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Having read in their free newspaper about the fire in the Simplon Tunnel, passengers join the replacement bus outside Brig Station for a scenic, but slower, trip over the pass. PHOTOS: Tony Bagwell

The 1906 bore of the Simplon Tunnel reopened on the afternoon of Saturday 11th June as a single-line operation. With the help of Trenitalia an hourly each way shuttle passenger train operation was introduced between Brig and Domodossola worked by a Re4/4 II with a scratch set of lightweight coaches. Also, some of the freight trains that had been stabled on the approaches to the tunnel were able to be moved, with some through trains being operated via the Gotthard. This was not possible, for example, for the many daily RAlpin trains from Freiburg (D) to Novara (I) as the Gotthard loading gauge cannot accommodate 4m high

By the end of the holiday weekend operations had been rapidly been normalized with the tunnels being used as double track from Brig to the central crossing point, and from there to Iselle as a single line allowing around seven paths per hour each way - enough to handle normal traffic. The rebuilding of the damaged section was confirmed as needing several months of work, however, programmed extensive renovation was also falling due, and it was hoped that this and the repairs would be co-ordinated. Determining responsibility and insurance claims will inevitably be complex. 

