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Private Railways in Switzerland - 11

by Brian Hemming

RM - Regionalverkehr Mittelland AG

The RM came into being in 1997 with the formal merging of three nominally distinct railways which constituted the EBT Group. These railways, the Emmental-Burgdorf-Thun (EBT), Solothurn-Moutier-Bahn (SMB) and Vereinigte-Huttwil-Bahnen (VHB) had been under common management since 1944. A common livery, apart from ownership branding, was adopted for motive power and rolling stock. The organisation of the Group, including the centralised workshops at Oberburg passed to the RM and no time has been lost in changing branding in all its aspects.

Each of the constituent parts will be dealt with separately, but the powered rolling stock which largely operated on a common user basis and is numbered within one series is covered as a whole as are the passenger and freight services.

Length: 162.3 km
Gauge: 1435 mm
Voltage: 15kv 16.7Hz AC

Maximum gradient: 28‰

Depots: Burgdorf, Huttwil, Oberburg

Works: Oberburg

EBT - Emmental-Burgdorf-Thun

The early history of the EBT goes back to 1864 when a horse tramway was opened to carry freight traffic between Derendingen on the Schweizerische Centralbahn (SCB) and Biberist. This was extended in 1870 to the iron works at Gerlafingen. Locomotives were employed from 1872 and the line passed to the ownership of the newly formed Emmentalbahn (EB) in 1873. By 1874 a passenger service was operated. The line was extended south to Burgdorf in 1875 with a further extension northwards in 1876 from Biberist to Eigentumsgrenze where connection was made with the SCB line from Busswil to give access to Solothurn. In 1881 the EB opened a line from Burgdorf to Langnau, where connection was made with the main line from Luzern to Bern.



The tramway from Derendingen to Biberist closed to through traffic in 1884. In 1899 the Burgdorf-Thun-Bahn (BTB), which was managed by the EB, was opened from Thun to Hasle-Rüegsau with running powers over the EB to Burgdorf, and thus was completed the network of the EBT which was formed by the merger of the EB and BTB in 1942.

The BTB route from Burgdorf to Thun was electrified from its opening at 750v 40Hz three phase AC. This was the first totally electrified railway in Europe and one of the original locomotives is preserved in the VHS at Luzern. The EB line from Hasle-Rüegsau to Langnau was similarly electrified in 1919. By the early 1930's the electrification at 15kV 16 $\frac{2}{3}$ Hz AC of the SBB lines at the ends of the EB/BTB and at Burgdorf forced the adoption of the SBB standard. Burgdorf to Solothurn was electrified in 1932 whilst the lines to Langnau and Thun were converted in 1932 and 1933.

Length: 76.1 km

Maximum gradient: 28‰

Depots: Burgdorf, Oberburg

Works: Oberburg

Nearest main line stations: Burgdorf, Langnau and Solothurn (SBB), Thun (BLS) all shared.

Kursbuch tables: 440, 441, 442, 443

Previous page: Re 436 112-7 in the new livery.

Above: RDe 566 221-8 in new livery.

Photo: Les Heath

SMB - Solothurn-Moutier-Bahn

The SMB is the most recent of the railways which formed part of the EBT Group. It was built for mainly military reasons and opened in 1908. From the beginning it was managed by the Emmentalbahn (EB) and later its successor, the EBT. Early ambitions had been to develop this line as an international transit route to and from France and Germany, but the opening in 1913 of the nearby Grenchenberg Tunnel on the BLS diverted much potential traffic away from the SMB.

The line was steam operated until electrification in 1932. Railcars were provided for the passenger service, whilst freight traffic was handled by the Be4/4 locomotives which are still in service today. Although there has been a steady level of freight, largely based on stone traffic, the passenger service has recently been under threat. However, it is understood that the future of the line has been assured as a result of Cantonal support.



Above: Re4/4 436 142 at the 150th celebrations in Burghdorf, August 97.

Photo: Les Heath

The topography of the area through which this 23km line passes gives the line the feel of being a true mountain railway once the climb from Solothurn out of the Aare valley has been achieved. Many earthworks were necessary on the single track route including the construction of 25 bridges and the 3.7km tunnel between Oberdorf SO and Gänsbrunnen.

Length: 23.0 km

Maximum gradient: 28‰

Depots: Burgdorf, Oberburg

Works: Oberburg

Nearest SBB stations: Solothurn, Moutier (both shared)

Kursbuch table: 411

VHB -

Vereinigte-Huttwil-Bahnen

The Vereinigte-Huttwil-Bahnen came into being in 1944 following the acquisition by the EBT Group in 1943 of three railways, the HWB, LHB and RSHB.

All these railways, based on Huttwil reflect an expansion of the network over a period of 26 years. The first line, opened in 1889, was the Langenthal-Huttwil-Bahn (LHB) which was

followed in 1895 by the Huttwil-Wolhusen-Bahn (HWB), thereby providing a through route between Langenthal and Wolhusen. The Ramsei-Sumiswald-Huttwil-Bahn (RSHB) opened in 1908 from Ramsei (on the EB Burgdorf-Langnau line) to Huttwil with a branch from Sumiswald to Wasen. The final line was the Huttwil-Eriswil-Bahn (HEB) which opened in 1915 and merged with the LHB in 1927,

The railways were particularly interesting in that they were steam operated until relatively late in the overall electrification programme in Switzerland. They had one man operated steam railcars and rail motors, and despite giving the matter serious consideration did not convert to diesel power. One of the rail motors, HWB 5, is preserved in working order by the VHS and appeared at the Lausanne Rail Show earlier this year.

The lines from Ramsei to Wasen and Langenthal to Wolhusen were electrified in 1945, followed in 1946 by the section from Sumiswald to Huttwil and the branch to Eriswil. Despite electrification, the passenger service on the

Eriswil branch ceased in 1975, and was followed in 1978 by complete closure and lifting after withdrawal of the freight service. Although the passenger service from Sumiswald to Wasen ceased in 1994 the branch remains open for freight traffic.

Length: 63.2 km

Maximum gradient: 25‰

Depot: Huttwil

Works: Oberburg

Nearest SBB stations: Langenthal, Wolhusen (both shared)

Kursbuch tables: 444, 445

Services

All passenger services are operated by two or three vehicle electric pendelzug units, whilst freight is handled by the old Be4/4 or the more recent Re4/4 electric locomotives.

The passenger service on the EBT comprises half hourly all stations pendelzug trains throughout the day between Solothurn and Burgdorf which are extended hourly as semi-fast trains to Thun. A twenty minute service is maintained between Burgdorf and Hasle-Rüegsau by the hourly semi-fast trains to Thun, an hourly service to Huttwil (VHB) and an hourly service to Langnau. The Burgdorf to Langnau hourly service makes a connection at Hasle-Rüegsau with an all stations hourly service to Thun giving that line two trains an hour throughout the day.

The SMB line passenger service is hourly throughout the day between Solothurn and Moutier. Three of the evening trains from Moutier are extended to Olten; two returning to Moutier and the third to Solothurn West. There are additional peak hour return workings to Günsbrunnen from Solothurn.

The VHB line from Langenthal to Huttwil has a half hourly service. Each hour one of these trains extends to Wolhusen whilst three of these have return workings to Luzern on the SBB line from Bern. The original service from Huttwil to Ramsei has now been replaced by an hourly service from Huttwil to Burgdorf. These trains reverse at Ramsei where connection is made with the EBT Burgdorf-Langnau service.

Freight provides a significant source of income for the RM. Traffic is provided not only

by a number of major industrial concerns, but also by agriculture and forestry. A reflection of the amount of freight traffic is the widespread allocation of both diesel and electric shunters throughout the system.

Powered Stock

Liveries: locomotives: red or green, railcars: red, tractors: red or orange)

Class	Old Nos.	New Nos.	Built
Tm	10	236 310	1978
Tm	12-14	236 312-314	1962-75
Tm	15	236 315	1958
Te ^I	21-27	216 321-327	1944-46
Te ^I	28-29	216 328-329	1955
Tm	52-55	236 352-355	1971-72
Tm	56	236 356	1980
Tm	57	236 357	1965
Te ^I	61	216 361	1963
Tm	71	236 371	1964
Tm	72	236 372	1983
Be4/4	101-106	406 101-106	1933
Be4/4	107	406 107	1944
Be4/4	108	406 108	1953
Re4/4	111-112	436 111-112	1969
Re4/4	113	436 113	1983
Te ^{III}	121-122	216 121-122	1945
Te ^{III}	123-124	216 123-124	1952
Ee3/3	131	936 131	1967
Ee3/3	132-134	936 132-134	1992
Ee3/3	135	936 135	1928
Re4/4	141	436 141	1983
Ee3/3	151	936 151	1992
Te ^{III}	161	216 161	1945
Be4/4	171-172	406 171-172	1932
Re4/4	181	436 181	1983
BDe4/4 ^{II}	201	576 201	1966
RBDe4/4	221-226	566 221-226	1973-4
RBDe4/4	227-233	566 227-233	1984-5
De4/4	235-236	586 235-236	1981
BDe2/4	240	576 240	1932
BDe4/4 ^{II}	251-252	576 251-252	1966
RBDe4/4	261	566 261	1973
RBDe4/4	262-265	566 262-265	1985
De4/4	266-267	586 266-267	1981
RBDe4/4	281	566 281	1973
RBDe4/4	282-283	566 282-283	1985
Re4/4	-	436 142-143	1993

Notes:

Te 216 122 (ex 122) formerly SBB 137

Ee 936 135 (ex 135) formerly SBB 16312

BDe 576 240 (ex 240) is retained for special duties