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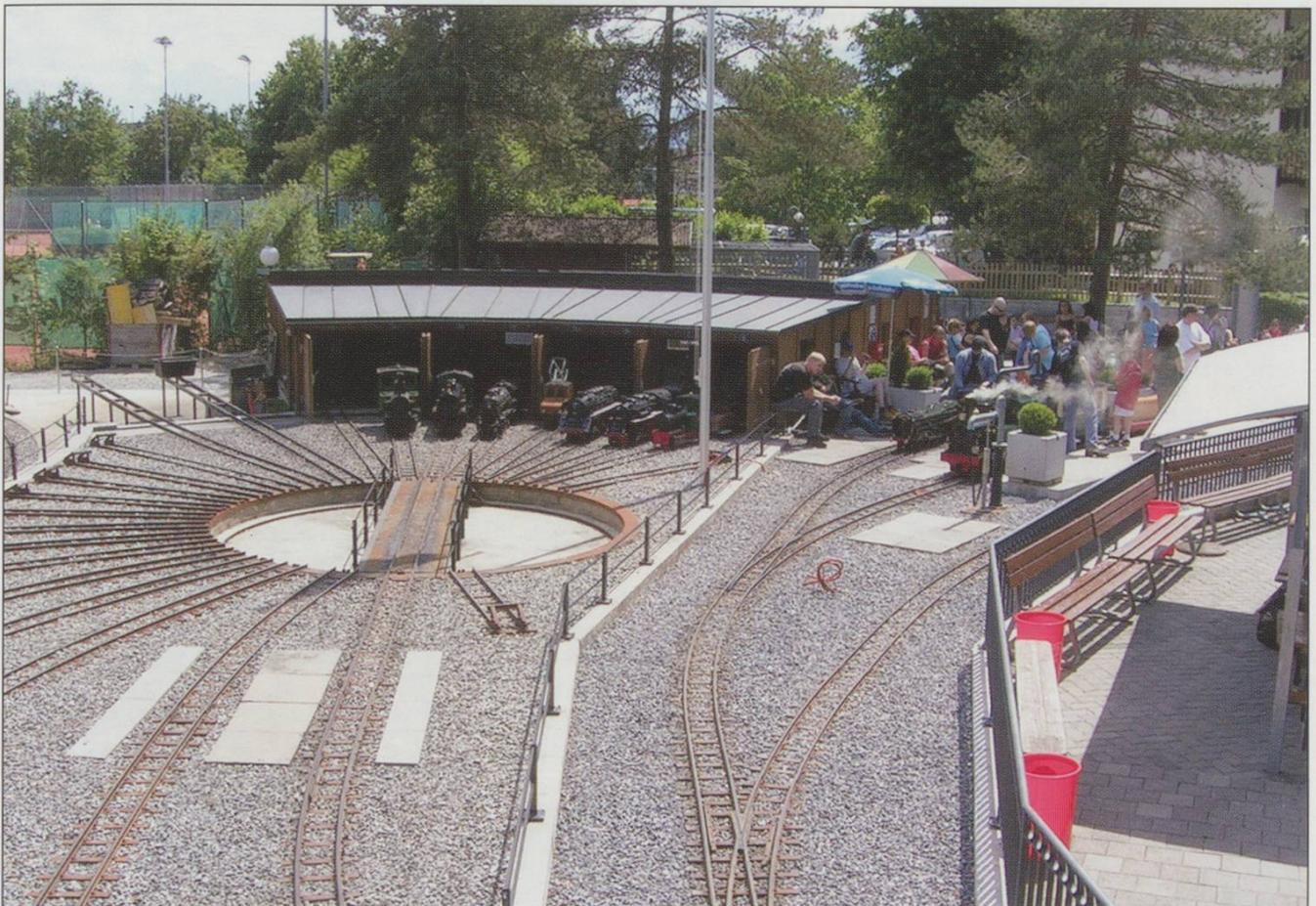
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LILIPUTBAHN CHAERNSMATT

Philip Elwin



An overall view of the large roundhouse and turntable.

PHOTOS:Philip Elwin

Having enjoyed visiting the well known miniature railway at the Swiss Vapeur Parc at Le Bouveret on Lake Geneva I had a look on the Internet to see if there was anything else of a similar nature in Switzerland. What I found was the fascinating railway in the garden of the Gasthof Chaernsmatt in the Lucerne suburb of Rothenburg. This 7"- gauge system operates on Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday afternoons when the weather is fine for the enjoyment of the local young children and of course the operators, drivers and very much older children.... like me.

With more than 700 metres of main line laid out in the landscaped back garden of the Gasthof this is a system well worth a visit for fans of smaller railways and is especially convenient if you are visiting the Lucerne area. The enthusiastic operators

field a wide range of live steam and electric locomotives representing scale main line and narrow gauge prototypes. There is even a rack and pinion section, tunnels, ponds, a Swiss covered wooden bridge, a turntable serving a part-roundhouse and a traverser serving the rack loco shed.

The riders are mainly young children and families having a good time. There is an electric tramcar which even has room for the driver and smaller guests to ride inside. From our visits, Sunday seems to be the best day for steam with a number of locos operating, along with battery electrics. Saturdays can be equally enjoyable with usually at least one loco in steam working along with the electrics. Those steam locos not in traffic are usually on display outside the part-roundhouse.

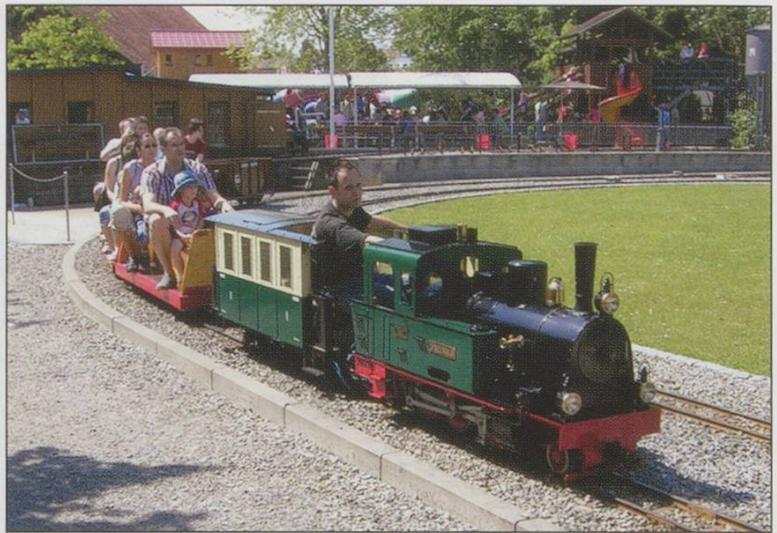
Getting to the railway is easy as bus

numbers 51 (Wahligen) and 52 (Bertiswil) operate from Lucerne Bahnhof. Get off at the Rothenburg Lindau stop which is just opposite the Gasthof. Even on Sundays the combined routes offer a half hourly service. The Chaernsmatt can be relied on for a good lunch and of course ice creams and drinks during the afternoon. The ticket office will sell you single and multi ride tickets - the single tickets are of the traditional Edmondson card type.

You can spend a long time browsing the web site at www.liliputbahn-chaernsmatt.ch which provides a fascinating account of the development of the railway, its engineering and its rolling stock. There are also some very interesting photos of the almost mythical but certainly long gone line owned by the brothers Brast that used to exist near what is now the Lucerne Lido.

TOP: Spreewald' 2-6-0T passes with a full load.

BOTTOM: The railway even has a pub sign.



BABY TREES

Keith Scotland

On your travels in Switzerland, you may have spotted signs with names on them outside people's homes. These are the names of newly arrived babies that have been born to the families living there. Their neighbours club together, get a small tree and attach it to a pole to make it as high as possible, and attach a sign with the baby's name. At some locations there can be several of these "baby trees" depending on the neighbours. In towns, these can be seen attached to the balconies of apartments. It is a charming Swiss custom that could be added to any building on a model layout to give a little interest.

