

Zeitschrift: Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal
Herausgeber: Swiss Railways Society
Band: - (2009)
Heft: 100

Rubrik: Sidetracks... a miscellany of items

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● Gremlin Attack!

Just when we thought that the magazine was safe from gremlin attack they snuck into the production process for the September magazine. Apart from some superfluous words that crept into Bryan Stone's Basel article two captions on P 21 became transposed. The photo at the bottom left on P20 was actually the view from the post bus on the approach to St Johann whilst the photo on the top of P21 was of the Säntis from between Unterwasser and Wildhaus. On P27 Anthony Warrener's photo of the new BLS "Lötschbergers" was taken at Villeneuve SBB outside the Bombardier works not at Brig as we stated. Apparently the units were parked in a siding leading to the Montreux - Brig mainline, and a very helpful Bombardier official invited Anthony to have a look over them. Our apologies to both David and Anthony.

● Question answered

For those of you still wondering about the location of David Adam's "CARGO" image in June's edition of *Swiss Express*, the city is Luzern and the line is a short branch that leads down to the Vierwaldstättersee from behind the carriage sidings at the side of Luzern station, accessed by the long footbridge across those sidings from the subway at the country end of the station.

● Trans-Alpine Traffic down

Hupac, the Swiss combined transport operator, reported that road consignments carried on their trans-alpine shuttle trains through Switzerland had fallen by 23.8% in the first six-months of 2009 compared with the same figure in 2008. However, in early July they noted that the negative trend had begun to stabilise since May and was then running at -15%. Bernhard Kunz, director of the Chiasso-based company, noted at the time that various economic stimulus programmes, some sponsored by the Swiss Federal Transport Office, appeared to be working and that he considered that the company was then on the right track.

● Anniversaries

It is not just *Swiss Express* that is celebrating a 100th anniversary (well its 100th issue) but some railways in Switzerland are heading

towards 100-years of operation, and other significant anniversaries are coming up in 2010. The Rhätische Bahn is celebrating the centenary of the completion of the Albula/Bernina through route, and the 120th anniversary of the opening (by the Landquart - Davos Bahn) of the route from Landquart to Klosters. The RhB/MGB "Glacier Express" will celebrate 80-years of operation whilst the Harderbahn funicular at Interlaken will join the 100-Club. The Rigi Bahn will celebrate the 140th anniversary of the first trial run on the line on the 21st May 1870.

● BLS plan new tunnel

On the line between Bern and Neuchâtel there is the single track 1103m long Rosshäusern Tunnel. This 108 year-old structure needs a lot of repair work, and so the BLS is planning to construct a new double-track tunnel between Rosshäusern and Mauss to be open by 2015. This will involve a realignment of the tracks and will assist with the growth of traffic on this line that hosts the Bern to Paris TGVs. The 4.1km of new line will cost CHF180m with CHF100m paid by the Confederation and the balance by the Cantons Bern, Neuchâtel and Fribourg. The existing line will be abandoned and revert to nature.

● Jazzing it up

During the annual Montreux Jazz festival that was held this year between the 3rd and 18th July several "Jazz Train" journeys were organised from nearby locations into the town, including on the MOB from Gstaad. There were also special Salsa, Flamenco and Jazz boat cruises on offer on Le Léman.

● Restricted Entry

In the September edition we mentioned that SBB had opened a "Luxury Lounge" at Zürich Hbf for the use of first class ticket holders. Several of our members holding 1st Class Swiss Passes have tracked down the lounge which is signposted on the main concourse. On the door there is a notice that it is restricted to - Holders of First Class GA cards; International passengers with a first class ticket; and Railteam frequent travellers. Presenting 1st Class Swiss Passes the different individuals were informed that these did not qualify. Looking inside showed a number of

smallish tables with white linen tablecloths, good quality crockery, etc – but mostly no obvious users – so these good customers of the railway finished-up paying for refreshments from outlets on the station. We wonder how many people actually get past the door. Member David Wright has had a reply from the SBB that attempts to justify the restrictions on entry. It is polite, but talks in terms of the lounge being solely for “top-client rail travellers both national and international”. Not something you should put into a letter to an overseas visitor who has spent many hundreds of pounds on a 1st Class Swiss Pass only to be turned away by the staff. This looks like a big PR gaffe on the part of the SBB.

● **SBB takes on Apprentices**

The SBB has recently taken on 464 new apprentices, and 87 trainees. There is also a programme of 6 to 12 months’ training for apprentices who have completed their apprenticeships outside the railway industry but have been unable to find a job before joining SBB. The young people are trained in any of 13 different trades. Last year the SBB took on 406 young people and 87 trainees. There are more than 1,300 apprentices or trainees undergoing training on the SBB at the moment.

● **Total Power Failure on FFS/SBB in Ticino**

On Tuesday 11th August, the 132kV electricity supply line that passes through the Gotthard Tunnel was closed down for maintenance work. This left Ticino isolated, with electrical power being supplied only from the hydro-electric power station at Ritom, feeding the converter at Giubiasco. This is not an unusual situation, and it takes place several times a year. However, around 12.35hrs, for unknown reasons that are under investigation to discover, strong power surges caused safety devices to trip in both Ritom and Giubiasco, cutting all electricity supply instantly. The network north of the tunnel was unaffected. Four main line passenger trains were stopped between stations. Rescue trains from Airolo and from Bellinzona evacuated two of them, and two

more were able to proceed when the current was reconnected at 13.30hrs. Buses were used between Göschenen and Bellinzona. Other traffic was diverted via the Lötschberg route. The SBB reacted swiftly, placing extra staff at Göschenen and Bellinzona stations, and by setting up a freephone helpline.

● **Swiss railways take increased steps against crime...**

SBB has decided to step up the fight against violence and vandalism by increasing the number of surveillance cameras in both their stations and on regional trains. In June the company confirmed a report in a Swiss newspaper that the measures would be carried out in the near future. CCTV cameras would be installed at stations where there were many passengers in transit, and at those locations where acts of vandalism had already occurred. SBB added that cameras would also be installed in older regional trains to complement the 400 already fitted in modern rolling stock and that they are also considering whether to install cameras in InterCity trains.

● **...but!**

One of our friends in Canton Vaud has reported two recent incidents of theft from trains. A woman on an IC train from Genève had her bag snatched at Nyon during a station stop and another woman travelling in First Class had her bag stolen at Montreux station. There is mounting evidence of a gang preying on wealthy tourists who are concentrating on the scenery rather than their personal security. Be warned.

● **Italians riot on Cisalpino train**

On August 11th two groups of young Italian tourists travelling to Milan were involved in a brawl which caused around CHF30,000 of damage. The 18 Italian nationals, all aged 18-25, were among passengers on the 17.01 Cisalpino ETR 470 unit from Zurich. What precisely triggered the incident, which spread to three carriages, remains unclear, but at some point a fire extinguisher was let off – causing breathing problems for innocent bystanders although fortunately no one was physically injured. The train’s conductor called the police, who boarded the train in Erstfeld (UR), resulting

in a 90-minute delay to the service. Those involved were charged with disrupting public transport and damage to property. The two groups were then sent on their way to Italy in separate trains.

● Services closing

Yes, rail routes in Switzerland do close. It has been announced that from the 12th December 2009 the Bern S-Bahn service S44 to Affoltern-Weier will terminate at Sumiswald-Grünen partly due to the poor state of the overhead north of Sumiswald. In practice the whole route from Ramsei to Huttwil has been in financial trouble for years and it was when Canton Bern failed to support the Affoltern to Hutwil section, that the southern end of the route from Ramsei to Affoltern was brought into the S-Bahn network and scheduled passenger trains were abandoned on the northern section. Now another review by the Canton has shown that as the section that will now lose its passenger service was carrying few people, and its infrastructure was failing, the further cut-back was ordered. In the same area freight service on the branch to Wasen-im-Emmenthal is to be withdrawn past the RUWA siding outside Sumiswald; this is again due to the poor condition of the infrastructure. Passenger traffic ceased some years ago. We hope to bring you articles on Swiss line and station closures and about lines in this area in future editions.

● Historic Information

With reference to Martin Fisher's article on the Nyon-St.Cergue-Morez line in Issue 99, in addition to "Googling" company names to find photos members might be interested in the following website:

www.eingestellte-bahnen.ch which gives brilliant photos of practically all of the closed lines, both standard gauge and narrow gauge, and tram systems in Switzerland. Not only are there photos of the railways whilst they were operating but also pictures as the lines and sites look now that the track and in some cases buildings have been removed.

● Old line lifted

Although the Wengernalpbahn (WAB) had previously stated that it had no plans to

remove the track, overhead, etc on its old line from Lauterbrunnen to its namesake community, during this summer this operation was seen by our members to be taking place. It is understood that some of the recovered equipment will be used on the proposed doubling of the line above the village.

● Train usage

The UIC announced in September that the Swiss are the world's record holders in train riding with 2,440km per head per year. Japan is second with some 2,100km. On the measure of train journeys per head per year at 41 the Swiss are the highest in Europe, but here the Japanese lead with over 60. The two standard travel cards, the GA with some 330,000 holders and the Halb-Tax with over 2 million holders (over half the adult population) have a big share in this as rail travel is cheap for most potential riders. However, the link to the Taktfahrplan, the political priority of rail and public transport, the social acceptance and the sustained investment are all contributory factors. The Swiss are now aware that it's all so busy that it's also beginning again to creak at the joints.

● New route to the Alps

From mid-December to mid-April Snowjet will be flying on Saturday and Sundays from London Stinted to Sion in the Valais. This airline offers the only scheduled service to this small, exclusive and efficient airport that is the closest point-of-entry to many alpine resorts. Fares are publicised to start at only £49 one-way. Also starting in mid-December is a Saturdays only flight from Oxford to Genève by the Swiss carrier Baboo. This too is aimed at skiers and the fares start at £79 one-way. Even if you are not skiers and simply wish to sample Switzerland in the winter these are new, quick and keenly priced ways to reach southern areas of the country. Baboo also flies daily from London City to Genève. More details are on www.snowjet.co.uk and www.flybaboo.com.

Information supplied by: SBB; Ron Smith; Geoff Turner; Hupac; Bill Weber; Swissinfo; David Stephens; Tony Bagwell; Tony Lamdin; Bryan Stone; David Wright; Jakob Jager; David Stevenson.