

Zeitschrift: Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal
Herausgeber: Swiss Railways Society
Band: - (2009)
Heft: 97

Artikel: Dante's inferno on the RhB : Piers Milne and Colin Capell chase a Krokodil by night
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-854268>

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DANTE'S INFERNO ON THE RhB

Piers Milne and Colin Capell chase a Krokodil by night.



RhB Krokodil at night.

PHOTO: Piers Milne

Whilst we were waiting for a train at Bergün on the morning of 13th August 2008, we came across a very small notice board which showed the times when all the locomotives on roster would pass through the station that day. Two unexpected numbers were present – Krokodils 414 and 415. To make sure we weren't hallucinating, we made enquiries at the ticket office. They also weren't expecting these locos to be running that day but explained that train numbers containing a 1 as the second digit would be running on the Albula line and those with a 2 would be running on the Disentis line. No.415 was shown as heading train 9122 through Bergün around 6pm and a corresponding return passage back to Samedan was scheduled for around midnight. No.414 was heading train number 92xx on the other line.

Further enquiries established that she was taking a train to Tiefencastel where it would collect some 120 people and leave at 9pm (after dark). The passengers were to experience a performance of Dante's Inferno on the train. Plans for that afternoon were immediately altered and we went to Tiefencastel to gain further information but the place was deserted so we came back and waited to witness the passage of No.415 and its train that consisted of a flat wagon, four of the yellow, open air, Aussichtswagens and two old Gms vans.

I'm a member of the Albula Bahn Club so we went to see a running session of their layout

and made our way to Tiefencastel arriving about 9.25pm. There on the other side of the platform was the loaded train, which had been waiting for ours to clear the line. No.415 then dashed off into the night with a completely blacked out train and a (recorded) orchestra playing the overture. The experience must have been awesome! We then followed her back to Bergün, expecting to see the train parked up somewhere, but we couldn't find them. Although we had arrived at Bergün, No.415 hadn't - and there were people on the platform with video cameras waiting for her. Then four people arrived and poured out hot toddy into plastic cups on the platform bench - for the theatre-goers. Around 11pm, the train arrived and disgorged her load to have their drinks, whilst the Krok ran around it in order to return to Tiefencastel at 11.30pm. It was a rather miserable damp evening and the loco glistened in the lights of the station but, not having a suitable camera, I wasn't able to make a record of the event. Since the train would not have got back to Bergün again before around 12.45pm on its way home, we did not wait up. Where did it hide on the way to Bergün? It was not at Filisur, so we think she must have holed up on a passing loop at the disused station of Stuls/Stugl and because the night was so dark we missed seeing it there.

As a postscript, we went to Poschiavo the next day and one of the Aussichtswagen was attached to our train fully loaded with passengers – so the RhB obviously keeps these coaches busy.