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INTERNATIONAL

On the morning of 9th June, a BLS Cargo train caught fire in the northbound bore of the Simplon tunnel on Italian territory. A full report on this can be found on P16.

The Paris – Bern TGV failed at Pontarlier on the evening of 24th March, being unable to set up on 15kV. Passengers were taken forward by a RBDe 562 set. On the following morning, the connecting service was provided by a BLS EWIII pendelzug rake powered by 420 504, bringing back memories of when the BLS used to work the Interlaken – Paris sleepers as far as this station.

Testing of the ETR 610 sets in multiple was carried out in April in the Lausanne – Yverdon – Biel line. However, Trenitalia have decided to withdraw their ETR 610 sets from international service, leaving the residual SBB fleet to maintain the Simplon line services in the absence of viable alternatives. The Basel – Gotthard – Milano service will be switched from ETR 610 to ETR 470 operation, and the Venezia extension withdrawn to save a unit.

SBB have announced that they will be withdrawing their ETR 470 units at the December 2014 timetable change, due to their continuing unreliability. There are more details in the article on P10.

SWITZERLAND

SBB

As reported more fully on P25 of this edition's Swiss News, on 22nd April a diversion of the Seetalbahn was opened at Böniswil serving a new station and removing numerous level crossings.

Refurbishment of the Orbe Viaduct throughout the summer means that single track operation applies between Vallorbe and Le Day.

The Stadler-built RegioDosto units, type RABe511, are scheduled to enter passenger service in the autumn on Zürich route S14.

The new rake for the Simplon Pass car-carrying service arrived from Waggonbau Niesky at the end of March, was tested in the Valais (using Army vehicles) during April and went into service in May, replacing the existing rake of modified wagons.

A fire on 28th March in a coach undergoing refurbishment has completely destroyed an erecting shop in Olten Works and the three coaches under overhaul at the time, one EC Apm and two EC Bpm coaches.

The Cadenazzo - Luino section has been closed for infrastructure work at Gambarogno on weekdays from 7th February to 4th September. With the parallel road closed for repairs in Italy except on Wednesdays (Luino market day), passengers have been advised to use the NLM boat from Locarno, although Swiss tickets are not valid thereupon, as there is limited capacity on the PostAuto portion of the alternative route via Lugano and Ponte Tresa.

BLS

NINA unit 525 031, burnt out at Müntschemier on 24th December 2010, has been broken up.

TPF

The Bulle – Romont section closed on 30th May for upgrading to form part of the Fribourg S-Bahn system. Reopening is planned for the December timetable change.

Zentralbahn

The use of LSE At 12 as a mess coach on Track 16 at Luzern was short lived, as it was taken away at the end of March and put back into service in one of the 4 coach LSE Pendelzug sets for use on Luzern – Wolfenschiessen peak services, replacing an ABt coach. The replacement is the former 'Rottenküchenwagen' X 9745, with D 609 being also stabled there as a stores wagon.

LSE ABt 25 and 26 have been reconfigured to work with ABe130 stock, and renumbered ABt 925 (in use from Luzern) and Bt 926 (in use from Meiringen). The reserve Penzelzug set at Meiringen is formed by ABt 923, two Brünig B coaches and De110 121 or 122.

SZU

The first low floor double deck coach for the SZU underwent brake trials at the end of March in the Valais, motive power being provided by SOB Re446 015. From early May, one of the coaches was in use in a SBB DPZ set on the S3 (Aarau – Wetzikon) route, with a second joining it in May; one of the coaches is now in service on the SZU Sihltal line.

AB

Gais station has been remodelled, with access to the Altstätten line now only available via Track 1; while the Rotbach bridge between Gais station and Gais depot was being renewed during April, stock to maintain the services to St Gallen and Altstätten were outstabled in Gais station itself.

De4/4 50 (ex AB) of 1966 has been scrapped, and the Gais works coach X1001 broken up and the underframe used for a bike wagon.

CJ / MIB

MIB Gem4/4 12, converted from CJ De4/4 402 at Tramelan, was despatched from Tavannes to Interlaken on 31st May on a standard gauge transporter wagon. It reached the MIB at Inntertkirchen on the 3rd June.

MGB

Two panoramic coaches have been ordered from Stadler as replacements for Ap 4022 and Api 4032, written off after the derailment near Fiesch in August 2010. Fitting out will be done by the RhB at Landquart.

MOB

Bs 235 entered service in April, while prototype gauge-change coach BDs 220 went to the Verkehrshaus on 24th May for a presentation on 26th May, returning that night. The outward route was Zweisimmen – Bern VL – Olten – Luzern, the return via Langnau and Steffisburg to Zweisimmen.

During May, services were suspended between Château d'Oex and Zweisimmen for various bridge

repairs, although a shuttle service was maintained between Saanen and Gstaad by Be2/6 7004. See P24.

RhB

Although supposedly withdrawn from October 2010, ABe 4/4 No. 46 was observed powering a tree clearing train out of Poschiavo on 14th February. On the same day, Allegra 3503 was declared a failure on the northbound Bernina Express at Poschiavo, having stopped twice on the way up from Tirano being replaced by ABe4/4 Nos. 53 and 56 from Poschiavo Depot. Ge4/4III 644 had worked the train from Chur to Pontresina. It is alleged that the Allegras continue to be having software problems; perhaps the newly-commissioned dedicated shed at Landquart will help in resolving these.

The Thusis – Samedan car carrying service was withdrawn from 31st March; loadings have been steadily reducing since the introduction car carrying service through the Vereina Tunnel

Some of the RhB ballast wagon fleet is currently working in France on track renewal works on the Chemin de Fer de Provence out of Nice.

Canton Graubunden has approved the Retica 30 project, which would see frequencies on the Landquart – Davos and Chur – Ilanz sections increased to half-hourly from 2014; at the same time, a hourly direct service would be introduced on the Landquart – Vereina – Zernez – St Moritz route, complementing the traditional service via the Albula route.

The winter season extra trains to Arosa deployed the traditional collection of antique stock; on February 26th, Ge4/4I 607 and 603 were photographed on a four coach set, with three 'Fliegender Rätier' coaches of 1938/9 and a steam set coach, originally built for the Chur-Arosa Bahn in 1928, with an average age of some 70 years!

The remaining centre entrance coaches of 1947-56 in normal service were withdrawn this spring, the last two, B 1516 (1956) and 2326 (1948) being retired on 12th May. They had been regularly used over the winter season. Also broken up in May were B 2261-63, the first retirements from a series of 13 coaches of 1986/7 whose 'bus' bodies concealed bogies and underframes dating from the late 1940s.

Ge4/4III 644 has emerged from overhaul in plain red livery, the first non-advert loco of its type for over 10 years.

SPB

A collision occurred on the afternoon of 30th May just above Breitlauenen, when an ascending passenger train ran into a descending works train; fortunately no injuries were sustained on either train, although the coaches were derailed and the works train loco landed on its side.

TMR

The first rack SPATZ unit for the MC line, BDeh4/8 871, was delivered by Stadler in April.

WAB

A 900m long double track section above Wengen was commissioned on 20th May.

TRAMS

TPG

The last section of the Meyrin line was opened on 30th April, extending Route 18 by 2.4 Km from Meyrin to CERN.

HERITAGE

BLS

The centenary of the breakthrough of the Lötschberg summit tunnel was commemorated at both Goppenstein and Kandersteg on March 30th, guests being conveyed by Be4/4 761. On display at Kandersteg for the summer is freshly restored 'Simplon 1', a 750mm gauge 0-4-0T (Jung 1684/1911) used on construction work on both the Lötschberg and second Simplon contract.

DER

Etzwilen – Ramsen services have been extended to Rielasingen on certain weekends this summer.

BDB

Rack services for this preservation group will be restricted in 2011; the removal of the Meiringen turntable requires a crane turn at Interlaken to work services over the Brünig pass, while the removal of run round capabilities at Grindelwald will prevent operation beyond Schwendi in future.

RhB

Despite it being February, the steam special on the 13th was worked by Ge6/6 414 due to the fire risk, there having been no substantial precipitation for some 40 days.

Ge4/4I 603 is to go on loan to Bahnpark Augsburg for 10 years in Spring 2012.

SOB

The Amor Express set has been leased to the Dampf-Loki Club at Herisau, for use with their loco, BT Eb3/5 9. Be3/4 43 and the bar coach are up for sale, the DLC group have expressed an interest.

HSB

This group have bought the old SBB depot at Hochdorf, where their two locomotives – Seetalbahn E3/3 No. 3 Beinwyl and E3/3 8554 (NOB 456), the latter having been removed from its plinth at Dietikon on 25th March for restoration at Balsthal – will be based after repair work has been completed.

SEFT

The last former BM motorcoach, ABDe4/4 454, and ex LCD B2 31, were broken up at the end of March. 

Swiss Tip Some good ideas and information about Switzerland from travellers.

Visiting Engelberg? This has no station buffet or restaurant, but the Co-operative store, some seven minutes walk from the station, does a good value lunch (main course CHF14) in a 1st floor restaurant with a panoramic view and a terrace in summer.