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Düwags on Basel Line 21

Don Gatehouse Rides a Peak-Hour




Düwag Tram No. 652 sets off from Birmbächerstrasse.

Photos: Don Gatehouse

In the March 2015 Issue of *Swiss Express* Neil Wheelwright provided an update on the long-serving Basel 'Standards' and during my May 2015 visit I was able to take a ride and record some images of their workings on the Line 15/16 services to/from Bruderholz. At the time of that visit, I saw just one of the new Bombardier 'FlexityBasel' units, No. 5002 in service on Line 8. However, with further deliveries during the remainder of the year, the cascade of trams onto other routes will certainly herald the demise of the older BVB fleet members still in service on day-to-day operations. The publication by the Society of the splendid 'Swiss Tram and Trolleybus Systems' book also prompted me to check out the status of the 1967-72 built Düwag/Siemens 2-section articulated trams, as I had noted several such units still in operation during my previous visit to Basel in 2014. Sure enough a couple of examples appeared on Line 2 and Line 14/Line 1 services during the day. The Line 2 services through Badischer Bahnhof also produced additional examples during the late afternoon peak-hour operations.

With examples of both the 'Standards' and Düwags recorded during the day, my two prime objectives of the Basel visit had been achieved and I was well satisfied, but there was a bonus still to come. While waiting at Badischer Bahnhof shortly after 15:00, I noted that a Line 21 service was due, so I decided to wait and see what tram unit would be allocated to work this peak-hour shuttle service to Bahnhof St. Johann. To my delight, and in good time to work the 15:29 service, Düwag Class Be 4/6 No. 624 arrived on the opposite side of the road. When the traffic lights permitted, it swung into the platform for the clutch of waiting passengers to board. I couldn't resist

the temptation and duly climbed on for 'the off'.

We rattled along the Line 2 route the short distance to Messeplatz, where our tram turned right to join the route used by the Line 14 services from Pratteln and then continued as far as Dreirosenbrücke, where the change from Line 14 to a Line 1 service (destination: Bahnhof SBB) is completed. With the ten intermediate stops duly serviced and a good number of passengers collected and delivered along the way, our tram soon reached Bahnhof St. Johann. Within minutes, the Düwag was en route back to Badischer Bahnhof, passing another class member No. 652 that enabled a 15 minute interval service to be provided over the 3 hours of afternoon peak-hours activities. A study of the Line 21 timetable confirms it operates each weekday between circa. 06:30 and 09:00, and later between 15:30 and 18:30. The vintage Düwag 2-section cars are well suited to the task and provide a splendid sample of a 1960s tram ride. Simply magic! 

Tram No. 624 was heading for Badischer Bahnhof, despite what the destination blind quoted!

