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Oberwald I boarded just after 15.00 which was just as well as there was quite a squash inside our coach. Despite the difficulty in booking a ticket many weeks in advance it seemed that they were also being sold on the day and some complimentary tickets were being given out as well! However the ride down was fabulous; first along the road; then into the spiral tunnel; then along the other side of the valley to a footpath which many people were using as a viewing area. All too soon it seemed we were down in Oberwald. Once there we saw MGB Gem4/4 leave Oberwald for Gletsch in order to haul the evening trains. I wonder when it will be used on these rails again.




TOP: DFB Nos.6 and 7 cross at Gletsch 13/08/ 2010 as part of the celebrations to mark the opening of the complete Furka Pass line from Oberwald to Realp.

ABOVE: DFB No.1 is filled with water for its return to Realp. Gletsch, 13/08/ 2010

Friday morning in Gletsch saw the PostAuto services from Andermatt arriving with standing room only on many trips, whilst the station was very busy with relatively frequent trains arriving from and setting off for Oberwald, also carrying passengers. In the station sidings the DFB volunteers had a number of interesting specialist vehicles on view, and on the grass to the side of the station building there were many stalls – including a Cornish pasty vendor which amused me. On the pass roads to the Grimsel and the Furka an old Saurer PostAuto ran excursions for CHF10 which added to the atmosphere. Just before noon there was the arrival of the first of two trains from Realp; this was to go forward to Oberwald headed by No.4 which had been given by the MGB to the DFB the day before. The sight of the smoke from the locomotive winding its way down the valley to the station was a great experience. Having booked a seat on the 15:30 train down from Gletsch to

The Saturday and Sunday programmes were essentially the same, but with one great difference – the weather. Whereas Thursday and Friday had been cloudy, with the odd shower on Thursday, both Saturday and Sunday were complete washouts. It was a great pity since so much work had gone into making the event attractive for the visitors. I do not know how the visitor numbers were affected but I cannot envisage many but the most committed being there.

For those who have never visited this railway they are missing a great treasure. While not a cheap day out, travelling the whole route is an unforgettable experience as it makes its way through the rugged uninhabited countryside. For those who want a shorter experience, I understand that a shuttle service will be available in years to come between Oberwald and Gletsch. 

FIFTY YEARS AND GROWING

Keith Scotland



11140 propels a Voralpen Express into Verkehrshaus station. ALL PHOTOS: Keith Scotland

The Verkehrshaus - the Swiss Museum of Transport - was opened in 1959 since when it has continued to grow and renew itself, expecting to finally break through the 1m visitor barrier in 2010.

A CHF50m plan for a “new” Verkehrshaus, enhancing, adapting and improving it, was launched in March 2007 and completed in July 2009. In addition to a badly needed replacement entrance, shop and restaurant, it now includes a large conference facility which is proving popular and profitable. There are now even more “hands-on” or interactive areas to keep children (and adults!) fully occupied for a whole day. Of particular railway interest in January 2010 three simulators were installed in the vast railway hall, one each from the SBB, the BLS, and the RhB. You actually sit in a driver’s seat, facing a huge screen, and drive over various routes. These are a very popular attraction as are the often changing exhibits of railway locomotives, coaches and trams. In March 2010, to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the first flight in Switzerland, the completely re-furbished aviation and space travel hall was opened. Every week the museum also hosts special events or exhibits; 80 years of Hurlimann tractors; a Lego exhibition; helicopter landings, and last year in a joint venture with SBB Historic, the Rigibahnen and the SGV, special “Royal Anniversary Excursions” were run to the Rigi Kulm.

The word “Museum” suggests something stuffy and static. The Verkehrshaus is anything but that! By constantly featuring special events of such huge variety, changing displays and re-furbishing and re-building, it is ensuring that you can go many times and always see something new, different and exciting. The film theatre; Swissarena; Planetarium; Media factory, and the two-floor Road Transport Hall (clad in road signs!) are especially worth seeing. Within this hall the museum has found an innovative way of displaying its large collection of cars – they are stacked up on shelves! By pressing buttons visitors “vote” for a particular vehicle, and the winning vehicle is robotically brought down onto a turntable in order to be seen, complete with its own commentary, then slotted back into its allotted shelf space. In its 20,000 sq.m. of space the museum has over 3,000 objects on display and many more in reserve.

The sources of the CHF50m re-development funding were varied. Stadt Luzern, CHF5m; Kanton Luzern, CHF5m; Federal Government, CHF10m; a CHF10m loan; CHF14m in donations from the private sector to cover various exhibitions and displays; whilst the final CHF6m came from the ZFV, an interesting organisation. ZFV stands for the Zürcher Frauen Verein, or Zürich Women’s Association. It was founded in 1894 and today it is a remarkable catering and hospitality organisation. Its turnover for 2009 was CHF169 m with 1925 full and part-time employees. It runs 12 hotels;



TOP: Re 460 080-5 from Basel arrives at Zurich HBf advertising the museum.

MIDDLE: RVT ABm 2/5 No.9.

ABOVE: An early 4-wheel tram.

13 restaurants; 75 catering operations (such as universities, museums, etc); 13 bakers/confectioners; and two event catering companies. In July 2006 the ZFV (www.zfv.ch – German only) started running the catering at the Verkehrshaus, and they have now taken it over on a franchise basis.

Access to the Verkehrshaus is easy. From Luzern Bahnhof take train S3, or the hourly Voralpen Express, on an 8-minute trip to the museum’s own station; trolley bus routes 6 and 8, or bus route 24 take 10-minutes; SGV ships from the Bahnhofquai also take 10 minutes to the museum’s landing stage; or take a peaceful 25 minute walk along the lakeside promenade. It is open 365 days a year from 10.00 to 18.00 in summer, 17.00 in winter. See www.verkehrshaus.ch for more information. 