

The Switzerland '97 tour

Autor(en): **Swan, David**

Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal**

Band (Jahr): **5 (1997-1999)**

Heft 5

PDF erstellt am: **20.06.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-854512>

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The Switzerland '97 Tour by David Swan, photos Author.

Along with 44 others I decided to take advantage of a trip organised by Along Different Lines to Switzerland which took place between Friday 8th August and Wednesday 13th August 1997. I myself joined the main party in Dietikon having flown out by Air UK from London Stansted to Zurich. When passing through the main station in Zurich, the Spanisch Brotli Bahn train was on display in the concourse, where the Railway Orchestra were playing together with a speech from the President of the Swiss Federal Railways. After watching this, I made my way to Dietikon to book into the Hotel. The rest of the party arrived later when we all sat down to the evening meal. After a good buffet breakfast the following morning, we all went to Dietikon to participate in the various festivities being held in connection with the 150th anniversary of Swiss Railways. Places were booked for us on the 10.30 Killwengen to Dietikon run on the Spanisch Brotli Bahn train, a replica of the 4-2-0 "Limmat" and rake of four wheeled carriages built in 1947 for the centenary of Swiss Railways and normally kept in the Luzern Transport Museum.

The rest of the morning was free to look at the other exhibits. To give it justice more time was really needed, however, the tour leaders were not really sure of what was going to be on display and the booklet issued was not really helpful on this point. Displays of rolling stock and track maintenance machines were available for public inspection as was the Cisalpino. It is understood that well over 200,000 people attended the display. In the afternoon after gathering our luggage we caught the S12 service to the main station at Zurich then on the Inter-City push pull for Lausanne via Bern and Fribourg. The reserved strengthening coach for our group was coupled in front of the control trailer which prevented us from using the refreshment car! even though such facilities were announced throughout the train. After emerging from the tunnel at Epesses, splendid views of Lake Geneva were obtained. On arrival at Lausanne, we were met by a representative of the Lausanne-Echallens-Bercher railway who provided a "Bendi-Bus" to take us to their terminus at Lausanne Chaulderons. The party



descended to the underground station where an unusual waterfall over the escalators was observed. We then went on to the train for Echallens where there was a full depot visit before continuing on to Becher. This portion was by chartered train and a photo stop was included both ways. On return to Lausanne, we then caught another SBB train to Montreux which was to be our base for the remainder of the trip.

The next morning took us to Montbovan by an ordinary MOB service train where we changed on to the GFM (Gruyere-Fribourg-Morat) to cover the whole of their network. Whilst waiting for our connecting service, a number of service trains on the MOB passed through including the Crystal Panoramique. We then went on to Palesieux on a very roundabout route. After a refreshment stop, we carried on to Romont, then on to Bulle. The group transferred to a rather splendid vintage train, fully equipped with bar cars. This train took us to Broc-Fabrique where there is a large chocolate factory owned by Nestle; however, since it was Sunday, the factory was closed and therefore no free samples could be obtained; shame! Never mind, you can't have everything. After the visit to Broc, the train took us to the

Previous page: Steam at Caux on the Rochers de Naye line

Above: Photo stop on the BAM, Ge4/4 21.

Photo: David Swan

maintenance depot at Planchy where we had a look round. Afterwards the train then took us back to Bulle for a visit to the depot and the signalbox. Standard gauge no. 166 returned us to Roumont to connect with SBB express to Fribourg to complete our coverage of the GFM system.

Another depot visit was arranged for us at Fribourg, we then continued on Givisieux then over the GFM to Ins on the BN Bern-Neuchatel line. We then returned to Fribourg. Despite being delayed because of the need for the unit to run round our strengthening train at Ins, our onward connection to Lausanne was held. After another change of trains, we continued on to Montreux to our hotel. The next morning, the group joined a Geneva train as far as Nyon where we joined a Nyon-St.Cergue-Morez service train for the short run to the depot at Les Plantaz. The main source of interest at this depot was the overhead maintenance vehicle, which can be described as a sort of pre-historic home made Unimog,



Above: Top station of the Rochers de Naye. Two of the modern units awaiting their passengers for the descent to Montreux.

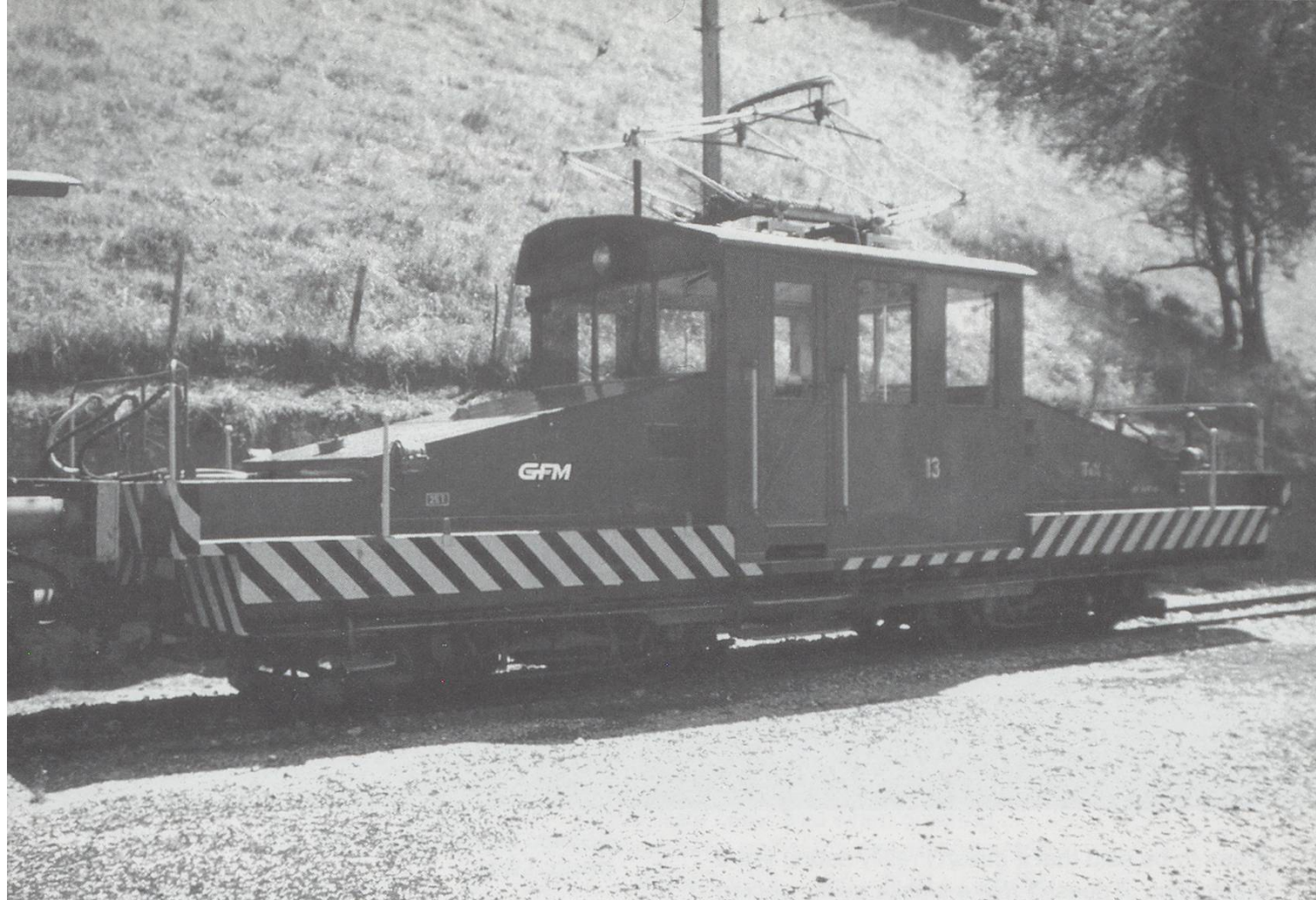
Photo: David Swan

comprising a Berna U Lorry (A Swiss-Built Saurer C type lorry, with bonnet similar to classic Swiss post buses) on a rail chassis with two four wheel bogies, and with some sort of drive arrangement from the vehicle's road wheels. The group rejoined the next service train to St. Cergue and Le Cure, the present terminus of the line, just inside the border with France. The border posts are just outside the station. The service train returned to St. Cergue where the second unit was detached to form the charter train for our group. The charter train then followed the service train with several photo stops on the way. On the return to Nyon, a request to cover the extent of the line and the loop was readily agreed by the charming lady train driver, after which we returned to Morges, with time in hand for a lunch stop.

When the inner person was satisfied, Loco No. 21 with two passenger coaches, all looking immaculate were waiting for us. We were informed that the coaches were originally built in 1965 but were refurbished in 1996. The train proceeds to Apples with two photo stops on route including the chateau at Vufflens and then

reversed to proceed to L'Isle Mont-la-Ville terminus, which appearances suggest is rather less important than Biere. We reversed again at L'Isle after a stop for photos and returned to the junction at Apples for another photo stop at the junction. We then continued to Biere for a depot visit and a tour of the works. The other Ge4/4 loco no. 22 was found in the modern works: to British eyes, it seems extraordinary that so small a railway should have magnificent facilities and be able to maintain its stock in such excellent condition. Although the railway is metre gauge, it is electrified at the standard SBB 15,000V a.c.

An earlier than scheduled departure from Biere was made in order to allow a side trip down a further branch line seen curving off to the south just before the Biere terminus. This appeared to be almost brand new, with pointwork from von Roll dated 1996, and heavily engineered with a combined road/rail approach viaduct, and a comprehensive terminal layout. At a loading dock



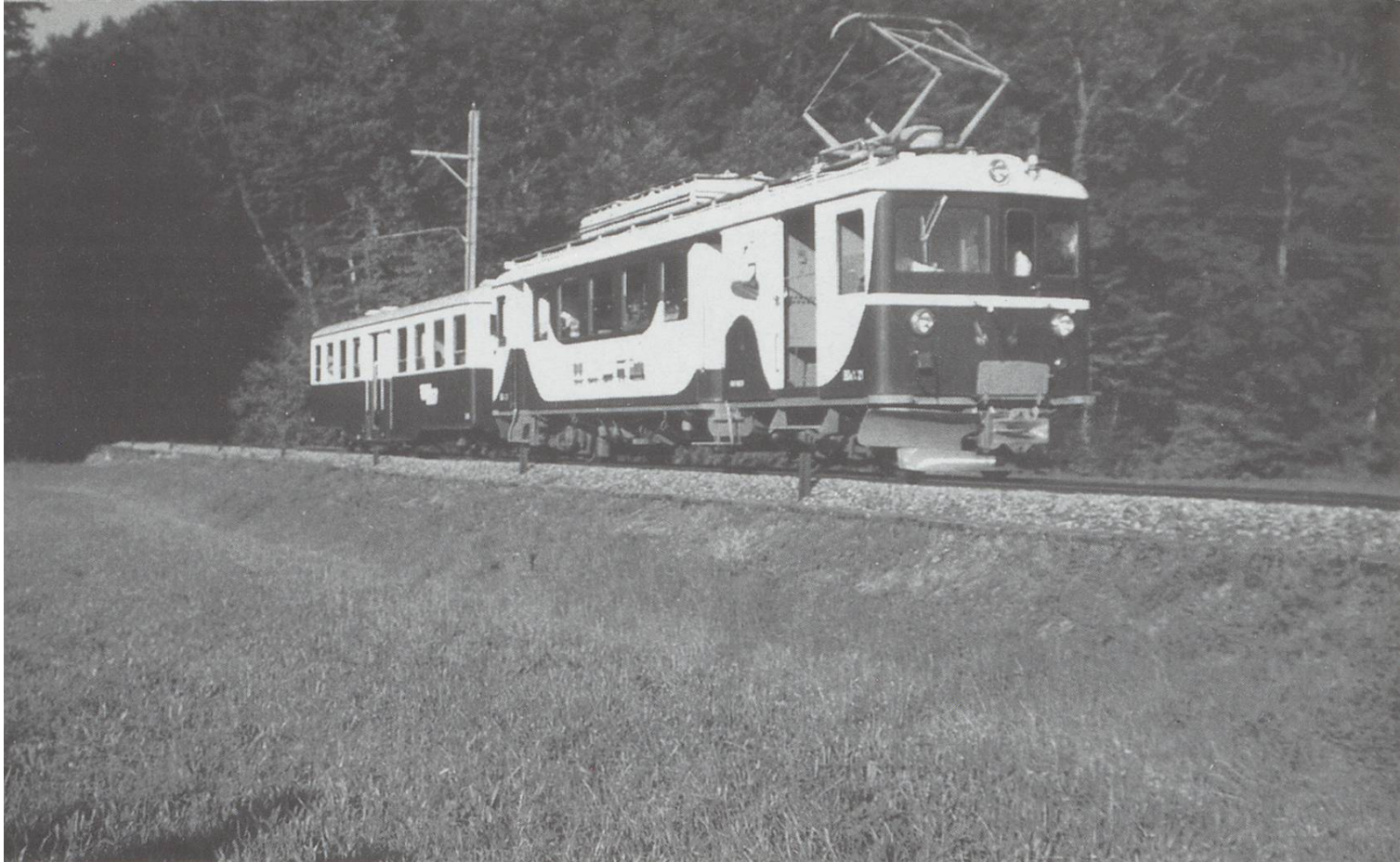
Above: Te4/ 13 of the GFM waiting in Broc.

Photo: David Swan

Swiss soldiers were seen loading some lorries and trailers who disappeared shortly after we had arrived. It is understood that this branch opened in the Spring of this year and serves an army depot of some importance. The area itself does not appear to be densely populated and presumably because of the Army's presence is the reason why this particular railway survives. After a most excellent and most co-operative visit, our train returned to Apples and Morges with a further brief stop at Vuflens. SBB transported us back to Montreux for an early night, the only one on this tour. This gave us an opportunity to have a walk along the promenade.

The next day was an early start. We took the SBB train to Vevey, where we transferred to a train of the CEF (Chemins de Fer Veveysans), part of the MOB group. The train climbed through the back of Vevey on adhesion as far as Blonay, then on to the rack to Les Pleiades at 1348m high above sea level and has a superb view of Lake Geneva at the top. We returned as far as Blonay. We joined unit MOB 1001 for the first part of the journey along the Blonay-Chamby preservation line. This proved necessary as the line was cut due to some track

repairs. However, photo stops were made en route at a trestle viaduct and at the Baye de Clarens Viaduct. Where the line was cut, we had to walk over the track bed to join the museum train at the other side. This was an ex-Georg Fisher steeple cab electric loco no. 75 dating from 1913 with a passenger coach from the SEG in Germany. This enabled us to be transported up to the museum building at Chaulin where we had the opportunity to have a look round the old vehicles. Demonstration trips were on Basel tram 182 dating from 1926 and a rather splendid toastrake trailer no. 21 from the Lugano-Cadro-Dino line. To conclude the visit Le Bouc, the 1935 Geneva Shunting Tractor which proved very popular with the ADL group took us to Chamby and a lunch break, after which we returned to Montreux to be followed by a trip up the Rochers de Naye. At the top we were in good position to take photographs of the steam train which followed. Our group returned on the steam train which was worked by the line's 1992 built SLM 0-4-2T which is essentially a very modern version of the steam locomotive used on Snowdon.



Above: BDe4/4 21 of the LEB posing at a photo stop.

Photo David Swan

It has to be said that it doesn't really sound like a steam loco, it doesn't make smoke being oil fired and it is all welded with not a rivet in sight. The restored carriages being genuine turn of the century stock. We were taken to the depot at Glion where we were given a conducted tour of both the old and new depots. A special demonstration of the machinery room at the head of the Territet was also given. It is normally automatic in operation every 15 minutes. However the control system was overridden and gave a few passengers an earlier departure. We then returned to Montreux. Even though it was just before 18.30 our day's travels were not over. We caught the SBB train to Bex for a ride on one of the two six wheeled trams of the Bex-Villars-Bretaye which normally operate the Bex "town" service. It was blue tram No. 15 the more modern of the two cars. The special followed the service tram of the BVB with a photo stop in town at the local church, and on to the depot where the driver very kindly opened the depot for us to have a look inside. We then returned to Bex SBB station for our train back to Montreux.

The following morning after another early start, we returned to Bex for a ride over the full BVB. After leaving Bex we travel over the curving bridge at Gryonne George. After reversal at Villars, the train continued to Col de Soud and

passed a summer only golf course amongst the ski lifts and spectacular mountain scenery to the summit. After a brief stop, we returned to Bex via Villars where we had a four minute connection for the SBB train to Montreux, which was made with about 30 seconds to spare. When we returned to Montreux I left the main party as they were returning via the TGV and Eurostar to the U.K. I went for a sail on the upper part of Lake Geneva which included a trip on the preserved paddle "diesel", followed by a walk along the promenade back to the hotel close by the railway station. The hotel was The Terminus.

The next day I returned to the U.K. by travelling first to Brig then along the BLS to Spiez, Bern, then on to Zurich Airport for the flight back to London Stansted. The weather throughout the trip was excellent, plenty of sunshine and very warm. Even though a lot was fitted in on this trip it still proved very enjoyable.

I understand that ADL are arranging another trip to Switzerland this year which will be in July. It has been called "Zurich und Zee" and will be based in Zurich but I have no idea at this stage what the contents will be, though it will be at a more relaxed pace.