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SWISS STANDARDS

Having assisted with the earlier articles Neil Wheelwright offers a postscript



BVB 481 + Swiss Standard trailers 1489 + 1433 arr Bahnhof St Johann on a recently opened section of route.

ALL PHOTOS: Neil Wheelwright in June 2010

In David Hitchen's articles we have seen that Swiss Standard trams had long been withdrawn in Zurich, Geneva and Neuchatel, so during a visit to Switzerland in June 2010 I decided to look at the situation in Bern and Basel.

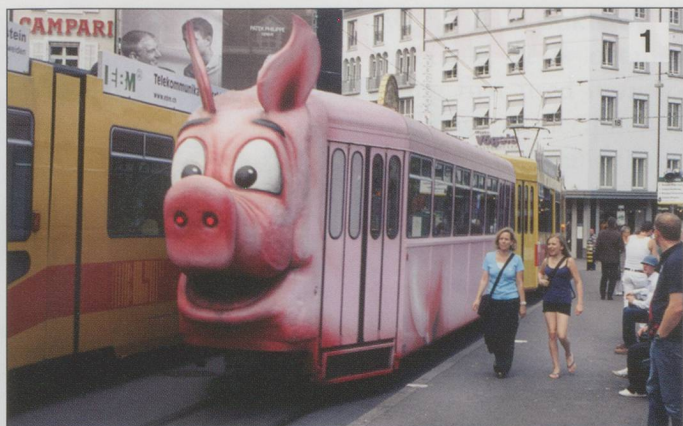
The visit to Bern confirmed reports that all high-floor cars were withdrawn with the timetable change in December 2009. Not only did this involve the remaining Swiss Standard trailers, but also the double articulated cars (latterly) numbered 711-726, which most recently had been paired with the trailers. Once the new and upgraded Combino trams had proved their reliability, the surplus trams were sold abroad (except 719 retained as a departmental and museum car).



In contrast to the other systems, Swiss Standard are 'alive and well' on the BVB and BLT and are still serving Basel, albeit in reduced numbers. On the BVB cars in series 457-476 of 1967 can be found on Routes 15, 16 (the Bruderholz routes) and on Route 3. These routes run with a mixture of formations, but the visitor should find many to photograph and ride on the 15 & 16. Typically, they are paired with Swiss Standard trailers with a low floor section inserted. Route 3 is interesting in that the Swiss Standards are the 3rd vehicle in a motor (series 477-502) + trailer + motor combination. Here again, the trailer is usually one with a low-floor section. Swiss Standard trailers could also be seen working on other routes, for example Route 2 with the later, low-floor extended, articulated trams, and Route 1 with a pair of trailers hauled by one of the newer bogie cars. On the BLT peak hour only Route 17 sees sets with an (usually yellow painted) ex BVB Swiss Standard trailer (including one 'decorated' as a piggy bank). BLT has ordered further 'Tango' low-floor cars so it can be assumed that this kind of working will only be around for a short time.

Whilst in Zürich I was able to confirm that the double-articulated 'Mirage' trams (1601-1726) are also almost gone with just a couple of rosters on Route 2. By

BLT Swiss Standard 1303 at Heuwaage.



September these had ended although a single roster remained on Route 8 until October. The oldest cars in the fleet are now the first batch of 'Tram 2000' delivered in 1977. However, the observant will note the occasional departmental tram converted from Swiss Standards, and usually in snowplough configuration. 



1. BLT Swiss Standard 'Piggy Bank' trailer Barfusserplatz on peak hour route 17.

2. BVB 461 interior.


3. BVB 458 + 1506 at Barfusserplatz.

4. BVB 458, 1484 trailer at Barfusserplatz – note the low floor entrance section on trailer.

100 YEAR VETERAN RETURNS George Hoekstra

On the 31st March 2011, an important event will be celebrated in Kandersteg: the 100th anniversary of the final piercing of the Lötschberg tunnel. The BLS Foundation for the Preservation of Public Transport Culture and the Local History Association of Kandersteg will also present something quite extraordinary for this occasion: the return of the 100-year-old loco "Simplon No. 1", used in the construction of the north ramp of the Lötschberg line.

The loco was built in 1911 to a gauge of 750 mm by the firm of Arnold Jung at Jungenthal, near Kirchen-on-the-Sieg, Germany. It has had quite a chequered career. Initially it was bought by the firm of Fritz Marti in Bern and resold to contractors Vanni and Basso for use on the north ramp (Frutigen – Kandersteg) of the Lötschberg where it did not stay long. From 1912 – 15 it was used in Biel for the reconstruction of the station and in 1916 it returned to Marti in Bern. The next 24 years was spent around Brig; first at the depot for the construction of the second Simplon tunnel; then working for the SBB building department; finally working for Mineral AG. In 1942 it was sold to the construction company Heinrich Hatt Haller in Zürich who used it during WWII in the lignite quarry near Zell (LU). After the war it was no longer in use and in 1966 Hatt Haller

presented it to the Technorama in Winterthur where it was exhibited to the public for a while, and stored out of sight for most of the time. Finally it was offered to the BLS, and then bought by Kandersteg where at the moment it is being cosmetically restored by volunteers. In March 2011, it will most probably find its final spot, weather protected, on Platform No.1 of Kandersteg station. 

Locomotive "Simplon No. 1" being cosmetically restored by volunteers in an army barracks at Kandersteg. As the loco was stored outside for some time while at Technorama, all pipe work will have to be taken off to make sure there is no internal rust.

