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International

For Saturdays in the winter skiing season, ICT services 185 / 180 have been extended from Zürich Museumstrasse to Chur, reversing at Zürich Altstetten.

Schweizerische Bundesbahnen (SBB)

The new Inter City servicing depot at Geneva Cornavin was inaugurated on 15th September. The 5 track, 300m long depot building is designed to handle double deck IC trains and the new ICN tilting trains.

Delémont station is being reconstructed and simplified. Over 2km of track is scheduled to be removed in the process. Tracks 1 and 2 will be lengthened to accommodate ICN trains.

Work has started on the double track tunnel between Leuk and Salgesch (VS) which will replace the last stretch of single track on the Rhône valley line. The new line is planned to open in 2004.

The headings on the Vauderens tunnel between Yverdon and Neuchâtel broke through on 3rd November.

The last workings for the Grey Mouse RABDe EC units on 27th November were covered by units 1051 and 1053 in multiple. The SBB propose to set up a joint venture company to look after a train in retirement, including restoration to TEE condition; it is intended to base the unit at Winterthur.

A proposal has been made to extend Geneva - La Plaine service to Bellegarde, calling intermediately at Pougny-Chancy. This would provide 5 trains each way on Mondays to Fridays from the winter 2001 timetable, permitting the SNCF to withdraw their commuter services between Bellegarde and Geneva. The Pougny stop is linked by bus to the Chancy district at the south western extremity of Canton Geneva - as long as the French open their border post on time in the morning!

Re4/4^{II} 11276 and Re6/6 11655 have been repainted in SBB Cargo livery; this has seen the removal of the Swiss cross from the cab fronts and the raised numbers.

Extra trains for the New Year period were scheduled in all the main conurbations. In Zürich alone, 80 extra trains were scheduled, not to mention extra trams and buses, running up to 03.00 on New Years Day. The Basel area saw 6 additional trains and the Geneva region six. Inevitably, some overcrowding occurred but no Millennium Bugs were found on the night. Travel was greatly eased by the special 2000 Centimes for 2000 ticket, offering unlimited second class travel from 19.00 on 31st December until 23.59 on 1st January. This price was available to Swiss half fare card holders; non holders could buy the ticket for 40 SFr, with first class at double the price. Over 25000 tickets were sold.

Bern-Lötschberg-Simplon (BLS)

Re465 003 has been turned out in advertising livery for the Mystery Park at Interlaken.

Due to the loss of run round facilities at Zweisimmen during its reconstruction, two Pendelzug sets have been used in the Simmental during the autumn. These were formed Ae4/4 - BD - AB - B - BDt, using green liveried BDt 940 and 941 at the Zweisimmen end. All four serviceable Ae4/4s have been used on these trains.

After the storm damage on Boxing Day, almost every BLS line was blocked by fallen trees, with fallen overhead lines and uprooted masts. The only main line sections open on 27th December were Thun - Interlaken Ost / Frutigen and Kandersteg - Brig. Shuttle services were provided over the Spiez - Frutigen and Kandersteg - Brig sections, with a bus connection through the Kandertal. The southern section being worked by Re4/4 167, Re465 008 and Re465 012. International services were diverted via the Rhône Valley line and Lausanne.



Pictured at St Gallen is a very colourful, or at least it looks colourful, BLS coach on a Zürich working and then probably to Interlaken. August 1999. No doubt someone will tell us the significance of the livery in time for the June issue, please!

Photo: Philip Elwin

The most interesting reopening was on the Simmental Line between Spiez and Zweifelden. Although the fallen trees could be cleared relatively quickly, the BLS does not have enough resources to replace overhead masts on two lines at the same time. Initial efforts were therefore concentrated on the Frutigen - Kandersteg section of the main line, where a through service was restored on 31st December. This would leave a cleared line with no method of working it: main line diesel traction and DMUs are an unheard quantity in Switzerland. In the end, they found spare trains from the BOB - not their landlords at Interlaken Ost, but the German Bayerische Oberland Bahn! They were able to loan five five-unit DMUs, built by Integral in Austria in 1999 but which require rectification work before they are put into normal service. These took up the Regionalzug diagrams on 31st December, working in pairs with one unit spare until 12th January when normal service could be resumed. During this period the RX expresses were cancelled and a BLS shunter used on goods trains.

Other Standard Gauge Mittel Thurgau Bahn (MThB)

The MThB has ordered new power units to replace its existing fleet of secondhand locomotives. 6 locomotives of the German BR 145 design have been ordered from Adtranz for goods traffic. Also ordered from Adtranz is an electro-diesel version of their Cargo Sprinter, for use on the Frauenfeld - Chur postal contract.

Now some corrections from the last Notepad:

The Weinfelden - Kreuzlingen section has been closed between Kreuzlingen and Bernrain for major reconstruction work not just track renewal. An extra Pendelzug formation has been used on Weinfelden - Bernrain services, formed by two BDe4/4 (ex WM) hired from the SOB sandwiching two other vehicles.

Frauenfeld - Chur services, contracted to the MThB for haulage, are now being worked as planned by a single Re4/4 (Re 416) between Frauenfeld and St Gallen via Bischofszell, after the return SOB BDe4/4 to that line. If double heading is required, a LOKOOP Ae476 is added to the Re 416. This particular note should have been in 'Die Post'

Regionalverkehr Mitteland (RM)

Financial considerations have postponed the conversion of the RMs Re4/4s to the SBB Re4/4^{III} configuration.

Sensetalbahn (STB)

BDe4/6 103 is out of service with collision damage to the driving trailer, leaving the local services between Flamatt and Laupen to be covered by bus when the hired SZU Pendelzug set is undergoing maintenance.

Sihltal Zürich Uetliberg Bahn (SZU)

Following the storm on Boxing Day, the Uetliberg line above Uitikon-Waldegg was another line taken out of service with most of the overhead masts uprooted. A reduced service was introduced from 31st December using Am 846 461 hired from the SOB; this engine is equipped with track brakes for use on the steep gradients of the line.

Metre gauge.

AppenzellerBahnen (AB)

ABDe4/4 8 has been scrapped, leaving only two units to cover the normal Gais - Altstätten service. B 82 has been sent to RJ Bahntechnik at Biel for reconstruction as Art 181.

Bernese Oberland Bahn (BOB)

ABeh4/4 309 is reportedly sold to the Bayerische Zugspitze Bahn to work extra trains between Garmisch - Partenkirchen and Grainau in conjunction with RBS ABt 211 and 213. However, this unit is also reported as still at Interlaken on 12th January, when it was in a photo session with ABeh4/4 312 Interlaken and the (standard gauge) BOB DMUs which had just finished their stint on the Simmental line.

The BOB is buying driving trailers ABt 203 - 207 from the RBS.

Chemin de Fer du Jura (CJ)

RhB ABe4/4 487 and 488 have been purchased by the CJ for use on rubbish trains between Glovelier and an incineration plant at La Chaux de Fonds.. They were transferred from Landquart to Tramelan

on 6th / 7th October for conversion to 1500V DC operation. The bodies and bogies were transported separately, giving the unusual sight between Tavannes and Tramelan of a metre gauge carriage body mounted on a standard gauge flat wagon being carried on CJ Rollschime!

French-built Gm4/4 508 has been sold to the Chemin de Fer de Provence.

Furka-Oberalp Bahn (FO)

Construction of the new Disentis tunnel was completed in September, 2 months ahead of schedule.

Regionalverkehr Bern-Solothurn (RBS)

A major train lengthening exercise has started. Low floor centre sections are on order from Stadler for the following sets, converting them from Be4/8 to ABe4/12 or Be4/12 formation: Three composite sections for low floor units Be4/8 62 - 64; 16 second class sections for Mandarinli units Be4/8 41 - 61.

As part of this project, a new 120m long depot building is planned for Worb to take two stretch units on each track. The depot roof would include the obligatory car park on!

SBB Bm4/4 18414 has been equipped with RBS signalling equipment for working goods trains over the mixed gauge lines around Worblaufen.

Rhätische Bahn (RhB)

The first scheduled service to use the Vereina tunnel was on 28th September by train 524 (05 50 St Moritz - Chur), diverted due to a blockage at Bergün.

The post Vereina Tunnel timetable sees the combination of Oberland and Davos services to create a regular through service between Disentis and Davos Platz, releasing platform capacity at Chur. Two Be4/4 51x units, released from their duties around Chur, have been transferred to Samedan. One unit covers the Oberengadin local diagram (Zuoz - St Moritz), the spare unit is available to maintain delayed connections between Samedan and Pontresina.



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On the Engadin line, the halt at Carolina, the first loop west of Zernez, has disappeared from the timetable.

The three extra Ge4/4^{III} locomotives for the Vereina Line have entered service, carrying the following names:

August: 650 *Seewis in Prättigau*
November: 651 *Fideris*
652 *Vaz/Obervaz, Lenzerheide-Valbella*

Trams

Basler Verkehrsbetriebe (BVB)

Many of the Swiss standard bogie cars from the Be4/4 401 - 448 series have been taken out of service and stored at Eglisee.

Transport Public Genève (TPG)

The TPG have reentered the traction power supply business; their workshops at Jonction have been equipped with solar power panels capable of delivering 154Kw to the systems overhead.

Städtische Verkehrsbetriebe Bern (SVB)

Snowploughs Xe2/2 501 and 502 have been taken out of service; 501 has been transferred to the TVB group.

Preservation

Dampfbahn Furka Bergstrecke (DFB)

The DFB has been reconnected to the FO at Realp by a siding and hand-worked point connection. This has been used to receive stock from the FO and the overhauled HG2/3 6 *Weisshorn* from Landquart.

HG3/4 1 worked a press special to Gletsch on 30th September, the first passenger train there for 18 years.

Reisebüro Mittelthurgau (RMT)

Five Type U sleeping cars, built for the SBB in 1968, have been working since June 1999 on trains between the south of Sweden and Narvik.

Associazione 182

This group, a branch of the RhB enthusiasts Club 1889 organisation, have organised the recovery of

Bernina Krokodil Ge4/4 182 from its 15 year exile at St Georges de Commiers on the Chemin de Fer de La Mure in France. It arrived at Landquart by rail on 26th November. After cosmetic restoration, it is intended to plinth the engine at Poschiavo.

Industrial

On 12th November, Adtranz announced that they would be closing six works worldwide. Included in these are the former Schindler works at Pratteln and the BBC works at Oerlikon. These are expected to close in 2001 when existing orders are completed. This will leave only the Bombardier works at Villeneuve and Stadler AG at Bussnang as active train builders in Switzerland. (see article by George Hoekstra)

Stadler are expected to be the main beneficiaries; they are involved in a joint venture with Adtranz to run the Berlin Pankow works and are investigating taking over the electrical work carried out at Oerlikon.

A MThB RABe526 Low Cost railcar has been demonstrated on the MO, GFM, TRN (RVT) and SBB (Neuchâtel - Les Verrières) lines in Western Switzerland. The MO have also tried out a BLS RABe 525 NINA unit, and have ordered two of the latter type, with an option of a third, from Bombardier at Villeneuve.

Boxing Day Storms

On Boxing Day, Switzerland was hit by the same storm as the rest of Western Europe, blocking many roads and railway lines. The west of the country was very badly affected, with most of the lines being shut down until 27th December. With a maximum recorded wind speed of 290 kph (at Kandergrund), overhead wires, trees and even overhead masts were an easy victim, leaving trains stranded. The Lötschberg line was blocked around 10.40, stranding Re 465 016 at Frutigen on IC 331, the 08.48 Basel - Milano Centrale. Similarly, power was lost on the Bern - Neuchâtel line just before 11.00, leaving trains to coast into the nearest station; S5 train 15514 (10.55 Bern - Neuchâtel), for example, got only as far as Bern Stöckacker. Delays and line closures got worse during the day; a sample was IC 737, 16.20

Geneva Aéroport - Rorschach, which left Lausanne at 17.50 (45 late) and arrived at Bern at 19.30 (75 late), while all the only line open out of Spiez was that to Bern. Services to France were only operating through Geneva, both the Frasne and Basel lines were out of commission.

Woods in the Kandertal and Lauterbrunnental were particularly heavily damaged, with the Frutigen area suffering a lot of structural damage. The three levels around Blausee are now clearly visible for the first time in many years.

The following lines were reported as closed after the storms died down on the morning on 27th December:

SBB (last report on 28th December)
La Chaux de Fonds - Renan BE (Biel line) (until 28th)
Interlaken Ost - Giswil (Meiringen - Giswil from 28th)

Palézieux - Châtillens

Zofingen - Safenwil

Lenzburg - Seon (Seetalbahn)

Pfungen - Embrach (Bülach - Winterthur)

Eglisau - Zweidlen (until 28th)

BLS

Frutigen - Kandersteg (until 31st)

Spiez - Zweisimmen (until 31st - diesel until 12th January)

Bern - Neuchâtel

MOB

Zweisimmen - Montreux (Rougemont - Les Avants still closed on 12th January)

Zweisimmen - Lenk (until 8th January)

SOB

Sattel-Aegeri - Arth-Goldau (until 28th)

SZU

Uitikon-Waldegg - Uetliberg (until 31st, then diesel)



Although already well known the visit of two DBAG 145's to the BLS has so far not been pictured in Swiss Express. Stephen Barnes was at Kandersteg on Friday 27th August 1999 and saw 145 001 and 145 016 in the station before they returned light engine to Spiez. Photo: Stephen Barnes