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BLS GROSSE FAHRZEUGPARADE

Sam Dixon



All photos: Sam Dixon

There is something quite surreal about standing on the side of a mountain in the dark watching trains cross an illuminated viaduct accompanied by music! But that is exactly what I found myself doing in September last year. Neil Wheelright's detailed report into the Grosses BLS-Sudrampenfest in the December issue of Swiss Express made reference to the floodlit cavalcade across the Luogelkin Viaduct on the Saturday night. This spectacular event had been planned as the highlight of the weekend's festivities.

I arrived at Hohtenn aboard the fabulous SBB 'Churchill Pfeil' from Brig shortly after 6.30pm. It was my first ride on this beautiful train and I sat just behind the driver enjoying the view forward while drinking a beer – a splendid start to the evening! At Hohtenn, attendees were directed to one of two NINA units waiting in the rarely used third platform adjacent to the main station building. These acted as shuttle trains to the viaduct – one for each of the designated grandstands that had been built on the east and west sides of the viaduct beside the South Ramp path. Temporary scaffold platforms had also been erected alongside the line at each end

of the viaduct for the NINA units to off load their passengers.

The parade, accompanied by a commentary in German, started at 8pm as dusk fell, and consisted of seventeen different exhibits representing BLS traction and rolling stock through the years. Both tracks were used, with the exhibits passing in either direction during the display and pausing briefly in the centre of the viaduct for photographs.

Having concluded the initial parade, one of the two tracks was reopened to allow scheduled 'Lotschberger' services to pass in each direction – with much horn-sounding and bemusement from the passengers on board! Once those trains were clear, the entire parade was repeated in reverse, but this time accompanied by music and a light show projected onto the viaduct.

After the event concluded shortly before 10pm, the two NINA units collected attendees and returned them to Hohtenn station, from where a number of extra trains had been laid on back to Brig, Spiez, Bern and even Zurich. It was a fabulous evening helped by the weather being kind – the BLS did themselves proud. 

The equipment that took part in the parade.

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|--|--|----------------------------|
| 1. BLS Engineers train | 7. BLS 'Blauen Pfeil' BDe4/6 736 + BLS Ae6/8 208 | 12. BLS 465 009 |
| 2. BLS Ae6/8 205 + Swiss Classic train | 8. BLS Ae8/8 273 + BLS Ae4/4 251 | 13. BLS 'NINA' unit |
| 3. EBT Be4/4 102 | 9. BN Be4/4 761 | 14. BLS 486 501 |
| 4. BLS Ce4/6 307 + BLS Ce4/4 312 | 10. BLS Re4/4 162 + tunnel car shuttle loaded with cars and occupants! | 15. BLS 'MUTZ' RABe515 006 |
| 5. BLS Re4/4 185 'Lalden' | 11. BLS Class 565 NPZ unit | 16. BLS Engineers train |
| 6. SBB 'Churchill Pfeil' + BLS Re4/4 184 'Krattigen' | | 17. BLS Engineers train |

