

Zeitschrift: Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal
Herausgeber: Swiss Railways Society
Band: - (2004)
Heft: [3]

Artikel: Celebrating with the MOB
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-854780>

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CELEBRATING WITH THE MOB



The Blonay-Chamby Museum's BFO3 all steamed up at Château d'Oex on 29.05.04. An MOB 4000 series railcar is on the left.

ALL THE PICTURES IN THIS ARTICLE WERE TAKEN BY PETER BOWEN.

The Montreux–Oberland-Bernois (MOB) railway was opened in sections. Château-d'Oex and Gstaad were reached in 1904 and the MOB (now known as Golden Pass Services) planned a major event for 29th May 2004 to celebrate the opening of the Montbovon to Gstaad section. The event featured station open days and events at Château-d'Oex, Rougemont, Saanen and Gstaad, the unveiling of "new" stock at 3 stations, a steam train from the Blonay-Chamby museum and finally a grand parade featuring 20 trains and based on Rougemont. Special catering was provided with visiting restaurant cars from the GFM (Rougemont) and Blonay-Chamby (Saanen). Rougemont was also to feature untold quantities of "Travellers Rosti" amongst many culinary delights.

My wife and I discovered details of the event only by chance through a leaflet at Gstaad station in January when we visited to celebrate the 10th anniversary of our wedding

in Saanen/Gstaad. We arranged to stay at the Hotel Bernerhof which adjoins the station at Gstaad. Our fourth-floor corner room (415 if you want to book) had two balconies giving excellent views over the station towards Saanen from one, and of the famous Reichenbach viaduct from the other. Both provided plenty of opportunities for photography. We arrived the day before the event, travelling via Geneva and Montreux having booked front seats in a Golden Pass Panoramic train. Some preparations for the event were already underway with the unexpected sighting of a loco in steam at Chateau-d'Oex (BFD 3 from Blonay-Chamby). Once at Gstaad I obtained copies of a special newspaper leaflet, which featured a history of the line and details of the following day's events. It was an interesting time to be in the valley since, as well as the trains, some early haymaking had begun. So naturally there were several processions of cows, complete with bells, heading up to alpine pastures for

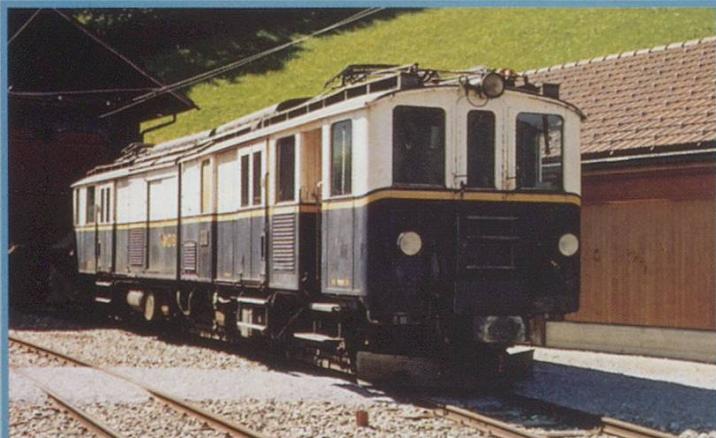


Golden Pass Services-MOB Be4/12 5003 at Château d'Oex. 29.05.04. Low floor entrances and designed to improve local services in and around Zweisimmen, Gstaad and Saanen.

the summer.

Some careful planning with the timetable was required and I opted for an early start and trip to Chateau-d'Oex. In Gstaad railcar Be4/4 1003 was easing itself into position to bring DZe6/6 2002 out from the loco shed. This was one of the pair of "locos" built in 1932 to haul the Golden Mountain Pullman train. Economic recession put paid to the train and 4 of the Pullmans were sold to the RhB where they remain. The DZe6/6s continued in use until the 1990s but were sidelined when newer stock arrived. DZe6/6 2001 is awaiting a rebuild at Montbovon. I am told that SFr1.2

MOB DZe 6/6 2002 outside Gstaad shed. 29.05.04.



million is required and that the railway is hoping for and actively looking for sponsorship. DZe6/6 2002 has been hidden in the Gstaad shed for many years and so it was pleasing to see it out in the open at last. Suspect wheelsets prevented it appearing in the parade.

Travelling to Chateau-d'Oex, by the 08.30 train, there was an astonishing sight on arrival, a brand new railcar set. Local services from Zweisimmen have been in the hands of the 5000 series Be4/4 sets running as 2 or 3 car units. These are being rebuilt with the former driving power car becoming a non-driving centre power unit and two additional lowfloor trailers from Ramseier and Jenzer added. The livery is being changed to red and gold with a large emblem featuring the bear of Canton Bern and the new unit, 5003 now classified Be4/12, is very striking.

The Blonay-Chamby steam train was out and about again. I took up a place in a wooden seated carriage and the train was soon full. Before leaving Ge4/4 6002 Rossinière arrived from the Montreux direction with a VIP train which included the two remaining MOB Pullmans, 101/2, together with a "new" Pull-

man As103. This was in fact a rebuild of one of the 1964 steel bodied first class coaches. It looked superb and was there to be officially inaugurated. We chuffed our way through Rougemont, Saanen and onto Gstaad. DZe6/6 2002 was beautifully positioned outside the shed, which by now contained only a carriage sheeted in black plastic (of which more anon).

Remember. All this was taking place during normal operations and indeed free travel was available between Rossinière and Saanenmöser so trains were busy. Shortly after the arrival of the steam train the VIP party arrived in the Pullman train from Château-d'Oex and the new Be4/12 set appeared from Zweisimmen to be formally inaugurated with a series of speeches and a small buffet.



The "new" Pullman As103 at Gstaad. 29.05.04

Pléiades livery and GFM railcar Be4/4 116 in green together with several dining carriages.

Having duly visited the cabs of 28 and 8004 I headed for the bourse, which was held in a nearby school. There was a fine display of around 100 pictures by local schoolchildren

from a competition to decorate an MOB carriage. The lucky winners were having their entries decorating either side of a carriage (hence the black wrapped coach at Gstaad)

The parade was due to get underway at 13.30 and was to feature a number of special



Golden Pass Services Ge4/4 8004 in the Cailler livery. Rougemont. 29.05.04.

I then opted to travel to Rougemont which was the venue for an exhibition of stock, together with a small bourse featuring preservation societies and model suppliers and of course a barbecue including wild boar and rosti. The display in the station featured Ge4/4 8004 in red Cailler chocolate livery (with the cabs open for inspection), vintage railcar 11 (now on the Blonay-Chamby) and railcar De4/4 28 now used on works trains. Also displayed was Be4/4 72 from the CEV line in Astro-

MOB B208, the school carriage. Rougemont. 29.05.04.





MOB Be4/4 3001 and trailer with 3006 and 3005 at Saanen. 29.05.04.

workings (primarily the trains on display at the various stations) slotted in between the normal service trains on this single-track route. The parade would therefore cover virtually all the type of stock operated on the line. I headed for Saanen to photograph the various workings from there.

As elsewhere various trains were on display together with an array of vintage cars and a shuttle bus service with a beautiful long bonneted coach. The display featured Be4/4 36,

MOB/BC no.11 waits at Gstaad in the evening of 29.05.04.

motorcars 3005/6 (the latter in a new dark blue livery) and rail car sets 3001/3301 and 5001. The parade featured railcars 1002/3 which arrived from Rougemont. Originally bought second-hand for local services around Montreux these are now used for schools services around Chateau-d'Oex and Gstaad. 36 then

departed in the opposite direction followed by 3005/6. A short while later these returned followed by diesel Gm4/4 2003 with an elderly tower wagon. By now Saanen station resembled one of those complex shunting problems on a minimum space layout.

Railcar 11 appeared from Gstaad with the black wrapped coach and set off towards Rougemont for its unveiling. By now the timetable had been slightly disrupted and 5003 appeared as an extra from Rougemont to Gstaad. I was planning to return to Gstaad to



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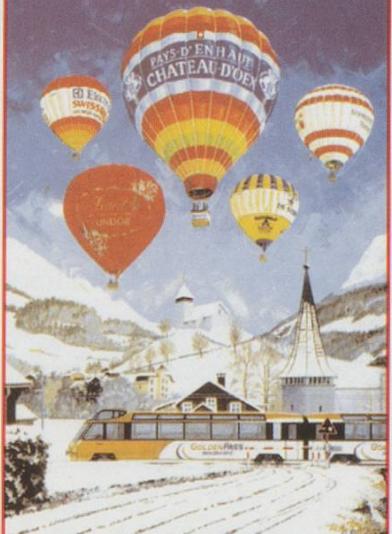
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MOB/BC De4/4 28 at Chamby on the return journey from Montreux. 30.05.04.

meet my wife and so I was delighted to have the opportunity of trying the new railcar. It had that inescapable wonderful aroma that only new vehicles have and was very comfortable. Subsequently we returned to Rougemont for another helping of rosti whilst being entertained by a jazz band. Don't the Swiss do these things well? The newly unveiled school children's carriage, B208, was on view and like a number of the decorated locos is different on each side.

Jan and I headed back to Gstaad where there were some further surprises in store; railcar 11 with its wooden bodied coach. A splendid sight. It ran round, the beautiful large lamps at the front were lit and it set off. We also saw other items of stock returning home including 3005/6 crossing the Reichenbach viaduct on their way back to Zweisimmen.

For completeness it should also be noted that SBB Historic ran 2 trains to the event. One, From Olten to Montreux featured Ae3/6 10264 out and Ae4/7 10976 back whilst a second ran from Olten to Zweisimmen and return with Re4/4 10001. The model company HAG also had a presence at Zweisimmen and BLS Ae4/4 251 now carries special markings commemorating 60 years of the class and 60

years of HAG.

However even more treats were in store. The day after the MOB celebrations was part of the Blonay Chamby festival held over Pentecost. This event was publicised by the MOB with particular reference to the cakes on offer, and featured an extensive service with as much stock as possible working.

We travelled

to Chamby and then by steam train for the brief shunt into the Museum. On arrival I was surprised to see the MOB Pullman 101 in front of the museum coupled up to railcar 28. The two of us boarded the coach and settled into its sumptuous seats and ordered a bottle of Swiss wine, complete with Blonay-Chamby label.

We were surprised when the carriage started moving but, sure enough, De4/4 28 was propelling us beyond the junction and then set off in fine style towards Blonay. Since this railcar is now confined to works trains this was extremely rare.

Blonay station was very busy with another electric hauled museum train about to depart. Two MOB 7000 series railcars were in the station for Vevey, whilst two CEV trains in Astro-Pléiades colours set off separately up the rack section. We then returned to the museum and decided to sample some of the cakes that are supposedly a feature of this annual event. To quote Michael Winner, they were "Historic". The Museum is in a beautiful setting above the lake and it is possible to sit on a terrace and watch the succession of trains, which for that day included no less than 4 engines in steam.

There was plenty of shunting around in the depot and this brought railcars 11 and 28 side by side for a while. My grasp of the various announcements about trains wasn't too good but it seemed that De4/4 28 and its Pullman were setting off again so we took our places. This time we set off to Chamby and then continued

onto the mainline and down to Montreux. This, I was told, was an unprecedented working. We had magnificent lake views as we descended towards Montreux where the train shunted into the sidings to clear the route for service trains. After a short wait we then began the steep climb out of Montreux. 28 is restricted to just 50 kph and initially made quite slow progress. Indeed it made you realise the effortless ease with which the modern Panoramic trains make the climb.

Our return to Gstaad from Chamby was on the Golden Pass Panoramic with 8002 in the centre of a train comprising a mixture of the former Crystal Panoramic and Golden Panoramic stock all in the new gold colours. The traditional dark blue and cream of the original Panoramic stock has all but disappeared with just one carriage noted.

The 100th anniversary represents something of a watershed with the replacement of the MOB identity with that of the Golden Pass Line now almost complete and with older liveries disappearing. However there are still magnificent vintage units about and hopefully one at least of the DZe6/6s will run again.



MOB/BC II and De4/4 28 in the Blonay-Chamby Museum. 30.05.04.

The anniversary day was a real success and one can only be grateful for all the hard work that the railway staff put into this. Remember also that the whole series of events took place whilst operating a normal passenger service.

The Blonay Chamby line is well worth a visit at the Pentecost event with its extensive service and historic cakes. The museum also operates special workings to both Vevey and Montreux (see table 115 in the timetable)

Our visit produced many exceptional memories with rare opportunities to see and travel in vintage stock. The hotel provided superb views and a chance to see not only special workings but also those elusive early and late trains. Highlights were seeing a 6000/8000 combination on a Panoramic and the new 5003 working the last through train from Montreux. Also seen was a passenger working with several tank wagons in tow. We are due to return to Gstaad for a longer holiday in July and this will provide another chance for some new experiences on the MOB.

My thanks to Hans-Jurg Spirgi of Golden Pass Services for additional information provided for this article.



RUPERT CHAMBERS TOOK THIS
PICTURE ON THE 10TH AUGUST
2003 AT LUGANO. RE6/6 11602
WAITS WITH A PASSENGER TRAIN
TOWARDS CHIASSO.