

Zeitschrift: Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal
Herausgeber: Swiss Railways Society
Band: - (2015)
Heft: 122

Artikel: A special working : in memory of Alby Glatt 1933-2014, a man who loved luxury rail travel
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-853961>

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A Special Working

Bryan Stone

In memory of Alby Glatt 1933 – 2014.
A man who loved luxury rail travel.

1158 waiting in Locarno to attach the saloons to the 17.47 to Basel.

All photos: Bryan Stone

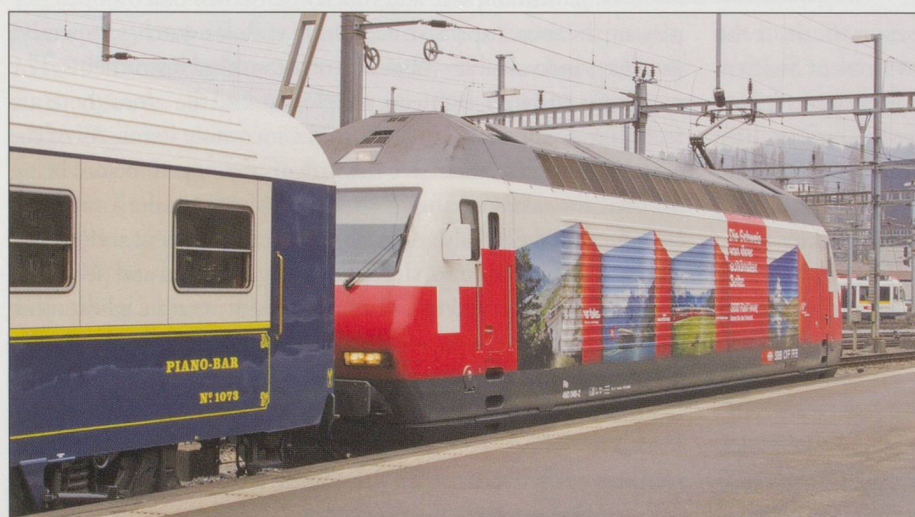
On 21st March 2015 a curious train left Basel SBB at 10.04 with Re4/4 II No.11289 at the head. It was really the regular Gotthard line train to Locarno, with at the rear three dark blue luxury saloons, 'Salon Bleu', 'Rubis Noir' & 'Diamant', the last with bar and grand piano. Altogether 100 guests, many dressed as requested in either the style of the Belle Epoque or of the 1920s. This private trip, to Locarno and back, was a homage to the memory of luxury train pioneer Albert (Alby) Glatt, who died on 23rd July 2014 aged 81. The unique journey was organized by the Pullman Club, Zürich, along with Alby's widow Martina.

Alby had friends all over the rail travel world - and elsewhere. My wife and I remembered various meetings and much good humour, even in the Sherlock Holmes Society of London, of which he was a member. He loved railways, and Britain too. With his company Intraflug, he is remembered mainly for his revival of luxury trains in Europe, collecting between 1970 and 1992 a fleet of classic blue 'Wagons-Lits' sleepers, dining cars and Pullman cars of the former CIWL (Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits) as these were withdrawn in the 70s and 80s. He had them restored to original 1920s and 1930s style, and

ran them as the 'Nostalgie Istanbul Orient Express'. There were altogether 28 cars, including some support and service vehicles. Private charter trains were run all over Europe and once, in 1988, to Hong Kong and (with bogie change) to Tokyo. An involvement with the American European Express luxury train ended however disastrously; liquidation and dispersal of the fleet followed. Alby came back: he saved the RAe4/8 No.1021, the 'Churchill Arrow', now a charter train run by SBB, when it might have been scrapped, and most recently he was on the board of Pro Salonwagen RhB, which has restored the 1931 Bernina Express Pullman cars now regularly running on the RhB.

The saloons for our trip were once 1970s standard UIC international cars; 'Salon Bleu' and 'Rubis Noir' were Intercity restaurant cars of DB, and the 'Diamant' piano-bar a restaurant car of SBB, betrayed by still having its roof-top pantograph. All are rated for 200 km/h running. They were purchased on withdrawal by Pullman Club, Zürich, and restored by Alexandra Bubendorf, former Technical Director of Intraflug Travel. She used historic originals in the Musée des Chemins de Fer in Mulhouse as models for the inlaid panels, fittings, decoration, seating and finish. Pullman Club, which organizes now both public and private luxury tours, has its own catering staff, and standards are high, even for your correspondent, who remembers the real Wagons-Lits days and their grandiose dinners before it all fell apart in later years.

The 10.04 being a timetable train, it ran as normal, with more guests joining at Olten and Luzern. The three private cars justified, at reversal in Luzern, 460 048, for the Gotthard section, attached ahead of the saloons. Unusually, the route through Küsnacht, the original Gotthard Railway main line from Luzern, was taken to 460 048 at Luzern for the trip to Locarno.



Immensee; most Gotthard trains today take the Rotkreuz line, but a serious derailment near Immensee three days earlier still cast its shadow. The rain became heavier; at Airolo there was deep snow, but beyond Bellinzona, Italy and the lakes make themselves felt; Locarno, with camelias and magnolias, was still dry. At 17.47, after a historic walking tour and a rest in the finely restored Locarno station bar, where Colin Mitchell, one of Alby's British friends, was to be found, we left again, 9-cars behind No.11158, for the north, in rain, darkness and with a worthy dinner which kept us all quiet until around Arth-Goldau. The Piano-Bar was still in action as we stopped, at 21.55, in Basel SBB, after nearly 12 hours of a valued experience, a real tribute to Alby and his work and colleagues.

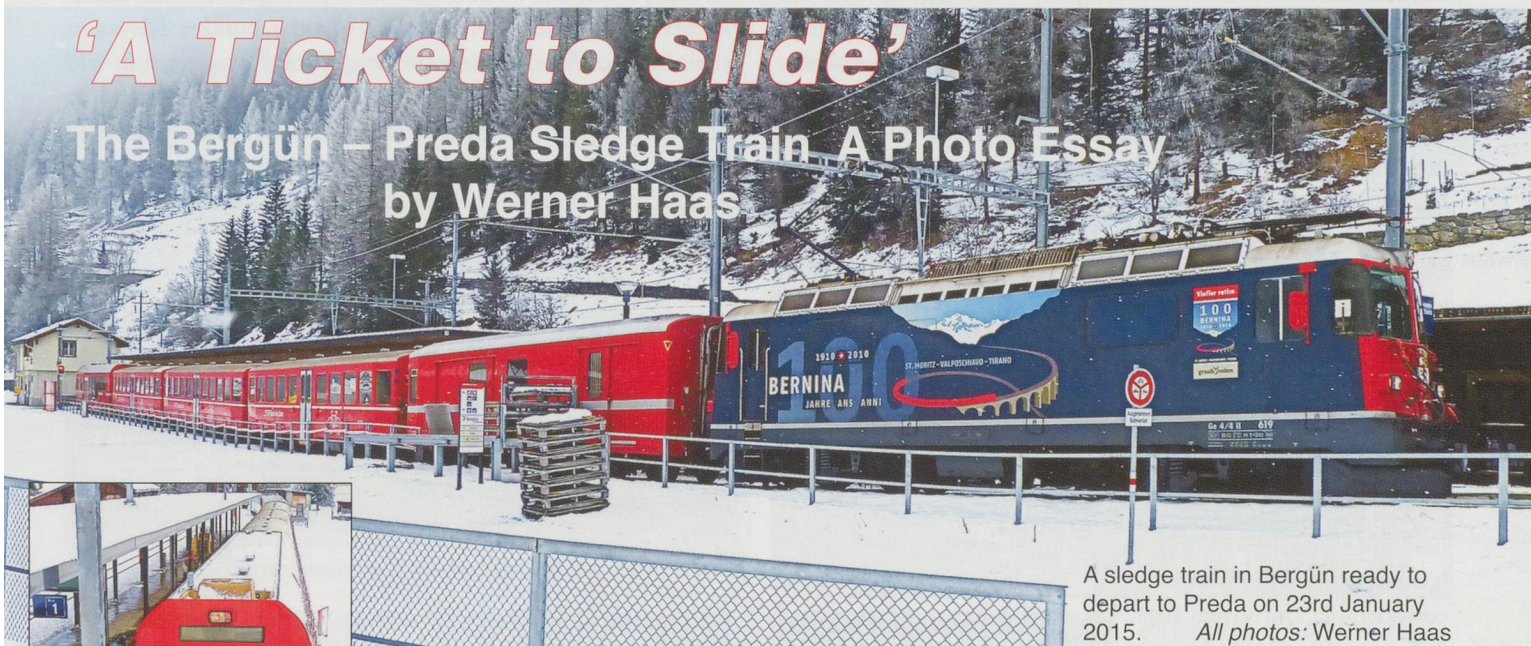
Alby's life with trains was very full, and much more comprehensive articles have appeared in German in RhB Culture magazine and in Eisenbahn Amateur (12-2014). Shortly before he died he had asked me to send him, from my private collection, pictures of British Pullman cars in regular service. Over 100 are on a computer file. Regrettably, he won't need them now.

1. Johanna Stone with SBB 'Historic Trains' conductor Daniel Gfeller (now retired).
2. Colin Mitchell from Britain boards the Salon Bleu.
3. Piano-Bar saloon.
4. Bryan and Johanna Stone joining in Basel.



'A Ticket to Slide'

The Bergün – Preda Sledge Train A Photo Essay
by Werner Haas



The arrival of a sledge train at platform 1 in Bergün-Bravuogn.

Every winter the 6km of winding road that runs down from Preda to Bergün is closed to traffic during the day and becomes one of the longest publically accessible sledge runs in Europe – and it's floodlit six nights a week! Key to the operation of the run is the shuttle-service of trains between the two stations provided by the Rhätische Bahn. If people have not brought their own sledges, toboggans, etc. they can be hired (from CHF12/day) in Bergün, where all the participants make their way to the station. Here they load their equipment onto to the Schlittelzug, a special

rake of coaches and baggage cars, for the 15-minute trip up through the famous spiral tunnels that lift the railway to Preda and the north portal of the Albula tunnel. After the run down the road back to Bergün there are many outlets around the attractive village dispensing warming drinks and hot sausages. Most people then return to the station for at least another train ride followed by a hair-raising slide as they descend some 400m down the valley. The service operates from 10.00 to 23.30 (except Mondays when it finishes at 17.00), and an adult day ticket costs CHF39. The shuttle train is stabled at the RhB's Samedan depot and travels to Bergün every morning to start its numerous runs that keep the winter sports fans happy.

SRS Member Werner is a resident of Bergün.

A sledge train in Bergün ready to depart to Preda on 23rd January 2015. All photos: Werner Haas