

Zeitschrift: Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal
Herausgeber: Swiss Railways Society
Band: - (2012)
Heft: 110

Artikel: Landquart to Luzern : Bryan Stone reports on No.602's longest journey
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-854347>

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LANDQUART TO LUZERN

Bryan Stone reports on No.602's longest journey




On arrival after 65 years in service on the RhB and now to the Transport Museum. All photos: Bryan Stone

Rhätische Bahn (RhB) Ge4/4 No.602 'Bernina' was built at SLM Winterthur in 1947, to a breakthrough concept developed in Switzerland during the war years. It would become normal practice today; then it was a leap forwards. No.602 was, apart from prototypes, one of the three first series of Swiss locomotives (the others were SBB's Re4/4 400 class, and the BLS Ae4/4 251 series) to run as Bo-Bos on powered bogies with direct geared drive. The RhB series, ultimately 10 engines - powerful, fast and smooth-riding - were a dramatic contrast to the 1920s rod-drive Crocodiles that preceded them, at last permitting true express trains to be operated on the metre-gauge RhB main line.

As has been reported in Swiss Express, 65 years later these 10 engines are now being taken out of service, with No.602 being reserved for the Verkehrshaus (VHS). It will be first displayed, not in the railway hall, but on the main square of the Museum as part of this season's major exhibition 'The Sun

moves us' which contains many examples and explanations, with hands-on experience, of how the sun and its energy make possible movement in our world. Electric power for transport is an inevitable part of the story, and No.602 is now in the exhibition tent accompanied by a 108year old observation car in service until recently on the RhB Bernina line.

Getting No.602 there was the exciting bit. It was loaded in the early morning of Wednesday March 7th onto a low-loader at the RhB workshops in Landquart for its transfer by road across Switzerland. The press were invited to the VHS for 14.00 and, following a briefing, at 14.30 the convoy complete with police escort pulled-up outside. The trailer was then propelled into the central square of the VHS where a typical track length had been built-up and ballasted. It took some 45 minutes for two Welte-Furrer heavy-lift cranes to locate the 48t loco on the line, the whole operation in full view of guests, press, TV cameras and museum visitors, who had, in spring sunshine, an unforgettable experience. Whilst at the event I met up with SRS member Ruedi Steinmann, who was there representing his magazine 'Eisenbahn-Amateur', and I was interviewed by Swiss radio and TV about our Society.

No.602 has been officially loaned to the VHS for 5-years. After the solar exhibition (open from 4th April to 21st October 2012) it will be moved to the railway collection to join BLS Ae4/4 No.258 and SBB Ae6/6 No.11413 as examples of pioneering Swiss post-war electric traction. Thanks to the RhB this locomotive, still in service only a few weeks beforehand, is now a key element of this major exhibition. 

No. 602 arrives at the gate. More photos on page 10.





TOP LEFT: 'And up she rises'.
TOP RIGHT: 602 being set on the track.
ABOVE: A museum for all ages.
RIGHT: 602 on its new exhibition location.

JUNGFRAUBAHN STAMPS



Swiss Post has marked the centenary of the Jungfrau Railway with the issue on the 8th March of a new CHF1 stamp. The usual first day cover facilities and a postcard were available. A 34-page A5 (landscape) souvenir book is also available from SwissPost philatelic outlets, but it is not on sale at post offices. Its cost (CHF19)

includes a sheetlet of ten of the CHF1 stamps. More information at stamps@post.ch. The stamps will remain on sale through the philatelic outlets until the 31st March 2013, and at post offices until stocks are exhausted, so it will be worth asking if they are still available as part payment of the postage on your postcards this summer. 