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Variations on a theme by Stadler

Jason Sargerson



A MBC ABe 8/12 in the countryside near Yens. 04.06.16

Photos: Jason Sargerson

One of my objectives during my Swiss holiday this year was to sample and photograph the new narrow gauge units built by Stadler. I did manage to see six railways where the new units are operating and travel on four of them. Regular readers will recall from items in Swiss News, that to save costs Stadler was contracted by several of the narrow gauge operators to build similar units for each of them under one contract. The units are outwardly similar, being based on the three-car articulated body design already in use on the ZB-Zentralbahn (Class 160 'Fink'), BDWM-Bremgarten-Dietikon (Abe4/8) and FW-Frauenfeld-Wil (Abe4/8) although electrical equipment, interior layout, etc. will vary.

My first day in Switzerland was wet, so I travelled from Brig to Bern and on to Bulle to see the TPF-Transports Publics Fribourgeois. The new units are in full operation here, connecting Palézieux with Bulle and also running from Broc- Fabrique to Montbovon via Bulle. These units are three-car ABe 4/12, with a power rating of 1020kW, low floor access, toilet and air conditioning. I enjoyed the A YStC ABe 8/12 at Yverdon. 05.06.16


journey on one of these new units from Bulle to Montbovon, where I changed to the MOB to travel to Montreux and on to Vevey. At Vevey I travelled on the MVR-Montreux-Vevey-Riviera (ex. Chemins de fer électriques Veveysans) on a new two-car ABeh 2/6 unit to Blonay. I did intend going on to Les Pléiades to sample the rack operation on this section but it was still wet and cool, so waiting at the top station was not an option. These units have a power rating of 850kW, low floor access, toilet and air conditioning and with their Strub rack equipment they are able to cover the whole of the journey from Vevey to Les Pléiades. Leaving Montreux, I arrived at Aigle, still in the rain, to see the TPC-Transports Publics du Chablais where I was lucky to find a new two-car Beh 2/6 undergoing a training run. These units are similar to the MVR units, but with Abt rack equipment for the section from Monthey to Champéry.

The next day was brighter as I travelled to Nyon to see the NStCM-Nyon-St Cergue-Morez, where the line is being operated by the new two-car ABe 4/4 units with air

A MVR ABeh 2/6 stops at Blonay. 02.06.16



conditioning, toilet and low floor access. My train took me as far as Givrins before having to switch to a bus for a short hop, due to track being renewed. With typical Swiss efficiency the bus called at Genolier and then Arzier where I changed back to the railway, travelling in an older unit Be4/4 for the journey to St-Cergue. On the way back, in my haste to take photos of the new trains, I left my hat on the bus – realising this I got back to the bus to find the driver holding my hat up! I also visited the MBC-Morges-Bière-Cossonay only to find an older unit on my service at Morges. I took this train to Yens, where I waited for the opposite service, which was a new three-car unit ABe 8/12. These have more powered axles than the TPF units and have low floor access, toilet and air conditioning. It is intended that these new units will receive modern intermediate trailer-cars from the existing stock, hence the higher power rating. On another day, I set off to see the Aare Seeland mobil (ASm) and the line extension from Niederbipp to Oensingen. After travelling to Solothurn, I went to Yverdon to see the Yverdon Ste-Croix (YSteC). Here the new units are three-car ABe 8/12, similar to the MBC units. The old units were all stabled, so it appears the service here is operational with the new units.

My impressions of the new units are that the seats are not as comfortable as the older units, the rack fitted unit was noisy and although air conditioning will be very important in the summer, some windows that opened would have been useful. It appears that several train manufacturers are now not conforming to the first rule of the foot: comfortable seats! I am surprised that the NStCM didn't order three-car units as their line is very well patronised. Maybe a centre car can be added at a later date? Similarly, the TPC section from Aigle to Monthey is also busy, so three-car units will soon be needed. It is possible, when the TPC is fully harmonised, that they could use the two-car units running the rack sections from Aigle to Leysin and Monthey to Champéry and obtain three-car units for running the non-rack section from Monthey to Aigle and on to Les Diablerets. Overall, I believe the new units are a big step forward and with Swiss high standards of maintenance will probably be in service for thirty-years. 

A NStCM ABe 4/4 at the underground station at Nyon. 04.06.16



A TPF ABe 4/12 approaching Bulle. 02.06.16

A TPC Beh 2/6 at Aigle. 02.06.16



Where's Heidi? As it's nearly Christmas, this should be an easy one so as not to tax your brains too much. Where would you see these silos?

See page 43 for the answer. 