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Autor: [s.n.]

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SPIEZ AGAIN

Pendolini problems...and a hectic twenty-five minutes

s'Murmeli



Spiez FULL !!

PHOTOS: s'Murmeli

March 24th 2011. Spiez station, high above Lake Thun. At the south end the Interlaken line branches off the main line to Brig and Italy. At the north end the Zweisimmen line branches off the main line to Thun and Bern. There are five platforms, numbered as always here from Platform 1 nearest the station building. There are through goods lines beyond Platform 5, and just up the Brig line is the BLS main loco workshop and engine shed. Normally there is a lot going on – all of interest to a professional railwayman. Conflicting moves are legion and involve spectacular switches through double-slip crossings which, though now having apparently disappeared in Britain, we call 'Engländer' and are still common on Swiss railways.

I was on the 13.29 ex. Interlaken, an old blue-and-white local, which rolled into Platform 2 as two Crossrail 185s were just off up the hill to Brig with an 'intermodal'. Alighting, the empty stock left at once for the yard. My connection to Bern was the EuroCity Milano-Brig-Basel due in Spiez at 13.50 and off at 13.54. At Platform 3 was a by now 'familiar stranger': a Class 460 with 5 EW IV coaches on the 13.52 extra to Thun and Bern. That meant trouble and the announcer revealed that the EuroCity Pendolino from Milano was 25 minutes late due to a defect '*mit dem Fahrzeug*' (with the train-set) and

passengers for Bern should take the 13.52 substitute. Being in no hurry, I thought I would wait and, as my English friends say, 'observe the working'. It was more than instructive.

Spiez was in ordered chaos. Platform 5 had the two 'Lötschberger' locals to Kandersteg and Zweisimmen. Another southbound Crossrail intermodal was in Platform 1, about to follow the Crossrail freight now heading up the hill. Platform 3 had the Bern extra. The yard tracks facing north were full with waiting trains. One had BLS 486 510 on the head of a load of van bodies from Italy, the other was an SBB intermodal with No. 620 045 and a Re4/4 II. Platform 4 had a long freight comprising empty kaolin wagons going back to Germany with two DB Cargo Class 185s on the front. All were booked to follow the delayed Pendolino. Then another northbound freight rolled in, a Hangärtner intermodal from Brig hauled by two BLS 'Brownies' Nos. 175 and 177. With nowhere else free this was unusually put across the layout at the south end, into the just-vacated Platform 1.

Action at the north end involved first getting the 13.52 substitute Pendolino away, followed by the DB Cargo double-header, then the BLS 486 with its Italian van bodies. Then, from the north, came the next southbound Euro-City Pendolino, No. 610 001 (on time) into the now



clear Platform 3. To leave for Brig it had to cross in front of BLS Nos.175/177 on the Häggartner train which was then dispatched northwards in some haste, while the 'Lötschberger' slipped out to the junction for Zweisimmen.

So, ten train movements - not counting light engines and an engineer's train - in 25 minutes, with the northbound SBB intermodal left awaiting a slot. Highly entertaining to watch - but a nightmare for those in the Control office. By this time my delayed northbound EC Pendolino had disappeared from the information screens and with the on-time arrival of the 14.22 InterCity Interlaken to Basel, with a Class 460 in charge, I headed to Bern. Checking later it seems that the missing Pendolino finally appeared some 40 minutes down. 



ABOVE: SBB 610 001 "Pendolino" for Milano.

BOTTOM LEFT: BLS 486-510 and SBB 620 065 wait with freights at Spiez.

BOTTOM RIGHT: BLS "Brownies" Re 4/4s Nos.175 & 177 bring a Häggartner intermodal through Spiez.

PRO PATRIA STAMPS TAKE TO THE WATER



Stamp illustrations,
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Michael Farr

Thanks to Mario Gavazzi, a Swiss friend of the SRS, we were alerted that this year's Pro Patria stamps are likely to appeal to many of our members. All four stamps for 2011 feature paddle steamers. The two cheaper ones at CHF0.85 show the *Piemonte* (Lago Maggiore) and the *Gallia* (Vierwaldstättersee) while the CHF1 values carry pictures of the *Blümisalp* (Thuner See) and *La Suisse* (Le Léman). Escher-Wyss of Zürich built the *Piemonte* in 1904, the *Blümisalp* in 1906 and the *Gallia* in 1913, while *La Suisse* was delivered by Sulzer Bros of Winterthur in 1910. The Pro Patria donation supplement is 40c on the 85c stamp and 50c on the CHF1 value. A special souvenir book containing ten stamps is available for CHF 14.50.

An article by Derrick Slate in the March issue of the Helvetia Philatelic Society Newsletter tells us that the Swiss Commemorative Fund was set up in December 1909 to support cultural and social projects. At first funds were raised by selling special postcards, a new design every year, and these have become very collectable. When other charities began selling cards the income fell and in 1923 they introduced commemorative badges. The surcharging of an annual issue of stamps began in 1938 and they have been known as Pro Patria stamps since 1952. This year's special issue has been on sale since 5th May but in common with all Swiss commemoratives they should remain available for a year (unless stocks are exhausted). So why not specify Pro Patria issues when buying stamps for your postcards? In this way the 40 or 50rp you donate will benefit the Pro Patria fund which has made many substantial contributions to transport preservation projects. 

HELVETIA PHILATELIC SOCIETY

Adrian Keppel

The regular stamp-related features in Swiss Express (like the one above) indicate that there is a strong link between Swiss transport enthusiasts and Swiss stamp collectors. This is not surprising seeing that, for example, the Swiss railways feature often in Swiss philately. Not just because there are many stamps to be found with a railway theme, but even more so because of the impact the Swiss railways have had (and still have) on the Swiss Post. Railway philately is a very interesting part of Swiss postal history and there is a wealth of material to collect, for example, Travelling Post Offices, as well as stamps featuring the SBB and all the private railways in Switzerland. So have you ever considered joining the Helvetia Philatelic Society? Membership benefits include a monthly Newsletter, which regularly features railway-themed news and articles; a circulated stamp sales packet from which you can get your railway stamps; an extensive library with much railway information to be found; and regular Society meetings providing opportunities for the interchange of information. Why not look at the society's website <http://www.swiss-philately.co.uk/> or contact the General Secretary Peter Vonwiller direct, at secretary@swiss-philately.co.uk? 