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150TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

by Peter Izard

1997 saw me in Switzerland during the first 2 weeks of September. I arrived at Kloten on Tuesday 2nd courtesy of Sainsbury's and Air Miles. Thursday saw me in Luzern at 08.43 having just got off the 06.00 from Bellinzona and thereby hangs a tale. On Wednesday night I was awaiting train 299 the 02.00 departure from Basel ex Bruxelles but the French had delayed the train by 80 minutes. A Swiss controller came over to the 7 or so waiting and said this was not acceptable. He then took us to another platform where an un-advertised train with an RE6/6 and 2/3 coaches stood. He put us on board and told us this train would take the train crew and us to the Badische station in Basel. He had also obtained authorisation from the German authorities for us to be able to board train 201 ex Amsterdam-Chiasso which has no booked stops in Switzerland until Bellinzona but of course there has to be the loco and crew change at the Badische station. The loco from the SBB station

to Badische was also to be our train loco to Chiasso.

Back to Luzern, and the ticket office where I purchased my special ticket for the day and was on board the Paddle Steamer "Unterwalden" for my journey to Kussnacht-am-Rigi.

The sun was out and it was quite hot on the top deck, soon I was stepping out on the walk to the station in time to see the 11.35 steam hauled special to the Verkehrshaus hauled by 0-6-2t number 2 and pushed by the SBB Mallett 196. My train was due out at 12.08 hauled by Liacon and pushed by Limmatt with me standing in one of the open top carriages with good views of the Lake to the left. We crossed the other train returning to Kussnacht just before we were flagged across the main road and into the specially built station in the Museum grounds. I visited the museum during the afternoon, paying special attention to the special visiting vintage steam locos but I didn't see Rocket there.

Saturday saw me awake from my sleep at 04.00. I left camp at 04.30 and I took 40 minutes to walk into Interlaken in time to board the 05.34 direct to Basel for the highlight of my visit. This train amalgamates at Spiez with the IC 3552 from Brig and Roma. This is accomplished by uncoupling the BLS RE4/4 and post vans, a shunter then pulls the Brig train out and back up the line to Brig and then shunts it onto the rear of the Interlaken train. This didn't go quite to plan on Wednesday as the points weren't thrown over correctly and we had to be re-shunted for a second time! In Basel I changed to special train 32011 which was scheduled to Brugg by vintage electric, again an AE6/6. First stop was at Rheinfelden to pick up but the train sailed past, undertook an emergency stop and set back into the platform. Arrival at Brugg in my vintage nostalgic Rhein Express coach I caught sight of the loco that was to haul us for the rest of our special. This was an immaculate ex SNCF 141R244, oil fired and built in Canada. This was scheduled to take our 10 coaches non-stop to Erstfeld via the Gotthard freight route and after a stop for water to continue with 8 coaches over

the Gotthard with arrival in Mendrisio scheduled for 16.55. We left 8 minutes late and running was stupendous with speeds up to and exceeding 110 kph. We ran out of the showery rain before Erstfeld and the rest of the day was fine and sunny. On board was a professional camera crew recording an Eisenbahn Romantik special.

The sound of the Mikado pounding up the 1 in 37 from Erstfeld through the spirals at Wassen and on to Goschenen will remain with me forever. I think everyone on the train had black clothes, hair and faces by the time we stopped for oil and water at Goschenen.

I believe we left Erstfeld about 10 down at 11.55 but arrival at Goschenen only 2 late at 12.38, absolutely brilliant. The loco was steaming so freely that the safety valves were lifting even on the 1 in 37. For the first time on the whole of the journey I must admit to resting away from the window for the trip through the tunnel and on down to Bellinzona and we had the addition of a brake loco in the form of an RE4/4(II) from Airola to Bellinzona.

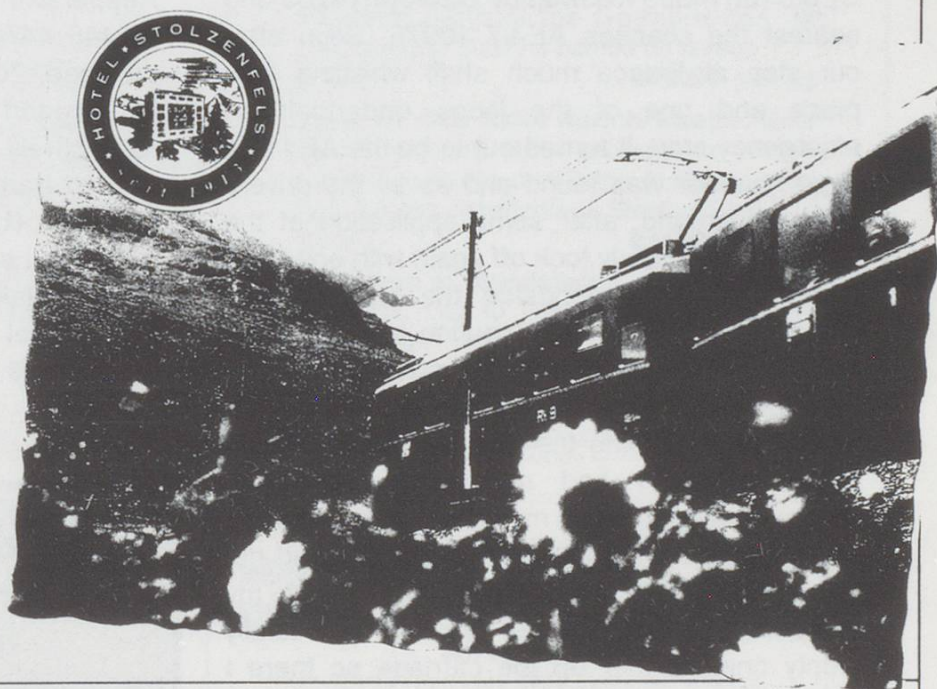
More water here and a chance of an ice

Fascination

RHAETIAN RAILWAY

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cream and a first attempt at cleaning my face and what little hair I have left!

Then the final climb to Lugano, we left 10 minute late but arrival at Lugano only 3 taking 37 minutes for this part of the journey and we had a short stop to allow service trains to pass. Leaving Lugano 4 minutes late we arrived in Mendrisio on time even though we had been slowed by the R/Zug service which was just in front of us.

I travelled back to Lugano for food and the 19.12 Cisalpino service to Zurich which the Italians had delayed in Milano and it arrived 32 minutes late. Here I used the toilets hot water etc. to clean myself up some more. On Sunday I was back at Mendrisio in time for my next special due out at 13.18. I had already photographed the returning Mikado earlier on in the day at Melide. This time I was to sample one of the 5 weekend trips of the Historic Electric circa 1930's Gotthard Expresses. I left behind BE4/6 12320 and AE8/14 11801 in one of 10 historic '30's' coaches. 3 or 4 of these were BLS stock normally stored at Interlaken Ost with the "Rail in Club" who were providing the Rest. Car facilities. Various stops were scheduled to pass service trains but information as to timings were non existent, all I was aware of were departure time and arrival at Basel was for 20.35. We had our first loco change at Bellinzona in a hail storm. For the run up and over the hump to Erstfeld we had CE6/8 (III)14305 followed by CE6/8(II)14253 and nearest the coaches AE4/7 10976. Soon after our stop at Biasca much shrill whistling took place and one of the locos undertook an emergency stop. It turned out to be the AE4/7, a large hammer was found and as all the drivers gathered around, after some application of the hammer we gingerly took off again with one crew member walking alongside the loco. It was decided to proceed with caution and we were able to continue all the way to Erstfeld.

To travel on one of these trains you had to have a normal ticket plus the special supplementary ticket. When I had my phone call from Switzerland concerning my ticket I was told there was very little room on the train and I could not have a window seat. As it turned out my compartment was full but we had two totally empty ones further up the carriage so there I moved. A meal of a roll, salami, mars and a cold drink were included in the cost of the ticket and

some of us were lucky enough to be given an A4 colour booklet about the Gotthard line produced by the SBB who were running the trips.

The run over the Gotthard was almost as exhilarating as the previous day being pulled by all these museum locos. At Erstfeld the two crocodiles were scheduled to come off leaving the AE4/7 to continue on to Basel with 10664 but in view of the earlier problems with 10976 she also came off. In her place we had Re4/4(III)11362 and at the head AE3/6(I)10664. Our return journey to Basel was also via the freight route, then to Aarau and finally to Basel where we arrived 12 seconds early.

This gave me time to catch the 21.03 to Brig, changing in Spiez. I finally arrived back at the camp site just before midnight totally exhausted but elated.

My other highlights were pale in comparison but in brief I was able to sample D.S. IC stock which is very comfortable. Also Cisalpino to Brig; D.B. ICE from Interlaken to Basel and "grey mouse" from Neuchatel to Bern. My personal preference was for all, the quietest being the "grey mouse" and the worst being the Cisalpino.

Highlights of my locomotive haulage were; Brig to Zermatt behind BVZ ABDE 8/8 Brig; Glovelier to La Chaux de Fonds behind CJ DE4/4 411; Goschenen to Fluelen behind RE4/4(III)11352; Disentis to Andermatt FO HGE4/4 36; Luzern to Rapperswil behind Ex SBB RE4/4(4)/ SOB RE446 447-5 Marklin in the 150th Anniversary montage; Zurich to Sargans non-stop and Bern to Burgdorf behind AE6/6 11460 and 11411 respectively.

Apart from all the above it was the usual SBB RE4/4(II), RE 460 and BLS RE4/4, RE465.

Finally, I even managed two days of walking in the Mountains, a great finish to a holiday I will never forget.

**Please submit articles for the
June "Swiss Express"
by the 20th APRIL.
THANK YOU**