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A WEEK IN MONTREUX

David and Elizabeth Carpenter



PS Savoie leaving Geneva on 3.9.2013.

Photo: David Carpenter

We are not great lovers of airports so with the advent of Eurostar and the ever-expanding TGV network we make our annual Swiss pilgrimage by rail. Having checked-in at St Pancras one Saturday last August we were tempted by a £13 offer to upgrade to Standard Premier where, as well as more space *"you can enjoy a delicious meal"*. Wrong on two counts - the two bite offering was neither a meal nor delicious! The forthcoming refurbishment of the Eurostar trains can't come soon enough as everything all looks rather drab now. However, the journey passed smoothly as usual and we were soon in Paris making a quick transfer to the Gare de L'Est for our TGV to Strasbourg. Rather than suffer crossing Paris with heavy luggage to the Gare de Lyon for the Swiss TGVs we prefer this more relaxed option and the opportunity to have a break in Strasbourg, which is an interesting city to look round, and have a leisurely evening meal there. In 2016 the extension of LGV Est from Baudrecourt to the outskirts of Strasbourg will bring the journey time down to 1 hour 50 minutes and it will be interesting to see whether any of the Swiss TGVs return to this route as a result. Sunday morning saw us at the Gare de Strasbourg for the 08.51 to Basel, a push-pull set of a loco and six coaches of Corail stock in 'Alsace Region' livery. At Basel we transferred to the SBB station, with its wonderful mural of Lake Lucerne in the main hall, to travel onwards to Montreux via Bern and Lausanne, riding in a mixture of Mark IV coaches and Bahn 2000 double deck stock.

On our first day we decided to take a leisurely walk along the lakeside to Vevey, but we did not realise that this was not possible as the path goes no further than Clarens. So, after a rather boring trudge along the main road, broken only by the passing of trolleybuses on Line 201, we eventually rejoined Vevey Funicular at Mont Pèlerin on 2.9.2013.

Photo: David Carpenter

the lakeside and reached the centre of Vevey. Having never previously been up the funicular between Vevey and Mt Pelerin this seemed the ideal opportunity to do it, so a quick trolleybus ride brought us to the lower station where we noticed what appeared to be the departure indicator - a clockface with the word "Depart" underneath it.



Then the minute hand moved – but it did not tell you time of the next departure at all and was simply an ordinary clock. Departure was announced with the "Depart" being illuminated and an accompanying series of beeps. We rode up and took-in the view, but a word of warning - if you go up here hoping to get to the Ascenseur Plein Ciel (panoramic lift) it is some way from the funicular station. Even the Lonely Planet guide refers to it as "a hike".

Next day, still in leisurely mode, we decided to take the paddle steamer from Lausanne to Genève. The 09.19 from Montreux gave us Class 460 haulage and Mark IV coaches to Lausanne CFF, where we rode the Metro down to the lake at Ouchy. The Metro seemed to be

totally unstaffed, with automatic trains and platform edge doors to stop anyone falling onto the track. No doubt the revenue people do a swoop from time to time, but we did not see any. The Paddle Steamer 'Rhône' gave us a wonderful lake cruise to Genève although it was quite full as far as Yvoire where most of the clientele alighted, something we should have taken note of for later in the week! After a look round the old city of Genève we returned in the peak, behind another Class 460 in a well-loaded set of Mark IV coaches. Returning to Montreux station on Wednesday after a walk around the

Old Town the MOB loco for the 'Chocolate Train' was present reminding us that it was a trip to schedule for our next visit. This time we took the train to Rochers de Naye and were surprised how busy the lower section of line to Glion was. This line is DOO (Driver Only Operation) but even with this method of working the train managed to keep time and all fares were collected, although at one point there were five passengers travelling in the driving cab! That evening we went back to the old town for an evening meal and sat outside a restaurant just below Les Planches station, the first stop on the Rochers de Naye line. Just after a down train passed some people started walking across the viaduct towards the tunnel. On noticing this, the restaurant staff and some customers made them well aware of the error of their ways and the group retreated back towards the station. How they had missed the steps down to the street we will never know.

Although staying in and around Montreux on several occasions we had never managed to cross the lake to France, so this was to be the year to do it, and we set off to Lausanne the following morning for the short crossing to Evian. Mistake! Everywhere was shut for lunch (it is France after all) but this even included the museum telling the story of Evian water. We should have taken

notice of the large crowd getting off the boat at Yvoire two days earlier and gone there instead, however there was some consolation as the return boat was a paddle steamer. The following day we again took the 09.19 (we were becoming regular commuters) this time to Morges, an interesting small city with its wonderful castle museum and a secret service exhibition - with a section on James Bond! On Saturday, our last day in Montreux, we took the MOB's 10.44 departure to Montbovon, where we changed onto the TPF (formerly GFM) for Gruyeres. Here the guidebook had warned of an uphill walk into town, but on arrival we followed the masses to a waiting bus, which whisked us into



I leaving Ouchy in 2011.


Photo: Bremgarten

town in no time. It was Saturday, so rather crowded, and after looking round we walked down to the station for the 13.59 back to Montbovon. Unusually, the train the other way came and went with no sign of our train. As the ticket-seller-cum-general-factotum was on the platform, we asked him about our train. "About 10 to 12 minutes late" he replied. "We are going to Montreux, will we make the connection?" "Maybe". The train arrived 15 minutes late



MOB Chocolate Train loco, Montreux station on 6.9.2013. Photo: Elizabeth Carpenter

and, as is inevitable when you are in a hurry, was required to stop at every request halt along the way, so no time was made up. At Montbovon we were relieved to see the MOB train waiting for us. Shortly after departure the Train Manager came through checking tickets, and we thanked her for waiting - "Yes, but I have passengers for Geneva Airport" she commented. Fortunately we did not stop at many request halts and arrived in Montreux just three minutes late, and

before the Genève train. Seeing the Train Manager on the platform she greeted us with a broad smile saying "We have made the connection, so everyone is happy." She must have gone home that night pleased that she had made the right decision. A nice end to our stay in Montreux, our Swiss Passes yet again seeing much use and proving excellent value for money. After a week of good weather it was time to move on to Grindelwald where it rained, but that is another story. 



Changing trains at Montbovon on 7.9.2013.



TPF No. 226 at Gruyères on 7.9.2013. *Photos: David Carpenter*



Re4/4II 11113 passing Coppet on a Swiss Express working to Genève Airport, probably from Luzern. Note automatic coupling for use with Swiss Express stock. *All Photos: Paul Russenberger*

Part 7 – The Post War Developments of the Classic Electrical Concept

The first Leichtstahlwagen – 'Light Steel Coach' – appeared in 1937 and series production began that year. The concept achieved a reduction in weight from at least 35t to 29t for the same carrying capacity by building the strength into the body itself. The heavy underframe is replaced by constructing the whole coach body as a tube. This

is sometimes referred to as 'monocoque' construction, though railway parlance usually describes it as 'integral'. A locomotive is a rolling stock vehicle in the same way as a coach, albeit with traction equipment rather than passenger accommodation. It follows that the same principles of construction can be applied. Because the locomotive has to carry a greater weight – transformers weigh more than people – a greater reduction in weight can be gained. There are numerous advantages. Less material is used in construction; the vehicle