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Jura Jaunts

Phil Emond uses his Swiss Pass to explore the Jura – and beyond.

At La Clole the SNCF twin 'bubble' cars led by 72752 on the local service to Besancon, departs at 16.18 on Saturday 22 July 2017. Flanked by the TransN single car unit for the 10 minute journey to Les Brenets at 16.20, and EMU No.333, again of TransN, on the RE service to Neuchâtel at 16.21. All Photos: Phil Emond

Switzerland, in July 2017, was experiencing an extreme heat wave and it was into this on Thursday 20th that I arrived at Gorgier-St Aubin on the shores of Lac de Neuchâtel, to stay for a week at a good old basic Swiss hotel with lake views. On Friday, having travelled all the day before on trains from London, via Paris and Basel, I decided to have a local day and went into Neuchâtel, a lovely city with many medieval buildings, to ride on all three Funiculars. The buses on transN Line 612 from Gorgier connect into Tram Line 215 from Boudry, which runs into the city. After a few hours

Looking in need of a lot of TLC this UK phone box was seen in St Croix on Friday 22nd. On close examination it was last updated in October 1984 in Warrington; what may you ask, was it doing nearly 1000 miles from home? Apparently lots of communes have bought them to use as information points, although I have never seen any in use yet.



exploring, including riding trolleybus Line 101 to Marin-Epagnier gare, the weather changed to wind and rain. To escape it I rode to Genève and back, stopping only for a beer in the very good Les Brassures bar opposite Cornavin station.

On Saturday, with my 'local' station only having a limited train service to the south, I opted for a PostAuto Line 630 bus into Yverdon where, after an enjoyable walk around its centre, I rode up to Ste Croix on the metre-gauge line that featured in a recent article in *Swiss Express*. Wandering around I found a British red phone box, somewhat in need of some

A short while later at 14.15 Post Bus 392 stops to pick up on its journey to Buttes – the second of three services a day on this very rural route.



TLC, that on inspection was last used in Warrington in the mid 80's! Apparently, many small places use these as local information points. Choosing not to return the same way I joined the 13.57 bus on PostAuto Line 392. Three times a day this route connects Ste Croix with Buttes for trains down the Val-de-Travers to Neuchâtel. On this occasion the connecting train was partly a substitute bus because of engineering works. At least on the bus there's a different view of the localities the service passes through.

Still afternoon I set off for La Chaux-de-Fonds, a superb location to be visited again, and onward to La Clole, then by metre-gauge TRN service to Les Brenets - a trip worth making. Arriving at La Clole I found the single rail car awaiting departure for the 10-minute trip to Les Brenets. Here the train connects with a bus for a very short journey to the Lac des Brenets and a short boat trip to the famous Doubs waterfalls. However, as La Clole is close to the French border, it is a stop on the three daily SNCF services to Besancon-Viotte from La Chaux-de-Fonds. There are also three additional M-F peak hour services to the French town of Morteau 9km away. I was able to photograph the 16.18 with the TRN railcar on its left and the RE service to Neuchâtel and Lausanne on the right - my most interesting shot this visit. I returned on a Bern service, changing at Chambrélien to a bus on transN Line120 for a different journey back to Neuchatel.



13.40 service from Le Pont MBC route 733 to Cossensay and Morges awaits departure on Sunday 22 July 2017. Again one of only three daily departures.

at a new two-platform station (with an overall roof), that serves a large, but seemingly under populated, catchment area. I returned on the next service to Le Pont as it looked to be a good place to explore. At 1008m it is located at the northern end of the Lac de Joux, where a narrow isthmus separates it from Lac Brenet. It was worth a stop to take an enjoyable stroll along the lakeside with its various cafes, etc.

Always keen to travel on seasonal bus services, I noticed that MBC's Line 730 between Morges and Cossonay is extended as Line 733 to Le Pont thrice daily from May to October. It was a sunny day so I took the 13.40 departure over the Col du Mollendruz, enjoying wonderful views, although only two others shared the trip! Following a trip on the Cossonay Gare to Cossonay-Ville funicular, I travelled to Chavornay for the short, interesting 9-minute trip over flat farmland to Orbe. The numerous sidings serving warehouses and factories are no doubt the reason why this line survives. Orbe is surprisingly large, and steeped in history. The TIC has a very good pocket size guidebook in English and the guided walk will not disappoint. PostAuto Line 680 took me from Orbe to Yverdon for Line 630 back to Gorgier.

The next day I ventured to Biel/Bienne - a great city that I enjoyed walking around to see the many fascinating squares and streets. I travelled on both its funiculars but whilst on the one that climbs to Magglingen (1681m), with grand views of the city, my camera battery went flat. Forgetting to charge the spare during the night I missed any photos of the Evilard funicular. I returned to Neuchâtel by the 14.35 boat, first on the Bieler See, then via the Zihlkanal link into the Lac de Neuchâtel. This lake is connected to the Murtensee by another canal, and the Nidau-Buren Kanal links Biel/Bienne with the River Aare, which is navigable as far as Solothurn. Apart from the through



The 12.30 TRAVYS departure to Vallorbe from La Brassus. As can be seen, a very substantial station building in a very rural area, but with severe winter weather.

Again on Sunday 23rd I took Line 630 to Yverdon, then changing onto the twice-hourly Lausanne service to Cossonay-Penthalaz to connect with the Vallorbe line. I have travelled this route on several occasions on TGV services so I thought it would be good to explore. Alighting at Le Day there is the local TRAVYS service via Le Pont to La Brassures. This runs down the Swiss section of the Vallée de Joux, which continues into France. This is a picturesque line that terminates



Delle station on the French border on 25 July 2017 with the new extended works for the through services to Belfort, due to start in December this year, clearly seen past the temporary buffer stops. (See 'Swiss News')

sailings, all the lakes have local services and there is also a 3-day/two-night cruise based on Solothurn to all three.

On Tuesday, from Gorgier I travelled to Neuchâtel, Biel/Bienne then onward via Delémont to Delle just over the border in France. Its recently rebuilt station was only partly open, as the reconstruction of the line to Belfort was still in progress - completion scheduled for end 2017. Returning to Switzerland I alighted at St Ursanne, where there is a very steep hill down to the town. This is served by oddly timed buses there is a 2-hour gap between 14.00 and 16.00. Guidebooks claim this is the most complete medieval town in Switzerland and I can see why. I also found a brewery,



A post bus awaits its next departure at the bottom of the very steep hill to the railway station at St Ursanne.

'Tonnebiere', new to me so that was a plus. I continued on to Glovelier, changing onto the metre-gauge Chemins de fer du Jura for the 70km journey to La Chaux-de-Fonds, then back to my base via Neuchâtel. Having had some very busy days I spent Wednesday on an enjoyable three-and-half-hour return boat trip from Neuchâtel to Murten, on its namesake lake, via the connecting Canal de la Broye. Murten is a medieval walled town that is very worthwhile exploring. As the guidebooks note, it is off the usual tourist routes, which makes it all the more enjoyable, plus having reasonably



Approaching Murten on Lake de Morat July 26 at 13.35.

priced accommodation.

On Thursday 27th I left the Jura to stay with friends in Kaltbrunn, near Uznach (famous for its storks) at the eastern end of the Zürichsee. On Saturday, a clear alpine summer day,



European storks on the roof tops in Uznach. Unbelievably most stay all year round and raise their young on such dire locations. They are a great feature in this town.

we took a cruise on the Walensee, embarking at Weesen. This is now my second-favourite lake after Lake Luzern - small towns with sandy beaches on the south side and high mountain cliffs on the north. The only downside is that Swiss Passes are not valid and a round trip is CHF27! The following day I sampled the Gotthard Base Tunnel on a trip to Lugano, travelling via the SOB to Arth-Goldau and returning there using the old 'mountain' route. My final excursion from Kaltbrunn was to Sargans then on to remote Weisstannen (1003m). This is reached by a 35-minute journey by PostAuto Line 432 Midi Bus up a narrow, steep, road. Arriving in the village the bus deposits many walkers and collects up those who have had their exercise. Here there is a Postal Museum operating out of a building that was a Tavern (dating from 1853), before it became a Post Office.



Weisstannen with the hourly service 432 awaiting departure at 13.42 to Sargens.

Remarkably an English guidebook is available. Returning home I consider that my Swiss Pass was both put to good use and excellent value for money. 



If you have not been to Arth-Goldau in the last few years you will not have seen the rebuilding of the base station for trains to the Rigi. Well this is where you used to board, but the rebuild has put the trains out at the southern end and this is now a very grand station entrance hall. Unfortunately the two new platforms are no longer under cover!!

An 'Oldtimer' Excursion.



For anyone visiting the Emmental region last year, apart from the network of railways and PostAuto routes serving this region of Switzerland that is off the main tourist track, on the first Sunday of the months between June and October 2017 there was the opportunity to ride an 'Oldtimer' PostAuto. Based in the small community of Biglen to the east of Worbligen is the 'Trägerverein Historische Postautolinie' an association founded in 2016, that began offering trips over the Moosegg mountain road during last summer, using an assortment of elderly Post Buses. The 2017 timetable showed two return trips between Biglen Bahnhof on the line between Burgdorf and Thun (Kursbuch Table 340) and Emmenmatt Bahnhof on the Bern-Luzern Line (Table 460). In addition there was a short return working between Emmenmatt and Moosegg Hotel that connected at the Hotel with a Sunday working on PostAuto Line 472 to Biglen. In addition to the monthly timetabled workings there were also special trips run in association with events at the Moosegg Hotel, which is a renowned destination in the locality for good food. The end-to-end trip takes 45 minutes, but the schedules allow for a stopover of up to 6-hours at the hotel, which is a base for a network of walking routes. The 2017 fares from either end to Moosegg were CHF7, or CHF12 for the whole trip. It is presumed that the service will operate again in 2018. **For details see www.oldiepost.ch.** 

Based on information kindly supplied by Richard Donithorn, the Editor of the Helvetia Philatelic Society's 'Newsletter'.

Where's Heidi?

You can't get here on a Magic Carpet, but if coming by train, where's the nearest station?

Answer on page 47. 

