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Switzerland to Snowdon



Peter Bowen reports on the arrival of the BRB equipment.

Brake test run at Llanberis station.

All photos: Peter Bowen

Arriving early at the Snowdon Mountain Railway's car park on the 30th August I found Mike Ellis from the BRB overseeing the unloading of the carriage B1, dating from 1891. The loco, (which had already been unloaded) carriage and supplies had been brought from Brienz by an immaculate vehicle from a specialist company based in Thun. Unloading of the carriage by the skilled driver was in Mike Ellis's words "millimeter perfect". Other preparations were also underway and versions of the traditional Swiss 'mini chalets', that seem to be present at any Swiss event, had arrived in the SMR forecourt. In one, Switzerland Travel Centre Marketing Manager Nick Robb and his team were busy making-up 'goody bags' for visitors, whilst another cabin was promoting Gruyère cheese. So Switzerland had truly come to Snowdon.

Test running of BRB No.2 was scheduled that afternoon

and the loco was being cleaned and steam being raised. Side-by-side with its Welsh cousin it was apparent how fundamentally different the BRB and SMR locos are in their whole design and stance, despite both being built by SLM just a few years apart. I hadn't fully appreciated just how precise the Abt rack track has to be with its two staggered sections engaging with the loco pinions. In another article Mike Ellis had described the previous trials undertaken at Llanberis, but the afternoon provided the first chance to prove the match of BRB loco and SMR track for real. So BRB No.2 moved gently off-shed and then up to a siding to collect the carriage before dropping back into the station at a very slow walking pace. With apparently all being well the train set off for the short journey towards Waterfall Halt and back. The BRB and the SMR were ready for a busy September. 🇨🇭

Checking rack and pinion compatibility at Llanberis.

BRB carriage B1 being unloaded.

