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The Extreme North West Corner

John Jesson



A pair of BLS locos, 485.008 and (Railpool) 186.504 work a southbound intermodal.

All photos: John Jesson

Like a lot of other enthusiasts, I am not a fan of multiple units, so my wanderings and photography now concentrate more on freight workings. This year, I had an afternoon free in Basel and decided to investigate Basel Badische Bahnhof. I never made it into the station as, when getting off the tram, I spotted a multi-story car park just to the south of the station. It was on the west side of the railway, so the sun would be behind me. The car park has four decks. The top deck is open and reserved for local companies. An attendant told me I shouldn't be on that deck, but didn't mind me taking photographs of the trains. I didn't stay long, for two reasons – one was that the deck was high enough for the overhead wires to get in the way, the other was that it was very hot. I moved down to the public area on the 3rd deck – now under the wires and also under shade – and spent some time recording the variety of train movements. As well as the frequent freights between Germany and Switzerland, there were the passenger operations on both the main line and the diverging German route to the east along the north bank of the Rhein. A few local trip workings were also seen, to and from the docks at Kleinhüningen. The following day, I returned with a friend and had another session, but we didn't bother with the top deck. The scenery is certainly no match for the Gotthard, but the variety is great! 

1. The combination of BLS classes 425 ('Brownie') and 465 is quite common. This pair is heading south, with 173 'Lötschental' leading an unidentified 465. Both locos are looking a bit grubby.

2. Semi-fast RE services in this corner of Germany are worked by class 146 locos and double-deck push-pull sets. 146. No.113, carrying advertising for the local area ticket, nears the end of its journey at Basel SBB.

3. After working one of the rather infrequent loco-hauled IC trains into Basel SBB, DB 101 No.144 in advertising livery returns L/E to Badische Bhf.

4. SBBC 482.011 has been knocking around with the 'ChemOil' branding for a number of years, although it works every sort of train. Here, it is working a southbound intermodal. The shadow of the car park top deck is seen in the bottom left foreground.

5. The Siemens ES 64 F4 (German class 189) locos operated by SBBCI are hired from MRCE Dispo and are not widely used in Switzerland, their versatility making them more useful elsewhere. 189 No.284, with inscriptions marking the opening of the Gotthard base tunnel, works a northbound intermodal train.

6. Ralpín operate 9 trains each way between Freiburg and Novara, although the number varies according to the day of the week. BLS work the trains, with 485 No.018 in charge of this one, probably the 14.00 departure from Freiburg. Journey time is about 10 hours, allowing the lorry drivers to take their statutory rest period.

7. 620 No.026 'Zollikofen' on what seems to be a regular transfer of a single container wagon. The front-end stripes are a legacy of the final journey of a retiring driver, for which his loco was "decorated".

8. Services along the north bank of the Rhein and into Württemberg are now worked by class 612 units. They have been re-liveried in this yellow/white/black colour scheme, making them (in my eyes) more attractive than the former all-over red. Services are operated under the name of bwegt, an abbreviation that incorporates the initial letters of the states concerned (B = Baden, W = Württemberg) and the word 'bewegt' (moved/transported).

9. Locomotives in the various hire fleets often show signs of previous hires. 185 No.510 is owned, I think, by Alpha Trains, but the present operator is shown as RailTraxx on the front, while the letters METRANS are visible on the bodyside. It is heading north with a container train.



