

Zeitschrift: Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal
Herausgeber: Swiss Railways Society
Band: - (2017)
Heft: 131

Rubrik: Swiss news

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 23.01.2026


ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

Ireland, where he served until 1885. His military duties must have been light during his career as he became involved in numerous philatelic studies in all the locations where he served and wrote many papers and articles about his research and collections. By 1875 he was elected a member of the Royal Philatelic Society becoming a member of its Council from 1891 to 1900. He apparently was always known as Major Evans, never Edward Evans or Mr. E.B. Evans. Leaving the army he edited the 'Stanley Gibbons Monthly Journal' from 1891 to his retirement in 1914. It is also on record that in 1914 Major Evans had sold his notable collection of stamps of the American Confederate States. Could it be that anticipating his retirement from his editorial role, and having acquired money from the sale, he opted to go on a trip to Switzerland, something that he may not have had the time or money to take previously? We may never know but it is quite possible that the philatelic world's Major Evans could have been the 'Maj. Evans' the 1914 Ticket Book was issued to. If so, as an inveterate collector it is highly likely that he would have kept the little object after the unplanned disruption of the homeward journey.

The PTA's papers are now held in the archives of Westminster University. With more time it could be possible to access these to see if the booking records exist for the participants in 'Section B, Tour 3' that left London around the 17th July, during the fateful summer of 1914. If so did they include the well-known philatelist, and possibly even his wife? Perhaps I have spent enough time on this already! Regarding the Ticket Book itself it is understood that European railways were still issuing similar



Hotel Baur au Lac in Zurich in 1939. Photo: MRC Collection
books of tickets/coupons for use by individuals and tour parties up to the early 1960s. Branches of large international travel agents often held sets of pre-printed pages with their fixed itineraries in stock to be made up into something similar to our 1914 example.

The author wishes to thank Bob Medland (for setting this hare running), Bryan Stone (for his knowledge of railways in Prussian-ruled Alsace), Michael Farr (for his expertise in railway ticketing) and my wife Elizabeth (for her unerring ability to trace people through the internet). Thanks also to Richard Donithorn for allowing me to quote extracts from the HPS 'Newsletter', and for agreeing to the reproduction of this article that first appeared in his journal. 

Swiss News

Ten Years of the Lötschberg Base Tunnel

On the 15th June the BLS's 35km long Lötschberg Base Tunnel was 10-years old. In that period the tunnel has become an integral part of both the Swiss and European rail network. The tunnel is controlled from Spiez, both operationally and technically. There are 146 Video cameras and some 2,200 detectors installed through its length to monitoring safety and train running. The growth in traffic generated by the tunnel is remarkable. Prior to its opening some 7,600 passengers used the Lötschberg route each day. With journey times between central Switzerland and the Valais cut by one hour the current daily passenger flow is some 13,000. The increase in freight traffic is even more dramatic; a rise of 408% to 33m net tonnes of cargo transported between the planning reference year of 1999 and 2016. In the ten years since opening the BLS reported that 314,814 trains passed through the base tunnel of which only 0.1% was delayed for technical tunnel malfunctions. There were other delays because of train defects.

The tunnel is now being used at its capacity limit. Some freight trains are now regularly routed via Kandersteg and through the old tunnel. However, due to an ill-advised political decision at the project's planning stage, only 14km of the 35km were completed as double track and the need to complete the job is now recognised as urgent. Another 14km of tunnel was

excavated but left without technical installations; and a further 7km of tunnel has still to be bored. Advanced work on this now essential project, is well advanced and in June the Federal administration approved the next part of the process by granting 'Planning Credits' to the project.



Vintage BLS Blue Arrow enters the old Lötschberg tunnel at Goppenstein. Photo: Roy Marriott

Side by side

Thoughts on two news items from the 18th May 2017

'Yesterday morning a train arriving in Schlieren damaged the

catenary, so that this fell onto another train. Services on the routes Zürich – Aarau – Olten – Bern und Basel were completely suspended and could only be partially resumed in the late afternoon. SBB could not confirm when normal service could be resumed' and 'A serious fatal accident occurred yesterday on the A2 (motorway) northbound lanes between Quinto, TI, and Airolo, TI. A heavy goods vehicle from Aargau ran into another, which had stopped as traffic was held up. The driver of the Aargau truck was found dead. The subsequent traffic jam reached back to Biasca'.

Although Switzerland has, as its highway authority reports, a high and rising standard of highway safety, there is still considerable room for improvement. Although falling, motor vehicle crashes resulting in injuries or death are still occurring and are often caused by inattention (using mobile phones, fatigue etc.); alcohol and drugs, and inappropriate speed. Injuries and deaths of E-bike users are increasing. Highway congestion is now an everyday matter. Although public opinion resists new motorways, some major new works, such as widening at critical locations, are in hand. They add to the short-term problems, without necessarily offering long-term improvement. Rail service disturbances are, mercifully still rare, though capacity problems increase steadily. Troubles with digital systems and signalling problems are everyday news for the press. Increasingly troublesome are the extensive engineering works, but they are inevitable; however, arrears of maintenance had also accumulated embarrassingly. Readers should have no illusions - Switzerland is a land of travel where, we are told, more daily commuters use public transport than private, but rapidly increasing demand for mobility is challenging politics, finance and space.

Swiss Rail Industry News - Stadler

A contract between Stadler and Caltrain, in the US State of California is has now been confirmed. It is for the construction of 16 double-deck train-sets for the Silicon Valley commuter line, between San Francisco and San José for entry into service in 2020. This busy, but run-down diesel-powered line, serving a rapidly growing and prosperous region, is to be electrified and modernised. The contract value for Stadler is US\$551m. Concern regarding the contract had been caused by the administrative turmoil following the US Presidential election. Such pending works could not be confirmed until the post-election Department of Transportation was able to authorise its funding for such projects nominally already under contract. Stadler had avoided delay by an interim agreement with California's State Government, which allowed project work to continue. Stadler will now build an assembly plant in the State of Utah, to meet the 60% 'local assembly' added-value requirement of the 'Buy America' Act.

As a company Stadler is presently optimistic as to the future. This is reflected in the punctual 'Giruno' roll-out on May 2017 of the first of a fleet of 250kph low-floor (step free from conventional platforms) EMUs for SBB Gotthard base tunnel services (see picture of prototype 501 001). These 11-car 202m long units will have 117 1st Class and 288 2nd Class seats along with multi-functional areas, space for bicycles, large luggage racks, and separate male and female toilets. They will be able to operate in Germany, Austria and Italy as well as Switzerland.

The launch of the 'Giruno' (Buzzard) units is part of a

successful on-going programme, with an order book volume in mid-2017 of around CHF5 billion. Rolling stock (the first Swiss mainstream equipment to come to the UK) for two of our Train Operating Companies is included in that figure. Stadler claims to be the fifth biggest rolling stock constructor worldwide. Owner Peter Spuhler insists that his success, in a high-cost country and with over 50% of products exported, reflects innovative high quality products and specialist solutions, but also rigorous cost reduction by use of modular product families.

Swiss operator BLS has also ordered 58 new single-deck train sets from Stadler. These are 6-car units based on the FLIRT platform for delivery between 2021 and 2026, planned for Regional Express services (30 units) and for the Bern S-Bahn (28 units). At CHF650m it is the biggest rolling stock order ever placed by the BLS. In addition, options were signed for a further 82 units in various configurations. The RE sets are for the lines Bern-Neuchâtel-La Chaux de Fonds, Bern-Kandersteg-Brig/Zweisimmen, and a new service Bern-Konolfingen-Thun. On entering service the new equipment will enable the withdrawal of 43 older trains from the EW III, RBDe 565 and RBDe 566 fleets, with the first arrivals of the new units scheduled for 2021.



501 001 - the new Stadler HST at Spiez. Photo: Bryan Stone

Swiss Rail Industry News – Bombardier

Bombardier, in Switzerland a fierce rival of Stadler, is sharply reducing its labour force worldwide, with the result that some 650 jobs in Zürich and Villeneuve will be lost. Bombardier insists that this has no influence on the now seriously delayed delivery of the SBB's Class 502 double-deck Inter-City trains. Twenty three of these, originally expected in 2013, are being delivered for trials in 2017 (see SE No.129), of which some could enter service in the December timetable. Delivery of the last of the series, which includes three additional units as penalty for late delivery, is due in 2020. Bombardier is also involved in deliveries of trams in Basel and Zürich.

Gotthard Base Tunnel

Since the full service came into operation with the December 2016 timetable change, passenger journeys on the Gotthard route have increased by over 30%. Although a programme of extra trains ran at Christmas and Easter, as well as over Ascension and Whitsuntide (all public holidays), it was not always possible to avoid overcrowding. It is reported that some 700 passengers on 12 trains (out of over 1000) had to leave northbound trains at Bellinzona and take following trains, as use of emergency exits

(obligatory in the base tunnel) could not be assured should there have been a problem. SBB is steadily, in the face of rolling stock shortages, increasing capacity, and we are told that by the next timetable change in December 2017 such problems should no longer occur. The main problem is that the new services are so good; it is now very tempting, also for your News Editor, to have a day out in Lugano. We would, however, avoid the obvious peak days, although motorists regularly turn out at holiday times to sit in 12km traffic queues on the Gotthard motorway!

BLS v SBB – An operating ‘Civil War’?

The opportunity given by the Federal Ministry of Transport to enter competing bids for future operating concessions (these require to be submitted in September 2017), has opened up a rivalry between the two main service providers. SBB is adamant that there is no room for competitors on its main routes. It has published analyses of profitability to show how tightly its operations are integrated in order to ensure productivity and cost control. However BLS, which once ran a considerable intercity passenger service of its own, has published a map of its new intentions. Since these extend from Romanshorn to Lausanne, as well as from La Chaux-de-Fonds and Basel to Brig and Interlaken, opportunity for conflict is apparent. Discussions broke off in spring 2017, but these were due to start again in June. In the interim BLS has been in conversation with the Cantons and Federal Authorities to test its position. By winter 2017 we may know more.

Alpine Transit Freight

In 2016 Transalpine freight reached 40m tonnes. Of this 71% was carried by rail. The number of transalpine heavy goods vehicle movements fell by 3.4% to 975,000, further significant progress towards the legal targets set by the Alpine Initiative some 20 years ago.

● SBB 1 – Operating the Jura line

The twin services along the ‘Base Line’ at the foot of the Jura Massive (Zürich – Genève and Basel – Lausanne) have been worked for 20 years by the very popular and reliable Class 500 ICN (‘Neigezug’, or tilt) units. Early drafts of the timetable for December 2017 suggest that these units will no longer serve these routes. Two questions: what then? Perhaps the Bombardier 502s; and where might the 500s go? They have been extensively used in recent years on the Gotthard route. Watch this space.

● SBB 2 - Double track in the Laufental

The Basel – Delémont line is mostly single track, winding through the Laufen valley alongside the river Birs. It is an acute bottleneck. The Canton Basel-Land has voted to advance CHF 126 m to enable a start in 2019 on 4 km of double track, and removal of level crossings, between Grellingen and Duggingen, to give greater capacity for Basel region commuter trains and to speed up the intercity trains to Lausanne and Genève. This is a political procedure which allows work to start, with the assurance that the national infrastructure budget will refund the money in its next round.

● SBB 3 - ECTS Level 2 between Lausanne and Villeneuve

With the signalling installations east of Lausanne towards Villeneuve being mostly some 60 years old renewal was urgent.

Since 23rd April 2017 the section is now controlled from a remote electronic signalling centre in Vevey (Type Elektra 2), which is in turn controlled from the regional centre in Lausanne. By 2025 ECTS Level 2 should be Swiss standard. This installation was thus timely, but as always, conversion to ECTS requires flanking measures; in particular all power and driving units must be equipped with ECTS signalling. By the 28th April the installation was functioning as planned.

● SBB 4 - Rolling stock overhaul

A large number of standard Intercity double-deck coaches (some 341) built between 1997-2004 are to be overhauled and modernised in the Olten workshops at a cost of CHF300m. This should ensure a useful life up to 2036-2043. The interiors will be completely refitted. This work goes with a R3 major overhaul due at 7m km. The work will extend from 2019 to 2025.

● BLS 1 - Saane Viaduct renewal

The single-track Saane Viaduct near Gummenen, on the Bern – Neuchâtel line, is a national monument and a well-known structure. Built in 1901, it spans the Saane and low-lying fields over a length of 400m. Frost damage has been observed both on the trackbed and in the stonework piers, and the steel girder section is now at its age limit. The BLS plans to restore it in a three-year project, starting in Autumn 2018, at a cost of CHF45m. This figure also includes providing a second track. The work practically adjoins the on-going building of the double-track Rosshäusern-Tunnel, and working synergies are expected.

● BLS 2 – Original Lötschberg Tunnel

The track in this tunnel, built in 1913 between Kandersteg and Goppenstein, is now 40 years old and for over 25 years carried very heavy traffic. It is now due for replacement. Although the Base Tunnel carries most through traffic, the summit tunnel of the old line is still busy; the automobile shuttle trains run every few minutes in the busy seasons, and a substantial part of the north-south freight also uses this route ‘over the top’. There is also the regular hourly ‘Lötschberger’ EMU working each way, which has built up a substantial local and tourist traffic. The BLS is to replace the trackbed and rails, between 2018 and 2022. A concrete trackbed is to be laid, assuring a longer life and also giving better loading gauge clearances, at a cost of CHF83.5m. This work is unusually important because intermodal freight trains carrying 4m profile loads (trucks and semi-trailers) had only a single track available in the tunnel, but will in future be able to use the route on double track. Worth noting is that total track capacity for freight trains, even after the opening of the Gotthard Base Tunnel, is still likely to be a scarce resource.

● BLS 3 – Revised Operating Network

It is understood that with the advent of its fleet of new rolling stock (see earlier item), the BLS is investigating the potential for a major revision of its current RegioExpress network of services. The current plan is to link the present separate services, all to operate at a 30 minute frequency. The routes suggested are: Solothurn-Burgdorf-Bern-Fribourg-Bulle; Lausanne-Payerne-Murten-Bern-Langnau-Luzern; Le Locle-Neuchâtel-Bern-Spiez-Zweisimmen or Brig/Domodossola; Biel/Bienne-Bern-Thun;

Bern-Burgdorf-Langenthal-Olten; Zweisimmen-Spiez-Interlaken.

● RhB - A better year

The RhB achieved an increase of 4% in passenger journeys, and 3% in passenger/km, in 2016. After slight falls in recent years this was welcome. Passenger revenue was CHF94.8 million and early results for the first months of 2017 are also promising. Freight income was CHF14.7 million, also a slight increase. Another CHF14.7 million was earned in automobile traffic through the Vereina tunnel where 464,000 vehicles were carried. The World Ski Championships held at St Moritz in February 2017 added to this year's good start. The RhB also notes a recovery in tourism after recent years, although here outside influences such as exchange rates are less predictable.

● TRAVYS

As previously reported in *Swiss Express* southwest regional operator TRAVYS is considering abandoning freight service on its routes between Yverdon-Ste Croix (after the loss of a major sugar beet contract), Vallorbe – Le Brassus and Orbe-Chavornay. The latter may surprise many as there is a busy traffic of containers to an industrial complex, plus Nestlé company trains, but the route will soon be converted to 15Kv ac, as part of the Lausanne suburban network. Other train operators can then operate direct from the mainline at Chavornay.

● Monte Generoso Bahn

This Abt rack railway starting in Capolago, Ticino, has been closed for two years while the summit station was rebuilt. It re-opened with regular services on 8th April 2017, and has also run several steam trains. It was one of the SLM 'standard' Abt rack railways built in Switzerland, of which Brienz Rothorn Bahn, Schynige Platte, Wengenalp-Bahn and others were opened around the same time. Success was not immediate and insolvency threatened regularly. However, in 1941 the Migros organisation bought the railway after another closure, and re-opened it in 1942 with steam power, lasting to 1953 when diesel, not electric, traction took over. Electrification came in 1982, again after threatened closure, and since then it has survived. Migros has invested in total over CHF17m in the MGB. As your News Editor has never ridden on it, it's now high time - but it's a long way from northwest Switzerland, although the Gotthard base Tunnel has shortened travel times (see above).

● Rigi Bahn

After many years of work the Rigi Bahn station at Arth Goldau was finally reinstated in a more convenient location for the thousands of passengers who interchange here, following the completion of changes to the high level bridge over the main line platforms. It was officially opened on the 1st July.

● MOB

Sadly for many, the familiar but 50-year-old ABDe8/8 Series 4000 – 4004 will be withdrawn this year. A parade took place above Montreux of the whole fleet, on 17th April 2017. The use of these units as relief capacity during Summer 2017 will end after the Lenk steam days during the w/e of 2nd/3rd September.

● Pilatusbahn

This mountain rack railway, originally steam-worked, was

electrified in 1937. The rolling stock dates mostly from then. Members are warned that a project is in hand, to develop 'new concepts' which should in 2022 replace the present operations. What this involves is not clear, but a visit now is surely to be recommended. The Pilatusbahn starts at Alpnachstad on the Zentralbahn. It is the steepest of all rack railways, and has a unique rack system, by Locher, with centre rail and lateral cogwheels. It is also, especially in the upper part, a spectacular journey in the cliff face.

Basel

A massive and interesting project is nearer reality. Basel SBB is effectively a terminal station for both the SBB and SNCF, although a few trains to/from France do run through. Most trains must reverse. Capacity is practically exhausted, and yet passenger demand rises all the time. It is proposed that a new line from the SBB station should be built, first heading westwards then tunnelling and curving north under the historic old city, serving an underground city station, before passing under the Rhein. This would be followed by a station in the industrial district before it joined the DB Rhein valley line in a triangular junction north of the DB Basel Badischer Bahnhof. The connection should allow passage of long-distance trains (the DB IC trains) heading north into Germany. The initial cost estimate is CHF2 billion. Views in Bern are sympathetic, but competition for the money is fierce. Regular readers of this column will know that there is no shortage of expensive infrastructure projects being promoted, and Luzern's through connections would also have priority amongst those competing for investment.

Accident Updates

The low-speed derailment outside Bern HB on 29th March 2017 of a BLS Class 525 unit, was apparently caused by a fatigue failure in the 'foot' of a point (switch) blade, according to the SBB a previously unknown form of failure. The derailment of a Trenitalia ETR 610 in Luzern on 22nd March that resulted in serious disruption (see the June *Swiss Express*), currently remains unexplained. There appears to have been no track failure, operating feature, or vehicle defect, which could directly have caused the derailment. This lack of an obvious cause for the incident is of course very disturbing, resulting in investigations now being concentrated on a possible combinations of factors.

Repair Updates

Steam railcar CZm 1 / 2 No.31, damaged in a July 2016 collision at Sihlbrugg, is back in service after repairs at the RhB workshops in Landquart. It ran an inaugural trial through Zürich, Bülach, Koblenz and Brugg on 23rd April 2017. Ballenberg G 3 / 4 No 208, also repaired in Landquart after the disastrous fire in Interlaken in 2013, is almost ready to return to service but too late for a summer season along the Brienzersee.

Südostbahn (SOB) Triebwagen No.5 needs help

When the SOB changed from steam traction to electric powered trains in the late 1930s, the company ordered eight railcars CFZ4 4/4s for the passenger service. In May 2002 the association Verein Historischer Triebwagen 5 was founded in Einsiedeln to preserve the remaining unit of this class. The members and their friends are doing all possible to restore this historic railcar, which is a good example of the technology

of electrification in the period of the 1930s and 1940s. Good progress on this project has been made in recent years on No.5, which is located in a depot of the Dampfbahnverein Zürich Oberland DVZO at Wald. One group of members helps in this depot, whilst others try to support the reactivation with public relations (TV, radio, newspapers). For more information please have a look at the website www.triebwagen5.ch. Any help from SRS Members would be appreciated by the group.



Photo: Mario Gavazzi.

The Centenary of a Historic Journey

The very secret journey made in 1917 by Lenin, from his Swiss exile back to Russia, has been celebrated by a special, worked by A3/5 No.705 from Zürich to Konstanz. Contemporary research has shown that, contrary to legend, on 8th April 1917 Lenin first took a normal train (the 14.58 from Zürich) to Schaffhausen where, after frontier formalities, his party took a train of the Baden State Railway using a private coach. After more controls the party left Switzerland via Konstanz, and with the coach now sealed (Russia and Germany were at war), it travelled through Germany via Frankfurt and Berlin to the Baltic port of Sassnitz. On 11th April they took the ferry to neutral Sweden, where taking Swedish trains to the north, they used a Finnish train from Tornio to reach Tampere, and finally on to Petrograd (once Leningrad, today St Petersburg) arriving on 16th April 1917. A memorial coach is exhibited at Sassnitz, but this is not authentic. This was a political move in an attempt to destabilise the Russian regime with the aim of bringing an early end to hostilities between the two countries. One wonders what would have happened if the Swiss had refused to let Lenin travel?

Alfred Escher

This 19th C. railway personality, not always popular in his time, was to be found this summer riding the trains! We met him between Brugg and Basel (see photo). His current persona is a carving in oak, part of a nationwide programme to raise public awareness of Swiss wood.



Alfred Escher.

Photo: Bryan Stone

Highway projects

As noted earlier in *Swiss News*, as well as investing heavily in new rail projects, the Federal Government is also funding some major highway improvement projects. In the coming years some of these may impact on Members who choose to travel to and in Switzerland by car. On 21st June 2017 the drilling of a third Belchen road tunnel was started. This tunnel lies on the Basel Land/Solothurn cantonal border, where the A2 Autobahn running south from Basel (and Germany and France) burrows under an outlying ridge of the Jura Massive. The present twin-bore four-lane tunnel complex opened in 1970 and it is planned that the new bore will be opened in 2021. This is a necessity (as with the improvements to the Gotthard Autobahn tunnel) to ensure that when the planned overhaul of the existing bores is in progress at least two tunnels out of three will be available on this important link in the national road network. At present some 55,000 vehicles pass through daily, and on 100 days each year there is congestion with standing traffic. It isn't the worst location; all around Zürich traffic congestion is acute. On the A1 at Wallisellen, traffic is jammed every day of the year as an average daily flow of 140,000 vehicles attempts to use this route. A slightly lower average daily flow of 120,000 vehicles uses the A2 east of Basel, with acute congestion from the mix of local, regional, long haul and international transit traffic. Swiss traffic growth in 2016 was 4.2%, higher than in many other European countries.

The Federal Highway Department - ASTRA - has various projects, including additional running lanes (the Swiss Autobahn network was built to 1970 planning standards with only two-lanes each way), experimental use of the emergency lane, and some substantial new works. Another current project on the A2 south of Basel is the provision of additional lanes between Harkinggen and Wiggertal, i.e. between the Belchen Tunnels and the Gotthard Autobahn near Olten. Overall, the present planning will not be enough. A capacity improvement of about 12% can be achieved by imposing 80kph limits on congested

sections of the network as against the normal upper limit of 120kph. This is achieved as at lower speeds less road space is taken-up by safety gaps left between vehicles by drivers, with no detriment to overall safety. However this easy short-term gain can raise political opposition from the right-wing automobile lobby, who campaign for investment in major new roads not just 'improvements', although even if politically approved these take many years to implement.

A 'convenient' way to travel!

The Swiss National YodelerFest occurs every three years and in 2017 took place in Brig. This brought around 150,000 people to the town over the weekend it took place in June. The MGB train, on which member Ron Smith travelled down from Morel to Brig, was so crowded that, as you can see from the photograph, the generous dimensions of the Persons with Reduced Mobility toilet, formed a useful addition to the available space. It was all good-natured. *Hopefully no one had the need to use the facilities en-route! Editor.*



Crowded train Morel to Brig 25.6.17.

Photo: Ron Smith

Late News

This Swiss News feature was compiled at the end of June. However in July, whilst we were still putting the magazine together, news came through from Switzerland that SBB had



Brig Yodeler Festival.

Photo: Roy Marriott

announced that, should its application to renew its concession be successful, it was willing to pass the operation of several Inter Regional (IR) services to the Sudostbahn (SOB). It is reported that these are: Bern-Burgdorf-Zürich; Zürich-Chur; Basel-Luzern-Erstfeld; and Zürich-Erstfeld-Göschenen-Bellinzona. If the award decision is confirmed at the end of the year, and the transfer of these services to the SOB does come to fruition, this will impact on the moves by the BLS, reported elsewhere in this Swiss News, to seek an expansion of its operations. It could be seen that this is a 'spoiling' move by the SBB to trim the expansionary wings of the BLS, and that the SBB feels it is safer to 'get-into-bed' with the smaller operator than risk losing larger parts of the network to its bigger rival. Railway politics appear to be alive and well in Switzerland! If the SOB does achieve this large expansion of their operations it is also reported that they would place an order for 20 additional FLIRT units from Stadler. Given this rolling-stock constructor's currently overflowing order book (they are building several fleets of trains for UK TOCs, apart from large orders from both SBB, BLS, and other European operators) it is unclear when these units would be available. ✚

Swiss News is compiled by Bryan Stone and includes input from SRS members and other sources.

Where's Heidi?

She was at Thun where the station is next to the end of the lake.

