

Zeitschrift: Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal
Herausgeber: Swiss Railways Society
Band: - (2010)
Heft: 102

Artikel: DFB reaches Oberwald
Autor: [s.n.]
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-854423>

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DFB REACHES OBERWALD



Two trains rest at the summit of the Furka Pass.

PHOTO: Roger Ellis

The weekend 13th - 15th August 2010 will see the Dampfbahn Furka-Bergstrecke (DFB) achieve its 30 year old ambition, when the last mountain section of the old Furka Oberalp Bahn (FO) line between Gletsch and Oberwald (closed in 1982) is reopened for throughout steam working. The first train will run on the 12th taking specially invited guests over the spectacular route. During the long weekend there will be a big programme, based on Gletsch, of special steam trains, post buses, parties, food and drink, etc, etc when four steam engines will be in operation. Two original FOB engines, Nos. 1 and 4, should be running, along with HG 2/3 Nos. 6 and 7 of the former Brig Visp Zermatt line. It is planned that to start with, trains will shuttle from Gletsch to Realp and Gletsch to Oberwald with through running being inaugurated in 2011.

It is a remarkable achievement. The

DFB has many friends and sponsors (over CHF1m - about £700,000 is contributed annually) as well as 7,600 members, plus many volunteer workers. Since it operates at high altitude and only in summer, snow clearances and maintenance are a big task, as is the care of the original Furka-Oberalp HG 3/4 Abt system rack and adhesion engines, of which four were brought back in 1990 from the Vietnam jungle where they had lain since the war.

The remains of three most interesting, more powerful cousins of these engines were also repatriated at the same time; one in bits; two thought saveable but in appalling condition. These were exhibited at the Verkehrshaus and twenty years later two of them are being rebuilt with a large share of new components. Some of these items are being donated by firms such as Stadler, who now run parts of the former SLM Winterthur works where

the locos were built. They are HG 4/4, 0-8-0T rack/adhesion engines built not for the FO, but directly by SLM in 1923 and 1930 for the Vietnamese Railway that was then under French administration.

Estimated cost of the first rebuild, allowing for volunteer labour, is CHF1.7 m. This engine will one day go into service to meet the demands of the full-length railway and its growing traffic. However, there is a new problem. The engine has never run in Switzerland, and detail design alterations were inevitable. Now it must be certified by the BAV (Federal Transport Office) as suitable, and all plans, many having to be redrawn to replace the destroyed originals, will again have to be submitted for technical approval.

Information supplied by Tim Cadish and s'Murmeli.

BOTTOM RIGHT: *The loco crew member fills the tank.*

PHOTO: Roger Ellis

BELOW: *DFB HG 3/4 no 1 Furkahorn at Muttbach-Belvedere.*

PHOTO: Peter Arnold



TOP: *DFB HG 3/4 no 1 prepares for its trip over the line with the SRS weekend party, Sept 2009.*

PHOTO: Roger Ellis

MIDDLE: *A well earned rest for F.O. No 4 at the summit of the Furka Pass.*

PHOTO: Roger Ellis

