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MORE TICKS IN THE BOOK

Part 2 of a railway ramble along lesser lines



Editor's note. In the previous issue of Swiss Express we left Gerry back at his B & B in Ins after the first episode of his ramblings. We now continue his journey.

On the last day based at Ins it was decided to travel to Bern to catch Line W of the RBS (Regionalverkehr Bern-Solothurn) out to Worb and to return to the city by the alternative southern route. This ride showed another side to Switzerland. The ordinary, everyday Switzerland as the train travelled between factories, blocks of apartments, houses and eventually running into the countryside before reaching Worb Dorf with the Saturday market in the nearby square. This is a very striking modern station, its sides clad in stainless steel strips that shone in the sun, complete with a car park over the tracks and platforms. On the return journey to Bern on RBS Line G there were some great views east down the valley towards Thun, whilst the suburbs that line the road that the route took into Bern looked to be very desirable places to live.

After lunch in Bern an SBB train for Luzern was caught to Wolhusen. This winding route through the valleys of the Emme,

UPPER: The view from the B&B at Ins. A Stadler built BTI train heads for Ins.

LOWER: An RBS tram at Worb Dorf. 07.05.05.

Photo: Toggenburg

All photos by Gerry Savine unless shown otherwise



Ilfis and Kl. Emme displays a different and attractive aspect to the Swiss landscape. From Wolhusen a push-pull unit of the RM-vhb (Regionalverkehr Mittelland – Vereinigte Hettwil-Bahnen) took an undulating route north to Langenthal. The weather had been mixed with sunshine and then rain, which had stopped some of the planned sightseeing tours of the towns en-route. A quick change of plan led to a run on the ASm (Aare Seeland mobil) metre gauge line to Solothurn. I wonder how many members have travelled this line? Despite the wet weather it proved to be



UPPER: RM unit from Wolhusen waits for the return journey at Langenthal. 07.05.05. Photo: Toggenburg

MIDDLE: ASm unit 354 waits departure at Langenthal. The Pierce Brosnan look-alike on the left is the Editor.

LOWER: The new RM Flirt unit waits at Moutier en-route for Sonceboz. 07.05.05. Photo: Toggenburg

a fascinating run with much evidence of freight.

Solothurn was a no-go for wandering around - so onward. This time on a new RM two-car unit twisting and climbing north into the Jura Mountains towards Moutier, which used to be the end of the line for the old RM. Their service now continues on over SBB tracks to join the La Chaux-de-Fonds - Bern line of the SBB at Sonceboz. A photo session of the RM unit at Moutier led to an invitation to a cab ride for the rest of the journey. What an experience - travelling along narrow valleys, and through a succession of tunnels, in this part of the Jura. One disappointment was that this splendid new unit had a blocked toilet with water leaking out under the door.

The journey back to Ins was by the SBB to Biel/ Bienne and then on the ASm route paralleling the south



RIGHT: BVB Siemens built tram threads its way through a crowded Barfüsserplatz in the late afternoon sun. Basel city centre is also served by BLT trams which extend out into the country (and France for a short distance). BVB also operate a lone trolleybus route as well as conventional motor buses. 11.05.05

BELOW: Elsewhere on the extensive Basel network a BVB Siemens tram crosses the Rhein. 11.05.05.
Photo: Toggenburg



shore of the Bieler See that was used before. With most of the former RM system now covered, and other unexpected routes traversed that had provided a lot more “ticks in the book”, more places in Switzerland were calling out for further exploration. Some of these will feature in other articles for *Swiss Express*.

At the northern end of the Swiss Jura lies the city of Basel. This historic centre, founded by the Romans in 44BC, is often only seen either when passing through on the Motorway on the German side of the Rhein, or as a brief glance en-route between the Airport and the Bahnhof. Neither of these scenarios gives a good impression of what is a very interesting place.

Arriving in Basel during the late afternoon on the way to catch the last flight out to the UK the city was bathed in warm sunshine. I've never seen so many trams on the move! The area in front of the Bahnhof was a constant buzz of BVB (Basler Verkhrs-Betriebe) trams arriving and departing with people dodging in between. However, having boarded a tram heading through the city towards the river in

error we left the ride sooner than intended, which proved to be a good mistake. Heading into one of the department stores we had a good dinner then continued down the main shopping street and arrived at the Marktplatz, the location of the Rathaus (Town Hall) dating from 1516. This area also has a major junction for the tram services and one tram followed another in all directions. The Marktplatz was still full of people shopping at the open-air market as they were on their way home.

Whilst walking down to a bridge over the Rhein to view the two cable ferries that navigate across the strong currents of the river an open topped tram and trailer was noticed on a number of occasions wandering around amongst the regular services. Walking through the back streets of the city via the university area we passed the 12c Münster, a large church built into a cliff and overlooking the river. Continuing back to the Bahnhof in order to get the bus to the Airport the evening rush hour was well under way as people made their way home by both tram and train.

Basel is now another city to be added to the list of “must-visit-again-places” in this part of Switzerland. This Jura Region of Switzerland, although not having the dramatic high mountains of the lands further south, contains its own dramatic countryside together with historic towns and cities which have played significant roles in the establishment of modern Switzerland.