

Zeitschrift: Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal
Herausgeber: Swiss Railways Society
Band: - (2010)
Heft: 103

Artikel: "Schaffhausen" at the Verkehrshaus
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-854438>

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"SCHAFFHAUSEN" AT THE VERKEHRSHAUS

Bryan Stone



TOP: With the crowds around 11413 it was difficult to get a good shot of the whole engine, so for the gricers, here's also preserved Ae 6/6 no 11407 "Aargau".

LEFT: Verkehrshaus Membership Manager Anita Steiner at the Ae6/66 event at the museum.

PHOTOS: Bryan Stone



On May 7th 2010 the Verkehrshaus, the Swiss Transport Museum in Luzern, invited those with rail interests to see its newest locomotive, an Ae6/6 No 11413 "Schaffhausen". This is not the first of its type to be shown there, nor is it the only one preserved; I know of several and, of

course, the class is still in service although in diminishing numbers. SBB Historic has No 11402 "Uri", one of the prototypes, in its working collection, at present in Erstfeld. What was important, as Ms Hermann, the VHS curator told us, was that the Verkehrshaus wanted to secure a good example, in reasonable order, of the first series of twenty five - those with the Canton names (before Canton Jura came into being) with the chromium finish and the original green paint. These engines were in the 1950s a Swiss popular sensation, coming in a time of new hope and prosperity and with a surprisingly active naming and publicity campaign, including children's competitions, prizes of special trips and so on, involving each Canton with the SBB. In the Verkehrshaus a legendary 1920s Crocodile is alongside the new acquisition, as the Ae 6/6 was the visible jump, in freight at least, from the "Crocodile" age

into modernity.

That was also the view of the footplatemen who no longer prepared their engine and its many rods and bearings with an oilcan, like the steamers before them, but could take a modern, powerful machine and handle any passenger or freight job on the Gotthard, where they were used on all trains for more than twenty years. Few cared if they were rough riders and tended to demand much of the track; without them SBB could not have become what it is today. Today, age and recession and new technologies, have left the last Ae6/6s looking tired and grubby and greatly reduced in numbers. Many are stored and will not run again, with just a few having blossomed-out almost as "pets" in the new SBB Cargo colours.

Only a few have survived in the original dark green, and it was only by good fortune that No 11413, a "Canton" engine, became available. So those lucky enough to be invited to Luzern had an evening of nostalgia, with the obligatory glass of white wine and Driver Marty showing us round and telling his stories; he drove Ae6/6s most of his career. The exhibits at the Verkehrshaus are always subject to rotation, but this year at least you will see No 11413, not specially restored but cleaned, just as you might have found her on any day over a fifty-five year period, in Luzern or Lugano at the head of a sleeping car or Intercity train, or double heading a freight at Erstfeld.