

Zeitschrift: Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal
Herausgeber: Swiss Railways Society
Band: - (2006)
Heft: [1]

Rubrik: Reviews

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The BLS has released a preview of summital services, after the opening of the Base Tunnel in December 2007. There will be an hourly regional service. Because of pathing limitations between Bern and Thun until 2012, trains will initially run only between Spiez and Brig, leaving Spiez at 07.13 and hourly thereafter, stopping at Mülenen, Reichenbach, Frutigen, Kandersteg,

Goppenstein, Hohtenn, Ausserberg, Eggerberg, Lalden and arriving at Brig 08.24. From Brig, trains will leave hourly from 05.38, making the same stops and arriving at Spiez at 06.47. Three trains each in both morning and evening peaks will run through to Bern. Good connections are assured at both Brig and Spiez. In the long run, the future of the summit service will depend both on patronage and the willingness of Kanton Bern, to pay for the service. Use it or lose it...

(Hot off the press from GMH).

REVIEWS REVIEWS REVIEWS

GELB FAHREN - 100 JAHRE POSTAUTO

Authors: Marc Valance and Michael T. Ganz.

Published by WERD Verlag A.G., Zürich. Language: German. 176 pages, over 180 photographs, all (except for the historical ones) are in full colour. Format 8½ x 11 inches, hardback. ISBN 3-85932-498-5. Price: SFr.69 or €46.

Right in time for the 100-year celebrations of postal coach transport in Switzerland, WERD Verlag has come out with a book about the typical Swiss PostAutos. More than half of the book consists of pictorial impressions of five typical routes, which together give an excellent impression of the huge variety in everyday postal coach operation. They are: Brig - Saas Fe, a mountain valley route; Delemont - Montsevelier, a school run; Zürich - Muri, a suburban run; Susten - Furka - Grimsel, a typical tourist route and Chur - Bellinzona, a long-distance route. I am sure many of you have travelled on at least one, or maybe more, of these routes and will fondly recognise many of the locations. All of the photographs in this section were taken by Herbert Steiner, a photographer from Interlaken, who works mainly in tourism promotion. Reproduction of all photographs is in a pleasing satin half-gloss. Many are printed full page, or even as a double-page spread. Even someone who does not have any knowledge of German at all, can fully enjoy this part of the book. There is no text at all in this section, just an indication of the location.

The other part of the book is written by the two authors, who are both freelance journalists and writers working in Zürich. History, development and everyday life are covered in four sections: "Enterprise PostAuto" - the development of the biggest player in Swiss Public Transport; "From coach-and-horses to postal coach" - 100 years of history; "Brakes, tyres and motors" - a postal coach consists of many parts, all of which have to be maintained in winter as well as in summer; "The yellow *ta-tue-ta-too*" - stories of the people who make it all work, the drivers and others involved in the postal coaches. The photographs in these sections are from other sources, mostly from the archives of the Museum of Communication in Bern and from the files of PostAuto Schweiz AG themselves. It is clear, that at least a working knowledge of German is needed to appreciate these sections. I keep saying this - learn German, as you will enjoy Switzerland so much more too!

Even though I am mainly a railway fan, or maybe precisely because I did not know too much about postal coaches, I enjoyed this book immensely. Read the book and use it to plan your next trip to Switzerland. Travel on the postal coaches; they are of course covered by the Swiss Pass - though you will have to pay a small surcharge over some of the purely tourist routes. But, as the book shows, a lot of routes that they cover every day of the year are quite wonderful too.

GMH

BAHNEN IN GLARNERLAND

Produced by: Ernst B. Leutwiler. Running time: 90 minutes.

Available in the UK from: The Signal Box, 1 Albion Street, Anstey, Leicester, LE7 7DD.

Tel. 0116 236 2901 or Email: <signalbox@talk21.com>. Price: £21.95, post free in the UK.

This DVD covers the railways past and present of an attractive valley that is not so well known, as it is not on any of the tourist routes - or near main centres. The valley of the River Linth ends in one of those typical Swiss passes that is open in the summer only, and has seasonal post buses running over the Klausenpass from the railway terminus at Linthal to Flüelen at the eastern end of the Vierwaldstätter See. The line into the valley branches off the main Zürich to Chur line at Ziegelbrücke. The valley used to be more important than it now is as it supported a major textile industry. Glarus, the main town, has a monumental railway station in a grand style as it was planned to be the headquarters of the Nord West Bahn, but before the station was fully completed the line merged with others to become the SBB, so the HQ never came to Glarus. The station building has a lop-sided look now, and it is shown several times in this 90-minute production. The programme opens with a scene of the latest "Glarner Sprinter" NPZ sets (repainted and "stretched" to 5 cars) that have just been introduced onto the line to give through trains to Zürich Hauptbahnhof. This service improvement will continue next year when it is planned to introduce new Staedtler EMU's.

There is an option on the DVD to choose either "Bahn in Glarnerland" or "Sernftalbahn". The Sernftalbahn (SeTB) was a 13.8km long, 1000mm-gauge line with overhead electrical supply at 750 volts that ran from the station forecourt at Schwanden up to the village of Elm. This line was opened in 1905 and it closed in 1969. The first section has no sound and it shows the old No. 4 with a clerestory trailer running up the line, squeezing through the very narrow space between the houses at the mid point village of Matt. Then the next section shows the more modern trains on the route, accompanied by a German commentary. The layout at Elm is a modeller's dream, the single roadside track opens into a very tidy fan of sidings. The "Bahn in Glarnerland" section opens with a 1980s winter scene with double-headed Ae3/6s on the service trains at that period. There is also a good section on another "Bahn" in the valley - the Braunwald-Standseilbahn (BRSB). This 1000mm-gauge funicular starts at Linthal-Braunwaldbahn, the penultimate station on the SBB line, and climbs to its eponymous station on a plateau 605m above the valley. The community located here has no other form of access other than a steep climb by foot! Black & white historical film shows the original cars; the 1933 replacements; and the more modern 1994 ones. There is also historical footage of the funicular that operated in the winter - large sledges run with the snow to keep them on track! There are two unusual features of the Braunwald-Standseilbahn: - the goods trailer is not propelled but is at the lower end of the cars. The passing loop half way is not the usual "V" shaped arrangement as each car runs straight into the loop, and the "points" are right-handed only. There is also a shot or two of the helicopter replacement that had to be used while the line was being refurbished. Yet another railway is the 600mm gauge industrial line linking the SBB at Neider-und-Oberurnen to the Eternit AG factory, using two wee diesel locos.

The rest of the extensive coverage is of the SBB line itself. Locos seen are of all varieties, including the latest "Cargo" liveried MAK Bo-Bos; old Ae6/6s on freight; passenger trains from several generations; and quite a bit of steam action featuring a variety of tank engines on special trains. One interesting sequence from 1933, in black & white, shows three 4-6-0 steam locos and a short train rushing across the bridge several times at different speeds to test a strengthened bridge. The DVD ends with some sequences taken during a glorious autumn. The colours are vivid, the trains brilliantly lit by the low sun and the cowbells on the soundtrack (that become ever louder) are eventually explained by a side shot of a curious typical Swiss cow that is determined to be in the production!

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