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Linesiding East of Brig

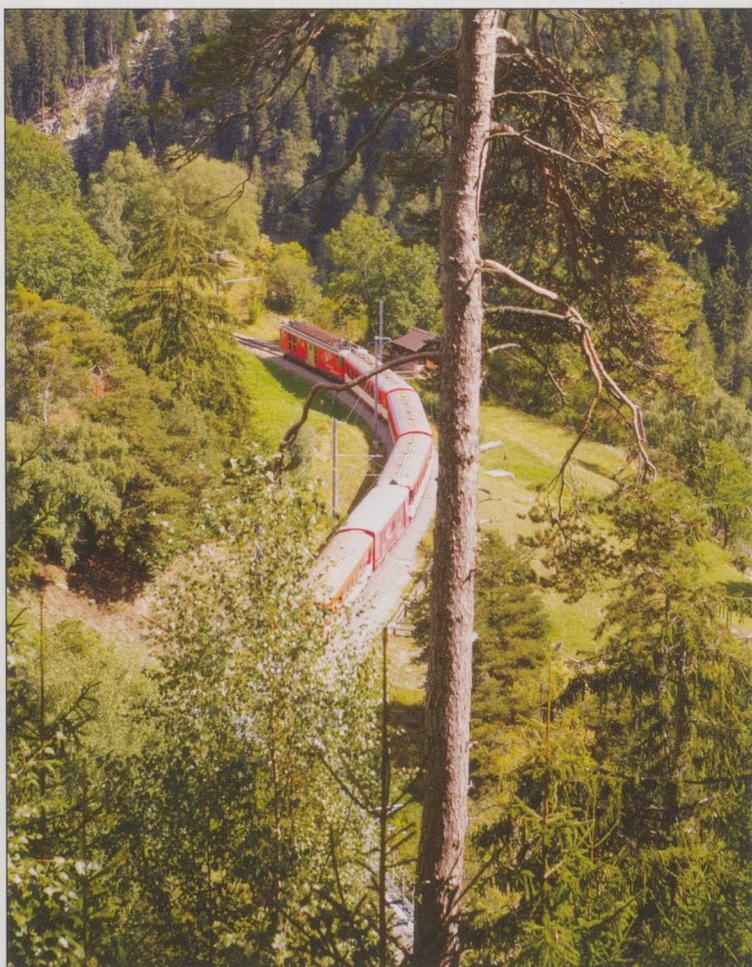
Neil Wheelwright



Westbound MGB train led by an unidentified ABt approaching Fiesch passing behind houses and gardens on the eastern side of the village. *All photos Neil Wheelwright on 9 September 2013*

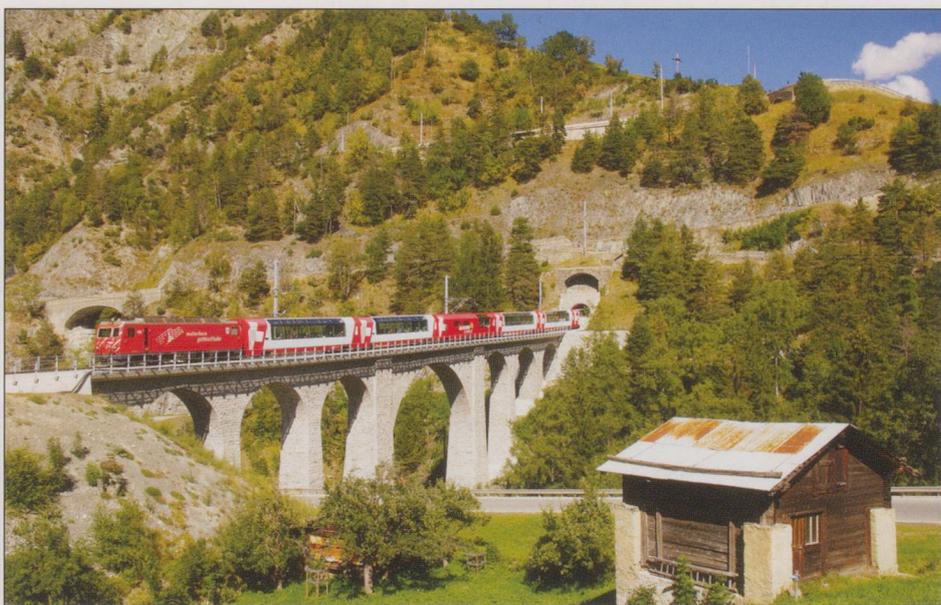
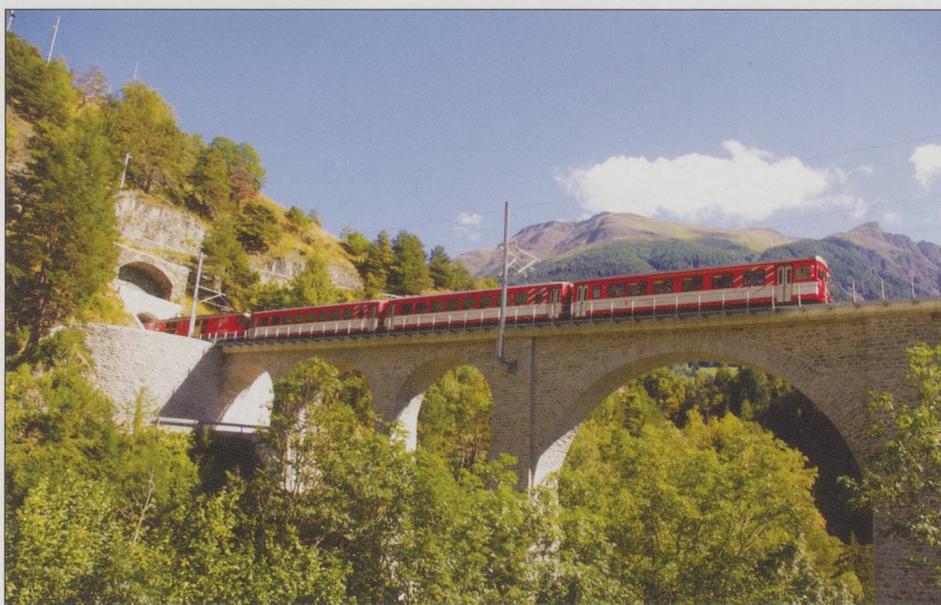
Having decided to stay in Brig for the weekend of the BLS Grosses BLS-Südrampenfest, and being able to make it a long weekend as I had a few days vacation left, the question was what to do on the Monday. As the weather forecast was good, I decided to do some lineside photography on the ex-FO section of the MGB. Having scoured Brig for a good walking map, and seen how many sections were almost inaccessible from walking paths, I headed for Fiesch with the aim of walking (downhill!) to Grengiols. My plan to travel the cable car up the Eggishorn was ruled out by low cloud which, while clearing over the valley, was stubbornly clinging to the mountains. After a coffee and a quick visit to a supermarket for the makings of lunch, I first headed eastwards only to find that the curve above the town was completely obscured by trees. However, I was able to get a shot of a train between two houses across a colourful garden. My route down to Lax confirmed the view I had from the morning's train journey, that the line was tucked too far into the side of the valley to be very visible. So, apart from some shots of the scenery along and across the valley, my next railway photographs were of local trains at Lax station where I also photographed a PostAuto on a service that calls there once each way per day – I'm sure there is a good reason!

MGB east-bound Deh4/4 'pendel zug' west of Lax.



Keeping away from the main road south of Lax, there are distant views of trains approaching the village, albeit too distant to identify a small diesel, which passed pulling a short permanent way train. I next came to a spot where four paths joined and the map and reality appeared to differ. I'm sure the road mending gang must have wondered why I walked past them one way and then quickly came back! However, that was just to take the wrong route – albeit with a silver lining as I was able to get good photographs through the trees of the trains on a reverse curve. Here again, the local crew of a refuse truck must have wondered why I was standing in the middle of nowhere when they went up the hill, and was still there ten minutes later on their way back. Fortunately, the road gang had gone for lunch when I returned again past their work! Further along, the path had been diverted to a more photo friendly route from where my photograph would have been better if there had not been a baggage van behind the driving trailer. The path then headed away from the railway through a small hamlet before coming out on a ledge some way above the loop, where the line itself crosses above the tunnel mouth at the upper end of the seven-arched Grengiols Bridge.

After a few photographs and a late lunch, I headed down what I correctly anticipated, would be a tricky section of path – thankful for stout walking boots and a walking stick! Once down at road level there are a number of photo options of the bridge across the Rhône/Rotten and I found a couple of good locations - no doubt to the bafflement of a couple working their garden as I passed them several times between trains to get the right angle for the direction of the next train! The 96m bridge looks impressive enough, especially since its recent cleaning, but the river is 35m in a gorge well below the level of the roads, quite spectacular in



TOP: MGB Deh4/4II No. 93 with east-bound train on Grengiols river bridge - viewed from the hill above the bridge.

MIDDLE: MGB No. ABt 4181 (with Deh4/4I No. 55 in train) on west-bound train on Grengiols bridge.

BOTTOM: MGB HGe4/4II No. 103 with west-bound Glacier Express crossing Grengiols bridge. The tunnel takes the line round a loop within the hillside coming out at the higher level line, which can be seen crossing the picture near the top of the hill.



close-up. After the passing of a couple of Glacier Expresses, I headed for the MGB halt. The 'station' was being rebuilt with the provision of an underpass and the builders had just finished for the day. The halt is nominally 'on request' but there was no button to press to warn the driver, nor was it obvious which side of the loop the train would use. Fortunately, one of the locals was also intending to catch the same train.

My next stop was to be Bitsch from where I followed a path along the river and then over the top of the mouth of the Simplon tunnel and high above the loco depot and yards. This gave a great view of the depot and sidings (as well as some enthusiastic fly shunting!), and a terrific view of the whole station and yard layout. The path eventually came out on Tunnelstrasse at the 'rear' of Brig, from where the route down to the station was straightforward, passing the Reformed Church which occupies a building that, according to a sign by the entrance, had been used as a hospital for the men building the Simplon tunnel. In short, a very enjoyable and relaxing day with some great photo opportunities – next time maybe up at Niederwald? 



TOP: MGB Deh4/4II No. 94 east-bound approaching Grengiols bridge.

MIDDLE: MGB Deh4/4II No. 94 east-bound crossing Grengiols bridge.



ABOVE: SBB Brig roundhouse & turntable seen from hillside behind depot on 9 September 2013.

LEFT: SBB Brig station and sidings seen from hillside behind depot on 9 September 2013.