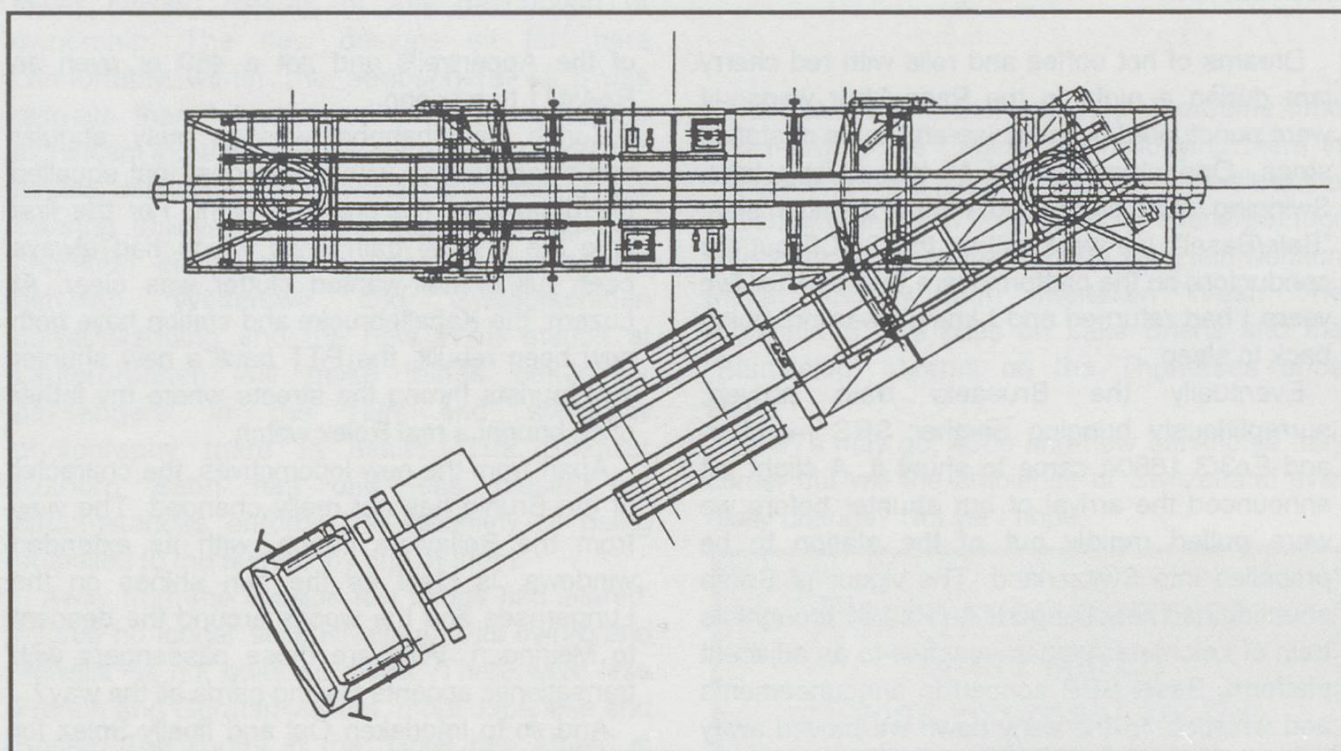




Drawing of ACTS system wagons, Single and double loads can be handled.
Drawing supplied by BVZ



Above AB2121 the beautifully restored "Premier Glacier-Express 1930" dining car of the BVZ. The coach endured service in 1908 as B4 17. Over the years it was rebuilt on several occasions it became AB2121 at its fourth revision in 1959, was dropped from use later and completely restored this year.



Drawn of ACTS system wagons, Single and double loads can be handled.
Drawing supplied by BVZ