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TRACKS IN THE STREET II

Jason Sargeson



All photos: Jason Sargeson

AL BDeh 4/4 No 301 challenges the approaching Opel in the Rue de la Gare in Aigle.

Following his article in the March 2007 magazine Jason continues his travels around Switzerland looking at street running.

During a visit to the Valais last year I sought out the railways belonging to the TPC (Transports Public Chablais). TPC has three metre gauge lines that emanate from Aigle as well as one from Bex and all four of them have elements of street running that appeal to me.

From Aigle, with its 13c feudal fortress set in vineyards, the first route I travelled-on was the AOMC (Aigle-Ollon-Monthey-Champéry). This line, electrified at 850V, starts from alongside the Gare CFF and the route initially parallels the main railway before turning away to Ollon, another attractive town surrounded by vineyards and also the location of an unusual ostrich farm. Swinging across the Rhône valley, crossing the CFF tracks, the motorway and the river it turns sharply left into Monthey

where there is street running through to the Monthey-Ville terminus. The main point of interest is provided by the junction in Monthey in the Place du Marche where the Route de Collombey and Avenue de l'Europe meet. Having run to Monthey-Ville the trains then return back on themselves, take the left fork at the junction and continue up to Champéry. At the junction there are two stops, one on each line, and

AOMC Beh 4/8 No 592 approaches Place du Marche in Monthey.



road traffic is halted for train movements. On its route up to Champéry the AOMC gives up street running and becomes a mountain railway as it uses three Strub rack sections to climb 623m to the resort.

The second line from Aigle is the ASD (Aigle-Le Sépey-Les Diablerets). Electrified at 1500V the line climbs 751m purely by adhesion. This route turns away from the Gare CFF at Aigle and immediately starts street running as it proceeds up the centre of the road allowing cars to pass on either side. Higher up the mountain trains on this line, like the AOMC also make a reversal. Following a side trip from Les Planches into Le Sépey the trains backtrack to the junction before continuing up the valley of the Grande Eau to the terminus at the alpine resort of Les Diablerets.

The route to Leysin is operated by the AL (Aigle Leysin) and again is electrified at 1500V. These trains also set-off from the TPC facility outside the Gare CFF at Aigle but in the opposite direction to the other two lines, although all the trains can initially be seen together at the terminus they share at Aigle. Immediately on leaving the station the train confronts road traffic. The driver keeps his headlights on and warns oncoming cars to move to one side, and if you park your car down the Rue de la Gare you must be sure to keep within the allocated space. These trains continue street-running to their depot on the edge of the town where they reverse, immediately engage the Abt rack, and then proceed up gradients as steep as 1:4 to the three stations in the mountain resort of Leysin.

TOP: The traffic in Place du Marché in Monthey stops to allow the passage of AOMC Beh 4/8 No 592.

MIDDLE: ASD BDe 4/4 Nos 403 & 404 disturb the peace of Avenue de Lose in Aigle.

BOTTOM: ASD BDe 4/4 takes its route down the centre of Avenue du Chamossaire in Aigle.





TOP: A variety of stock awaits their turn in the Place de la Gare, Aigle.



MIDDLE: AL BDeh 4/4 No 301 squeezes beside the cars in the Rue de la Gare in Aigle.

BOTTOM:— BVB Beh 4/8 No 93 waits at Bex Station.



At Bex, one stop further up the CFF Rhône Valley line from Aigle, the TPC also runs a service up to Villars-sur-Ollon and on to the Col-de-Bretaye. The BVB (Bex-Villars-Bretaye) line, electrified at 700v, starts outside Bex station and street running takes place through Bex right up to the depot at Bévieux. Vehicle drivers, not expecting to meet trains, can easily get themselves into difficulties in Bex. Further up the line there is also street

running in Gryon as well as on arrival in Villars-sur-Ollon. When away from the road network this line uses sections of the Abt rack in order to gain height, whilst the entire climb from Villars-sur-Ollon to Col-de-Bretaye is rack assisted.

At the end of all of these lines there are various forms of cable transit to take you further up into the mountains, along with pleasant villages to explore before returning down to the Rhône valley. One



A BVB train approaches the Church of St Clement in Bex; not many passengers were taking advantage of the open coach.

thing to consider when travelling on these lines in the summer is the lack of air conditioning in the trains. Given that summer temperatures in the Rhône valley regularly rise to 40°C it is not surprising that the BVB power cars have a prominent fan in the driver's cab!

BVB Beh 4/8 No 91 comes down the street into Gryon Station.

