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lichen stuck on the top of a shiny plastic trunk we would not suggest that you use any on your layout except at the top of a hill well outside normal viewing distance!

It goes without saying that usually the higher the price tag on a tree the better the model. Some companies specialise in architectural model trees (for example, 4D and Treemendus) and these are generally of a very good standard. Manufacturers of architectural tree models also offer a bespoke tree building service where you require a specific size, shape and kind of tree. These are ideal for single standing specimen trees and those near to the viewing edge of a layout, where the budget permits it.

Do not give up hope of owning exquisite models of trees if your budget is limited. The good news is that many of the tree models of mainstream model railway accessory companies are now of good quality. These manufacturers include Anita Décor, Bachmann Scene Scapes, Busch, ER Décor, Faller, Gaugemaster, Grande Central Gems, Heki, Hornby Skaledale, Model Landscape Company, Noch, The Model Tree Shop and Woodland Scenics.

Some firms such as Bachmann Scene Scapes, Faller, Gaugemaster, Heki, Noch and Woodland Scenics retail bumper bags of trees – these usually represent good value especially when you need a lot of fir trees. The Woodland Scenics trees of this type are known as Ready Made Tree Value Packs and are sold in 10 different colours, six different heights and three main types (deciduous, autumn and conifers). The trees in these packs can be visually improved by applying a little lighter shade good quality scenic material to brushed-on PVA glue.

The topic of model trees is vast. There are many kits available that make up good products such as the Heki larch tree illustrated here. Sea Moss is a material that is also becoming increasingly popular with layout builders.

SIDETRACKS...

a miscellany of items

● A puzzle solved?

Under a B & W photo by Graham Allen on P30 in SE 102 we asked if any one knew of the location and the class of locomotive shown. Several members have identified the loco as an Eb3/5 a super-heated 2-6-2T, numbered in the series 5801 to 5834, and built by the SBB as a standard class from 1911 to 1916. Several examples still exist. The location illustrated is in the throes of re-signalling; on the right is an old disc signal, while the early pattern colour light signal next to it has an 'X' showing it is out of use. A member has suggested that it could be in the Genève area, but other readers think it could be in Oerlikon in 1955, when the area was re-signalled, or in Olten.

● MOB Vans

On P29 of SE 102 J.W.Mills wonders why an MOB van was at Les Pléiades on the CEV. Michael Farr has noted that since freight traffic almost entirely disappeared on the MOB they had a lot of spare covered goods vans which are now used as stationary storage vans. The former 'Pepsi' advert van seen in the photo (Gk 562, with new doors so you cannot see the Pepsi logo) and the BVA/AWZ van (Gk 509) have been doing this duty at Les Pleiades for at least the last twelve years.

● Ticino connections

Jim Patterson has written to clarify a paragraph in his article in SE 102. The through bus service from Locarno along the northern shore of Lago Maggiore to Intra in Italy, is in fact just a connection in the Swiss village of Brissago 2.5km from the border. FART run a half-hourly service (Linea 316) to Brissago where some Italian services run by VCO cross the border to connect with them. The Swiss Kursbuch does not show these connections so you have to obtain the necessary information locally.

● Ae6/6 workings

It appears that these 60-year old locos may be staging a comeback, as rather than the 10 scheduled workings noted in

SE 102 early this summer a figure of some 25 diagrams seems to be the case. Head to the lines at the foot of the Jura to see these iconic locos in action.

● UIC numbering – again

Theo Stolz has correctly suggested that we should clarify the Country Code situation. All Swiss operators now have to use Code 85. The 'Keeper Code' for the CJ is now CH-CJ and, for example, Turbo is CH-Turbo.

● Fribourg improvements

Fribourg, the capital of the Canton of the same name is not a large city (35,000 people) but even here major investment in improved railway services is to take place. The Cantonal authorities, the SBB/CFF (it is a bilingual area) and Transports Publics Fribourgeois (TPF) have agreed to a two-phase project with the first part coming into operation in December 2011. This will cost over CHF7m and involve the introduction of a direct hourly Bulle-Romont-Fribourg-Bern service. There are currently 4-trains/hour on the Fribourg-Bern sector. By 2014 the second part of the strategy will see the introduction of 30-minute headways on this new service, as well as on existing services from Fribourg to Yverdon via Payerne and Fribourg to Neuchâtel via Murten, all at a cost of up to CHF50m. Additionally, another CHF100m will be coming from the SBB/CFF and TPF in the additional rolling stock that will be needed. TPF is already out to tender for seven 200-passenger 3 or 4-car EMUs.

● Traffic down, traffic up

Following a bad 2009, when Swiss Combined Transport operator Hupac saw a 13.5% fall in its trans-alpine rail traffic, it has reported that it has seen its volumes rise to previous levels in the first third of 2010. Various measures were taken during 2009 to improve the efficiency of Hupac's operations including the lengthening of some trains from 575m to 750m. These actions allowed the company to achieve a profit of CHF2.8m. In addition to campaigning for the clearances on the

Gotthard Transit Corridor to be raised to allow semi-trailers with a 4m-profile to be carried Hupac is looking to the future through its financial and operational link-up with SBB to develop the "SBB Cargo International" initiative reported on in Edition 102.

● New trains: company goes!

TILO (Treni Regionali Ticino Lombardia), which is owned 50/50 by the SBB/FFS and Trenitalia, is to receive eleven 6-car dual-voltage Flirt EMUs that are currently in production at Stadler's Bussnang plant. The first test runs of these units were reported in SE 102. Although the TILO name is unlikely to disappear in the near future the Italians are apparently no longer interested in being involved in this joint venture and it is understood that it is just a matter of time before it becomes a wholly owned subsidiary of the SBB/FFS. Significantly, the Trenitalia logos are not being used on the new stock.

● Allegras on the Bernina

As only the Swiss can do the RhB put on a splendid show at Tirano station in May for the Bernina 100. There was a new Allegra EMU open for public inspection, and two other units were shuttling back and forth to Poschiavo. They had also arranged for two new SBB Flirt units in TILO livery to be sent over from Chiasso. These were parked in Trenitalia's Tirano station who also had one of their new EMUs, produced in Italy by Bombardier, on display. It is reported that the Allegra units are very impressive in service as they are actually the RhB's most powerful vehicles and can be used as locos. As well as being in use on the Bernina line they are working on the Albula line in all-day service in place of a Ge4/4 III. Surprisingly they do not have automatic couplers so coupling and uncoupling is quite a process involving two railway operatives as when Allegra No 3504 was seen running round the train in Chur station whilst working a section of the Glacier Express through from St.Moritz to Disentis. The note in

the last Swiss Express which indicated that Allegra-hauled Bernina Expresses could be non-stop now appears to be incorrect.

● Coming home

The Chemins de Fer du Jura's (CJ) ABDe4/4 No 601, one of the first batch of railcars acquired for its 1953 electrification, is to come home. Its last job was as reserve unit on the Lausanne-Echallens-Bercher (LEB) but the delivery by Stadler of six new units to that line has made it redundant. It will become a historic unit for use on specials, of which the CJ has a great many. Another CJ original No 604 went to the Meiringen-Innertkirchen-Bahn (MIB) in 2005 and is often in use there. No 603 is still in traffic on the CJ.

● St Bernard centenary

The Martigny to Orsières line (that is marketed as the St Bernard Express) celebrates the 100th anniversary of its opening this year and a series of free postcards can be obtained from its ticket offices. These are also being delivered to all homes throughout the district served by the railway. The concession for the line was originally granted to the British Aluminium Company in 1906. It was not until 1953 that its second line from Sembrancher to Le Châble (for Verbier) was completed. From August 11th there will be an exhibition in the line's Orsières workshops.

● MGB Investment

With over 213,000 vehicles being carried on the rail shuttle through the Furka Base Tunnel between Oberwald and Realp in 2009 (up some 10% on 2006) the Matterhorn Gotthard Bahn (MGB) is to improve its facilities at the two terminals. Shuttle frequencies have been raised to meet the demand, with a half-hourly service now operating from Friday am to Monday pm. Oberwald station is to be modernised with disabled access to the facilities and an annex provided for a cycle hire operation. At Realp a new fully accessible multi-functional building is to be provided complete with a buffet and shop.

● Engleberg Tunnel progress

On the Luzern Stans Engleberg section of the Zentralbahn, the final section of the rack line to Engleberg traverses a steep and unstable section that has been a persistent source of trouble. The new avoiding tunnel now has track laid throughout, and is confidently expected to be officially opened on 11th December 2010, with public services running through it on the 12th December 2010. This will enable a 20% reduction in the journey time from Luzern to Engleberg bringing it down to 48 minutes and allowing the hourly service to be operated with just two train sets. The tracks through the tunnel rise from a height of 600m to 991m over 4.06km, utilising the rack to overcome a 10.5% (1:9.5) gradient. The CHF100m project commenced in 2006.

● Explosive 460

A member reports that when in Lausanne station earlier this year the front pantograph of Class 460 - 065 suddenly exploded with a terrific flash of light and a massive bang. After a few seconds, and the dust settling, brilliant white flames were seen shooting out the top of the loco accompanied by a lot of crackling and popping sounds and a small amount of brown smoke. This all drew a number of concerned SBB workers and, being 2010, onlookers with their mobile phone cameras. After an hour, when things had settled down, the coaching stock was removed; a diesel engine collected the ill-fated unit and took it away; whilst an engineer appeared, inspected the wires and roof for any damage, and services resumed as normal. The Swiss do not make a crisis out of a little drama!

● RhB modify vans

The RhB have equipped luggage van DS 4226 with a pantograph and a transformer to enable power for heating or air conditioning to be available for one half of a longer Albula train. With more and more air-conditioned coaches arriving (there will soon be an order for

new Albula coach-sets), it was becoming difficult to provide enough power for a full length train. This was due to the low 300 V of the heating line (against 1000 V or 1500 V which are European standard) that resulted in quite high currents. Expect to see this new van in operation any time now, along with DS 4219-25 the others in the class which are also under conversion.

● MGB fatal crash

On Friday 23rd July the rear three cars of an eastbound six-car *Glacier Express* derailed between Lax and Fiesch on the MGB. Sadly one person died, six were seriously injured and 36 slightly injured. The incident is subject to the usual full investigation and its preliminary findings indicate that it was probably caused by driver error. The train had been on a 35kph restriction and on leaving it appears that the driver immediately increased the train speed to 65kph with the result that the last car left the line and overturned onto an embankment following a form of "whiplash" movement. It then pulled the next two cars off, but they stayed on the line. Many of the injured appeared to have been standing in the last car and

some may have been thrown out of the large windows and observation panels as it toppled-over. Normal services resumed the following day.

● End of an era

We understand that following the death of Herr Andre Luyten on the 31st December 2009 at the age 79 the well known and old established model shop in Interlaken's main street is no longer trading.

● Why are PostAutos yellow?

This was a question in SE 101. Apparently this goes back to the postal monopoly that the Princes of Thurn and Taxis (from Regensburg) had in Bavaria and some other German states several centuries ago. Their mail coaches were painted in the royal livery of yellow and this subsequently became the standard colour for many postal administrations in Mainland Europe.

Information supplied by: Michael Farr; Theo Stolz; Bryan Stone; Chris Payne; Gordon Wiseman; Jan Bronsema; RhB; Tony Colbeck; John Davis; Bernard Haste; Anthony Warriner; Derek Meakin; Ron Smith; Jakob Jäger; and Swiss Media Sources.

BOOK REVIEWS

Erlebnis Furka-Bergstrecke

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200 photographs in colour and b+w. Format: 8x
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Both authors are colleagues. For many years, Beat Moser has done a tremendous job publicising this wonderful, volunteer-run railway. The incredible success story of the Furka Summit Steam Railway (Dampfbahn-Furka Bergstrecke/DFB) started after the Swiss Government decided the railway

from Chur to Brig should run all year and built a base tunnel between Oberwald and Realp at huge cost. Until then this summit section was closed by the Furka Oberalp Railway for almost three quarters of the year, due to

