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ALLEGRA ADVANCE



ABOVE: The Allegras are here. The 08.08 Chur to Arosa, 11/03/2011.

RIGHT: If it has to be a panorama car, make it nice and quiet! 07.58 Chur – St Moritz, 11/03/2011. ALL PHOTOS: Mark Evans

Mark Evans visits the RhB...

Further to my article in SE 105, as it had been three years since my last trip on the RhB I felt it was time to go again. This time I wanted to see the Bernina from the front of an Allegra, with its view over the driver's shoulder from the 1st class section at the outer ends of each unit. As I noted in the previous article I just set-out with a basic plan and a Pass.

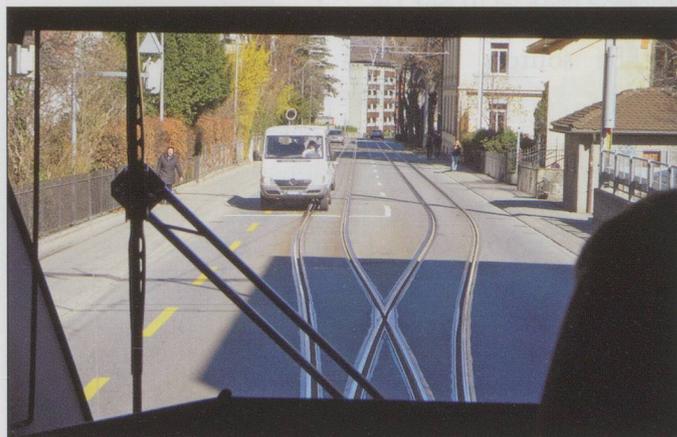
First surprise – sitting in Chur station forecourt for the 08.08 to Arosa this Friday in March was an Allegra. I didn't think that they would have got onto the route by then but with this train in the plan for the following day I was pleasantly surprised – more front end views. The 07.58 to St Moritz had a couple of panorama cars, one 1st, one 2nd class. OK, I admit it, I went in one. Having a 1st class car to myself to Filisur for the CHF5 supplement seemed a good deal, even if the windows didn't open. Reaching St Moritz, and after the obligatory walk on the lake (it was frozen, I'm not that clever), I returned to the station for the 10.45 Bernina departure and found... two ABe 4/4 II Class 50 railcars! Given that it was a perfect day and this meant window hanging was now possible, I embraced this unexpected development with enthusiasm. No need to repeat the description here but the Bernina again lived up to expectation; all other trains were Allegras.

Saturday the trip up to Arosa sitting behind the driver showed just how sinuous the route is, and in particular how many of the tunnels are far from straight. One loco-hauled train was seen on its way downhill, but otherwise all trains during the two nights I spent there



were Allegras. From the passenger's viewpoint they are excellent and I rapidly grew to appreciate them. Just as well really, because on Monday it was another down to Chur and, after the usual loco-hauled train from Chur to Filisur (Ge 4/4 III No. 651 Fideris - for the third time this trip) I got out for the Davos connection to find another Allegra waiting. Again, the view from the front was spectacular allowing real appreciation of the engineering that had also gone into this route.

The view from the front of a 3,000 hp train – honest! 09.48 Arosa – Chur, 14/03/2011.



I expected the unit to make a quick turn round at Davos Platz and return to Filisur, but a second was waiting for the return trip. The train from Landquart ran in behind a Ge 4/4 III (No.641 Maienfeld) and, satisfied that my next train was there, I retired for a coffee and cake in the station buffet. Arriving on the platform for the 13.02 to Lanquart I found... the Allegra again and another route seen from the front end! I have to admit that, as a time-served railwayman, I do enjoy it and it is certainly much more interesting than Liverpool Street to Cambridge – with a few more mountains to enjoy too!

As a footnote, this time I went for a '3-days-from-7' Graubunden Pass purchased in the UK before leaving at £78 2nd Class and £99 1st Class. With the aim of spending two days skiing in Arosa and two days intensive travelling this provided the best value – whilst the view from the Allegras clinched it for me. *Enjoy!* 

...whilst Jim Paterson remotely monitors the Arosa line

As a regular summer visitor to Arosa, I have often wondered what it is like at other times of the year so during the autumn and winter of 2010/11 I have been monitoring the Alpine weather, and also the comings and goings at Arosa Bahnhof, courtesy of the internet. The local cable car operator Arosa Bergbahnen has a number of webcams on its property which can be viewed on website www.arosabergbahnen.ch. The first listed is on their HQ building and shows the view over Obersee to the mountains beyond, with the RhB station in the foreground. Monitoring of this webcam has allowed me to observe the transition of the train service from Ge4/4II haulage to the ABe8/12 Allegras. The best time of day to log on to the webcam is morning or early afternoon.

According to the RhB website the autumn workings should have been exclusively Ge4/4II powered, operating in Pendelzug mode. However, from late October an Allegra unit replaced one of the older sets and from then on worked the three diagrams in rotation in the same manner as the other sets. The other development through November was that the blue liveried coaches were gradually re-assembled into a full train and operated as such for the final few days of the old timetable. The new timetable from 12th December included one regular diagram for an Allegra, together with three diagrams for Ge4/4II, the trains by now being without their driving trailers and running round being necessary at both termini. The transition was completed on 7th March 2011, and the service is now almost covered by three Allegra diagrams. Each set spends

3-days in its cycle on the Arosa line, spending the first and third nights at Arosa, finally leaving Arosa at 08.48 on the fourth morning, and moving on to other duties. I don't think it has been recorded in Swiss Express that Allegra is the Romansch word for "Welcome". I hope that I will feel welcome in August when I take my first trip up the Schanfigg valley to Arosa with a new viewpoint over the driver's shoulder.

Readers of Swiss Express may also be interested in the website www.swisswebcams.ch which allows access to webcams all over Switzerland. 

TOP: One time when an Allegra doesn't work for me! 10.58 Chur – St Moritz on the Landwasser viaduct, 14/03/2011.

MIDDLE: Still possible to window-hang, if you're lucky! Bernina Express, 10.45 St Moritz – Tirano, 11/03/2011.

BOTTOM: Climbing over the Bernina.

