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Private Railways in Switzerland - 12

by Brian Hemming

In this issue three more private railways are covered, all of which are metre gauge and are situated in the French speaking west of Switzerland.

The Nyon-St.Cergue-Morez (NStCM) achieved an international connection across the Jura from Nyon to Morez, in 1921 but was cut back to a Swiss only operation in 1958 when the French authorities curtailed the service on their side of the border. After many years of operation with what became antique railcars, the line now has a modern image with a distinctive livery and modern stock. Fortunately, some of the old railcars are preserved at the CF de La Mure in south east France.

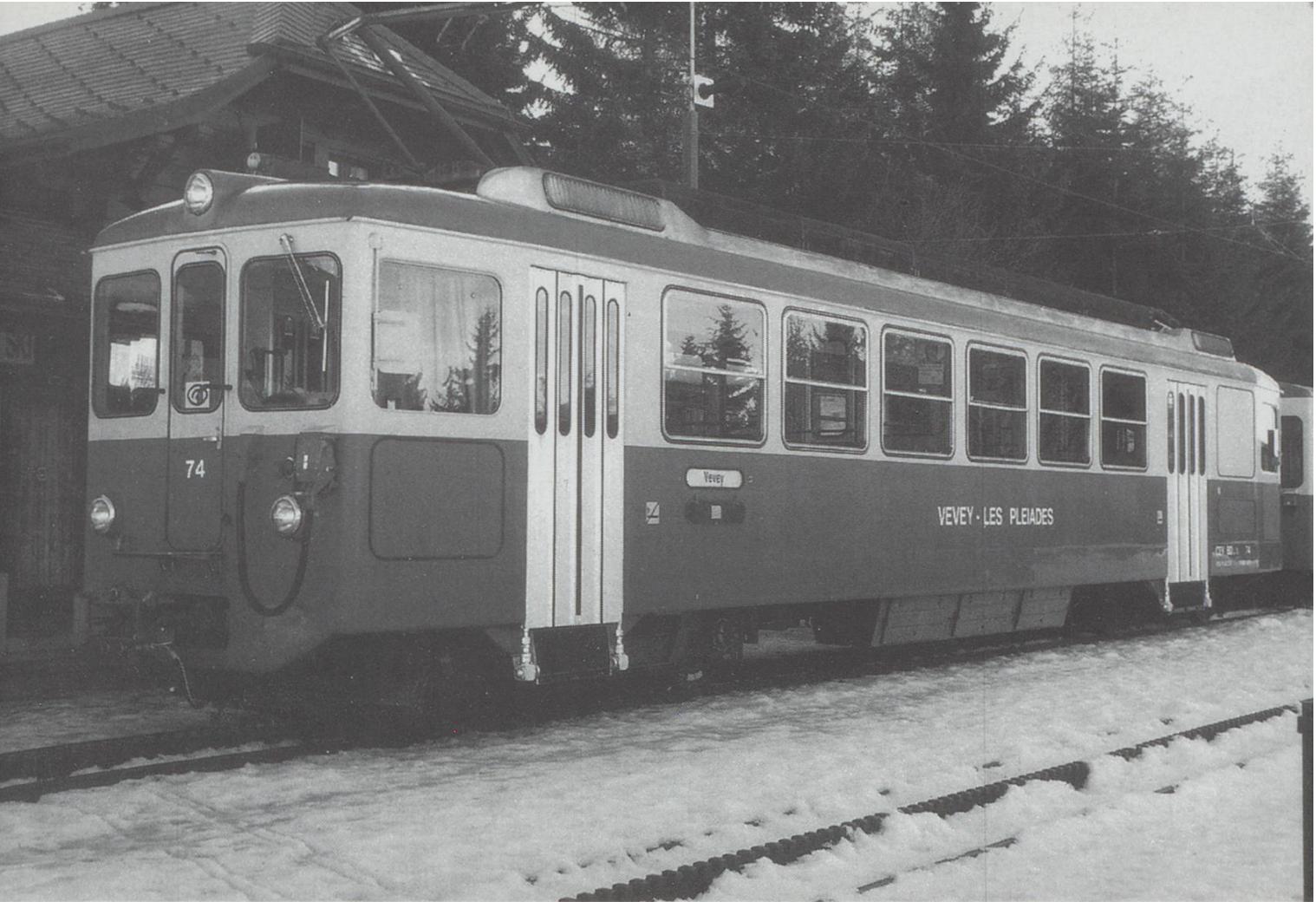
The Yverdon-Ste.Croix (YSteC) has its origins in plans to link Yverdon with Pontarlier in France which go back as far as 1856, but rival plans on alternative routes gained favour and it was left to a narrow gauge scheme to link only Yverdon and Ste.Croix. The line is interesting in the diversity of scenery along its route starting as it does as the lakeside town of Yverdon, and climbing beyond Baulmes into the almost alpine scenery of the Jura. It is one of a small number of metre gauge

Above: MOB/CEV Be4/4 1001 on the Blonay-Chamby section of line.

lines in Switzerland energised at 15kV AC, the line voltage of the Federal Railways.

The Chemins de fer électriques Veveysans (CEV) is one of those railways which has survived despite years of financial difficulties. At its peak connections were made with the Gruyère-Fribourg-Morat (GFM) at Châtel St.Denis and the Montreux-Oberland Bernois (MOB) at Chamby. Because of a standardisation between these companies on couplings, braking and power systems through working of stock could be achieved with a minimum of delay, although there is little evidence of through passenger services. A recent development touched upon in the article, and to be covered in more detail in a later issue, is the purchase by the MOB of four light articulated new style railcars for a through service, starting in the summer of 1998, between Montreux and Vevey via the MOB to Chamby, the Blonay-Chamby (BC) preserved line to Blonay and the CEV forward to Vevey.

The author is always pleased to receive any comments or additional information relating to the Private Railways articles. Send to 3 Little Heath Road, Chobham, Woking, Surrey, GU24 8RP.



CEV

Chemins de fer électriques Veveysans

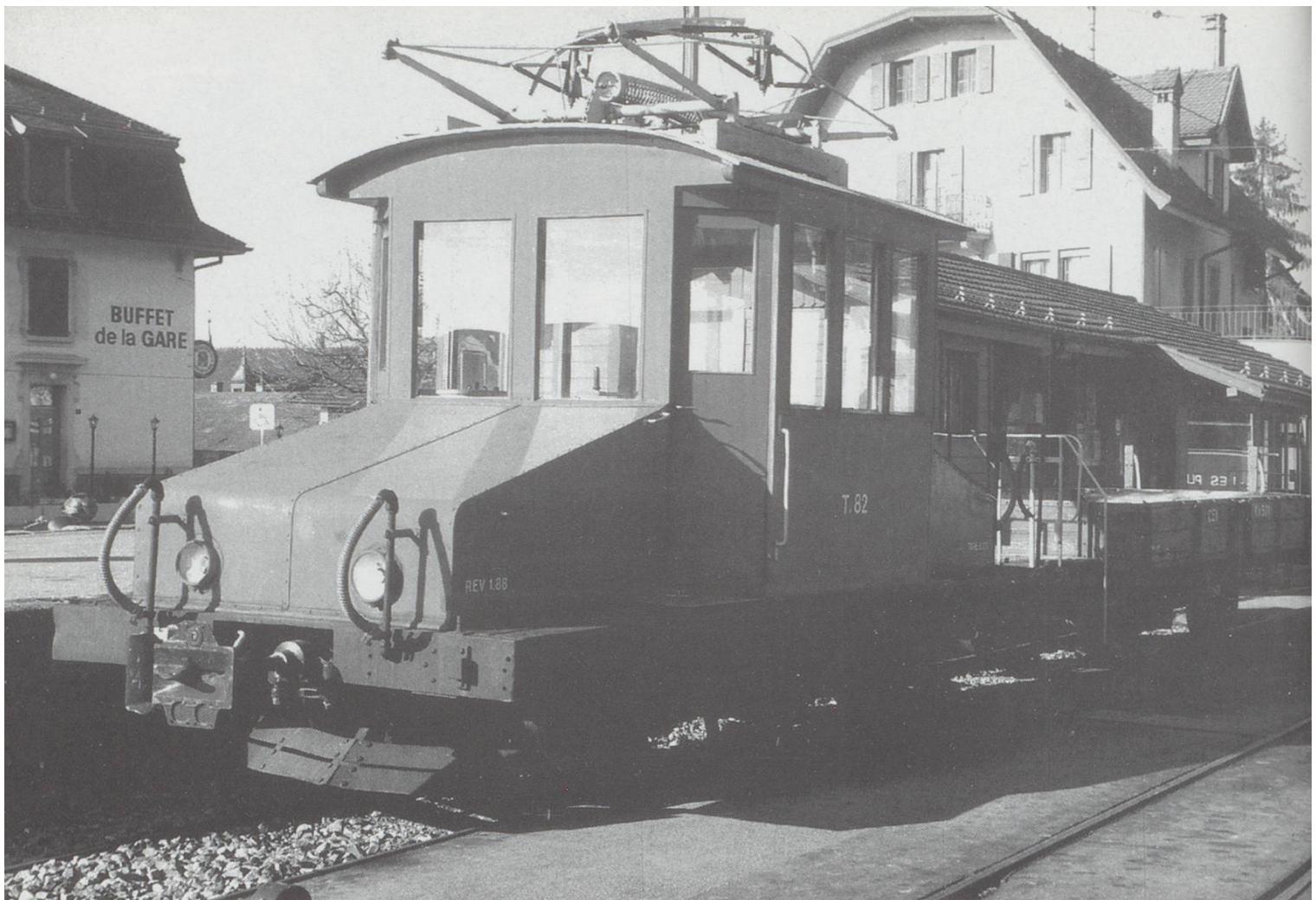
This line during the course of the present 10.4km journey climbs almost continually from Lac Leman at Vevey to a height of 1346 metres at Les Pléiades. The last 4.8km from Blonay is rack operated using the Strub system.

In 1898 a concession was requested for a line from Vevey to Châtel St.Denis. This was followed in 1899 by a further concession being sought for a line from Montreux to Les Avants and Montbovon (to become the Montreux-Oberland Bernois) as well as a connecting line from this line to that proposed from Vevey to Châtel St.Denis. Both were granted but the connecting point of the two lines was left open until Chamby was decreed by Kanton Vaud in 1900. The CEV was formed in 1901 by the merging of the two railways which were Vevey - St.Légier - Châtel St.Denis and (Vevey-) St. Légier - Chamby. Junctions were to be made at Chamby with the Montreux-Oberland-Bernois (MOB) and at Châtel St. Denis with the metre

gauge line of the Gruyère-Fribourg-Morat (GFM). The 8.6km line from Vevey to Blonay and Chamby opened in 1902, and was followed in 1904 by that from St. Légier to Châtel St. Denis (7.4km).

A concession was granted in 1904 for the CEV to build and operate a 4.9km line from Blonay to Les Pléiades. This section was opened in 1911.

The CEV went through several periods of financial difficulty after the First World War. In 1922 there was some reconstruction which improved the situation for a while, but by the 1930's there were again problems. A second restructuring took place in 1936 but it was only the passing of the private railway assistance law in 1939 that saved the day. In 1941 financial assistance came from the Confederation and Kanton for modernisation of the current supply and the existing railcars. Further assistance in 1949 enabled the acquisition of two new railcars and the re-building of the rack locomotives, but by 1953 the



situation was again catastrophic and even liquidation was considered. The Kanton again came to the rescue in 1956 by way of covering the deficit and from 1960 it was additionally supported by the local communities with further assistance. This permitted modernisation of the line between Vevey and Blonay with the securing of unguarded crossings and the introduction of the block system. Whilst the line from Vevey to Les Pléiades now produced a satisfactory financial return those from Blonay to Chamby and St. Légier to Châtel St. Denis did not. Following a review of the situation by Sadt Vevey, Federal intervention in 1963 made financial assistance to the CEV conditional on the withdrawal of the services from Blonay to Chamby and St. Légier to Châtel St. Denis. These closures, effected in 1966 and 1969 respectively, took place despite much local opposition. The Blonay to Chamby line was taken over in 1968 by a preservation group, the Chemin de fer musée du Blonay-Chamby (BC), and survives to this day, but the line to Châtel St. Denis was lifted. Since 1967 the remaining route mileage has been progres-

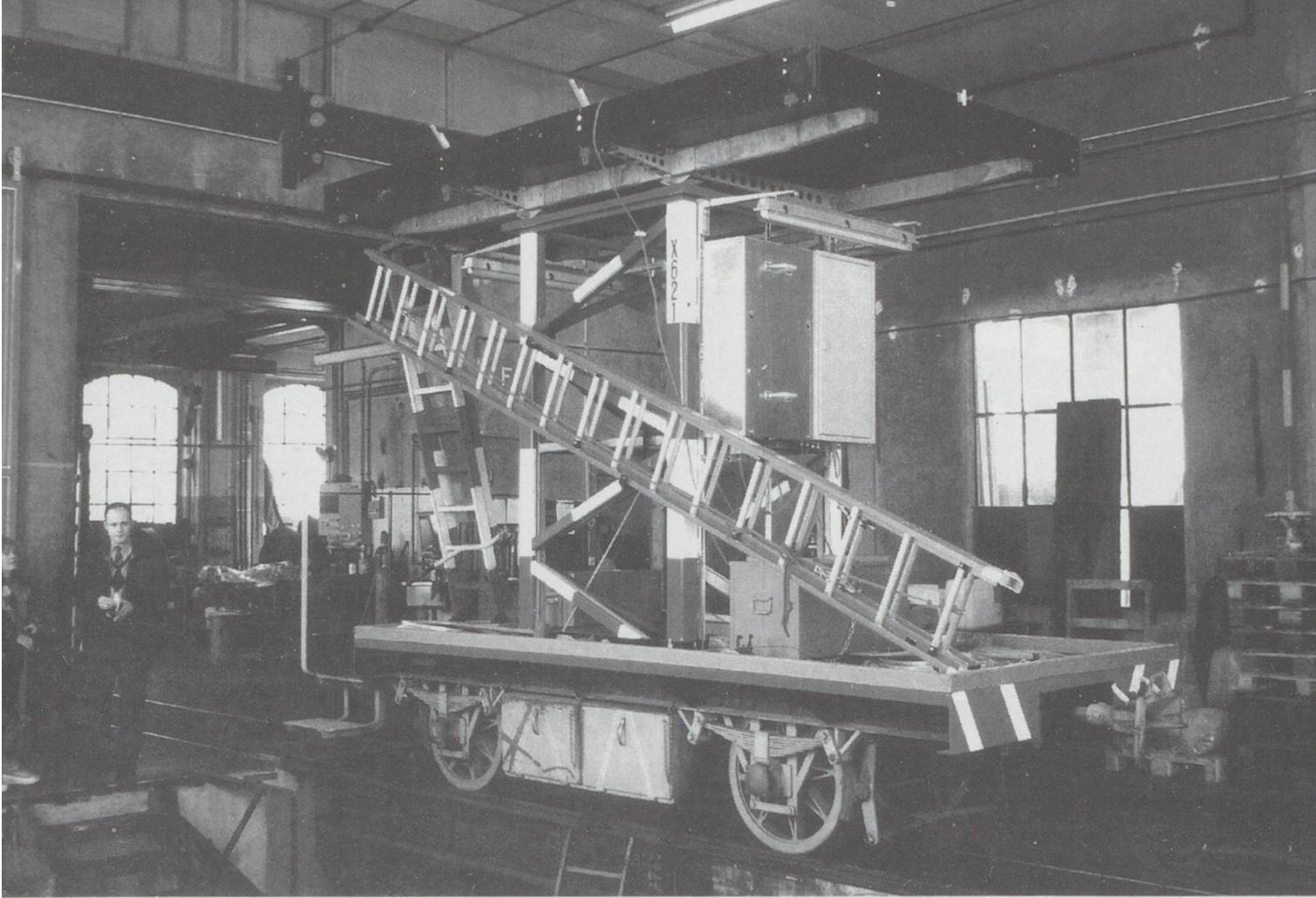
Previous page: BDe4/4 74 of the CEV at Les Pléiades
Above: Te2/2 82 at Blonay station.

Photos: Les Heath

sively modernised, whilst newer stock has been purchased with financial help from both the Confederation and Kanton. Future confidence in the line is indicated by an extension of the current concession to 2029.

All the lines of the CEV were electrified from their opening at 900v DC. Initially the service to Les Pléiades was operated in two sections; by adhesion railcars from Vevey to Blonay and onward to Les Pléiades by locomotive propelled coaches. The arrival of new rack fitted railcars in 1970 made through running possible which resulted in the original three locomotives being reduced to two.

An hourly interval service is operated throughout the day between Vevey and Les Pléiades which on working days is supplemented by an hourly service to Blonay. This gives the more



densely populated part of the line from Vevey to Blonay a half hourly service throughout the working day. Winter sports traffic to Les Pléiades provides valuable additional revenue. Freight on the line is very low, but nevertheless small shunting locomotives are kept at Vevey and Blonay. The remaining older adhesion railcars are used for freight duties and the haulage of works trains.

After many years of co-operation with the GFM and MOB and standardisation on such items as line voltage, brake systems and couplings, the CEV became a member of the MOB Group in 1990. The company uses central MOB facilities, but maintains a small workshop at Vevey and retains its own livery. In 1994 the MOB was granted a concession to develop services over the Blonay-Chamby line, and in 1998 a new service will be operated by the MOB from Vevey to Montreux via Blonay and Chamby using four newly built Be2/6 light railcars.

Above: Inside the depot at Vevey an overhead repair wagon of the CEV.

Photo: Les Heath

Length: 10.4 km (originally 27.1 km)

Gauge: 1000 mm

Rack system: Strub

Voltage: 900v DC

Maximum gradient:

50‰ (adhesion)

200‰ (rack)

Depots: Vevey, Blonay

Works: Vevey

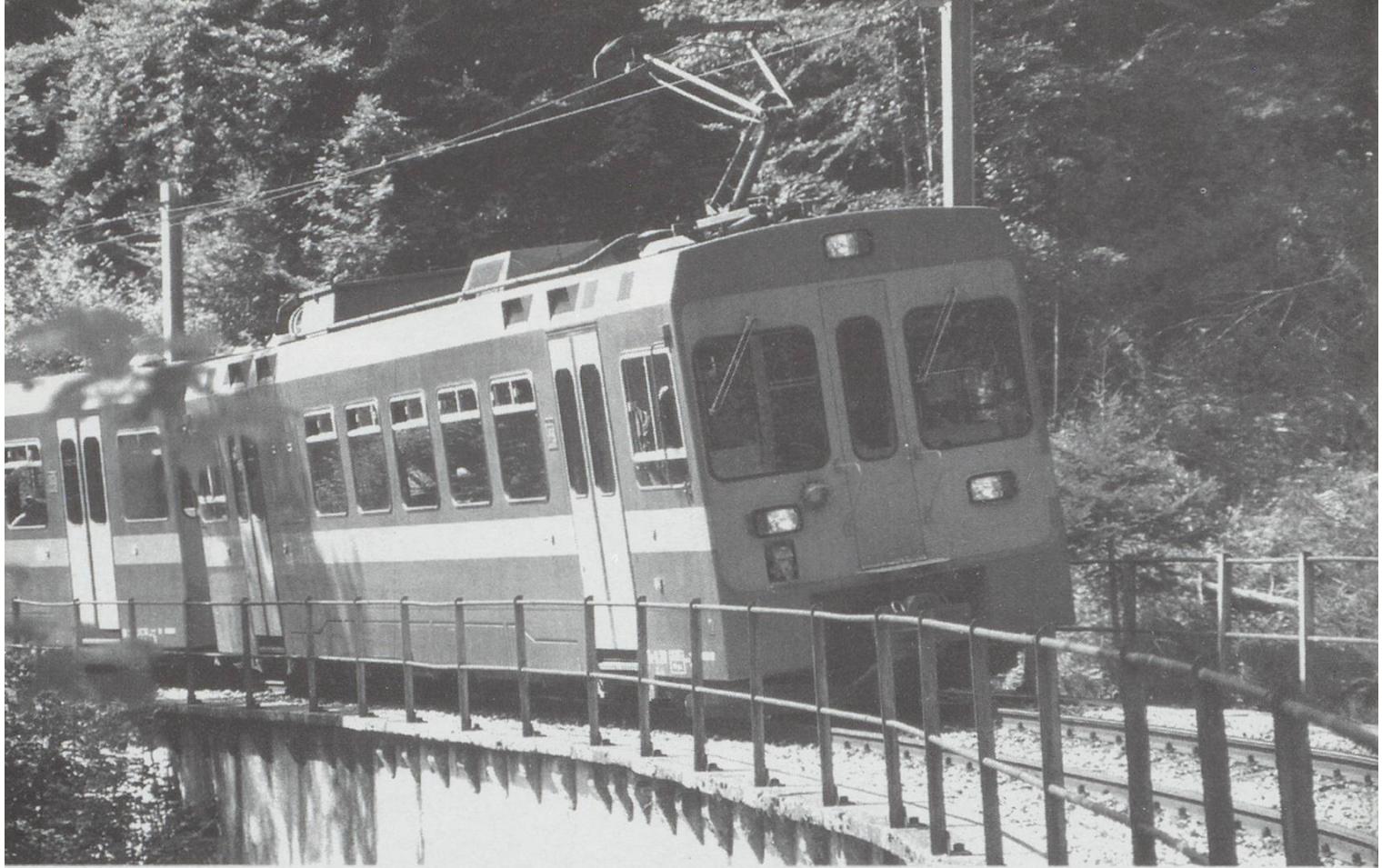
Nearest SBB station:

Vevey (shared)

Kursbuch table: 112

Powered Stock (liveries: railcars: red and ivory, shunters: red/brown)

Class	Numbers	Built
He2/2	1, 2	1911
BDeh2/4	71 - 74	1969-70
BDeh2/4	75	1983
Te2/2	81	1921 (1963)
Te2/2	82	1938
BDe4/4	103	1913
BDe4/4	105	1913



NStCM

Chemin de fer Nyon-St.Cergue-Morez

Nyon is in Switzerland on Lac Leman and has an SBB station. Morez is in the Jura in France and has an SNCF station. Until 1958 they were connected by an international narrow gauge railway. This line, the Swiss constituent of which is the NStCM, leaves the main line station forecourt at Nyon and climbs north and then west into the Jura passing behind St.Cergue and reaching its maximum height at the Col de La Givrine (1233m). It then descends to the present terminus at La Cure (1155m). Here the border was crossed and the line continued to Les Rousses where it ran down the middle of the street before descending 8.5km to Morez on a maximum gradient of 68%. Little evidence remains of the French section other than the inevitable earthworks.

Between 1895 and 1906 a number of branch lines were built from stations along the Federal Railways main Genève - Lausanne line to the foothills of the Jura. These connected Morges to Bière and L'Isle (1895-6), Allaman to Aubonne (1896) and Aubonne-Gimel (1898), Rolle to Gimel (1898) and Gland to Begnins (1906). It was not until 1909 and 1910 that concessions were granted by the French and Swiss

respectively for a narrow gauge line from Nyon to Morez which crossed the border at La Cure. Construction in Switzerland started in 1912 and that in France in the spring of 1914. The section from Nyon to St.Cergue was opened in 1916 followed by the continuation to the border at La Cure a year later. Also in 1917 a short extension under the SBB main line was completed to a new terminus outside the main line station. The First World War halted construction in France between 1914 and 1918 and so it was not until 1921 that a through line existed from Nyon to Morez. Both lines were electrically operated from their opening.

The operation of the line was shared by two companies, the Swiss NStCM and the French CF Morez-La Cure (MLC) which later became the Chemins de fer électriques du Jura. By a series of agreements the operations, timetables and personnel of both companies were integrated. Rolling stock support was provided by the NStCM works facilities at Les Plantaz, Nyon. In the autumn of 1958 the French authorities decided to replace the service on their side of the border with buses. The La Cure to Morez section was closed and the rolling stock

passed to the NStCM. The NStCM continued to operate and gained a reputation for the antiquity of its rolling stock and the desperate need for modernisation.

Track modernisation was carried out from 1972 using second hand materials from the SBB and BLS whilst the catenary was also replaced. A new livery was adopted and two fairly modern driving trailers were acquired from the Biel-Täuffelen-Ins Bahn (BTI). The ultimate saving of the line was the granting of Federal support for further modernisation including a reduction of the line voltage from 2200v to 1500v DC and the purchase of new railcars which arrived in 1985-6 to replace the vintage railcars.

Throughout the year an hourly interval service is operated daily which is supplemented by six return trains to give a half hourly service each morning and evening Monday to Saturday between Nyon and St.Cergue. The line benefits directly from the winter sports activities in the Jura with trains being significantly strengthened to cope with the volume of traffic generated not only by St.Cergue but the development of facilities at La Givrine where there is an NStCM owned chair lift. Freight traffic on the line is largely confined to the carriage of provisions for the various tourist establishments.

Length: 27 km (originally 39.1km)

Gauge: 1000 mm

Voltage: 1500v DC

Maximum gradient: 60‰

Depots: Les Plantaz, St.Cergue

Works: Les Plantaz

Nearest SBB station: Nyon (outside)

Kursbuch table: 155



Above: A strange overhead works vehicle photographed by David Swan, more details in his article on article on P.22 of this issue.

Powered Stock (liveries: railcars: red and orange, tractors: red)

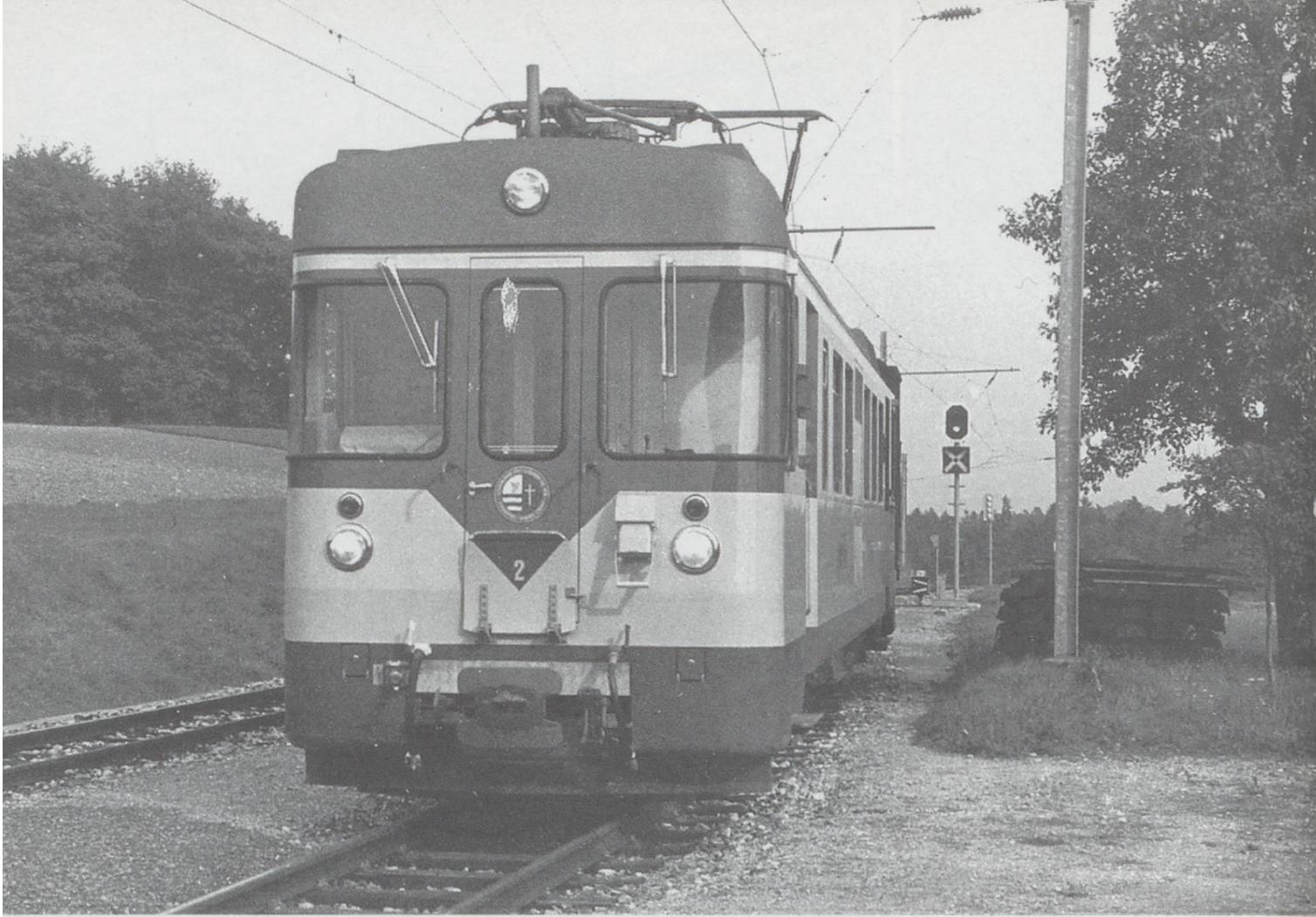
Class	Numbers	Built
Be4/4	201 - 205	1985-86
BDe4/4	211	1991
BDe4/4	221	1935
Tm2/2	251	1984
Tm2/2	261	1958

Notes:

221 ex LEB 22 in 1991

251 reclassified XTm when fitted with rotary snow plough

261 ex industrial user in 1996 - previously standard gauge



YSteC

Chemin de fer Yverdon - Ste-Croix

The YSteC connects Yverdon at the south western end of Lac de Neuchâtel with the town of Ste.Croix. Formerly a centre for musical box and clock manufacture but now specialising in office machinery, Ste.Croix is also a tourist centre. There is an overall height difference of 630m between the termini which results in a significant amount of climbing over the 24km as well as a hairpin bend at Baulmes and major earthworks including five tunnels.

After a number of proposals for both standard and narrow gauge lines a concession was granted in 1888 for a metre gauge line linking Yverdon and Ste.Croix via Baulmes. An offer for financing the construction of the line was made by William Barbey of Valeyres-sous-Rances, near Baulmes, on condition that for a period of 25 years after the opening there should be no Sunday operation. This offer was accepted and the company was formed in 1891 with construction commencing in 1892. The line was opened throughout in November 1893 and managed by the Jura-Simplon Bahn (JS), until

assuming its own management in 1897. The restriction on Sunday operation continued until 1919.

The line opened with steam operation using three new German built Mallet locomotives. In 1911 an eight coupled tank locomotive was acquired. The early Mallets were sold in 1920 to the Lausanne-Echallens-Bercher (LEB) and replaced by three more powerful 1902 SLM built Mallets from the Rhätische Bahn (RhB). A further Mallet, built originally for a German private line, was acquired in 1929.

Despite earlier discussions on conversion to electric operation, it was not until the passing of the private railway assistance law in 1939 that the necessary finance became available. Modernisation and electrification were completed in January 1945 with the adoption of the Federal Railways line voltage of 15kV and the acquisition of three new railcars. Two less powerful railcars, now withdrawn, followed in 1946. In 1976 two of the first three railcars were involved in a crash; the reclaimable parts of both being used to



create one vehicle which is now numbered Be4/4 5. In 1950 an electric freight locomotive, Te4/4 21 (now Ge4/4), was constructed in the company's own workshops using parts supplied by SIG and BBC. This is still in service and carries a blue "crocodile" livery.

During the 1960's and 1970's the future of the line was uncertain and consideration was even given to bustitution. However in 1975 the Kanton and the local communities approved financial support and a further modernisation programme which included the installation of a block signalling system. In 1972 four rollschemelen were loaned from the Solothurn-Zollikofen-Bern-Bahn (SZB) in order to transport standard gauge wagons to a local construction site at Vuiteboeuf. They were retained for a short while on completion of these duties and successfully used in 1973 to transport standard gauge timber wagons. In 1974 company designed and built rollböcken were introduced.

The passenger service on the line operates on an hourly regular interval basis throughout the day with the trains normally consisting of a railcar and driving trailer. Modern railcars, which when introduced in 1981 resulted in the withdrawal of first class facilities, normally operate the service. Freight traffic was always significant to the

company; the main sources traditionally being a quarry at Trois-Villes and a cement works at Baulmes. The latter closed in 1957.

The introduction of rollböcken in 1974 brought an improvement to freight traffic which today consists of mainly timber from the Jura, sugar beet and other agricultural products.

Length: 24.2 km

Gauge: 1000 mm

Voltage: 15 kV 16.7Hz AC

Maximum gradient: 44%

Depots: Baulmes, Ste-Croix, Yverdon

Works: Yverdon

Nearest SBB station: Yverdon (shared)

Kursbuch table: 212

Powered Stock (liveries: railcars: red and cream, tractors; orange, locomotive: blue "crocodile")

Class	Numbers	Built
Be4/4	1 - 3	1981
Be4/4	4, 5	1945
Ge4/4	21	1950
Tm2/2	22	1971
Tm2/2	23	1992