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TRAVYS SUGAR BEET

Don Gatehouse spots his opportunity...

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A trio of loaded wagons for collection by the SBB Am 841 shunter are positioned at Yverdon-les-Bains.

All photos: Don Gatehouse

In SE 112 Ron Smith provided an insight into the history and operations of the metre-gauge line, now under the Travys umbrella, that links Ste. Croix to the SBB main line at Yverdon-les-Bains. When I visited West Switzerland last autumn, I had planned to photograph the seasonal sugar beet traffic on the YStC and initially it appeared that my plans would be frustrated when at the start of the week I found no evidence of loading activities, with Ge 4/4 No.21 and numerous Rollbocke units stabled at Yverdon.

On the final day of my trip (Friday, 5th October), I was changing trains at Yverdon at 08:00 when I noticed that motor coach Be 4/4" No.2 'Baulmes' had just arrived in the Travys bay with three loaded Eaos open wagons, and was soon positioning them for transfer to the SBB standard gauge metals. So, later that morning I returned to Yverdon to discover that 'Baulmes' was once again active and about to position another trio of loaded wagons for transfer to the care of SBB Cargo's waiting Class 841 diesel locomotive.

With a set of empty open wagons already in position for their move along the branch, I took my seat on the 12:12 departure to Ste. Croix and headed to ESSERT-sous-Champvent, where my picnic lunch was enjoyed in the shade while I was waiting for the anticipated trip working to the loading point at Vuiteboeuf. Once the down train from Ste. Croix had arrived at Yverdon, No.2 and its sugar beet empties were on their way up the line and they duly ambled through ESSERT precisely at 13:00. The turnaround at Vuiteboeuf was completed quickly and only 25 minutes later, No.2 was back with a set of loaded wagons, passing the looped and waiting Be2/6 GTW unit No.2001 'La Thiéle' which I joined to move further up the line to view the loading operations first hand.

At Vuiteboeuf, the station car park was closed to traffic and the area was a hive of activity with tractors arriving and departing at regular intervals, ferrying trailers to be tipped into the portable loading machinery

that was positioned alongside the wagons stabled in the headshunt at the west end of the station. Shortly after 14:00, the final brace of empty Eaos wagons arrived from Yverdon and by that time the loading of the third wagon of the earlier delivery was nearing completion. Unfortunately, I had to leave Vuiteboeuf on the next Yverdon bound service to make the connection for my ICN to Genève Airport, so I was unable to view the shunting operations to be undertaken. That said, I had at least achieved one of the objectives of my trip and naturally, presented myself with a need to return again to see some more! 

BELOW: Sugar beet being loaded at Vuiteboeuf.

BOTTOM: YStC Be4/4" 2 'Baulmes' passing ESSERT-sous-Champvent with sugar beet bound for Aarberg via Yverdon.

