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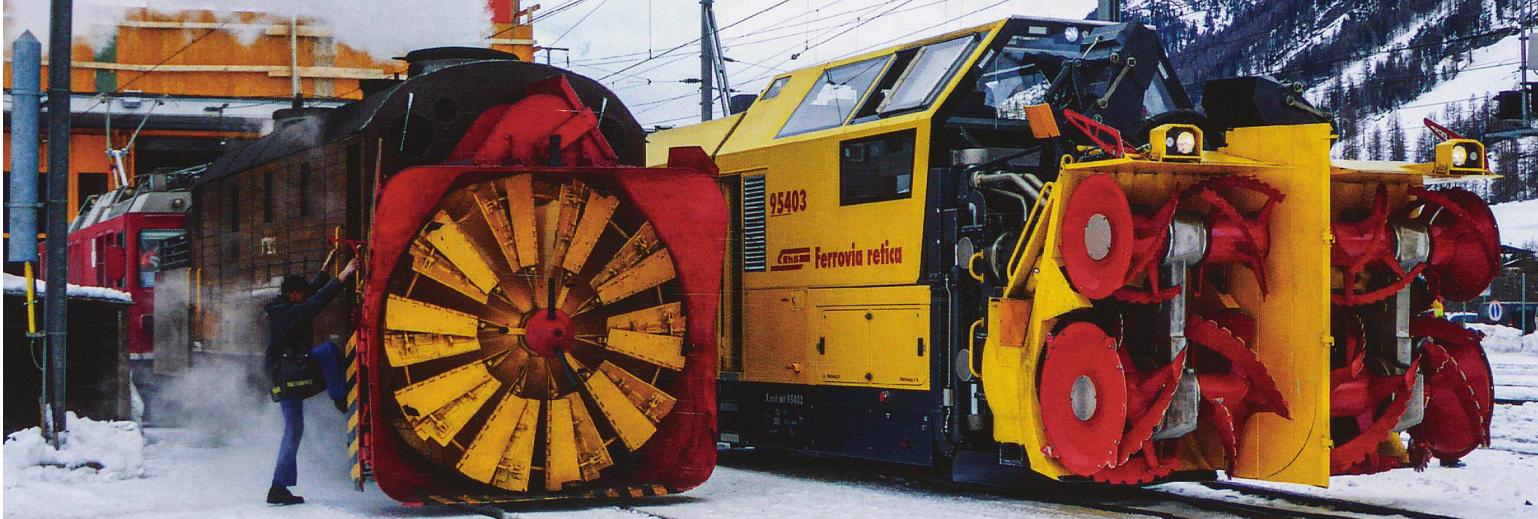
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# BERNINA MONSTER IN THE SNOW

Peter Arnold



Xrot 9213 (left) alongside Xrot mt 95403 (right) outside Pontresina depot.

Photos: Peter Arnold

Switzerland Travel Centre sent me details of a trip to see the 'Bernina Monster' working from Pontresina to Ospizio Bernina on Sunday 10th February and, with that weekend free in our diaries, my wife and I decided to reserve our places for the 3 night trip. I should explain that the 'Bernina Monster' is the RhB steam-powered rotary snow plough, Xrot 9213, as described by Carol Cotton in her article in the September 2018 issue of *Swiss Express*.

On a cold but fine Sunday morning tour participants began to gather at Pontresina station from 08.30 onwards to watch preparations being made for the departure of our special train at 09.14. However, our guides received news that the train bringing more participants from Samedan, due at 08.56, was running late. Initially the 09.04 departure to Tirano was held for the connection but some minutes later a second report advised them that the train had failed and would not be able to proceed from Samedan. The Tirano bound train departed some five minutes behind time with the restored Crocodile Ge4/4 182 coupled to the rear.

It was quickly decided that our train would depart an hour later than scheduled and time would have to be made up by missing out a couple of run pasts en route to Morteratsch, in order to reach Alp Grüm at the appointed time for lunch. To pass this extra waiting time at Pontresina we were given an escorted tour of the depot wherein we were able to walk through the two former Berninabahn railcars ABe4 30 + 34. Also housed in the depot is the modern diesel powered snow plough Xrot mt 95403 which was driven outside to stand alongside Xrot 9213 to provide an interesting comparison.

And so with the next train having arrived from Samedan, our party of some 60 participants climbed aboard Abe4/4 46 + 47, with plough Xk 9132 at the rear, which then departed at 10.14 closely followed by Xrot 9213, itself propelled by Gem4/4 801 operating in diesel mode. Our first stop for photographs was at Surovas station to allow a *Bernina Express* (08.32 Chur to Tirano) to overtake our convoy.

From there our train, followed very closely by Xrot 9213 and Gem4/4 801, made steady progress up the Bernina Pass with several opportunities for 'hanging out of the window' photos! Upon reaching Ospizio Bernina we found Ge4/4 182 waiting in the loop and we braved the very strong wind to take more photos. Our train continued down to Alp Grüm where we all enjoyed an excellent lunch before returning to Ospizio Bernina, where the Crocodile and steam plough were then sent ahead of us to a point somewhere alongside Lago Bianco to do a run past.

I say "somewhere" because the very strong wind was whipping snow off the banks causing near white-out conditions. However, undeterred, the majority of participants left the warmth of the train and formed an orderly line in knee depth snow to attempt their last few action photos of the day – "mad dogs and Englishmen" comes to mind!

Following a return to Ospizio Bernina to re-form the convoy into one train, we proceeded back down the pass, with a stop at Bernina Suot to allow a service train to pass, and reached Pontresina at 15.45 where the various items of rolling stock were returned to the depot. As we walked back to our hotel more snow started to fall and, by the next morning, there was a fresh covering for the start of our homeward journey.  *More photos on page 17.*

Back at Pontresina - Xrot 9213 with Ge4/4 182 + Gem4/4 801 beyond.



layshaft to a triangular coupling rod connecting the first and second driving axles, from which the third axle was driven via a further coupling rod.

This was a less complex arrangement that had proven itself with the prototype Ce 6/6 No. 121 of the BLS and also with the Ge 6/6<sup>I</sup> for the Rhätische Bahn. It did however produce unwelcome swaying on poor track, something that limited its application to locomotives that would not exceed 75 km/h, but that of course would not be a problem for the Crocodile. The arrangement used on the prototype was therefore adopted for the Ce6/8<sup>III</sup>, with the difference that the whole drive unit was turned around at each end of the locomotive.

### Into Service on the Gotthard

From the outset the Ce 6/8<sup>III</sup> carried a chocolate brown livery with black underframes. Later they appeared in SBB standard pine green with grey underparts. Originally they were intended for service on flatter sections but by 1930 all were working from Erstfeld depot where they replaced many of the first series which were transferred to Basel, Zürich, Lausanne and Romanshorn by 1928.

### Notes:

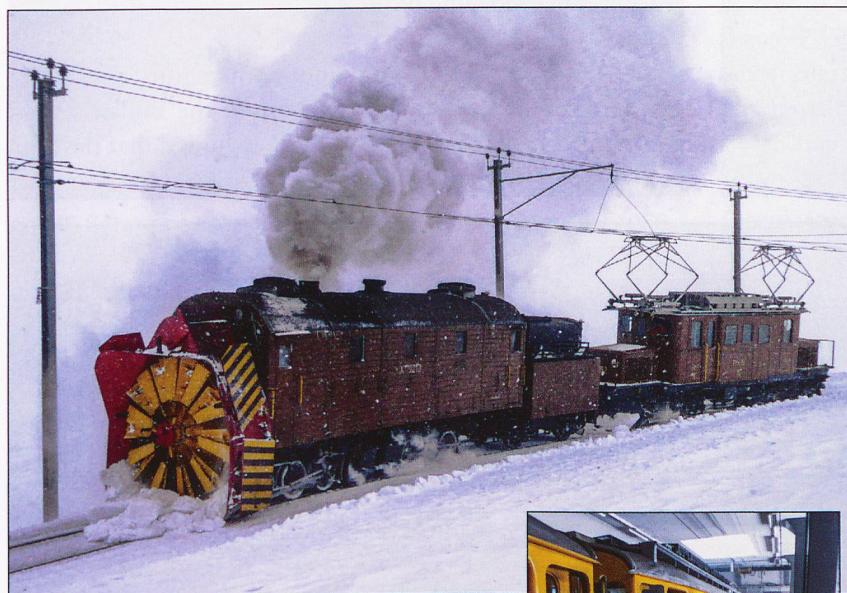
(Note 1) The prototypes were a Be 3/5 No. 12202 designed for light passenger work, two heavy mountain locomotives of type Be 4/6 Nos. 12301 and 12302, also for passenger work and Ce 6/8 No. 12201 mentioned in the main text above. 12201 was later renumbered 14201 and the classificatio



Prototype Ce 6/8<sup>I</sup> 14201 is seen here leaving Pratteln with a goods train for Olten circa 1938.

altered to Ce6/8<sup>I</sup>. It also acquired the nicknames “Köfferllok” (Luggage loco) and “Schlotterbeck” (meaning unclear, but believed to be an uncomplimentary reference to vibrations or swaying). 

**Part Two** will appear in a future edition of *Swiss Express*.



More photos from  
**BERNINA MONSTER IN THE SNOW**  
on page 13.

ABOVE: The run past “somewhere” near Lago Bianco with Xrot 9213 + Ge4/4 182.

RIGHT: Xrot 9213 at Surovas station.

INSET: ABe4 30 + 34 inside Pontresina depot.

