

Zeitschrift: Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal
Herausgeber: Swiss Railways Society
Band: - (2013)
Heft: 116

Artikel: Rigi Bahnen update
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-854238>

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RIGI BAHNEN UPDATE

Ron Smith



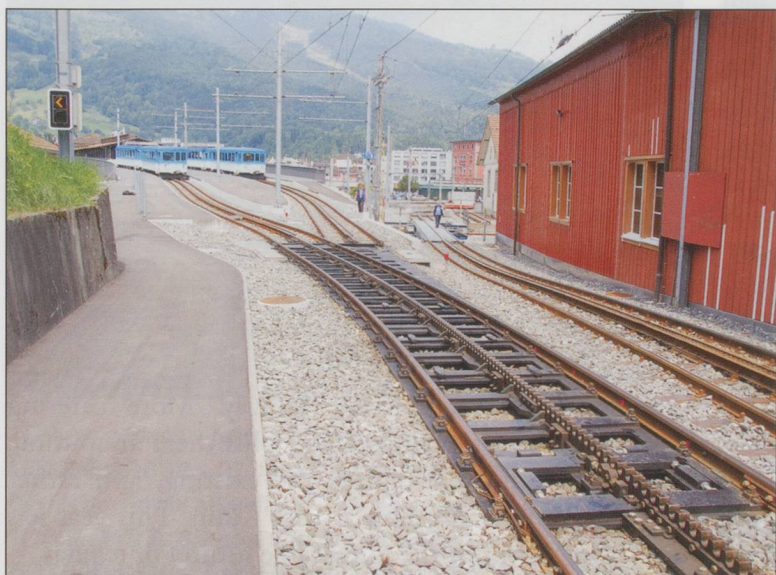
Building work on the shed roof as Ta 2/2 no 1 shunts cement silos Vitznau.

All photos: – Ron Smith

The Rigi Bahnen (RB) is an unusual standard-gauge railway, in that it is self-contained and carries out its own repairs; maintenance (including track work) along with renewals and refurbishments of all its own rolling stock. It has even invented its own design of rack-points for the Riggengbach system, which are simple, innovative and highly successful. The RB is very forward looking with long term development plans in place to use the opportunities of repairs and renewals as springboards for advancement. For example, at the start of the year they founded Rigi Plus AG. This is a marketing company set up to promote the whole Rigi Mountain, from Brunnen round to Küssnacht including New points at Arth Goldau.

the coast of the Vierwaldstätter See. The railway has 49% of the shares, whilst MineralbathAquaSPA, local hotels and nine cable car operators in the area hold the rest. At the end of four years its success and future purpose will be re-evaluated.

The RB has a remarkable collection of rolling stock, including many old and unique examples. Rigi Historic has been formed as a Foundation to raise money and preserve these vehicles, plus other infrastructure (such as the ship landing stage at Vitznau that dates from 1912), with an initial investment of CHF150,000 from the RB. Rigi Historic is currently raising money to fund the restoration of 1911-built CFHe 2/3 No.6, the white power car. VRB power cars Nos.1 to 3 VRB (Bhe 2/4 of 1937) and No.4 (Bhe 2/4 of 1953) will need to be replaced in the near future. The replacements will need to be able to propel goods wagons, vintage passenger coaches, and modern units, so will be special machines. In order to reduce the ever-increasing energy costs they will incorporate regenerative braking – an obvious saving as a lot of running is necessarily downhill! To have regenerative braking, you must have a power supply system capable of handling it, so the overhead catenary between Vitznau and Rigi Kulm will need to be replaced with heavy-duty cable, which will also reduce the power losses suffered at the moment. There are five substations transforming/rectifying the incoming electricity supply. One of these will be renewed



with the capacity to accept the generated electricity. All this will require an investment of CHF10m and is programmed for 2014 – 2016.

In July 2013 building work was well underway at Vitznau on luxury apartments above the existing Depot, the work due for completion by the end of 2014. At Rigi Kaltbad, the station track layout has been transformed. There are now three lines including a level track for freight wagons bringing the lifeline supplies to the resorts and hotels here. This new track layout, which gives greatly improved operational flexibility, came into operation in October 2012, and includes sets of RB's own design points. It operated completely successfully over the severe winter season. The old station building was completely demolished in the project and will be replaced with a new structure by the end of 2014. At Arth Goldau, the long running saga of the RB's station, which is on a bridge spanning the SBB tracks and is a 'listed' historic structure, is coming to a conclusion. Various sources, including SBB Infrastructure, are contributing towards the cost of raising the bridge 0.7m to allow double-deck high speed trains to pass under without difficulty for the pantographs. RB has already built the new platforms at their end of the bridge, and will install new lifts and access at the SBB station end and the old building will become a concourse. Work is scheduled to start in early 2014 for completion in early 2015 when the RB's temporary station will close. The main workshop of the RB is also at Arth Goldau and on 3rd July last, a new 60t capacity traverser, manufactured by Maschinen Stahlbau in Dresden, was installed. The old one ran on no less than 9 rails, with Victorian cast iron wheels with "S" spokes clanking slowly along – now it is all electric on just 2 rails. There are more developments planned for this Depot, including the possibility of constructing apartments over it. In addition the RB has a large car park here, and this could also see apartments being built above it, when a suitable development partner is found.

The operating licence from the Federal government for the Weggis cable car to Rigi Kaltbad is due for renewal in 2014. This will require around CHF12m to update the infrastructure to modern standards and Gemeinde Weggis is being asked to contribute. In 2012 the RB took over the "Bahnh ffl" restaurant at Rigi Staffel. This has worked well above expectations, and has proved very useful for catering for the groups that are an



TOP: New traverser at Arth Goldau 14.43 9.7.13.
MIDDLE: ARB 12 + 22 at the temporary station at Arth Goldau.
BOTTOM: Track repair at Rigi Staffel.

important market for the railway. More catering opportunities are being sought, plus there are outline plans to completely replace the existing, and rather austere, station/café/shop at Rigi Kulm. This year has seen the return (for the foreseeable future) of regular



TOP: No 4 forms a relief train from Kaltbad .
 MIDDLE: ARB 12 + 22 deliver essential supplies.
 BOTTOM: Points at Staffel.
 TOP RIGHT: Ta 2/2 no 1 shunting at Vitznau.
 BOTTOM RIGHT: The ARB bridge at Arth Goldau.

steam operations after a 3 year break caused by a lack of capacity while the line dealt with an unprecedented level of freight movements, connected to the construction of the new spa at Rigi Kaltbad, and the track work improvements there. It is hoped that the 150th anniversary of the VRB in 2021 will see the return of No.7, the 1873 vertical-boilered loco that was resurrected in 1996, 1997 and 2009, from the Verkehrshaus museum in Luzern. There will be more special events in 2015/2016 to celebrate 200 years of "Tourismus Central Schwiez" – something that was basically started off by the British! With all the above developments in hand, the RB is not neglecting the day-to-day activities moving milk, schoolchildren, building supplies, fuel oil, rubbish, and all the other life line supplies to the inhabitants of this car-free mountain, as well as catering for the unpredictable waves of tourists. 