

Zeitschrift: Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal
Herausgeber: Swiss Railways Society
Band: 6 (2000-2002)
Heft: 12

Artikel: Breithorn and the BVZ
Autor: Jarman, Colin
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-854988>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 25.01.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>



Breithorn on a test run in the depot. Some concern is being shown over a steam leak.

All photographs by Colin Jarman

As readers will know, the present Brig-Visp-Zermatt- Bahn (BVZ) will merge with the F.O. on the 1st January 2003. The name of the new company seems to be a secret; at least at the time of writing this article everyone I speak to seems not to know the proposed title. The colour is still to be red but in a different shade.

On the 28th September 2002 I was a guest of the BVZ. The purpose being to see *Breithorn* back in action and to take some photographs for forthcoming slide/ talk shows.

THE BACKGROUND HISTORY

The B.V.Z started life as the VZ (Visp - Zermatt Railway). People were being attracted to the area by the wild and mysterious world of the majestic snow-covered mountains. One peak in particular fascinated the early adventurers more than any other: the Matterhorn. It stands like a citadel at 4485 metres and even the first ascent in 1865 was surrounded in mystery. It acted like a magnet for keen travellers and people were fired with enthusiasm. It was inevitable that a form of transport was necessary.

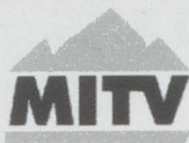
So it was in 1886 that a banking firm applied for a concession to build a narrow-gauge railway from Visp to Zermatt and on the 3rd July 1890 it came into service as far as Stalden. The railway progressed to St. Niklaus by August 1890 and finally reached Zermatt on

the 18th July 1891. Because of the difficulties of the steep inclines the planned operating system was a combination of adhesion and rack, using the Roman Abt system.

Initially operations were placed under the management of the Suisse Occidentale-Simplon Railway and the Swiss Federal Railways. The number of passengers steadily increased, in fact in the first year of operation the number of visitors to Zermatt tripled. At that time the railway registered 33,000 passengers. (Before the first train arrived in Zermatt only about 12,000 tourists visited the area.)

To begin with, in 1890, four steam locomotives were ordered but it was soon found that to maintain the transport services necessary a further four steam locomotives had to be purchased. Each locomotive was provided with its own rolling stock and coaches. All the locomotives were required to be able to operate in both adhesion and rack modes. They were all coal-fired and, from the research that I have done, it seems that they consumed some 1200 kg of coal per trip from Brig to Zermatt.

In 1929/1930 the whole network was electrified to a single-phase supply of 11,000V and 16 2/3 Hz and the steam locomotives were retired and replaced by the 'Crocodile' - type



The Alpine Railway Specialists TOP QUALITY CONTINENTAL RAILWAY VIDEOS FROM MITV

RAILWAYS IN YOUR GARDEN 1 & 2

From MITV

Two programmes visiting a variety of English garden railways in various scales and gauges. Several have Swiss themes. English commentary. R/T 60 & 70 mins. Each £14.95 (+ £1.35 p/p)

FROM FLYING HAMBURGER TO ICE

EVE86: Now in English from Desti

A journey through time covering sixty years of high speed train travel in Germany. From steam running to ICE. Modern video is combined with historic archive footage. English commentary. R/T 55 mins. £19.95 (+ £1.35 p/p)

L'ARTERE IMPERIALE 3

New from La Régordane

The final part of the journey along the original main line from Paris to Marseille, this video covering the section from Lyon to Marseille. French commentary. R/T c. 50 mins. £23.95 (+ £1.35)

SWITZERLAND IN CAMERA

Two travel videos from MITV

The first two of our series Switzerland in Camera, which are general tourist programmes about this wonderful country. English commentary. R/T c. 50 mins. each. SIC 1: Beautiful Land
SIC2: Glorious Graubünden.
Each £14.95 (+ £1.35 p/p)

SBB MAP

Swiss railways shown in great detail. 46 x 128cm.
£10.95 (+£1.00 p/p UK: £2.50 p/p overseas)

RhB 2003 CALENDAR

The Albula Line Past and Present

The theme of the Rhaetian Railway's 2003 calendar features the impressive Albula Line, which celebrates its centenary in 2003. 12 large colour photos are complemented by small black and white archive shots taken in similar locations. Approx. 48 x 30 cm.
£12.95 (+ £2.25 p/p UK: £5.00 p/p overseas)

2003 MINI CALENDARS

Bernina Express and Glacier Express

Two mini postcard calendars featuring these two world-famous services. Each has 13 colour photos which are perforated and can be turned into postcards after the calendar has been used. Approx. 22 x 15 cm.
Each £6.95 (+ £1.00 p/p UK: £2.50 p/p overseas)

RHAETIAN RAILWAY RUCKSACK

Colourful black and red walker's rucksack featuring the RhB, Glacier, Bernina, Arosa, and Heidiland Express logos on the front. Expandable side pockets for carrying drinks and a mobile phone pouch on the comfortable straps. Approx 48 x 32 cm.
£25.00 (+ £3.50 p/p UK: £6.00 p/p overseas)

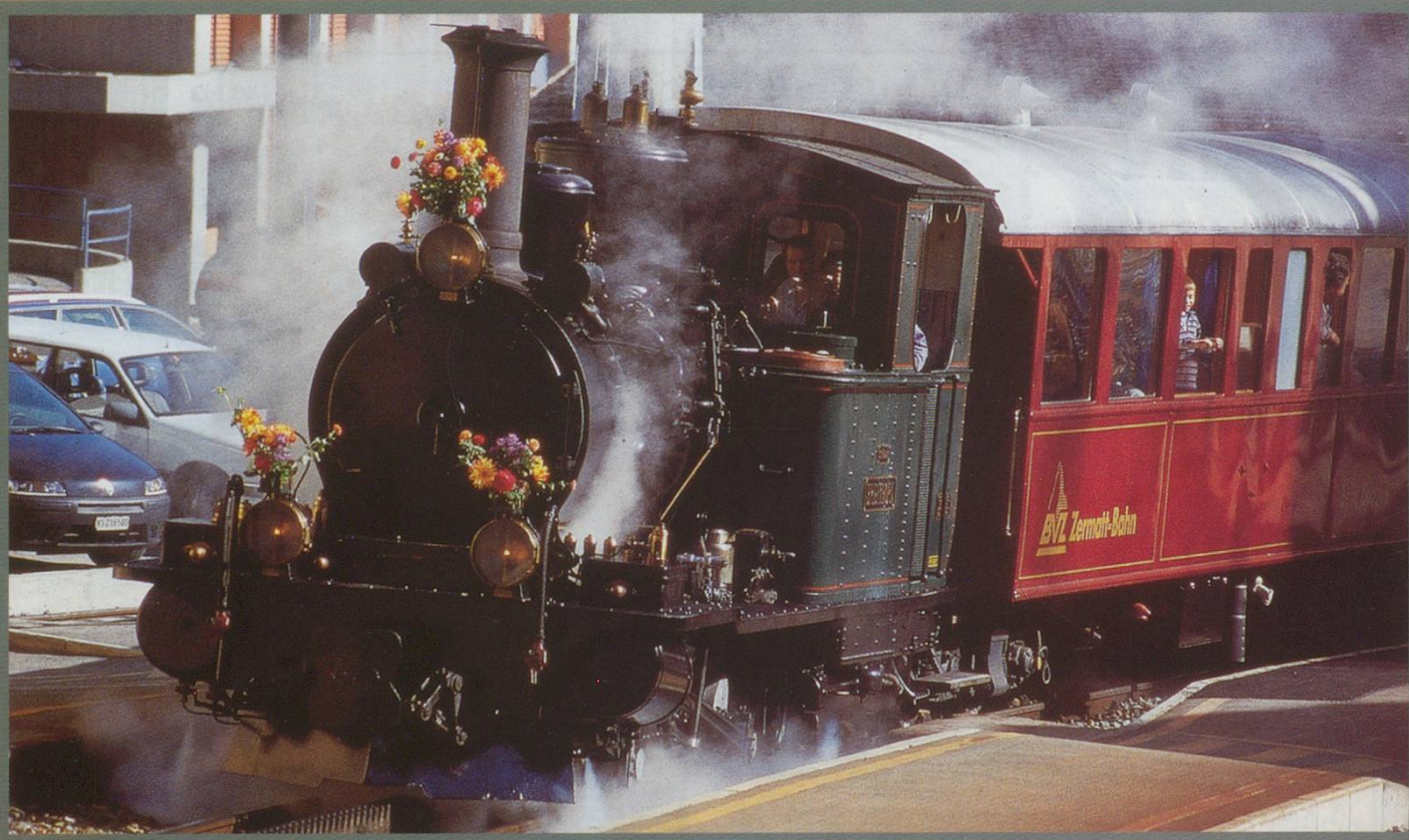
CHRISTMAS GIFT IDEAS

We have a variety of items which make good Christmas presents. Please contact us for a copy of our free brochure no. 7 which gives details of our full range of DVDs, videos and gifts.

SRS AGM

We will be attending the AGM in Derby. If you would like us to bring anything special please contact us.

**Our new web site is up and running. Visit us at www.mitv.co.uk
We can now be reached by E-mail. Our address is: Sales@MITV.freemove.co.uk**



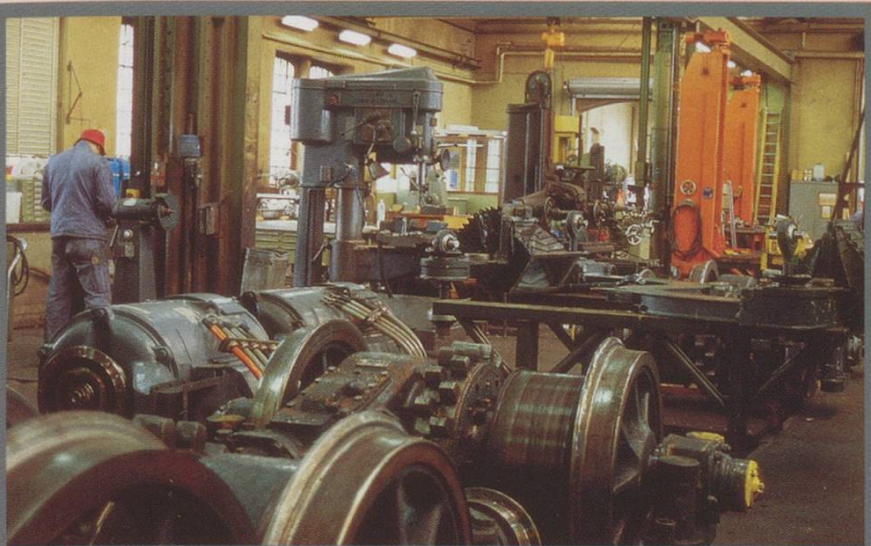
ABOVE: *Breithorn* pulling away from Stalden with its load of passengers on a scheduled run to Zermatt.

RIGHT: *Breithorn* at rest at Stalden

locomotives. In 1930 the railway was extended into Brig. However it was not until 1933, when galleries were built, that regular winter runs to Zermatt became possible.

Six of the eight steam locomotives built were broken up. Five were dismantled immediately and one later in 1935. This left just two. (Number 6 *Weisshorn* and number 7 *Breithorn*). Number 6 became a works loco at Hovag Ems before being placed in the grounds of Herold School in Chur. In 1989 the locomotive was restored to operating condition for use on the steam-operated Dampfbahn Furka-Bergstrecke DFB. Number 7 *Breithorn*





therefore became the only one of these engines to survive with the BVZ.

The BVZ now runs between Brig (at 672 metres above sea level) and Zermatt (1,605 metres above sea level). The distance is 44kms, and of this 8.9kms are rack section. Maximum gradients are 12.5%. It crosses 39 bridges and 8 avalanche galleries. It has its own fleet of 184 rolling stock items, including 10 electric locomotives, 9 rail cars, 6 diesel shunting locomotives, diesel tractors and service vehicles. There are 57 passenger carriages plus some 70 open, closed or special goods wagons. And just one steam locomotive, which is of course number 7.

Breithorn was built in 1906 by SLM, Winterthur. Its maximum speed on the rack is 12 km/h and on adhesion is 32 km/h. However for reasons of fire safety and environmental protection it was no longer possible for the BVZ to continue to use the engine as a steam-fired locomotive. It was therefore rebuilt in 2001 and adapted to burn light oil with a new boiler.

With the reconstruction completed *Breithorn* has now been brought back into service, and with an interesting mix of coaches. It now steams again as a scheduled service or can be chartered. I can thoroughly rec-

ommend this trip, which takes roughly three and a half hours on the climb from Brig to Zermatt. There are stopping points to take on water and crossing points. This enables the scheduled service trains to overtake, which, using them, is an excellent way of getting ahead of the steam train in order to get some good photographs.

Details of the public runs from Brig to Zermatt, and return, have appeared in earlier editions of *Swiss Express* and these runs will continue into 2003.

The rolling stock used might vary according to the time of year but mainly it comprises the following:

Saloon coach old-timer carriage (AB 2121) "Premier Glacier Express"
Group travel coach (B2225) "Belle Époque"
Bar and catering coach (WR-S 2227) Bar carriage "Steam Pub"
Open observation coach (B2226) Open panoramic view carriage "Open-air"

[Reservations can be made on ++41 (0)27 921 45 10]

My thanks and appreciation must go to the BVZ Zermatt-Bahn for all the help extended to me.

ABOVE: Inside the BVZ workshop in Visp. This is presently their repair depot, but things will change with the merger and it is likely that this depot will close.

BELOW: This is the interior of the BVZ Maintenance depot between Visp and Brig. In the photo can be seen the "Open-air" coach B2226 ; "Belle Epoque" B2225 ; and "Premier Glacier Express" AB2121. (Note the red lights on the overhead wires.....this indicates that they are 'live'.)

