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Autor: Andrist, Jean-Francois
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ROMANDE REPORTS

News from Southwest Switzerland

Bernina-bahn Triebwagen for Blonay-Chamby

Whilst situated in the French-speaking part of Switzerland, the Blonay-Chamby Museum Railway has many supporters from across the "Rösti border" – i.e. the German speaking regions. In 2009 a lobby of these members had proposed negotiations to acquire a Bernina-bahn Triebwagen, but the society's policy is that such ideas must be supported by the membership generally. Therefore, at this year's AGM the proposal was considered - and received overwhelming endorsement.

The vehicle earmarked is Abe 4/4 35 of the series built by SIG/SAAS/MFO between 1908 and 1911. Despite having operated for more than 2 million kilometres, the vehicle is still in very good shape and, most importantly, has traditional electrical and power components which are familiar to BC crews. No 35's additional advantage is that it can be quite easily adapted to MOB standards, which are the norm on the BC and thus will allow the railcar to operate on all surrounding lines.

Two things remain to be confirmed; the precise transfer date from the RhB and what livery she will carry. I gather there is support for one of the less familiar RhB liveries, but one which will give Bemo the opportunity to offer their popular Abe 4/4 model in new colours. When we know more, Swiss Express readers will, of course, be informed.

Seeking mushrooms - found tram

Imagine you are in a forest, searching for mushrooms, and suddenly you stumble on the decrepit remains of a small tramcar. Hopefully you will know someone who might just want to save

the wreck – as did the mushroom explorer at Croy, near Romainmôtier (VD).

He got in touch with enthusiasts from the Blonay-Chamby line who found the tram was one of twenty five built in 1903 for the Lausanne Tramways, this vehicle being given the number 36 and nicknamed "Tom Thumb" due to its small size. It continued to work until 1940 when, due to being unable to pull a trailer, it was withdrawn and deposited in the forest to house bee hives. Seventy years exposure to all weathers has taken its toll on the bodywork but the B-C supporters immediately decided it was worth saving. After completing the necessary paperwork, at the beginning of March they hired a low loader and with some difficulty, the rusting and rotting hulk was loaded on board.

Now they have to decide what to do with it. Alain Canderello of the B-C says they can leave it in its present state as a "before" exhibit at Chaulin museum; can restore and keep only one of the cabs which is in better condition than the rest of the vehicle, or they can restore and rebuild the whole car. Because it is the only surviving example of this series of TL trams, restoration is their ideal. However, to do this they will need financial and practical support from outside the museum supporters. To create interest in Lausanne itself they decided to put it on display in the city one market day in May and it will be on show at Chaulin for the Blonay-Chamby's special "Day of the Tram" events on 26/27 June and 3/4 July which mark the centenary of Geneva tram 151.

Information supplied by: Jean-Francois Andrist; swissinfo; Michael Farr.