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ROMANDE REPORTS

News from Southwest Switzerland

Blonay-Chamby

● The heading photograph by Alain Candellero shows a line-up at the B-C on the 12th September of metre-gauge stock that worked in Canton Valais, of which the two centenarians are in superb form:

- Tm 2/2 No1 ex Dixence Dam. Built Orenstein & Koppel, 1931.
- BCFeh 4/4 No15 ex Martigny-Châtelard. Built SIG, 1909. On loan from the *Train Nostalgique du Trient*, Martigny
- BCFeh 4/4 No6, ex AOMC/TPC. Built SIG, 1909.
- BFD 3, ex FO. Built SLM, 1913.
- BCFeh 4/4 10, ex LLB. Built SIG, 1914.

● Similar to the situation on UK preservation lines the "credit crunch" has fortunately not really been felt on this line with the passenger numbers and group bookings rather stronger than had been the case over the last few years.

● The renovation of Bernina Bahn Ge 4/4 No 81 (built 1916) has hit a snag, since all 26 of the bearings need to be changed due to metal fatigue. Offers are being sought from the few workshops that can still produce such bearings, but the extra expense is expected to be between £25,000 & £50,000.

The CGN fights back

Following recent criticism from groups of well-organised ship enthusiasts, plus a campaign waged by the paper *Le Matin-Dimanche*, the usually discreet company that operates ships on Le Léman has started to fight back. The newspaper and the campaigners notably question why the CGN's deficit has grown so much since the new, faster, but also allegedly "gaz guzzling", tranche of smaller units has been added to the fleet. In a rather confused ongoing debate it is suggested that the CGN management is "loading" the so-called "historic fleet" with all its expenses. The locally perceived risk is that the next timetable would see a marked reduction of the steam operations to give additional employment to the newer units in order to justify their costs and heavy amortisation. The concern is that the CGN is now paying the price for decades of fleet mismanagement and it is suggested that the company, its President and its Director-General must "wake up".

In a written response to the paper the CGN has made a robust public rebuttal giving ten examples where it is considered that the company has initiated considerable improvements over the past six years. CGN

note that the fleet has expanded with five new vessels consisting of two rapid navettes and three vedettes whose engines are "clean and green". Fuel consumption has been improved by redesigning propellers and revising the bow designs, while for maximum safety all ships are fitted with GPS and the Zodiac security system. At the same time three of their paddle steamers have been renovated with private funds, the latest, *La Suisse*, costing CHF15 million. To man the fleet more than thirty new captains, pilots and boatmen have been employed and trained. The company's capital has increased threefold over the six years (CHF11m to CHF34 m). During this period the timetables have been expanded, with the mileage on some routes doubling, and passenger numbers have increased by 34%, now topping the 1.83 million mark. The letter to the paper concludes by saying "In matters relating to navigation CGN is at the cutting edge of innovation". It will be interesting to see if the debate continues.



PHOTO: J-F Andrist

New TPC livery

On Saturday 26th September at Aigle the TPC launched the new livery that will be applied to the rolling stock of all the lines in the group – the AL, ASD, AOMC, and BVB. Our correspondent Jean-Francois Andrist, who attended the launch event, notes that although the front aspect is a bit monochrome the side livery is quite pleasing with small white curving strata lines (not well seen on a photograph) that are supposed to symbolise the climb of these lines from the Rhone valley up to the mountain resorts. There has been local

comment about "a green train in a green environment" and of a danger of the loss of local identity, which has been an important factor in helping these lines to fight closure proceedings in the past.



PHOTO: MOB

Mont Pèlerin Funicular

After a 130 day period of being out of service for a major refurbishment the Vevey - Chardonne-Mont Pèlerin funicular was brought back into service on the 25th September. The works on this well-used link to the communities that overlook Lac Léman above the historic town of Vevey cost CHF4.8m and took place during the line's 110th anniversary year. The cars have had their passenger accommodation extensively improved and have received a new "Golden Pass" livery that in time will be applied to most of the MOB's normal service equipment (trains, buses, funiculars). Paradoxically the Premium Service "GoldenPass Panoramic" and "GoldenPass Classic" trains will retain their existing livery.

m2 at capacity

Lausanne's m2 automatic metro is reported to be at full capacity after less than a full year of operation. In an attempt to relieve overcrowding TL, the operator, is to increase the frequency on the busy central section to less than a 3-minute headway and it is understood that more rolling stock will soon be ordered.

Information supplied by: Jean-Francois Andrist; Michael Farr; CGN (translated by Pauline Farr); MOB; Jakob Jäger.