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WHAT FUTURE FOR MOB 2002?

Le Vaudois



Since its former shed at Gstaad has been demolished, DZe 6/6 No. 2002 stands on a siding at Saanen, prey to the weather and vandalism. September 2007

PHOTO: Le Vaudois

The future of arguably the most important historical locomotive remaining on the Montreux Oberland-bernois (MOB) hangs in the balance. After being stored, out of use, in a shed at Gstaad for several years, the impressive DZe6/6 No. 2002 now stands forlornly on a siding at Saanen, prey to the weather and the vandals – its former home razed to the ground.

Understandably in today's commercial climate the MOB cannot justify the cost of restoration, especially as its locomotive fleet has recently been strengthened by the acquisition of the two former Gruyères Fribourg Morat (GFM) metre gauge GDe4/4 locomotives, now numbered 6005 and 6006.

Locomotive No.2002 was supplied in 1932 by Brown Boveri (in conjunction with SIG), along with its sister engine 2001. The sharp curves then abounding on the MOB prevented the use of a pair of three-wheel bogies, so three two-wheel ones were chosen. The 1000hp locomotives offered a top speed of 55 km/h and, being equipped with baggage and mail space, they were designated FZ (changed to DZ in 1962).

When ordered, traffic on the MOB was buoyant, its luxury trains attracting a clientele who clamoured to travel from Montreux to up-market resorts like Gstaad

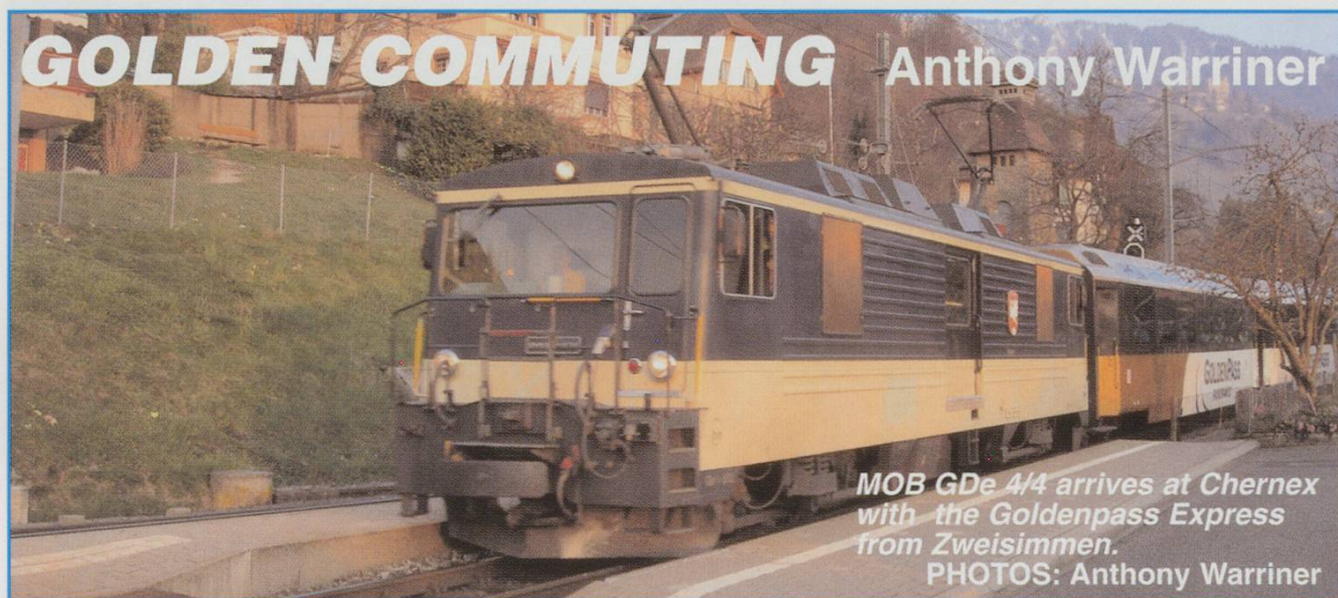
in the Pullman coaches owned by the *Compagnie internationale des wagons-lits* (CIWL). The MOB needed suitably impressive motive power for their Golden Mountain Pullman Express but by the time the two locomotives were delivered, recession had set in. The Wall Street Crash and the worsening situation in Europe had drastically reduced the number of well-to-do visitors to Switzerland. The Golden Mountain Pullman had ceased to run in 1931 and so the huge new articulated locomotives were deployed on regular passenger and freight services, where they proved to be useful workhorses. The CIWL Pullman coaches were sold to the Rhätische Bahn in 1939 where, much rebuilt, they continue to run.

According to MOB, a committee has been set up to look at ways to preserve the locomotive. The railway is fortunate to have the Blonay-Chamby Museum Railway (BC) at hand to provide historic rolling stock – steam or electric – for its special events, but even the enthusiasts at the museum would have a problem to accommodate such a large vehicle at the Chaulin museum site. However, if the MOB allowed it, I understand there is enthusiasm within the electric traction

supporters of the BC to preserve the locomotive – somehow, somewhere!

The future of No.2002 needs to be settled soon, before rust attacks the body-work and it attracts the attention of the graffiti artists. Finding a new, secure home

has been given even more urgency because only last year the final vestiges of sister locomotive 2001 were scrapped by MOB after being stored, dismantled but still in the hope of restoration, in various sites along the line.



GOLDEN COMMUTING Anthony Warriner

MOB GDe 4/4 arrives at Charnex with the Goldenpass Express from Zweisimmen.

PHOTOS: Anthony Warriner

Whilst staying in Montreux in March 2007, I was intrigued to see the considerable use made by local business commuters of the 17.45 Goldenpass Panoramic train. This train, complete with the VIP observation driving car, has its first stop at Charnex where there is a six minute connection with the local Postbus that serves the surrounding communities. This is usually provided by a Renault Minibus.

The timing of the 17.45 service seems very advantageous for local people wishing to alight at Charnex, or the next stop at Chamby. The earlier service at 17.18 was provided by a MEV (formerly CEV) Be2/6 EMU, built by Stadler, and that service calls at all stations to Charnex.

After the Goldenpass service at 17.45 from Montreux, the next east-bound service is at 17.53, on weekdays, and is also a MEV Stadler unit, though that service terminates at Fontanivent. At Chamby the 17.45

service crosses the 16.28 Goldenpass service from Zweisimmen. On the day of my visit that service was hauled by a MOB GDe4/4.

For UK residents accustomed to the overcrowded commuter services in many of our conurbations the prospect of being able to do their homeward journey on a luxury service amidst the splendid surroundings of Montreux would seem like a dream situation. Lucky residents of Charnex !

EDITOR: The cover photograph of June 2007 issue of 'Swiss Express' is also related to this article.

LEFT: Local Postbus waits for commuters at Charnex.

BELOW: MEV Stadler EMU waits at Montreux.

