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SEETALBAHN FOLLOW-UP

Gordon Wiseman

Photos: Gordon Wiseman

I thoroughly enjoyed Bryan Stone's article on the Seetalbahn having been interested in the line for years. The editor has given me the opportunity to relate my experiences of an era on the line, and about one particular train that Bryan did not mention, also to make a few minor corrections to his information with the hope that he will not be offended.

I visited the Seetalbahn in the late 1980s and early 1990s, during the Seetalbahn's 'forgotten' era. Once the 'Baby-Krocs', De4/4s and 'Seetal' coaches had gone, enthusiasts largely disappeared! However it was a very interesting period. With the dedicated 'lightweight' stock gone, the line had to be operated with 'standard' equipment, forcing incongruously large/heavy locos onto a roadside 'tramway'. To the uninitiated it was quite alarming to see 'full size' SBB stuff rear up right alongside or in front of your car. In comparison, the 73tonne 'Baby-Krocs' and 62t De4/4 were replaced with 120t Ae6/6, 68t RBe4/4 and 96t Ae3/6. Furthermore, an SBB EWI coach is 10t heavier than a Seetalbahn coach. I wonder if this heavier rolling stock caused even more accidents?

I was drawn to the area in summer 1989 almost by chance. Researching a potential camping base for a SwissPass holiday with my parents, I discovered the existence of the campsite at Mosen (LU). It stood out from the crowd in the official Swiss Camping guide as being right in the centre of Switzerland and even more noticeably listed as '50m' from a station. Within literally 2-minutes of zipping up the tent for the day you could be boarding the train at Mosen station. We got used to the incongruous site of Ae6/6s looped at Mosen every morning. It proved such a suitable base that we camped for 8 nights from 30/7/1989. I returned with my wife in the mid 1990s.

The most unusual train at that time and perhaps one of the quirkiest ever to run on SBB was the rush hour 'extra' Luzern to Beinwil. The quirk was enforced by the 'backwards' junction at Emmenbrücke where it had to reverse Being formed of 'used once a day' stock. SBB's way round this conundrum was to top and tail the two coaches. The train loco was an Ae3/6 but an Ae6/6 pulled the train as far as Emmenbrücke, where it dropped off to leave a 3/6 hauling its two coaches up the line. It had a limited life. It does not appear in my 1983 Kursbuch, but I saw it in 1989 and 1992, and it was still showing in the 1995 edition. The train was Ae3/6 10691 + Ae6/6 11505 on 31/7/89 and 10680 + 11509 on 4/8/89. At Beinwil the Ae3/6 collected a post van that ran back to Luzern with the empty passenger coaches. The Lenzburg – Beinwil equivalent peak extra was an Ae6/6 for some years but I saw it with 11134 on 7/8/89. I recall the aforementioned Ae6/6 morning freight mainly being entrusted to the then recently repainted red Ae6/6s. I recorded 11519+2 wagons (31/7/89) 11426 (plus 11519 at Beinwil) (1/8/89), 11418 (3/8) and 11520+3 wagons (7/8). Immediately following this period, Re4/4l appeared for a short time and even Swiss express Re4/4II. I recorded 11141 going light to Beromünster to return with two post vans on 4/8/89.

Even if you don't read German it is worth having a look at the following web site as the pictures of the bewildering variety of rolling stock that has traversed such an 'insignificant' line is remarkable **http://www.seetalkroki.ch/** Bryan's text suggests that the hi-visibility fluorescent bands were always part of the rolling stock scene on the Seetalbahn but in fact they were not added to the stock until the 1980s and some of the dedicated RBe4/4s Nos 1401 – 1406 didn't receive them until at least 1995, although the latter had been running for some years with red ends. The other reference that needs some clarification is the line to Beromünster. Rather than being taken over in full by the AAR as implied, it was just the Reinach – Menziken section that went to AAR. One of the reasons for closing the SBB line to Beromünster was that it inconvenienced few people, because Beromünster was the only place of any size not already served by the Wynetalbahn line of the AAR direct from Aarau, arguably a more popular destination for commuters than Lenzburg. The faster speeds possible by putting the AAR onto the former SBB trackbed, and the safety improvement of taking the AAR off-street, cemented the argument for moving the line.