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# A BASEL TAGESKARTE

Don Gatehouse recounts a colourful investment



Be 4/8 No. 216 provided an excellent example of the Baselland Transport (BLT) livery on a Route 11 working to Aesch, seen gliding into Münchensteinerstrasse.

All photos: Don Gatehouse

Having spent a few days based near Olten enjoying sessions of line side photography, my plans for the final day of my September 2012 trip were frustrated by heavy mist. So, by mid-morning I abandoned my attempts at 'Plan A' and headed for Basel where my 'Plan B' was to ride the trams, an option that was not as weather dependent. Not for the first time on a visit to the area, my train from Olten emerged from the Hausenstein Tunnel under a full blue sky, a complete contrast to the conditions prevailing at the south portal. I had the option to re-assess my plans for the remainder of the day, but on arrival at Basel SBB I decided to invest in a Tageskarte and enjoy some BVB and BLT mileage and take a few location images of the trams at work in view of the excellent conditions.

Despite the infiltration of new Stadler units there is still a great variety of more traditional Swiss Standard combinations to be seen and enjoyed, as has been well documented previously in the pages of *Swiss Express*. Added to this, there were a number of units carrying non-standard liveries supporting advertising branding to be seen. While the purists may well frown on such practices, it gave me the opportunity to capture a selection of colour variations that provide a sample of what could be seen on the Basel network at the time of my visit. With a sizeable order placed with Bombardier for more new trams, the opportunity was not to be missed as I



BVB Class Be 4/4 single car No. 490 was at the head of this Route 1 service recorded arriving at Bahnhof SBB.

was not sure when I would next be in Basel let alone in such good light. The sunny conditions prevailed, tram mileage was accumulated, photo stops were made, lunch was taken in the shade of the spacious bus shelter at Wettsteinplatz and the splendid sights in Basel enjoyed along the way. All of the trams seen and sampled were in immaculate condition and spotlessly clean, as you would expect. Alas, all too quickly it was time to board a Route 50 bus to the airport for my early evening flight home, albeit well satisfied with my Tageskarte investment. I have made a note to return again before the next order for new trams is fulfilled. More photos overleaf.



A splash of floral colour complemented the well kept tram and bus interchange at Wettsteinplatz where BVB 3-car set No. 681 was recorded with a Route 2 service to Binningen via Bahnhof SBB.

An immaculate BLT Be 4/8 No. 240 in all-over white provided the lead unit on this Route 17 Wiesenplatz-Ettingen service seen entering Theaterstrasse.



'Live Young' is the slogan that I assume relates to drinking Evian. If only it was that simple, I ask! BLT Class Be 4/8 247 was leaving Bahnhof SBB on a Route 10 working to Dornach.

A classic combination in prestige condition comprised BVB Be 4/4 No. 457 and B4 low floor trailer No. 1489, seen leaving Claraplatz on Route 15 Bruderholz.



## TAKING A BRAKE (!)

Recently (whilst out on official business) I rode in the driver's cab of trains on the RhB and the MOB and was reminded of a curiosity. Both of these railways were among many Swiss (and other) narrow-gauge lines that adopted, not the compressed air brake that today we tend to assume is universal, but the Hardy vacuum brake. Of course, until the 1960s the vacuum brake was standard in Britain - the only European main line system to use it. The system was effective, but slow-acting, and the moving parts were heavy as a vacuum could only be at most one



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atmosphere, and in practice was less (21" of mercury was the BR standard). The automatic air brake has normally a working pressure of 5 atmospheres and there are various refinements to obtain rapid, even application and release.

Leaving the technology aside, I had to recall that RhB and MOB both today operate mixed systems. This is all allowed for in the official FDV, the legally binding operating rules. While all the modern rolling stock is air-braked, many old cars, especially those freight cars that are also hauled about on some passenger trains, are vacuum

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