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MOB100 @ LENK

Bryan Stone reports on a Swiss railway celebration



All photos: Bryan Stone

Lenk, a Commune of some 2,500 people, lies in the broad valley floor of the Simme, as it climbs towards the Wildstrubel and Rawyl. Today it is mainly a winter resort, but in summer it is a centre for long and rewarding walks of all categories, including some serious mountain crossings as over the Rawyl from the Iffigen Alp, or to Gstaad over the Trütlisberger path. A parallel article in this *Swiss Express* describes why a metre-gauge railway was built 100 years ago, and, more importantly, how it survived.


So there was something to celebrate, and the events on Saturday 9th and Sunday 10th June were a great success despite a deluge on the Friday, and threats of more rain later. Local people, the MOB, the Blonay-Chamby (B-C), and many others, were marshalled by the organising committee, which included the Family Friedli, expert fine-detail model builders whose workshops are in an old chalet in the village. There were several model layouts, backed by sponsors, and plenty of hands-on opportunities. A visit to Lenk in spring 2012 had shown that this was no village fête, but a serious mobilization. Where could you find; a five-in-hand postal coach; one of the first MOB electric motor coaches (No 11, as old as the line itself); steam specials with a Furka-Oberalp steam engine (No 3, brought with a fine collection of wooden seated cars from

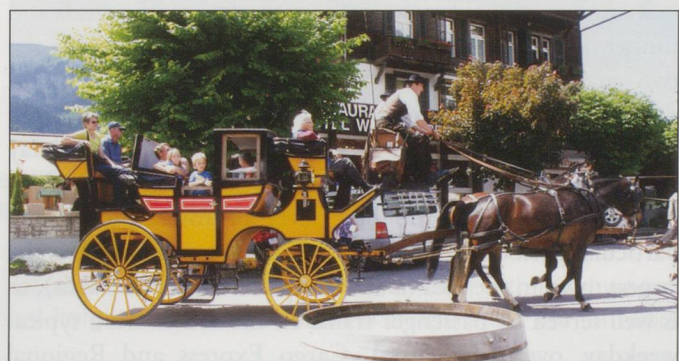


Top: Historic MOB railcar No 11.

Left: FO HG3/4 No 3, from Blonay-Chamby, entering Lenk on the festival train.

the B-C); original Pullman cars and MOB locomotives explained by experts; an Alphorn quintet; games and competitions; more than enough to eat and drink; and behind it all our friends from the MOB who kept good order, and ran a greatly enhanced timetable, including all the regular trains, on the branch? So the crowds came, friendly and informal in the sunshine. Down in Zweisimmen there was more, including an 'Open Day' at the engine shed. Flags, waving crowds, and innumerable photographers, a historic DC3 at St Stephan Airfield, and regular crossings of three trains at once at St Stephan station (including working the hand-worked points) all added to the experience.

This then was similar to many such celebrations in Switzerland, where there is always an anniversary (this year on the rails it is 125 years of Frauenfeld-Wil, and 100 years of Bulle-Broc), and where local and country people, far from all of them 'railfans', turn out and make a great many visitors, and one-another, welcome. I travelled with an 8 year-old (and his grandmother) who, after a 200km train journey in the early morning, and experiencing a smoky ride behind No 3, is determined to be an engine driver. As with many other rural railways behind the scenes there have been many political battles - about closure, renewal, money, and its absence - and the recurring 'does this line have a future' question. Such festivals have also the purpose of showing that many people know and can value these local enterprises. At Lenk, and included with them, were several members of our Society. 



Top: FO HG 3/4 No 3 climbing the Lenk Valley.

Middle Right: Star of the show: No 3 in Lenk yard.

Right: The Post-coach as in 1912.

Bottom Left: MOB driving instructor Beat Leffler (right) and colleague show off MOB 6003.

Bottom Right: Hand-coaling No 3.

