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Gotthard Route Problems

Reports in the Swiss press, where railway issues can make the front pages, have been frequent this summer, full of complaints, but often contradictory. Through Italian services have been heavily affected by various troubles. Many services have often been delayed in Italy, for example throughout the summer the Monza – Desio route was under heavy repair with 30-minute delays, and other operations have suffered from the non-availability of Class 610s and other diagrammed train sets. Apart from delays and missed connections, especially in Arth-Goldau, other strange situations frequently occur. One such scenario was on 24th August when a EuroCity (EC) service was worked by a Class 524 TiLO Flirt. This apparently kept time, albeit with a long uncomfortable ride and no refreshments. This service worked - some ECs have simply been cancelled. Reports indicate that the daily pairs Luzern-Milano EC 153/158, and Milano – Basel EC 310/311, have both missed a number of journeys. Alongside these problems with the important Italo-Swiss traffic, internal IR services over the old line have also been disrupted. This is perhaps unsurprising when considering the work in progress on the approach lines (Monte Ceneri and elsewhere), but there have been many other extraneous influences that have compromised current operations.

However, there are other potential issues waiting on the horizon. The construction of the Gotthard Base Tunnel (GBT) had been justified politically by diversion of highway traffic to rail. This diversion is increasingly a reality, as the successfully competing open-access freight operators all now want their trains to run through it. But post the political and planning stages, once the GBT became a reality, faster trans-alpine passenger services came to the fore and a minimum of two services/hour each way was considered necessary. Providing for these has reduced the potential capacity for freight operations as speed differentials have reduced the availability of freight paths. The GBT is approved for 250 km/h, but this only helps if trains can effectively use the speed. As today's available rolling stock is not yet up to this it may reduce available paths. Freight trains, once wildly optimistically planned for 120/160kph operation will scarcely manage 100kph at normal full loads. Indeed, they may suffer a load penalty or be reduced to operating at 80kph as parts of the tunnel have long steady grades of up to 1%. All this is much better than using the old mountain route, but such slow running again loses paths. Criticism is being voiced that the earlier promises of speeds and loads were too rash – in transport planning terms it appears that what is known as 'Optimum Bias' was used to justify the project. In other words the actual benefits were overstated to justify the costs! The recent unexpected decision to re-condition the almost 40 year old Class 620s (Re6/6) may be seen in this context as they will still give the best overall planned performance on GBT freight traffic, otherwise double-heading to handle normal loads at planned path speeds is likely. That was not the idea! These operating complexities are constantly changing and solutions will have to be found to ensure that

this 'Headline' project meets at least some of its full planned potential.

'Old' Gotthard Services Post-2016

In September the SBB announced its service pattern for the 'old' Gotthard route in 2017. From the timetable change on 11th December, the date when the new Gotthard Base Tunnel formally opens for traffic, SBB will operate a conventional RegioExpress (RE) service at hourly intervals on the old line between Erstfeld and Bellinzona. Alternate trains will go on to Lugano every two hours and this new RE operation is planned to offer convenient links with the Ticino S-Bahn operation. In addition to this all-year RE service there will be a seasonal '*Gotthard Panorama Express*', which will have panorama coaches and restaurant cars. This will run between Flüelen, Bellinzona and Lugano at weekends from 14th April to 30th June, becoming a daily service between 1st July and 22nd October. It is intended that this 'premium' service will be marketed internationally and run in conjunction with a dedicated Luzern-Flüelen lake steamer service. It is presumably intended that this will replace the former '*William Tell Express*'. Additionally the SBB will run a '*Gotthard Weekender*' service from Zürich to Bellinzona between April and October. This is intended to appeal to walkers, cyclists; etc., will be scheduled to stop at various stations on the old route and have plenty of space available for baggage and bikes. SBB has also indicated that it will offer additional direct services between Basel, Zürich and Göschenen at times when demand is likely to be heavy.

Before the new services have even started another suggestion has come into play. For some time the Südostbahn (SOB) has let be known its interest in providing a new service over the old Gotthard line. SOB's proposals two years ago were rejected as the SBB was seen to be the established operator and its proposals for the post-GBT operations were still unclear. However, despite the proposal above the SBB has done little in the meantime to show interest in developing the potential of the old route. In July 2016 the SOB presented its new proposals to run a regular-interval service between Basel and Lugano and Zürich and Lugano over the old Gotthard line. They combine this with a projected new service Zürich – St. Gallen – Chur. No decision can yet be expected, but the Federal Transport Office (BAV) expressed at least satisfaction that a bid was to be made, especially as the SOB considered that the service could be run commercially, whereas the SBB requires a heavy subsidy to operate its current proposals. Watch this space; there is surely more to come.

Class 620 (Re6/6) to be refurbished

SBB Cargo is to refurbish twenty five locomotives of the robust Class 620 (Re6/6) in its Bellinzona workshops between autumn 2016 and 2019. The Class 620 locomotives, the backbone of SBB Cargo, have reached an average age of 40 years. The refit, at a cost of CHF1.58m/loco, should extend their life for a further 15 years. The refit includes a complete renewal of all cables; repairs to the roof; servicing of the transformers; servicing of the bogies and installation of the newest ETCS systems. This refit replaces the expensive 3rd

stage revision. A decision will be taken later as to a refitting of further Class 620 locomotives, and this unplanned work reflects a general shortage of motive power that is highlighted by the following item.

BAV bans locos from Gotthard Base Tunnel

On 8th September Switzerland's Federal Office of Transport (BAV) confirmed that four types of modern freight locomotive will be banned from operating through the Gotthard Base Tunnel when it opens in December, due to problems with the functioning of ETCS Level 2 equipment. The BAV will not renew the temporary operating license for some thirty seven Bombardier Re 486, Re 487, Class 186 and Class 187 locomotives beyond November, due to "an accumulation of ETCS faults" on the northern and southern access routes to the tunnel. Most of the banned locos are owned by BLS Cargo and Crossrail. They may continue to operate if headed by a pilot locomotive. BAV has offered to assist Bombardier in seeking a solution to the problem that is apparently linked to "unforeseen forced braking".

MGB Suffers a Potentially disastrous Incident

A potentially disastrous incident occurred on 1st September on the Schöllenen Gorge section of the MGB between Andermatt and Göschenen. This section is a 3.7km long single line at a ruling grade of 18% with Abt rack throughout from the Andermatt station limits. The incident involved a regular move of four empty passenger vehicles being shunted in Andermatt using driverless Tm2/2 tractor No. 4972. Whilst left unsupervised, and for reasons not yet clear, the tractor and coaches ran away down the grade that was not protected with catch points. At a location in a snow gallery in the Schöllenen Gorge the composition derailed and became wedged-in, resulting in extensive damage. However, this impact and blockage avoided a collision with two passenger trains that were below the gallery and just above Göschenen station. At this stage it appears that the passenger vehicle vacuum brakes had been disconnected during shunting operations, so once on the move no braking of the coaches was possible, whilst the small diesel tractor was clearly inadequate to hold them on the gradient. The line was closed for 11 days and a substitute bus service was put into operation on the old Gotthard road. However, as the road through the gorge was under repair at the time, and traffic was regulated by temporary traffic signals, the delays were extreme. In this case it is unusual that the MGB did its best to suppress accurate information, and to attempt to chase off accredited journalists and photographers, even on the adjacent public road. Such action is neither legally justified, nor usual practice in Switzerland, and in the long term is self-defeating as all official investigation reports are subsequently placed in the public domain.

Léman Express moves forward

At a meeting in September the heads of both the SBB and SNCF signed an agreement to strengthen cross-border co-operation in the Greater Genève area, by merging the two teams responsible for the development of the planned Léman Express service. The new organisation will start work in the first

quarter of 2017 and will be disbanded when the network is operational. The main task of the new joint organisation is to ensure the new service starts on time, including the introduction of 23 Stadler 'FLIRT France' EMUs and 17 Alstom 'Régiolis Ceva' dual-voltage EMUs. Personnel training is a key issue although the two parent companies will retain responsibility for their individual staff. A joint subsidiary, Lémanis, will be founded to start work in 2017 to launch commercial operations and coordinate the operation of the network. Owned 60% by SBB and 40% by SNCF, it will be based in Genève and replace the study and marketing company Transferis set up in 2008 to progress the scheme.

Sissach – Olten reprieved again

This story is like the light in the fridge: always on or off. In Spring 2016 Canton Basel-Land, with severe financial problems, announced that their operational subsidy - and the trains - would stop in December 2016. A rather cheaper bus service, that would actually better serve the communities, would run between Sissach and Läfelfingen. The snag was that the trains run a further 8.5km from Läfelfingen to Olten in Canton Solothurn along this line (electrified and singled in the 1950s) that once was the original main route south from Basel. Incredibly Solothurn had not been consulted and irate, refused to play. Its section includes the 2.5km Hauenstein tunnel under a Jura ridge. Commuters into Olten use the service, as the road journey over the mountain is long and slow. Solothurn made clear that if the trains stopped a substitute bus service would cost much more than its present share of the train costs. The trains will therefore now run at least until Dec 2017. Joint negotiation is now in progress. This also is Swiss politics, but see it now to be safe.

SBB catering Plans

The SBB has announced more details of its plans for railway catering. The dining car fleet will be modernised over the coming years. In the 1st Class coach adjacent to the dining car a catering zone with at-place service will be established and the take away service will be improved. By 2021 SBB plans to have 120 dining cars in operation and offer catering on all Intercity and Eurocity trains. The first new style dining cars were scheduled to go into service at the end of September 2016. The menus will be completely revamped and the assortment of beers and wines on sale will be extended. Starbucks remains the main coffee partner and the SBB is looking for further big name partners. Beginning December 2017, as more and more dining cars enter service, the minibar service will step by step be reduced.

SBB Aem 940

The Aem 940 is a new heavy-duty diesel locomotive for SBB. The SBB's collection of elderly and diverse diesel locomotives, built from the 1950s onwards, are almost all gone. A few can be caught here and there, particularly the Bm4/4 still needed by the Infrastructure department, whose task includes not only maintenance and emergencies, but also traction in the last great marshalling yards. By 2019 SBB classes Am841, Am842, Am6/6, Ee6/6 II, Ee3/3 and Bm4/4 should

all be replaced by 47 Aem4/4 hybrid locomotives now on order from Alstom. These 4-axle multi-purpose locomotives will be powered either from an on-board diesel engine or from the o/h electric supply. The specification calls for 300kN tractive effort; 120kph maximum speed; 1600kW rating in electric mode; 900kW in diesel; up to 4 locomotives in multiple; centre cab and also remote radio control when in shunting use. Alstom has produced a modular design that may be of greater value to their sales department, as it is estimated the average age of medium range diesel locomotives on European railways was some 26 years in 2014. Many are much older.



No. 18821 Em3/3 at Landquart 17 12 2009. Photo: Bryan Stone

Tunnel progress

Work on the 3 km long Eppenbergtunnel, the key element of the new 4-track railway between Olten and Aarau continues to progress. At the end of August 2016 construction of the tunnel-boring machine commenced. The machine should commence work in December 2016 and break through early 2018. The tunnel is expected to be in service toward the end of 2020.

Sion Shuttle service suspended

On 23rd June 2016 PostBus Switzerland experimentally introduced two self-driving shuttles licensed for certain areas of the town of Sion. They are fully electric vehicles and prior to entering service were tested extensively on private land. They seat 11 passengers and can reach 20kph. Although self-driving, for safety reasons a driver is on-board to monitor operations. On 21st September, despite the presence of the driver, one of the shuttles was involved in an incident when it touched the open tailgate of a parked van. No one was injured and damage minor. Nevertheless, the experiment has been suspended until further notice, to allow PostBus Switzerland and the manufacturers to analyse the causes of the collision and take any necessary remedial measures.

Switzerland invades East Anglia ...

No, Switzerland's conscript army has not set up camp in Norfolk, but rolling stock manufacturer Stadler has been contracted to supply 383 vehicles to the NS subsidiary Abellio who have won a contract to operate the UK's Greater Anglia Railway Franchise until 2025. Along with a major order to the UK arm of multi-national train supplier Bombardier, the franchisee has ordered a selection of articulated FLIRT units from Stadler. These comprise 20 12-car electric main line

EMUs to operate between London and Norwich, Cambridge, and Stansted Airport and 14 3-car and 24 4-car electro-diesel MUs to work regional and local services around East Anglia. The new units are due for delivery between January 2019 and September 2020. It is probable that they will be built in one of Stadler's German facilities, but with many components coming from their Swiss plants. This is the Swiss manufacturer's first major incursion into the UK rolling stock market, although there is a small fleet of Stadler trams operating for TfL in Croydon, with more on order. Through its recently acquired Spanish subsidiary the company is also responsible for supplying trams in Nottingham and the small fleet of tram-train vehicles ordered for trial use around Sheffield.

... and arrives in California

Caltrans, who operate a 50 mile, high frequency rail route south from San Francisco to San Jose and the Silicon Valley, are to electrify the line at 25kV AC and have ordered 16 6-car units from Stadler for the start of the upgraded service in late 2020. They also have an option on a further 20 individual vehicles. To meet this order, and to increase their presence in the North American market, Stadler are opening a new manufacturing plant in Utah. To meet US laws any equipment supplied to transport operators through public funds has to have a majority of its content built in the USA, hence the reason that Stadler (plus Siemens and Japanese manufacturers before them) have built plants in that country.

SBB cuts ticket sales outlets

From 1st January 2018 SBB will discontinue ticket sales in Switzerland through third parties. The existing partnerships with Migrolino, Die Post, Valora and private station ticket offices will be discontinued. Sales through these channels are below 1% of total SBB ticket sales and cost the SBB around CHF5m annually in commissions. The decision has not been popular and it is seen as a further reduction of a public service. SBB argues that around 40% of tickets sold are Internet and Mobile App purchases. With the introduction of a new version of the Mobile App before the end of 2016 SBB expects even more tickets to be purchased in this manner. As ticket sales must represent a significant proportion of income for the Migrolino stores on unmanned SBB stations, one wonders if it will affect the long-term operation of these useful facilities.

Fuel cell finale

At the end of 2016 PostBus Switzerland will bring the five year project involving five hydrogen fuel cell PostAutos in the region of Brugg to an end. This has been reported in *Swiss Express*. PostBus has proven the everyday operation of routes with fuel cell vehicles is possible. PostBus was very upbeat about the project, part of the European project entitled Clean Hydrogen in European Cities (CIHC). After initial teething problems the buses were popular with both drivers and passengers and have covered a total of 1.2m km between them and cut 1,500 tonnes of CO2 emissions. Although technically it would be possible to continue operation without any problems, PostBus does not expect an extension of the project to provide further insight into technical issues or the vehicles'

operation. The end of the fuel cell project does not mean that PostBus is definitely departing from hydrogen-based technology. It was apparently because fuel cell PostBuses were not ready for series production that influenced the decision to end the CHIC project upon expiry of the initially planned period. PostBus will continue to closely monitor developments in fuel cell technology. One of its goals is to become independent of fossil fuels in the long term, although the hydrogen used in the fuel cells requires a lot of electricity, that has to be generated somehow, for it to be manufactured.

Coffee out – Beer in

It would appear that the Swiss prefer “Danish” beer to “American” coffee. From September the SBB was withdrawing from service its two bar coaches on the Genève-St Gallen that had been dedicated to being Starbucks’ coffee outlets, and converting at least one of them to a Carlsberg “Bierlounge”. The invidious spread onto the railway of outlets for a corporate American coffee brand appears to have been halted, as it seems that the two coaches were unpopular with travellers. However the introduction of a mobile outlet for a European brewing multi-national seems to have shown a lack of a potential initiative by SBB, to open-up the market for some of the growing range of Swiss craft beers and other locally-sourced food products.

Jungfraubahnen - Results show impact of International Terrorism

In its six-monthly statement published in September the Jungfraubahn Group noted that its operating revenues were some 7% down on the previous year, due to a ‘nervous’ international tourism market after the spate of terror attacks in Europe. The organization still managed its second-best ever first half-year passenger total of 376,100, but growth was lower than predicted and profits were some 27% down on the previous comparable sector. It appears that visitors from the Asian and Far-Eastern markets, which the company has set its sights on providing facilities for, are potentially more concerned about travelling in an uncertain security climate than visitors from older, more stable, markets had been in the past. Should these falls in passenger numbers prove to be more than a passing phase, it is suggested by outside observers that perhaps the JB’s current investment programme may need to be reconsidered.

Jungfraubahnen - Rolling stock news.

The four new BHe 4/8 units Nos.221-224 were delivered during the summer and on a press trip on 25th August a record run of just 25 minutes was made between Kleine Scheidegg and Jungfrauoch. All four went into service the next day. From the December timetable the journey times will be 34 minutes uphill, 35 minutes down. The earlier series BDHe 4/8 Nos.211-218 have been modified to work within the same schedules, whilst the oldest 200 Series units have now been withdrawn from public service, most being scrapped. With the new timetable a crossing at Eigerwand is not needed, and the traditional stop, where one could almost shake hands with the mountaineers outside on the North Wall, will no longer be

made. Progress? It will be missed. Also in the JB group, the BOB’s new units ABDeh 8/8 Nos.321 – 326 are due to be delivered from Stadler between Dec 2016 and May 2017. They should be in service for next summer’s timetable.

Bergbahn, Lauterbrunnen-Mürren

It is 10 years since this attractive 4.3km long tramway saw its Grütschalp-Lauterbrunnen funicular connection with the rest of the Swiss network, replaced with a new cable car operation, due to ground stability problems with the old installation. Although the double-deck cable car is adequate for passenger and general freight service, it is no longer possible to move whole or part rail vehicles for maintenance or replacement. As we reported in *Swiss Express* a couple of years ago, a second-hand reserve car acquired from the ASm had to come up the mountain on a special low-loader road vehicle designed to carry components to build or maintain cable car operations. This had to negotiate the Isenflüh road tunnel, and then climb to Winteregg, a hair-raising undertaking that cost ½ million francs. All the four cars in service are 50 years old, and museum piece BDe4/4 No.11 is also in the Grütschalp depot. In 2017 tenders will be invited for new vehicles, running at 40kph – today’s line speed is 30kph. Three units plus a reserve should then suffice. It is unclear how the new units will make the journey up the mountain this time. Also Mürren station is to be rebuilt and a train protection system, with signals, will finally be installed on the BLM. It is recommended that members should see the current operation before the changes. Ride up on the cable car; take the BLM to Mürren and then walk back (mainly gently downhill) on the parallel footpath, calling in at Winteregg on the way if strength fails! On a good day you will have the best view across the valley of the Weisse Lütschine of that great Swiss mountain, the Eigermönchundjungfrau.



No.31 at Mürren.

Photo: Bryan Stone

Delle-Belfort reopening

A few years ago the SBB reintroduced passenger services from Boncourt (1km short of the frontier) to Delle, just over the border in France, and operated the station as part of the Swiss network with an hourly RE service running from Basel. North of Delle the SNCF had long since withdrawn the passenger service to Belfort, on what was once one of the main

entry routes into Switzerland. Opened in 1877 this line was constructed to replace the former route that had fallen into Prussian hands, when that country had annexed Alsace in 1870 after its war with France. Although 12km from the border Porrentruy became a major frontier station with a heavy passenger and freight traffic, much of it with England. That is why the monumental station building stands there, which once housed rail staff, frontier guards, forwarding agents and customs officers. This route into Switzerland was exploited by the BLS, who in 1915 opened the 8.5km Grenchen tunnel under the Jura Massive to improve connections to the Bernese Oberland. The BLS still owns this isolated piece of their infrastructure along with Grenchen Nord station. Now the line in France is being restored in order to both improve mobility in the Greater Belfort area, and to give an interchange to the LGV Est at Belfort-Montélimar station 9km south of the city. It is anticipated that with through connections into Switzerland on the reopened route via Delle, this could prove a popular alternative to accessing the TGV network at Basel. The 20.5km of reconstructed route will cross the LGV line at a higher level, serving a station named Meroux that will be linked with stairs/lift/etc. to the station on the high-speed route. A curiosity is that the two stations will have different names, but since fares, reservations and ticket plans are not yet public, we can only wait to see how this works. Between February and August this year the SBB station at Delle was closed for reconstruction by the SNCF who have taken over ownership. The single platform has been replaced with three, while all the installations have been converted to French standards. During the closure the SBB provided a little used replacement bus service. SBB services recommenced serving the facility on 29th August. At the south end of the station, just 400m from the Swiss frontier, trains from Boncourt are now controlled by a standard SNCF entry signal on a post that also carries a standard SBB 'Home' (or entry) signal to Boncourt for southbound trains. The full reconstruction is scheduled to be completed during 2017, with a through Delémont – Belfort service commencing at the December 2017 timetable change. The Swiss RE service will presumably then terminate at Porrentruy.

Italian connections

The Italian railway infrastructure manager RFI recently announced that it would be allocating some €3 billion for upgrades to connections between Italy and Switzerland. One of the first routes to benefit will be the completion of the international link between Arcisate and Mendrisio. On the Swiss side of the border the line between Mendrisio (on the Lugano-Chiasso main line) and the frontier at Stabio was opened in late 2014 and used by TiLo services S40 and S50, with the expectation that the route down into Italy would follow shortly after. This link is now programmed to open sometime in 2017. Capacity improvements are also planned on the lines from Milano to Chiasso as well as between Novara-Luino and Novara-Domodossola. In a parallel move at Domodossola the Italian Piemonte Region has recently granted a 5 year contract (2017-2022) to the BLS to operate the stopping service from there to Iselle di Trasquera, then through the Simplon Tunnel to Brig, calling at Preglia and Varzo

en-route. At the moment the service is limited to only 25 return trips each week, but the Region has plans to increase the service to hourly in 2018, linking it into the Swiss network. A parallel bus service currently runs at an approximately 90 minute headway. SBB subsidiary RegionAlps currently run an hourly non-stop Brig-Domodossola IR service.

Thusis station

This RhB station is now fully operated by young trainees, who handle all operations including passenger and tourism enquiries, as well as being trained for action with emergencies. This concept is also in application at Langenthal on the SBB. It is an integral part of the official training courses for transportation recruits, typical of Swiss professional training in most branches of employment, and is a powerful step towards their Federal Diploma at completion. Customers seem satisfied, and can scarcely complain of lack of enthusiasm.

And you thought the Swiss were honest...

In 2015 the number of travellers lacking a ticket during ticket checks on SBB/CFF trains reached 460,000. Some 80% of them received a fine, but this was paid in only 33% of cases. At the end of 2015 a total of more than 300,000 fines were outstanding to a value of many millions of Swiss Francs. Information from SBB/CFF shows that between 2% and 3% of travellers lacking a valid ticket were attempting to travel on a counterfeit one.

New BLS workshops

A choice of preferred site for the new workshop has been made. The location will be slightly to the west of, and just outside, the city of Bern. The first proposals, as reported in *Swiss Express*, were fiercely opposed by local interests and an independent committee was set up to report on the alternatives. The works at Bönigen, near Interlaken East, will be retained and Spiez will be enlarged. The Bern depot seems to be a good compromise.

SBB Expenditure review

In September 2016 SBB announced the next stage of the programme "RailFit 20/30", which is intended to fulfil SBB "Strategy 2020". Over 400 measures have been evaluated and some 300 will be realised. Savings of CHF1.2 billion by 2020 versus costs in 2014 are foreseen. These are broken down as follows: CHF470m personnel costs resulting from 1,400 jobs being lost across all divisions; CHF400m reduction in expenditure for maintenance, materials, IT, etc.; CHF300m reduction in investment costs, and CHF30m in additional salary costs. This is a very ambitious programme, but the SBB is hopeful that it can be achieved with the minimum of redundancies.

Motive Power News

Big engines (1): The C5/6 2-10-0s, built by SLM in 1917, were briefly, before electrification, the pride of the Gotthard. They survived as heavy-duty locomotives until the 1960s and

several are preserved. Readers know No.2978, of SBB Historic, which hauled a steam special on the old line as part of the Gotthard Base Tunnel opening ceremonies. As we have reported, in Sulgen (SG), an Eurovapor team is restoring No.2969. Despite fearsome setbacks, including the depot fire in Interlaken where the frame and running gear were restored, they are nearly there. It might steam in 2017

Big engines (2): In 2015 BLS had ordered 15 'Vectron' Bo-Bo locomotives from Siemens. The first two Class 475 Nos.401 and 402 were delivered in April 2016, 13 months after ordering, and Nos.403 and 404 were on trial in mid-September on the Rhône Valley 'Sudrampe' of the old BLS line. No.405 is due this year and five are to be delivered in both 2017 and 2018. (See P18)

Big engines (3): BLS Loco Re4/4 No.69 was severely damaged by an electrical explosion while working near Hohen. It will not be repaired as these engines (No.69 was an older survivor) are being progressively withdrawn.

Small engines (1): Ballenberg Dampfbahn, ex Brünig, G3/4 No.208 was still not ready this year to work the planned specials, especially disappointing being the centenary of the opening from Brienz to Interlaken. Trains were worked by loaned Appenzeller Bahn (formerly RhB) G3/4 No.11. No.208, severely damaged in the Interlaken Depot fire, is still making good progress, and will soon be back.

Small engines (2): On 11th June a Chur – St Moritz express, due at 10.45, ran late into Samedan, and the 10.48 connection to Pontresina had gone. As this is not unusual, a reserve train with a path at 11.08 is kept. On this day, the reserve was the historic train; with steam loco G3/4 No.14 'Heidi' at the head which ran on time to Pontresina, and made the waiting connection for Tirano.

Small Engines (3): Have you wondered why there is no No.8 on the Brienz-Rothorn-Bahn? There was once: it was the first BRB diesel-hydraulic locomotive, and was later sold to the Rochers de Naye line (MVR) as No 4 to run works trains. Badly damaged in 2010, it was repaired and has now been sold to the Monte Generoso (MG) line in Ticino, also for works trains. The MG is closed at present as its upper station is being completely rebuilt. It should operate again in 2017.

Metre Gauge engines (1): RhB: Ge4/4 No.602, which as we reported was rescued from the Transport Museum at Luzern (VHS), is now in regular service. The Ge4/4s (three engines in service) and the Ge6/6 II (the 700 series) may be

seen on many jobs, but central is the need to operate the spoil and material trains for the new Albula tunnel.

Hans Amacker (1954-2016)

Hans Amacker, the Director/Chairman of Rhätische Bahn (RhB), sadly died in Olten Hospital on the 3rd July.


He moved to the RhB in 2011 from Regionalverkehr Bern-Solothurn (RBS) and in his short period with the company was responsible for the introduction of many new projects. He was a well-liked 'people-person' who always kept good contacts and relations with all the RhB staff, and where possible with his customers.

One of the highlights of his short period with the company was the jubilee year 2014 when the RhB celebrated its 125th anniversary and the Chur-Arosa line its 100-years. In spring 2015 he was forced to relinquish his role at the RhB because of a major illness. Swiss railways have lost a major personage who represented public transport in a very positive and forthright manner. He will be sorely missed by both his family, and the Swiss railway community.



Hans Amacker liked contact with people. He is shown presenting a prize to a young person during the open days at Landquart in the RhB125 celebrations in 2014. Photo: Mario Gavazzi

A smile – or spotting the deliberate mistake...

On 30th July the SBB Customer Service website helpfully announced that an afternoon train from Kleine Scheidegg to Jungfrauoch would not stop at Eigergletscher. The reason given was that the train was being diverted. Hmmm. Look at the map, and reflect on the nature of the Jungfraubahn! 

Swiss News is compiled by Bryan Stone and includes input from Robert Amstutz, Mario Gavazzi, Michael Donovan, Glyn Jones, s'Murmeli, and others.

SwissTip: -Ticino from Trevor Gaunlett

This came to nothing but until this happens the Arcobaleno Abbonamento is the best option. A week-long ticket for the whole of Ticino costs CHF100 with a Swiss Card and gives free bus, with a very few PostAuto exceptions, and train travel in Ticino and the Moesano – the Val Mesolcina area of Graubünden. It also gives also discounts on other transport options not covered by the Swiss Card/Pass, such as reduced price "commuter" journeys on SLN boats on Lake Lugano and the funivia cableway up to Monte Lema. Passes can be purchased for longer periods, but require a photo card at additional cost. 