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Autor: Donovan, Michael / Chick, Chris
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Back in the Baggage Car



Two members respond to s'Murmeli's earlier article

A trolley awaits further loading at Chur station into a RhB baggage car.

All photos: Chris Chick – except where stated

Michael Donovan writes:

I enjoyed s'Murmeli's article about baggage cars. It took me back twenty-odd years to when I was travelling from Pfäffikon (SZ) to St Gallen, over what is now the Südostbahn (I think), but which was then a joint venture of about three companies. I cannot recall the circumstances, but the guard identified me as being a railwayman before the journey commenced, and I was invited to join him in the baggage car. Being summer, the doors remained open throughout, and we leaned on the yellow bar and talked railways as we watched the scenery pass by! Dispatch from stations was undertaken by inserting a key into a lock on the platform, then triggering a "right-away" aspect to the driver. The trick then was to remove the key, get back across the platform, and be on the step board of the car before the train responded to

the command – or, at least, before it had got moving too fast! Health and Safety wouldn't allow this in Britain! I hope I haven't made s'Murmeli jealous!

Chris Chick writes:

S'Murmeli's fascinating article on Baggage Cars has gone far to assuage any pangs of guilt that I have felt when running models of these vehicles with the side door open on my G-Scale garden line! They will soon be provided with a yellow bar across the door opening to set my mind completely at rest. Does our little furry friend remember whether the bar was hinged, lifted or slid sideways to allow loading? Also has he any recollection of when this relaxed approach to safety disappeared? For those of us who discovered the delights of Swiss railways rather late in life, baggage cars are still to be Toboggans stacked in the baggage car of the Schlittelzug at Bergun.

Signal by Conductor.

Photo: s'Murmeli






A second trolley is pushed out on to the cart.

seen in use on the RhB and I collected some images of them in use when at Bergŭn and Chur in December 2012. The article also brought to mind the way in which various post and baggage carts bring character to station platforms.

The s'Murmeli responds:

Running with the doors open was always an option, and although I am not aware of any official regulations I cannot say whether there is not somewhere an effective ruling on this. Open doors died out on SBB with air conditioning, high speeds and eventually the withdrawal of the baggage cars. It continued on local and private lines as long as there was a baggage compartment, but these too have disappeared with the multiple unit trains that are now widely in-use. The yellow bar was hinged, with a hook at the outer end to secure it in a loop on the door jamb. The RhB with its baggage cars,

and opening doors, is thus very much a survivor. As long as traditional train sets on the Albula and the Vereina lines include a baggage car, the door will be there to open. The new trains, including the Allegra units, and also the fixed compositions ordered for push-pull working on the Albula after 2016, will have no such cars. Here there is an issue to resolve, because checked passengers' luggage, including some sent in advance for airports, plus newspapers, and some express freight like fish and other perishables for the Engadin, still go in today's baggage cars. I am not jealous of Michael as I have had the opportunity in the past to ride as he did. 



ABOVE: This little battery powered tractor at Chur station seems to be pulling a trailer of catering supplies for loading on to a train.

BELOW: This cart was seen at Poschiavo in December 2012. The improvised raised platform is presumably to achieve height alignment for loading.

BELOW LEFT: A post barrow at Rigi Kaltbad in the summer of 2014.



SwissTip from Ron Smith

If you are in the Lac Genève area take a local train between Lausanne and Montreux and get off at Rivaz. This station is located on a ledge at the side of the Lac and the CGN's boats stop there too. Exit the station up to the main road that overshadows it, turn left (to the west), walk round the corner that juts over the track, and 5 minutes later you come to Lavaux Vinorama. This is the showroom for 150 local wine producers, which features some 280 different wines, superb free-of-charge wine tastings, and an audio-visual presentation. They even sell a wine called 'Chemin de Fer'! If you stagger back to the station only to find that you have to wait for one of the hourly local trains there is an excellent cafe restaurant across the road. 