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Letters on any relevant subject are welcomed. Write in now to the address on the first page. Disc, email, CD, typewritten, handwritten or stone tablets.

FROM: MONTE BLEASDALE – ARGYLE

Railside Accommodation

As an SRS member, I wonder if I could pose, through the membership, a query. My wife and I are going to Switzerland this year, and I have been searching (without much luck as yet) for chalet accommodation as close as possible to the BLS line between Frutigen and Kandersteg. Not understanding much German I have been limited to websites that have English language translation as well. Three years ago we stayed in a brilliant chalet in Kandergrund which was directly next to the line! Unfortunately this chalet is no longer on the property market for tourists. I was wondering therefore if you, or any of our members, know of any chalet accommodation next to the BLS line?

I have been hoping that someone, somewhere may have produced a list of Swiss accommodation next to main railway lines for enthusiasts such as me, but no-one seems to have done this.

I would be very grateful for any help you can give me via the Editor.

(Note from Editor - are you volunteering Monte or indeed anyone else? Seems a good idea)

FROM: KENNETH FOLLETT – HENDON

Interlaken 28 Dec 2004 – 4 Jan 2005

I recently spent an enjoyable break (again!) in Interlaken, this time at the New Year. A great way to relax after the hustle and bustle of Christmas back home.

I took *Swiss Express* with me to read and catch up on some fleet notes. I noted the updates on incoming low floor stock to the BOB and WAB and would like to take those on a bit further now. As at 31.12.04 BOB 421-4 are in service and run rounds at Ost, Lauterbrunnen and Grindelwald seem to have stopped, WAB 141-4 are also in service – all seen working Grindelwald to Kleine Scheidegg.

The conversion of local Meiringen – Ost ZB (Zentralbahn) services to low floor has started too, with Stadler units 130.001/2 seen in revenue earning service on 30/12/04 and 1/1/05 respectively.

The local Interlaken – Spiez BLS services appear to have stopped using NINA units, although I did see them the last time I was there in June 2004.

FROM: MARK FOX – LONDON

Christmas in Klosters (note from Ed: lucky so and so!)

During my family Christmas holiday in Klosters I noted some interesting new developments. The first time I saw them, I was concerned that I had overdone either the skiing or the lunchtime drinking, but Arosa red driving trailers 1701 and 1702 made regular appearances in the “foreign territory” of Klosters on the Winter Sports specials between Küblis and Davos, powered by various members of the modified Ge4/4¹ class. Driving trailer 1723, normally a resident on the Samedan-Pontresina or Davos-Filisur stretches also meandered by. Of course the more regular low-floor Scuol driving trailers were regularly to be seen too, making train-spotting even more fun than usual. It was never possible to be quite sure what might turn up next!

Ge4/4^{II} no. 622 Arosa is still sadly, in regular red livery. It seems that the RhB haven't yet taken the modelling community's hint and repainted it in blue to match the Arosa Express “flower train”.

One of the great advantages of trains is, of course, that they are flexible in length to cope with traffic demands. In the era of close-coupled engines and driving trailer shuttles this seems to have been rather overlooked. Of course traffic varies even if train length does not normally do so. An interesting consequence of this is that several Ge4/4^{III}s were spotted “amidships”, with their normal push-pull train on one side and often as many as five coaches being pulled or pushed on the other.

I picked up a leaflet describing in great detail a revival of the original plan devised early in the last century to extend the metre gauge from Scuol into Austria. I wasn't able to confirm whether this is definitely happening or not as, very annoyingly, I managed to mislay the leaflet before translating the German! But I am sure that some other member will be able to enlighten all of us about such plans.

FROM: RICHARD HARPUM – DORSET

An Update from Graubünden

My brother and I have recently returned from Switzerland staying over Christmas at the Hotel Grischuna at Filisur. I would like to update you on a couple of points made in the last issue of *Swiss Express*.

The major reconstruction of Filisur station is complete, apart from some final finishing touches such as glazing the waiting shelter and some final electrical work as cables are currently wound up but made safe! Some more tarmac needs to be laid, as there are different levels in some places on the platforms.

The contractor's cabins are still nearby, as is some of their equipment around the station. They seemed to have stopped work for the winter, but local stories suggest the RhB is short of funds for completing projects. The rebuilding at the front of Chur station is a case in point – no work being done, and scheduled for completion in 2008. The station buildings at Landquart, once temporary, have now been replaced with a modern structure which houses a combined SBB Rail Desk, Enquiry Centre, small café and shop on the town side of the station.

Slightly further away, in Lucerne, well before Christmas, we spotted an LSE 3-car EMU, awaiting its next trip, painted in the new white and red livery of the Zentralbahn, with all three cars painted and with the correct graphics ready for the 1st January launch. (*Editors note-The pictures from Ken Follett refer.*)

The new SBB timetable from Zurich to Chur certainly throws up some interesting rolling stock for the XX.12 departures from Zurich. Where these are of EC designation, and originating in Germany, the stock is formed from units, certainly for 1st Class passengers, of corridor stock. 2nd Class fares not much better. The stock looks old and worn – many people, including us, waited for the faster departure at xx.37, as it is double-deck SBB stock. The EC service to Brussels, with Swiss stock now carries no refreshment facilities north of Basle, which from there is a five-hour trip. Some Belgian railway stock, both first and second class, was observed parked in the lines outside Sargans railway station on a couple of days.

Like many others in *Swiss Express* I would like to add my compliments to the Hotel Grischuna, which offers good value for money. Only a railway buff does not mind being woken up by a snow blower at 6am!

FROM: RON SMITH - SCOTLAND

Zürcher Modellbahnbourse

This well established and regular model railway show will be taking place this year on Saturday 30th April, and again on Saturday 24th September in the KGH hall at Wipkingen, in Zürich, from 09.00 hrs to 14.00 hours. This hall can be reached by tram 13 from the Hauptbahnhof, direction Frankental; get off the tram at Wipkingenplatz, the hall is on your right.

On display will be trade stands, all scales of models, old and antique, new and second hand, model cars, live steam models, model buildings and building materials. There are also items such as old railway lamps, books, photographs and postcards, videos & DVD's, a ticket exchange (only in spring), and of course a café! One special item is a "Loki Doktor" So, if your model loco will just not go, take it along for a free diagnosis from the "doctor". There are usually a few layouts to see trains running as well. If you are in Zürich or the area, it is well worth a visit, and you could find that model that you have been looking for, or in my case when I visited one, a model that I did not know existed!

FROM: MICHAEL FARR – CALLINGTON

Edmondsons!

Has any member travelled on the *Funivia Brusino-Serpiano* this year? When I tried to do so in September the service was suspended because the wind was considered too high for safe operation of the cable cars.

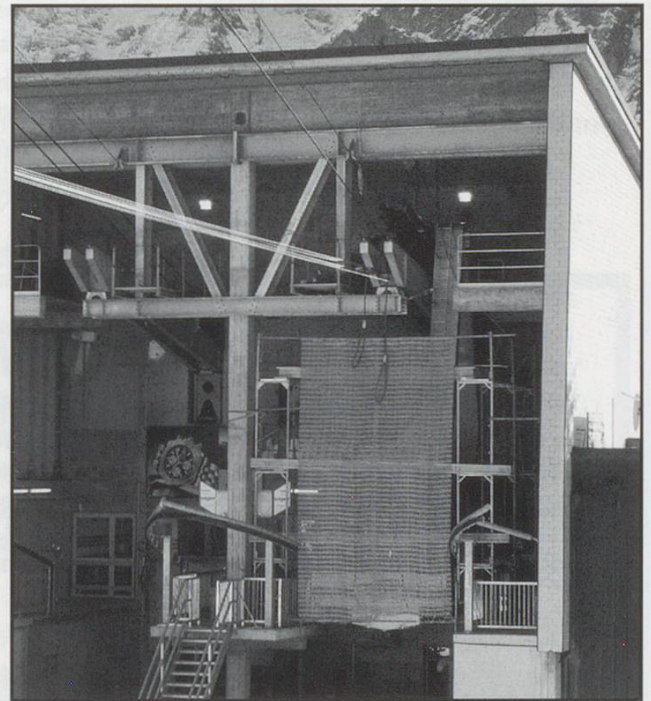
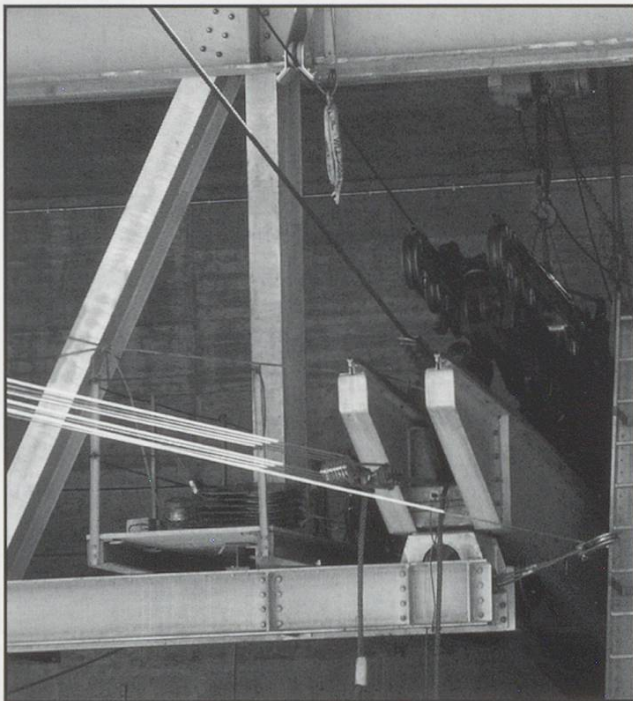
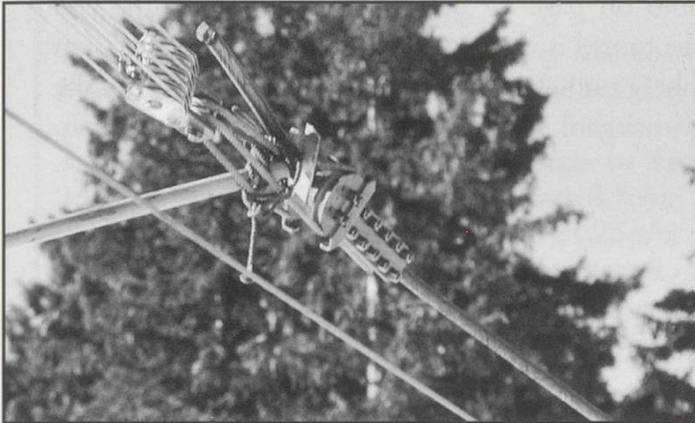
My reason for asking is to try to find out if they are still selling old style card tickets or if they, like most similar operations, have changed to a computer-based ticket system. If anyone can advise me I shall be very grateful. As a result of a letter to Brusino they have kindly sent me some ticket specimens but all are samples numbered 00000 so I suspect that the familiar tickets on sale when there in 2000 have been withdrawn – but I want to be certain of my facts as I am writing up my holidays for the Transport Ticket Society's Journal.

You can contact Michael via the Editor

FROM: GLYN JONES - COALVILLE

Update on the Schilthorn cable problems.

The Schilthornbahn is scheduled to reopen on 12th March. Whilst I was there last week (9th -16th January) I could see it. It is the left hand cable car looking up from Mürren that has broken and it appears they are making the new cable in situ. We were sitting outside in warm sunshine at Allmendhubel on the Tuesday for lunch and saw at least 10 drums of cable taken up by helicopter to Birg. I was told (unsubstantiated) that the cables have never been replaced and are about 40 years old. Despite this we ventured on the lower two working sections up to Mürren. I attach a few photos taken of the work in progress and one of the cable as shown on the display in the Mürren terminal.

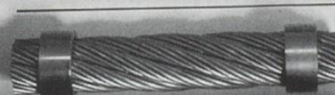


Schweizerische Seil-Industrie AG
CH8201 Schaffhausen

Trag-, Zug- und Gegenseile der
3. Sektion Mürren-Birg der
Schilthornbahn AG, Mürren



4 Tragsiele
vollmetallische Konstruktion
4 x 2080 m
Mindesttragkraft 165000 kg
Gewicht meter Seil 24,800 kg
Außen- 1 x 6 x 12 x 18 x 24 Rostseile
21,2 Protonen



Je 2 Zug- und Gegenseile
Querschnitt nach
Länge 2921 m | 2940 m
Durchmesser 32 mm | 30 mm
Mindesttragkraft 65000 kg | 59500 kg
Gewicht meter Seil 10,270 kg | 12550 kg
Außen- 6 Latten 6 x 12 x 18 x 24 Rostseile
1 Latten 6 x 12 x 18 x 24 Rostseile

FROM STEFAN UNHOLZ – SWITZERLAND

Best Regards from Switzerland

Firstly: Re 4/4^{II} 11109 on page 13 of the Dec. 2004 issue displays its Swiss Express livery, not TEE!

Referring to the TQI question from Garth Jenkinson on page 34: The two ex-SBB Re4/4^Is are nos. 10008 (blue) and 10019 (red). They are owned and operated by a German company named Centralbahn (www.centralbahn.com) or “Nostalgie Express Berlin” and mostly can be seen in action together anywhere in Germany, double-heading excursion and nostalgia trains organized by the magazine “Eisenbahn-Kurier”. A third locomotive (10006, if I remember correctly) is currently being restored at Basel in order to eventually join the first two units.

The new tunnel shown in Tony Rowbotham’s photo on page 49 had to be closed for traffic and temporarily (?) replaced by the road to the left because the tunnel is in danger of collapsing (Swiss precision work - hmmm...). It is unclear whether too much Lötschberg tunnel spoil had been deposited on top of the tunnel, and accusations are now raging back and forth with regard to the responsibility for the calamity. To be continued...

FROM: STEVE HOROBIN - HAVERHILL

The Last Issue and a Trip to Savour

Reference *The Question Is* letter from Garth Jenkinson. The train seen was probably that of the “Nostalgie Express Berlin”, as I reported, with a photo in Swiss Express September 2003.

In the book review *Bahnprofil Schweiz* members are asked to send a twenty-pound note for purchase. As a Royal Mail employee I would recommend that members to send it “Signature on Delivery”, £3 plus postage. Check out <www.royalmail.com>

Also I have enclosed details of one of the special trips for this year operated by “Nostalgie Rhein Express”, the operating arm of Euro-Vapor. On 9th April there is a trip hauled by former BLS Ae6/8 from Basel to Domodossola via Bern, Vevey, the Simplon and returning via the Lötschberg.

Check out the website for details: <www.nostalgie-rhein-express.ch> or contact:

EUROVAPOR Sektion Nostalgie RHEIN-EXPRESS, Gundeldingerstr. 135, CH 4053 BASEL

Tel.: ++ 41 61 363 35 32 Fax: ++ 41 61 363 35 34

DAS WOCHENENDE AM SEVERN TAL

Friday 14th and Saturday 15th October 2005

Following the general jollity and huge success of the Bristol and Bath Group's October weekend the West Midlands Branch of the Swiss Railways Society are holding an Event. Full details will be in the June Edition of Swiss Express, but . . . to whet your appetite here are some advance details, which should be enough to get you to reserve the weekend and get booking!

LOCATION – Kidderminster Railway Museum, Kidderminster SVR Railway Station.

This is adjacent to the Main Line Station. The SVR will be running both days.

PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME

Friday Evening from about 1930 – A social event in the Museum with grub.

Saturday – 1030 till 1630 – A small exhibition and social event. Four layouts have been confirmed. Also attending will be Winco, Gerald Savine Prints, and SRS Sales. Others TBC. In the evening we will be organising a dinner and entertainment.

ANYTHING ELSE

Advice on accommodation and other things later

AS AN INITIAL POINT OF CONTACT THE EDITOR CAN BE CONTACTED VIA EMAIL OR THE TELEPHONE ON THE NUMBERS ON P1 OF SWISS EXPRESS.

FURTHER DETAILS IN THE JUNE SWISS EXPRESS