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Sometimes not up to the usual standard!



MGB HGe 4/4 No. 106 waiting at Tschamut-Selva to be rescued, with the guard looking on.

Photos: Phil

Phil Weaver suffers a locomotive failure on the MGB

Last summer a friend and I enjoyed a great two-week Swiss holiday, primarily to 'do' the Gotthard Route during the final year of its present incarnation and for this we based ourselves in Goschenen, as it was central to everything we wanted to do. It also meant that we could have a few 'days off' to travel on other lines. On one such day, having never travelled on the RhB, we decided to go to Filisur to enjoy the famous railway infrastructure en-route. Everything went well until the return trip home. The locomotive hauling our train was MGB HGe 4/4 No.106 and just after we had passed Tschamut-Selva, and were within a couple of hundred metres of the avalanche shelter, we came to a very sudden stop. After about ten or fifteen minutes of trying to restart on the hill, the train began to go backwards down the hill (this is when you hope the rack and pinion works) and returned to Tschamut-Selva. The guard came through and told us that the locomotive had a problem and wouldn't be able to continue, as it appeared to have lost power in two of its motors. It apparently had become a HGe 2/4! He asked where we were going and as we were going to Goschenen he told us to stay on the train. He said other passengers would catch the train going the other way that had been held at Oberalp Pass and was now running about ten minutes late. As our train had extra carriages on, in the form of an open coach and a vintage coach, we were actually too long for the loops at Tschamut-Selva. This meant we had to set back to let the eastbound train enter and then shunt forward to let it out. About five or six other passengers had caught the other train, leaving us to find out that we were the only ones left, so we had the train to ourselves with two train crew. At about 17:30, some 40 minutes after we had failed, another locomotive

The two locomotives swapping over.

arrived in the shape of HGe 4/4 No.104 that had been sent from Disentis to rescue us. There now followed another couple of shunts back and forward, so that our locomotive could be removed and the new locomotive could be attached to our train. So, just 50 minutes after we broke down we were on our way again. Swiss efficiency, Britain take note. Also we were not locked in the train while this was all going on, but were free to get off and move around quite freely. Unfortunately our adventure was not quite over yet. As we were approaching Oberalp Pass the guard came to us and said that the train would terminate at Oberalp Pass and we would have to catch the following train, as obviously running to Andermatt with just two passengers would not be economical. As our train was scheduled to terminate at Andermatt to return to Disentis, reversing at Oberalp Pass made more sense, as it would also enable it to get its booked path back. Of course when the engine ran round, it also had to shunt back to let the following train get into the station. This service was now running about ten minutes late and the new guard told us we would probably not make the 18:28 service from Andermatt to Goschenen - and he was proved to be correct. As we pulled in to Andermatt our connection pulled out, so it was obviously not a guaranteed connection. The beer in the station buffet went down very well though! 

