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SCHWEIZERISCHE ALPEN BAHNEN

Our USA coordinator Jim Easley describes his Garden Railway



View of entrance to St. Niklaus Station. Goods train on track 2 waiting arrival of Glacier Express.


ALL PHOTOS: Jim Easley

Redmond is a Seattle suburb that is best known for one thing – the home of Microsoft. It is also a great place to live with the soaring peaks of the Cascade range rising to the east, the waters of Puget Sound to the west, and having a temperate (some would say wet!) climate that means we can enjoy our gardens for much of the year. Prior to a move in 2004 to Emerald Heights, a retirement homes complex, I had built a G-gauge layout in the garden of our previous home. This went by the grand name of the Bayerische Alpen Bahnen (BAB), where my Tyrolean and Bavarian equipment shared its tracks with my Swiss-outline stock which was in the majority.

Many of our friends had also moved into the complex and having seen the development of my BAB over its 17-year life there was a move to build a community garden railway in the extensive grounds of the development. I was not too sure at the time so they went ahead and constructed the Emerald Heights Garden Rail Road. The EHGR is American outline and represents the industries here in Washington State at the turn of the century and the era of steam haulage. In the fall of 2008 I decided that I would build my own layout adjacent to our house so the Schweizerische Alpen Bahnen (SAB) came into being, the name and format coming from an earlier visit with

Erwin Neuweiler of the St. Gallen LGB Club. Rolling stock and some of the Swiss structures from the former BAB, and other stock and structures acquired in recent years, will be used in its development. The track plan basically will replicate the track layouts and stations existing at Filisur and Ospizio Bernina on the RhB and St. Niklaus on the MGB-BVZ.

The road bed for track and structures will be elevated about 38" from the ground. Its course will start on the patio then circle through adjacent shrubbery before returning. Filisur will be featured on the patio with other sites being featured in a clockwise direction as Ospizio Bernina, St Niklaus, and a station which will at times be rotated to represent station areas along the FO, and the RhB Arosa, Engadin and Davos lines. The 200' of track and most of the 20 points will be powered by an electric DCC system, although some points will be manually worked from prototypical control stands to enhance the fun of personal card-order operation. At the outset trains will be controlled with individual hand units, but it is the intention to eventually run trains with computer programming. Although most of the locomotives have pantographs, the catenaries on the railway will not be electrified as the masts and gantries will be placed for aesthetic purposes only.

In time, a rack-line will leave Filisur to rise up along the shrubbery, immediately along the brick wall of the patio, un-prototypically representing the adhesion line to Davos from Filisur. Also, a cable car will arise from St. Niklaus to the tree next to the house as a representation of the lift at the St. Niklaus station. Landscaping the station areas will be accomplished with vignettes utilizing small plants rather than artificial vegetation wherever possible. This will require development of special containers and drip irrigation techniques. Structures will have internal lighting and systems like signals, station area lights, and sound systems will provide a sensation of "real life imaging". It will be a long term project. 



View of cement train on track 2 passing through St. Niklaus yard in the direction of Zermatt.



ABOVE: Train activity at Ospizio Bernia. This photo was taken at the time of the National Garden Railway Convention in August 2010.

TOP LEFT: View of complete outer loop of the railway which entails St. Niklaus and Ospizio Bernina.

BOTTOM LEFT: Track plan of St Niklaus station area. The track is supported by a metal platform, 38 inches above ground.

CAVAGILA LAYOUT IN HOm

Peter Marriott was privileged to meet Stephan Kraus the builder of Bemo's latest show layout

German modeller Stephan Kraus has been engaged by Bemo to produce several HOm layouts for use at model shows in Germany and other countries. I was fortunate to be able to discuss his latest layout at the Cologne 2010 Modellbahn Show. To my eyes this was the best layout in the show because not only did it look very realistic but the trains ran well too. This project, built to celebrate the Bernina centenary, took Stephan four months to build spending 598 hours in total. There are over 250 trees on the layout which were all handmade each requiring about 10 minutes per tree to build. The autumn colouring on the entire layout is very well done - the colour tones are natural and just look right. The layout is built on two baseboards and its trains are controlled by laptop.

Stephan is a qualified architect and his eye for detail on the layout is obvious. There are various cameos dotted about the layout including several railway photographers; groups of people chatting at the station; permanent way workers; and a small herd of deer near the top of the mountainside. Issues 9/2010 and 10/2010 of LOKI magazine contained well illustrated articles about this layout. Stephen also runs SMK Modellbau that has introduced a range of scenic products including a selection of ballast, earth materials, tree stumps, static grass for N scale, foliage, fine twigs, trees and publications. These are available by mail order from SMK Modellbau, Stephan Kraus, Schwabstrasse 20, 74189 Weinsberg, Germany. For more information about these products and other layout building projects go to: www.modellbau-smk.de. The website also contains some intriguing stage by stage pictures of this and other layout projects.

Stephan has been asked to produce another layout for the company for the shows in 2011. Whilst he would say that it is again based on the Rhätische Bahn he would not disclose the prototype that it is based upon. We will need to wait until the 2011 Leipzig show for that. 