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TRACKS IN THE STREET

Chris Blamey follows-up with some reminiscences



An Arosa bound train passes a Chur bound 4x4.

PHOTO: Bremgarten

I enjoyed Jason Sargeson's "Tracks in the Street" article in the June 2008 *Swiss Express* about the BVB running through the narrow streets in Bex. My wife and I are frequent visitors to nearby Gryon and along with our friends who live there we are always amused, and sometimes alarmed, at the antics of motorists when they encounter a train at the locations that were illustrated in the article.

For those of you unfamiliar with the Swiss rules-of-the-road in these situations perhaps a little explanation is necessary. Basically the train (or tram) always has right of way, and in the case of an incident the motor vehicle driver is always guilty. If a train is preceding you on your side of the road (the right hand side) then you are not allowed to overtake except at station stops and only then if the road is clear. If a train is coming towards you on your side of the road then you must cross to the other lane

and other vehicles must stop to give you passage, hence the no overtaking rule.

Jason's article shows a BVB train approaching the church of St Clement in Bex (June 2008 - P.15) but just down the road there is an even worse situation where the train joins the main road at a 45° angle on a bend hemmed-in with buildings. Opposite is a nice Super Marché, with car park, but on the actual corner is a Café/Bar with pavement tables. Here we sit for a coffee, or something stronger, after our food shopping and wait for an English/Dutch/German motorist (often also towing a caravan) to get it wrong! The train to Villars exits the one-way street, travelling in the correct direction, crosses the road - whistle sounding - and trundles up the other carriageway facing oncoming traffic. From Villars the train comes down the street on the correct side with the other traffic and

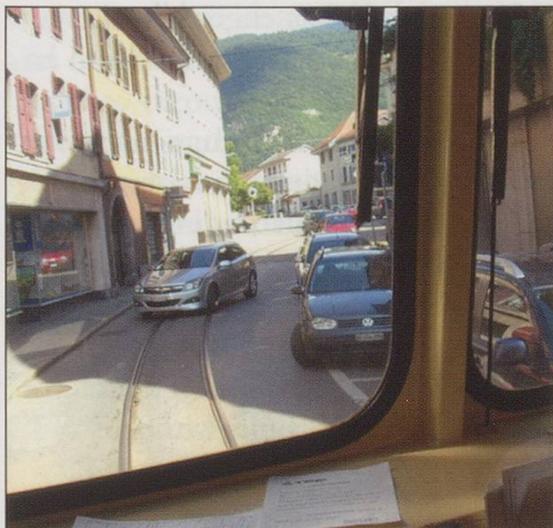
then – whistle sounding again – it swings across the other lane and enters the one-way-street travelling against the flow. Consternation for a visiting driver!

However, the best has to be in Chur where the Arosa line starts from the road outside the station along with the City Buses. It leaves the station, across a busy four-way junction, makes its way up the main road - now double track so the train is in the right lane – until the top of the street where it becomes single-track. It then crosses a busy round-about, continues up the main road for about another 1km before they separate to make their individual ways to Arosa. My Dutch wife always considered the BVB and similar lines using two-car “mobile greenhouses” as trams. Then she encountered the Arosa Express leaving Chur with six coaches and hauled by a Ge4/4. Now she has seen the light!

Editors note: Chris Blamey, a long-standing SRS Member, wrote this for Swiss Express at the end of 2008. Sadly he died not long after and the article has only just come to light. With the encouragement of Della Blamey we are publishing it as a tribute to his memory.

Quick reversal in Aigle as a driver suddenly realises the Leysin train is bearing down on him. 21.07.09.

PHOTO: Michael Farr



TOP: In Aigle drivers also get confused. Note the Dutch car parked on the tracks. 21/07/09. PHOTO: Michael Farr

MIDDLE: A tight squeeze as an Arosa train winds through Chur. PHOTO: Jakob Jaeger

BOTTOM: Leaving Plessurquai the traffic has to stop whilst the train negotiates this major junction.

PHOTO: Bremgarten