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ONE GATHERING - THREE LOCATIONS!



Birmensdorf Town Brass Band.

All photos in this article taken in April 2004 by Paul Russenberger

It is slightly unnerving to step off an S-Bahn train at a quiet station near Zürich to find Herr Wägli of the SBB secretariat unexpectedly greeting you by name! Nevertheless, it happened at Birmensdorf as I was on my way to represent the Society at the annual assembly of the Schweizerische Verband Eisenbahn Amateur (SVEA). A minibus whisked us across the town to the hall, where a greeting drink with nibbles was being served as the local, mainly brass, band serenaded the delegates in the sunshine and a miniature steam train was giving children rides. Adjacent to the meeting room, tin plate models were on display, some 1950s Märklin bringing back memories of gazing in Swiss model shops as a youngster.

Alan Pike was also in Switzerland

on wider business and had joined the meeting, which proceeded as all such meetings do. The local Gemeinde welcomed us all, the visiting delegates made their contributions (mine commenting on the coming Rail Festival at York in celebration of 200 years of railways, on the centenary of

“City of Truro’s” epic run of May 1904, on the Virgin Pendolino tilting train and expressing the hope that we would all be meeting somewhere in Switzerland in 2104) and the assembly continued with the necessary work of accepting accounts and electing the governing committee.

I declined Herr Wägli’s kind offer of a lift to Zug in order to track bash the line, travelling on the top deck of the S-Bahn train

Meeting at Birmensdorf with delegates





Zug Bhf. SOB RBDe4/4 waiting for departure towards Erstfeld.

which arrived at Zug with the locomotive at the south end. (It could have continued to Zürich without reversal, thus turning the set round; has anyone seen one the “wrong” way round?) Thence I repaired to the hotel, which proved to be next to the model shop; given my bank balance, I was glad it was by then after Saturday closing time!

An excellently prepared dinner was served in the Baar Gemeindezentrum. In the basement is the club's layout room. Alan and I were shown the current situation – with 1 **real** kilometre of track in place – of the HO and O gauge layouts, the latter having to be computer controlled due to the sheer size. And I won't even have a go at describing the sight of an O-gauge Ae6/6 hauling eight or so Leichtstahlwagen. There is at least another 10 years' work before scenery is seriously in place on either of the layouts, which are placed back to back to prevent visual confusion. In a better state of completion is a small HO line, capable of being powered as either 2-rail dc or stud contact ac. Part of the idea is that youngsters will be able to bring their own trains and see them running in scenery – the point control has been made simple and tough enough to survive handling by young fingers. All the same, a stud contact, tender drive, 19th century, American 4-4-0 did look a little out of place next to **working** Swiss point indicators! At 11

pm Alan and I had only intended to have a 5-minute glimpse, but such was the enthusiasm of the Baar Club's President, Herr Ugolini, that we stayed the best part of an hour. The April 2004 Eisenbahn Amateur carried pictures of their efforts; they are accurate but unfortunately cannot convey the sheer magnitude of the project.

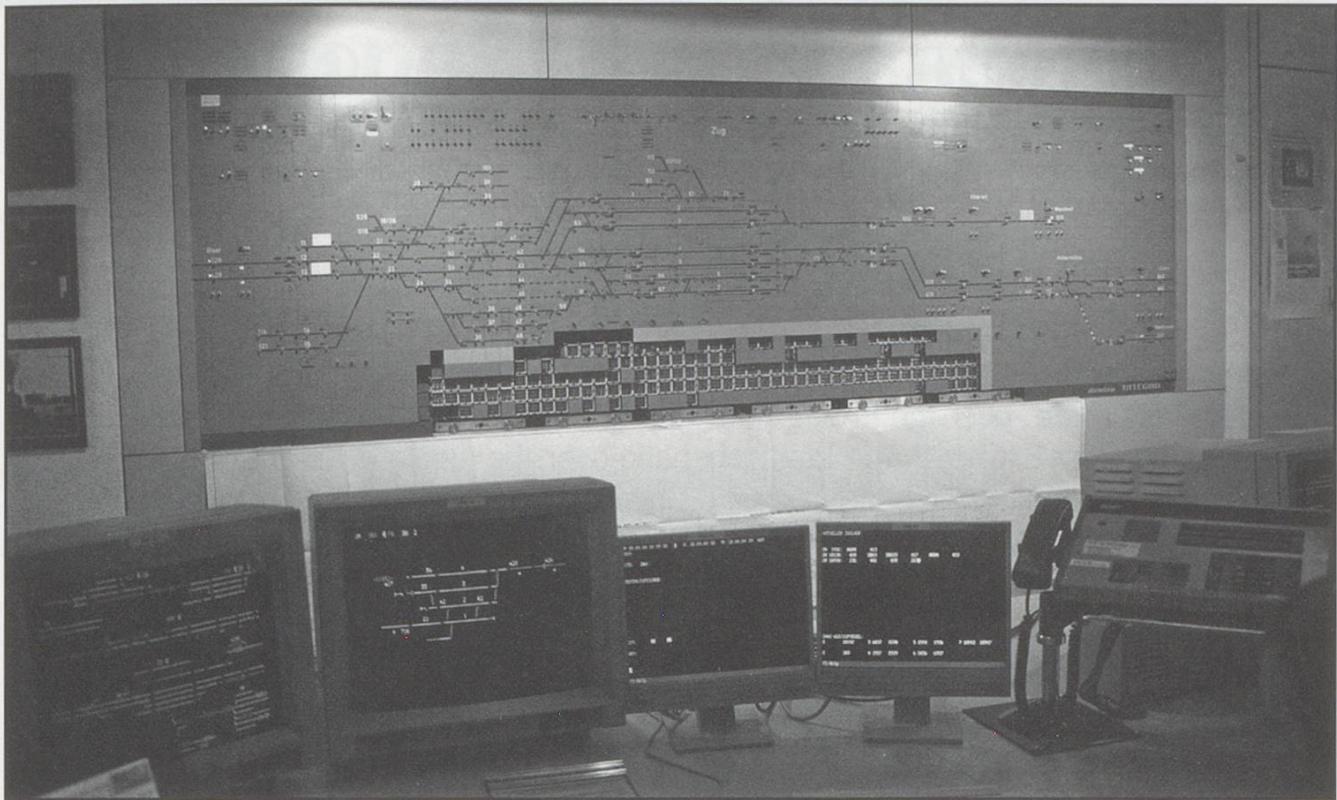
The Sunday morning began with a visit to the control room at Zug station. The previous

Integra mimic panel is retained rather for nostalgic reasons as the area, bounded by Cham, Walchwil, Horgen Oberdorf and Steinhäusen, is controlled by microprocessors displaying the state of track occupation on TV screens and working from the programmed timetable. By British standards the area controlled was remarkably small given the age of the panel. A train graph was moved manually under a sheet of glass forming one of the controllers' desks.

An office block has been built above the

The architecturally dramatic exterior of Zug SB & Bhf





The control panel in Zug SB

station, accessed by internal glass balconies above the entrance hall. At the edge of each are red, blue and green fluorescent tubes that can be used to create different lighting effects. (Yes, it was designed by a Californian!) The external walls are fitted with an additional layer of protective glass. The town of Zug has also financed a very thin flat screen departure board, which is suspended across the entrance hall, for SFr1.2m, about £510,000. Unfortunately, in strong external light it proved problematical to read.

Down on the lake the appropriately named diesel vessel "Zug" was coming alongside to take us for a trip to Arth and back in glorious sunshine. The clouds on the Rigi were lifting to reveal snow and trains passed on both Zug and Luzern lines, but somehow never quite at the ideal mo-

ment and the Joint President kept sending the Chairman out to get the photographs!

Back on shore, it was handshakes all round, Herr Rüegger, the SVEA President reminding us that he was glad of the SRS representation and Herr Ammann of the Frauenfeld Club saying that he hoped to see me when they host the gathering next year. Society willing, he will.

SBB Re4/4^{II} III99. Entering Zug with a Gotthard Line Express

