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Autor: Stone, Bryan

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DAMPFFESTIVAL INTERLAKEN 2010

For steam engines and a wet steaming dog

Bryan Stone



ALL PHOTOS: Bryan Stone

Despite heavy rain this year's Dampffestival in Interlaken Ost station was a great event. In one respect Ballenberg Dampfbahn, the organizers, were in serious trouble – there were far more paying visitors than they had expected! My dog and I arrived from Basel at 10.00 am and settled in for a wet vigil.

Many readers know Interlaken Ost where the Ballenberg Club has its original Brünig steam workshop just off Platform 5 at the east end. A cinder track leads to the workshop where the Brünig Museum locomotives, HG3/3 No 1067 and G208, are maintained, and also where contract work is undertaken, currently on the frames and motion of SBB C5/6 2-10-0 No 2969, being reconditioned for Eurovapor in Sulgen. The Festival really hinged around the 100 year old No 1067 although its sister No 1068, that was retrieved from its plinth at Meiringen 10 years ago, is also being restored in the workshop. Beyond the depot (crossing the BOB line to Lauterbrunnen and Grindelwald, with its 4 trains per hour) was the sidings area, reserved for the visiting motive power display. At the west end of the

station, a footpath runs along the Aare Canal and gives a glorious train-watching vantage point, as mainline trains run in and out along the cliffs there. I first stood there as a schoolboy in 1951, and there I stood again now, as one or two specials arrived.

One distinguished visitor was already on hand; little G3/3 No. 909, of 1901 was one of the first series built for the Brünig Railway in Jura-Simplon days, and survived after withdrawal in 1916 in various lives until she passed to the Blonay Chamby Museum line in 1967. She worked during the Festival together with No. 1067, on trains up the Lauterbrunnen valley.

Down the yard was ex-DB Class 01 No 202, a standard Reichsbahn heavy Pacific which had worked in from Basel with a train of German enthusiasts. No 202 lives at Lyss in Kt. Bern and is in superb condition – but they all were. During the morning, and all on the minute precisely, others arrived. I saw the Crocodile No 13302, from Olten and ex-DB Class 64 2-6-2T No 518 with a special from Huttwil, where she lives with several historic engines of the Bernese railways

at the Historische Eisenbahn Emmental. Appearing with a full, heavy train was the German 'Austerity' (or Kriegslok) Class 52 No 221, built in 1943 (subsequently with the ÖBB) and restored to service in 2009 by the Val de Travers steam society at St Sulpice. A preserved electric, Bodensee-Toggenburg Be4/4 No 14, came from Sulgen; and at 13.45 the spectacular Est 4-8-2, SNCF No. 241A65, rolled in. Originally in a series built for the Etat Railway, these huge 4-cylinder compounds were the oxen of the long east-west lines in France, pulling huge loads and last running between Chaumont and Basel before withdrawal in 1965. Bought by Armin Glaslin in Zürich, she was restored partly by the Val de Travers team and partly in the former DR steam workshops in Meiningen. Today licensed to run in Germany and Switzerland, she is kept by a small group in Full-Reuenthal near Laufenburg in Kt. Aargau.

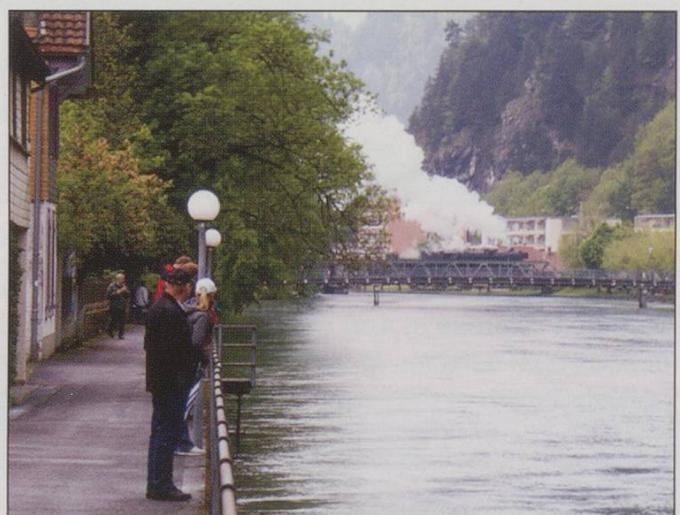
The sidings were by now full of engines being climbed over, photographed and visited by visitors of all ages. As fatigue and damp took over I took the 14.01 back to Basel missing the last arrival on the Saturday of Eb3/5 5810, now of the Verein Dampfbahn Bern, another overhauled engine recently back in service after 36 years. It is worth remembering that Interlaken Ost still had its own daily job to do, and was full of passengers who had no idea that all this was going on. The task of organizing the arrival and disposal of some ten visiting engines with their packed trains; the extra steam trains on the BOB and Meiringen lines (where No 208 was in action), along with the normal service, was hard to contemplate. The standard gauge visitors came along the single track from Spiez, the ZB line to Meiringen is also single track and the normal service on all routes serving Interlaken Ost is itself intense.

On Sunday the process was reversed; more crowds, more food and drink, the band and the speeches, followed by the engines and trains leaving for their home depots. I am told that the sun came out briefly, but my big dog and I weren't there to see it, although it was obviously another great day.



Jura-Simplon G3/3 No 909, which was built for the Brünigbahn, is now on the Blonay-Chamby.

OPPOSITE: 52 221 running along the banks of the Aare between the two stations at Interlaken.



52 221, a German 'Kriegslok' 2-10-0, running for the Val de Travers steam railway, crosses the River Aare on its way through Interlaken.

241A65, French former Est 4-8-2, of a private association based near Laufenbourg comes off the river bridge into Interlaken Ost.

