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Swiss News

Swiss investments in Foreign Railways - or, getting 4 m clearances on the Gotthard corridor

Readers may be aware that since WW2 the Swiss Confederation has loaned or invested substantial amounts of money in reconstruction, electrification and other improvements to other nations' railways. This was always done with the argument that these lines were necessary for the trade of a land-locked nation, the more so when money was tight elsewhere and projects might be delayed. Back in 1953 CHF626m was advanced to DB to electrify from Basel to Karlsruhe. In 1954 SNCF received CHF533 for electrification between Basel and Strasbourg plus CHF355m towards electrifying between Vallorbe and Dijon. A big one in 1955 was CHF855m for various reconstruction works between Milano and Luino and also work on the Simplon. In all cases the works were duly done, and the loans repaid. More recently other money went to France for the Rhein-Rhône TGV line, and for TGV-related improvements to Dijon. Currently CHF80m is approved towards work from Lindau to München, but here the DB is behind schedule and the work is not ready.

In early December 2013 the Swiss Parliament debated a new project. The expenditure of almost CHF1 billion to achieve clearances for 4 m-high road trailers on intermodal trains is seen as a clear necessity to make the best of the new Gotthard base tunnel. However, this included around CHF28m for clearances in Italy for freight on the line from Luino to the intermodal terminals in Gallarate/Novara, two Italian transportation centres. The members were reticent, but finally agreed; on condition that Switzerland finances the work directly, rather than giving another loan. This work is doubly urgent, as the direct route to Milano is dependent upon the Monte Ceneri tunnel, not to be opened until some years after the main Gotthard Base Tunnel. The Luino route goes off south of Bellinzona, but north of Monte Ceneri, and is heavily used already by freight avoiding Milano's congestion. The new feature is that this is not for Switzerland's trade directly, but for north-south transit freight, but which must go by rail in order to meet Switzerland's targets for road to rail diversion.

Gotthard test running starts

On December 16th Swiss Transport Minister Doris Leuthard launched the first test train through the 13km Bodio - Faido southern section of the 57km Gotthard Base Tunnel. This marked the beginning of the 900 day 'countdown' to the project's planned completion, and its opening to traffic in December 2016. The minister travelled into the tunnel on board a Class 524 FLIRT emu, which reached the planned test speed of 160km/h. Test speeds will gradually be increased to 220km/h over the next six months. Installation of track, catenary, power supplies, signaling and telecommunications systems is due to be completed in October 2014 and the first test runs through the entire tunnel will be made in 2015.

SBB tackles ticket problems

The SBB announced in November 2013 that it is addressing problems surrounding differing tariffs that are exacerbated by complicated ticket machines and alternative routes. It notes that the routes displayed on ticket machines will be simplified. However, with regard to some specific zone tickets, which in some circumstances can cost up to 80% more, there is not going to be any improvement in the near future. SBB is investing some CHF150m in new sales systems covering various ticketing systems, whilst some 1,000 new ticket machines with touch screens will be installed in 2014.

Wheelchair-friendly 'Cabrio'

The rebuilt Stanserhorn Cable Car gets full marks for facilities for passengers in wheelchairs. On the original 1893 funicular, which still operates the lower of the former three sections, there is room for a chair on the lower platform that gives the occupant splendid views. The boarding/alighting platforms are at a similar angle to the track and so it is easy to roll-on/roll-off. At the reconstructed Kälti station, where passengers change into the new open-top double-deck 'Cabrio' cable car, a wheelchair can be pushed straight into the lower floor of the vehicle. Similarly at the top access is level through to the viewing platform with gentle slopes up to the magnificent panoramic restaurant. The only part that is not accessible, without climbing two steps, is the raised circular floor of the revolving restaurant. Travelling on the 'Cabrio' is a great experience even for those with mobility impairment who cannot make the open top deck. The views over the northern arms of Lake Luzern are spectacular, as is the panorama of 100km of snow-covered peaks and ten lakes, said to be visible from the balcony at the top station.

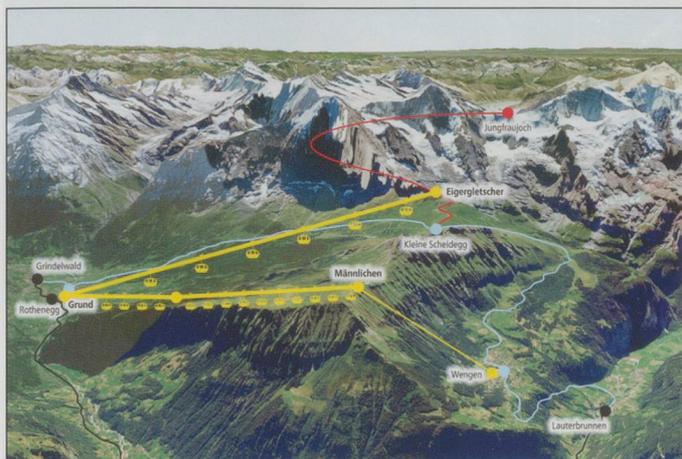
Horaire Romandie proves successful

The improved timetable for the line along Lake Genève that was introduced in December 2012 has proved to be a great success, especially the half-hourly service between Genève and Lausanne where passengers now benefit from more seats in the new double-deck trains. Some 50,000 passengers/day, an increase of 5% in one year, now use these core services and numbers continue to grow. The 2013 timetable change brought another 27 modern, air conditioned coaches into service on the route between Genève Airport and Brig, resulting in 95% of the IR trains on this route now having air conditioning and other amenities.

Slashing journey times in the Jungfrau Region

Tourism professionals attending the World Travel Market in London last November were given a preview of the plans for the V-Cableway/Eiger Express project, which is expected to speed visitors' journeys to the Jungfrauoch. At present the journey from Grindelwald to the top station of the Jungfrauobahn takes about 87 minutes. This will be cut to a mere 45 minutes with the construction of a new cable car from Grindelwald Grund direct to Eigergletscher. New transport hubs will be at both terminals as part of a CHF200m investment by the Jungfrauobahn (JB) and Männlichen Mountain Cableways. The Eiger Express will be a continuous loop aerial cableway capable of despatching

gondolas at 40-second intervals. However, JB staff at the WTM were keen to explain there are no plans at present to withdraw the Wengeralpbahn services from Grindelwald to Kleine Scheidegg, though clearly the importance of the latter junction station will be greatly reduced. One of the advantages quoted was to give more time for other excursions operated by JB, such as Grindelwald-First cableway, Schynige Platte Bahn and the Harder Kulm funicular. It was also suggested there would be more time "for shopping in the Jungfrau Region". We suspect that that most SE readers will prefer to forego the shopping and travel more slowly by conventional on-land traction!



Panorama of proposed cable car route.

Jungfraubahn

Ski Specials

BLS handled some 45,000 people on 11th and 12th January as the World Cup Ski Championship 'Circus' moved to Adelboden for racing on the Chuenisbärgli. Adelboden is not on the railway, being served by bus from Frutigen where only local trains now normally stop. The BLS provided some 20 extra direct trains from Bern, or further, that connected to an intensive shuttle bus service. The service was marketed at all-in reduced price (train, bus and admission), while spectators (some of whom may not have known the Adelboden road, nor realized it might also be snow-covered in January) were advised to use the train/bus link. A week later the 'Circus' moved to Wengen for the annual 'Lauberhorn' event, the longest race in the ski championship calendar. Here the routine is well established. Cars can get to Lauterbrunnen (if drivers insist, and are patient!), but the best option is the train, at least from Interlaken Ost. The Lauterbrunnen - Wengen section of the WAB is given over for the day to the race and its logistics, the normal service being generally given up, while everything with wheels is in operation to carry up to 40,000 ski fans.

BLS Workshops

The BLS has, as a result of mergers, etc. too many workshops. Traditionally motive power was maintained in Spiez, and coaches and wagons in Bönigen, at the extremity of the old Bödeli-Bahn in Interlaken. With the Regio Mittelland merger came workshops at Burgdorf-Oberburg and Bern-Aebimatt. The latter has to be vacated in 2019 as new running lines will use the land there. Notice has now been given that Spiez will be retained, and a new site in Bern will be sought for a new workshop. The others will be closed

when the new facilities in Bern are ready. It is suspected that very few visitors to Interlaken have the least idea that in Bönigen there is a major railway engineering workshop, that has been there 140 years and still provides significant local employment, with a BLS-classic high standard of work. With its closure, the rump of the Bödeli-Bahn beyond Interlaken Ost will surely also close.

St Gallen S-Bahn starts

The December 15th timetable change saw the commencement of the new St Gallen S-Bahn system. It is claimed that passengers will benefit from more frequent services, as trains will run at least every half-hour on the principal S-Bahn lines and at 15 minute intervals on some sectors. The CHF270m cost of introducing the system included improvements to the infrastructure to achieve the more frequent headways. The Rhine Valley Express (REX) service, which has been operating since June 2013 with new "Regio Dosto" double-deck trains between Chur and St. Gallen, is being extended to Wil (SG). Route upgrades will cut the journey time between the two cantonal capitals of St. Gallen and Chur by 12 minutes, as trains will be able to travel at up to 160 km/h. From last December the REX service will also have improved connections in Sargans for Zurich HB and in Landquart and Chur for the Rhätische Bahn (RhB) network. The downside of these improvements is that REX services will no longer stop at St. Gallen St. Fiden, Rheineck and Maienfeld, although to make up for this these locations will benefit from an improved S-Bahn service. Another concern for many is that the REX service now operates as a driver-only operation. It is claimed that the lack of conductors is being made up for by the introduction of other security and ticket-checking measures, probably the use of plain-clothes revenue protection squads.

Welcome back to PS Vevey

In mid-November crowds gathered at Vevey Marché to greet the CGN paddle steamer Vevey on its return to service following an 18-month refit. Despite grey skies the celebrations were deemed a success as the ship hove into view dressed overall and, copying its launch in 1907, flying the flags of the city of Vevey and the Cantons of Vaud, Genève and Valais. The renovation, which took 60,000 man-hours, was supported financially by the three cantons. The traditional fixtures and fittings have been retained, but where possible up-to-the-minute technologies have been incorporated, such as the improved viewing of the paddle wheels, now enhanced using LED lighting. Following its re-launch *PS Vevey* was put to work for four-days-a-week on winter services in the Haut-lac from Lausanne to Vevey, Montreux and Chillon (for the castle) and in the spring will begin services out of Genève on Fridays and Sundays.

Zürich S-Bahn changes

When the first phase of the new Zürich tunnel scheme opens on 15 June 2014, passengers will have even more services to choose from. A half-hourly S-Bahn service will be introduced on the Zürich - Zug route, together with faster connections between Zürich and Ziegelbrücke. Beginning in mid-2014 the GlarnerSprinter will be integrated into the

Zürich S-Bahn as service S25, providing an hourly service between Zürich HB and Linthal. Also from mid-June 2014, the S2, S8 and S14 S-Bahn services will use the cross-city link route and stop at the new underground Löwenstrasse station. Trains will run from there through the new Weinberg Tunnel to Zürich Oerlikon. The journey time between Zürich Enge and Zürich Oerlikon will be reduced by five minutes. On the S8 route between Zürich and Winterthur, passengers will reach their destination around four minutes faster from mid-June 2014. The Zürich – Chur line will be further upgraded as from 15 June 2014 there will be additional InterCity train services between Zürich and Chur.

Your own Kambly train

Following the article about visiting the Kambly biscuit factory at Trubschachen (SE - September 2013) readers may like to know that to celebrate the centenary of the Lötschberg line, Märklin reissued a limited run of their models of the specially-liveried BLS train. Powered by a Re465 locomotive the model has a 14-pin digital connector, flywheel-assisted motor powering four axles, traction tyres and LED headlights. The six passenger coaches (including a driving trailer) have close couplers and the bodies have been updated from an earlier model to represent the air conditioning on the prototype. The overall length is 1064mm.

Cross-border co-operation

For the trans-frontier economic region around Genève a joint company based in the Swiss city is to be formed by SBB and SNCF to operate an improved network of local services on both sides of the border. The new France-Vaud-Geneva RER network (the SBB will be the majority shareholder) will open in 2017 to capitalise on the through running opportunities that the CEVA 'link line', which is currently under construction, will make possible. It is planned to operate a 230km, 45-station network, which will encompass lines from Genève to Annecy, Bellegarde, Evian-les-Bains, Coppet, and St Gervais. Daily ridership is expected to be around 50,000 passengers. Staff from SBB and SNCF will jointly develop plans for the operation of the network, including timetables and the fares structure, as well as links to other transport modes and marketing. The joint company will also be responsible for specifying the new rolling stock and managing the procurement process for the French Rhône-Alpes Department and the Swiss Cantons of Vaud and Genève.

SBB pulls-out of the Voralpen Express

In an agreement made last autumn the SBB sold its one-third holding in the Voralpen Express joint venture with the Schweizersche Südostbahn (SOB), to the SOB on December 15th for some CHF4.2m. The hourly service between Romanshorn, St Gallen and Luzern was launched in 1991, with the erstwhile Bodensee-Toggenberg Bahn (BT) holding a third of the original shareholding. The SOB became the majority partner in the venture in 2001 when it and the BT merged. In February 2013 SOB added all of the SBB-owned rolling stock used on the service, including two first class and six standard class intermediate coaches and two standard class driving cars, to its own fleet of similar equipment. The SOB plans to replace the existing fleet with

new trains, probably multiple units, by December 2018. From the December 2013 timetable change the *Voralpen Express* operation was cut back to St Gallen from Romanshorn, as the S-Bahn now offers better connections between these two points. Also, from this change, the formation of the train has been lengthened.



The last through train from Romanshorn to Luzern on 14.12.13.
Photo: Mario Gavazzi

News from small railways

RhW: Services on the rack line between Rheineck Walzenhausen have been suspended from November 2013 to April 2014 whilst its sole railcar, Beh1/2 dating from 1958, was sent to Landquart to undergo a heavy overhaul in the RhB's works. Due to its non-standard track gauge of 1200mm it was not possible to provide a substitute unit, so buses were used.

MOB: Château d'Oex has temporarily been reduced to a single-track station. This is necessary as the whole layout is being selectively renewed and redundant track removed.

FW: Last November the Frauenfeld-Wil Bahn took delivery of its five new Stadler ABe4/8 EMUs. This represents a total renewal of its rolling stock and it has sold-off its Be4/4s. One is now on the ASm in Langenthal as a reserve unit and it is understood that two have gone to the CJ, soon to be followed by two more. It is unclear if the CJ intends to use these, or will be refurbishing them to offer for future sale. More about the FW in the June magazine.

CJ: The CJ has bought for its standard gauge Porrentruy-Bonfol line a former BLS Class 566 unit. This will replace the venerable units Nos.577 101 and 102 which once ran on the Sihltalbahn in Zürich, and can now be withdrawn. But the newer acquisition is not new; it dates from 1973, though substantially modernised.

ASD: The Aigle – Sepey – Diableret line will be celebrating its centenary in 2014 although (as at 31. 12.13) details have yet to be announced. This line is enjoying a new lease of life after receiving considerable expenditure on infrastructure in recent years. When combined with the connecting PostAuto from Diablerets to Gstaad, and a return on the MOB to the main line at Montreux, it makes an excellent round trip. Your editor notes that when he and his wife rode the PostAuto on a cold, sunny November day after overnight snow, they were the only passengers for most of the trip and the friendly driver gave them a running commentary of features along the route – in English. Such

personal service cannot be guaranteed!

OeBB: The Oensingen-Balsthal Bahn has decided to take the two former SBB heavy railcars, BDe 4/4 Nos.641 and 651 out of service as they were not worth equipping for ETM-S. They have been sold off.



Last day of OeBB BDe 44 No.641 at Oensingen 11.10.13.

Photo: Mario Gavazzi

President's Special

As we have noted previously, each incoming Swiss President has a special train that runs, after their election by the Parliament, from Bern to their home Commune. The President for 2014, (they hold office for just one year), is Federal Counselor Didier Burckhardt, from Auvernier near Neuchâtel. Friend of the SRS Mario Stefani lives nearby and has sent us this photograph of it arrival.



CFF Re460 07 14 *Spécial Burkhalter* at Auvernier, 12-12-2013.

BLS (1)

BLS 'Big Blue' Class 465 locomotive 465 015 is now a 'Big White', having been allocated to RailCare, and running in a new livery with Co-op freight trains, most recently in Western Switzerland.

BLS (2)

An accelerated rolling stock replacement programme on the BLS passenger services is likely to result in withdrawal during 2014 of the EW III intercity stock. These sets are used mainly between Bern and Luzern via Langnau, and are the original 'Swiss Express' sets of 1965, once grey and orange, fitted out once upon a time with tilt and with UIC automatic

couplings, and powered by some of the earliest Re 4/4 II. They have had several lives, and survived because the BLS renovated them most attractively some years ago. Now it appears that they are getting unreliable and difficult to maintain, and that they will have to go. And the 'Big Blues'? These trains along this very scenic route are powered by Class 465 engines, the only chance to see them today still in regular passenger service.

BLS (3)

A BLS Press Release at the end of 2013 has confirmed the end of the Interlaken/Spiez-Zweisimmen loco hauled trains these becoming the territory of the modern fleet of EMUs. It was always the intention of the BLS to remove the Class Re4/4s from these services and this is now occurring with some of the oldest locos being withdrawn. These engines, the 'Little Brownies' are, like the Class 465s mentioned above, still busy on freight and also work well off the BLS network. The InterCity services on the BLS lines to Brig and Interlaken are now SBB-worked mainly with Class 460s. These operations currently look stable, but they too could move to multiple unit train sets when Bombardier gets their deliveries going, with the fifty nine new trains that are on order. That leaves a few BLS locomotive workings on Neuchâtel – Bern passenger trains, but they too cannot last long.

BLS Model

In the early part of the last decade a German modelling group Modellbau Team Köln built two splendidly detailed HO-gauge layouts that featured the BLS North and South Ramps either side of the Lötschberg Tunnel. After the group moved-on to new modelling projects the layouts were sold to an Interlaken resident. It was the intention to have them on display in the town, but they eventually ended up in storage at a military facility there. The layouts were again sold last autumn to Brig resident Peter Bodenmann, a local politician and owner of the 'Good Night Inn' in that town. It is understood that he intends to install them in his hotel as a visitor attraction that will be open in 2014. There should be more information on www.brig-wallis.com.

Still hanging on

Last November there were still nine Ae6/6 in regular – or more correctly 'diagrammed' - service from Rangierbahnhof Limmat (RBL). With patience it was possible to see several in a day around Olten, as some worked to Solothurn, Oensingen and Langenthal. Two were seen, by your news editor when passing RBL one Thursday in December.

New Franco-Suisse services

From the December 2013 timetable changes, the TGV Lyria from Berne to Paris is re-routed via Basel. Due to the cancellation of the direct service via Neuchâtel-Pontarlier, SBB/CFF – in collaboration with SNCF, Canton Neuchâtel and the Franche-Comté Region – has developed a service from the Cantonal capital to Frasne with connections into the TGV Lyria from Lausanne to Paris. With three Regio Express trains a day, s passengers from the Neuchâtel area retain a service to the French capital with through ticketing and reserved seats, albeit with a change of train.

BRB update

A visit to the BRB's Brienz workshops in early December found all the engines being worked on as part of their regular winter overhauls. As we reported in SE 116 the firebox of loco No.7 is in poor shape and will require considerable expenditure to bring her up to serviceable standard, so it is probable that she will not see service for a second year. Major work is also required on some of the other members of the fleet. The 'temporary' station at Planalp, which replaced the structure destroyed in an avalanche some 14 years ago, is to be replaced this spring – weather permitting. Following the earlier incident major landscaping changes around the site have considerably reduced the risk of further avalanche damage so a smart pre-fabricated wooden structure, complete with waiting area and toilets, has been commissioned as part of an environmentally sensitive low-key redevelopment of the area around this location. It is intended that Planalp will become the focus of more activity in the future with perhaps more trains terminating here during an extended season.



BRB Locos 12 & 7 in Brienz works, December 2013.

Zentralbahn

October 23 was a bad day for both the Swiss Air Force and this railway. Two F18 jet fighters from the Meiringen AFB were turning in the valley near Alpnachstad, when the second, for reasons still unknown, collided with the Lopper mountain cliff above the south tunnel portal and the Alpnachsee, the road and the railway. Falling debris and the search for the crew of two, sadly both killed, meant a closure of three days.

Has the SBB got its priorities wrong?

Andreas Meyer, SBB's CEO, gave a major interview to a Swiss Sunday paper in early December. He admitted that customer service was not at its best due to various problems such as traffic density, new works and the unpredictability of the current winter weather patterns, much of which was out of the operator's control. However, your Swiss News Editor, and probably many others of a similar generation, chilled when he put priority on better mobile phone communications! Apparently the network providers have left some gaps along the railway network. Please can I know where these gaps are, and can they be made bigger, not smaller? Even in the 1st Class, good manners are not always what one might hope!

Bad news?

Possibly another case of the SBB getting its customer priorities wrong was the announcement that from last November the company has converted one of its double-deck Bistro cars to a mobile outlet for US giant Starbucks. A second one is due to follow. The Mini-Bars on both trains will also be run by Starbucks – so no choice! In a statement Director of SBB Passenger Transportation Jeannine Pilloud apparently said *"We continuously work to enhance our on-board services through innovations to ensure travellers enjoy a pleasant journey and this project is an evolution of our catering concept. We want our customers to feel at home while travelling with us."* This seemed to be mid-Atlantic 'corporate-speak' that was trying to justify a supposed innovation that might not be welcomed by all travellers. It is understood that Swiss consumer groups have already noted that prices have risen steeply. Who out there would swap a Caffe Lavazza from a Mini-Bar for a bland American import? Good job that outlets serving decent European coffee still exist on many Swiss stations - *take-away anyone?*

Mini-Bars, or not?

On the Class 200 ICNs, which have integral restaurant cars, the decision was taken to stop minibar service from January 1st, on both their home ground of the Jura route through Biel/Neuchâtel, and also on the Gotthard. The restaurant cars will however be opened in both sets where, as is often the case, two sets are used on busy trains. Inevitably the public reaction was sceptical, but SBB say their tests were convincing. Another poor decision?

Swiss second to Japanese

Figures published by LITRA, the Swiss public transport information service, show that on average each Swiss takes the train 51 times a year. The Japanese lead the field with an average of 69 train trips a year per person with the Germans taking 24 trips and being beaten by the British who take 25 trips. Each Swiss apparently travels 2274km/year by train.

RhB

A recent visit to Chur allowed an update on the rapidly evolving position regarding this operator's rolling stock situation. The new Allegra units are now in full service, although at the time two were cut-off in Arosa awaiting the Lüen section to be reopened following the major rock fall. If the rail reinstatement is not possible for the peak winter season (the strata in the area is, as it always was, very unstable) the conditions on the Chur-Arosa road may be precarious. Freights were running on the Albula Line hauled by Class 700 Ge6/6s - still reliable and effective at this role. The new train-sets planned for the Albula Line, and announced with great fanfare two years ago could, it appears be delayed, as it is understood the original concept is now being subjected to a major re-appraisal. The main line trains on this route are currently therefore either Allegra units, or conventional stock (some of which is getting rather elderly), hauled by Ge4/4^{III}. The future of freight traffic on the system is provoking thought. Freight wagons, mostly with vacuum brakes, often run attached to passenger trains.

With a progressive move to air brakes on the new trains, this suggests expensive modifications or replacements. This traffic is already subsidized by the Canton, which may be reluctant to incur further expenditure. Even in Switzerland resources are finite.

Not specifically Swiss

For those who did not know, following the demise of the "Cookbook" (the Thomas Cook International Timetable), the

rights to this publication have now been transferred to a new company headed by one of its former compilers, and backed-up by a number of former Thos. Cook employees. The timetable is expected to be re-launched in February 2014. 

Swiss News is compiled by Bryan Stone and includes input from Mario Gavazzi, Michael Farr, Jakob Jäger, Michael Donovan, Dick Carter, s'Murmeli, Mario Stefani, Ron Smith, Roger Kemp, Christian Ammann and others.

A MODEL SET OF STAMPS

Michael Farr



The Swiss Pro Juventute foundation supports young people and their parents and every year they anticipate that over 300,000 children and 100,000 parents benefit from its wide range of services. A major source of income for the foundation is the proceeds of their annual issue of charity stamps through SwissPost, where buyers pay a surcharge on top of the normal postage rate.

In 2013 they selected an ever-popular subject – railway locomotives. However on this occasion the illustrations are based on models and not the real thing. The set is made up of three different designs, the 85 + 40rp value illustrates the Rae 2/4 'Red Arrow' while the two stamps at CHF1.00 + 50rp illustrate 'Krokodil' Ce 6/8 No 14316 and one of the Ae 6/6 locos carrying a canton name. The designer, Laszlo Horvath, chose 11414 carrying the name of his home canton, Berne. Although issued in November, these stamps will be available at post offices until the end of January 2014 and through www.swisspost.ch/philashop until the end of June (or in both cases so long as stocks last). In the publicity blurb SwissPost reckon the birth of model railways was Märklin's display at the Leipzig Toy Fair in 1891. It is interesting to read

how they suggest our Swiss friends look upon their collections of models; "... the value of today's model railway components is stagnating. . . now it is only rare items . . . that command high prices". No mention is made of the pleasure I get from looking at the accumulation of HOm models in a glass case in our study!

It is worth noting that SwissPost's 2014 programme of special stamps includes one of railway interest. On 8 May a CHF 1.00 value will commemorate the 125th anniversary of the Pilatusbahn as well as a maximum card costing CHF 2.00. For further information check online nearer the date of issue (www.swisspost.ch/stamps) or request a subscription to their free quarterly magazine 'Focus on Stamps'.

I would like the opportunity to mention our Halifax member Tony Hoyle, a former President of the Helvetia Philatelic Society, who has kept me informed of interesting new (and old) stamp issues for many years. Sadly Tony was recently ill and unable to make his annual pilgrimage to Switzerland, so I wish him improved health in 2014; the good news is that he tells me he has already booked a holiday, no doubt in his beloved Jungfrau region! 

Swiss Tips: Good ideas and information about Switzerland from travellers.

Visiting the Verkehrshaus, the Transport Museum in Luzern? If you arrive at the main station you can get there in three different ways. Firstly, by the frequent trolleybuses on Lines 6 and 8 from over on the left outside the main entrance. Secondly you can continue by train. This is special, for not only is there a fairly new station 'Luzern-Verkehrshaus' just a 6 min. trip away, but it is on the original Gotthardbahn main line from Luzern to Küssnacht and Immensee. The main-line trains now mostly use the old Nordost-Bahn line, slightly further north via Rotkreuz, but you can take a Voralpen-Express, going to St Gallen, with SOB coaches and usually headed by a Cl.446 or Cl.456. These are hourly at xx.40, with a local at xx.06. Finally in high summer (check - the timetables are complex), there is a ship leaving at xx.12, and normally at 09.12 and 11.12 it is a stately paddle steamer. The first stop is 'Verkehrshaus-Lido'. The SwissPass is valid on all options. After a day at the museum, it's nice to return on the ship - sailing times are in the Museum lobby. 