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Swiss News

Special checks on EW IV carriage doors following accident

Following a tragic accident at Baden station on 4 August when a 54-year old train manager suffered fatal injuries after he was trapped in and dragged by the closing door of a train he had just despatched, SBB immediately instigated an emergency check of the door closing mechanisms of all 458 EW IV carriages currently in service.

Safety related defects were found with 69 of the doors so checked. In seven cases the trap protection mechanism failed to operate. All of the affected carriages were immediately withdrawn from service for repair. An enhanced inspection regime will now operate for the EW IV fleet.

Ninety driving trailers of type IC Bt4 and some 232 Eurocity carriages have similar, albeit more modern, closing mechanisms. Special examinations of these vehicles are underway and were due to be completed by the end of October.

A change in despatch procedures on EW IV carriages was introduced in late September. The train manager now operates the central door closure control, steps outside the train to observe the actual closure, then steps back inside closing his/her own door before giving the right-away by SMS to the driver.

SBB CEO to step down early

Andreas Meyer has announced that he will step down by the end of next year after 13 years at the head of SBB.

Meyer has certainly been under pressure recently — particularly in view of the continuing FV Dosto controversies — although SBB President Monika Ribar insists he retains the management board's full confidence and that his decision had nothing to do with the accident referred to above. He intends to leave at the end of 2020 or earlier if a suitable candidate is found.

Initially, RhB chief Renato Fasciato was tipped as a likely successor although he quickly ruled himself out of the running. The focus then turned to BLS's Bernard Guillelmon but it appears more likely now that SBB will seek an internal candidate.

Mixed 2019 first half results for SBB

SBB returned a before tax profit of CHF 290m during the first six months of 2019 (2018 was CHF 302m so a drop of 4%).

Group revenues were pretty static at CHF 4.79bn (-0.6%), whilst group expenditure rose 1.5%.

Passenger kilometres were up 6.2% at 9.62bn and passenger profits increased by 8% to CHF 124m. This was due to a massive increase in regional traffic, explained by a large number of additional trains for special events. Long distance traffic was down 5% which has been attributed to the late arrival of the Class 502 and continuing staff shortages.

SBB Cargo barely broke even with a net profit of CHF 0.25m. Freight traffic dropped 2.5% to 8.45bn tonne kilometres.

Class 501 'Giruno' news

On 8 August RABe 501 003 was formally named 'San Gottardo' at a ceremony in Bellinzona attended by political representatives of the town and Canton Ticino.

Of the 29 'Girunos', three will be named 'San Gottardo' (as above), 'Sempione' and 'Monte Ceneri'. The intention is to name the remaining 26 after the Swiss Cantons. This is a nice reference to the Ae 6/6 'Kantonsloks'. The aluminium castings of the Ae 6/6 will be carried on the end wall of the restaurant cars. The first three such namings took place on 31 August, 'Uri', and 26 September, 'Thurgau'. A third was scheduled to take place on 23 November, 'Zürich'.

On 20 August the first operation of the class as multiple units took place following regulatory approval a few days earlier. The first journey experienced a technical fault at Arth-Goldau which resulted in a 20-minute late arrival in Lugano.

FV Dosto - little improvement in reliability statistics

At the end of September SBB had accepted 22 Class 502 trains, of which only 12 were in daily service with the remainder held as reserve. As of 2 September two return journeys on IC3 Basel SBB - Zürich HB - Chur have been diagrammed for Class 502 operation. Previously appearances had been on an ad hoc basis.

The improvement in reliability reported in our last edition is not being maintained. Door failures are increasing in number and continue to dominate the statistics. According to Eisenbahn-Revue such failures accounted for 44% of the total in June and the figure for kilometres per recorded failure was less than 4,000. During the hot summer it was found that the air-conditioning was increasing the pressure inside trains to the extent that doors were not operating reliably. A temporary software fix whereby the air-conditioning is turned down when a train is in a station has been introduced. SBB still say they are aiming at a target of 7,500 kilometres per recorded failure by the end of the year.

Another curious glitch is contributing to the operator's woes. The control software for the pantograph regulates time from GPS signals. At a fixed interval of 12.1 days, a subroutine in the software has been returning an impossible result when processing this information. On detecting this result, the software instigates an immediate shutdown, drops the pantograph and brings the train to an emergency halt. A fix is being developed but until then drivers are instructed that they need to reboot the system.

As might be expected, because of the continued poor performance of its flagship fleet, SBB continues to experience a torrid press. An extensively-reported failure near Rorschach Stadt on Saturday 3 August, resulted in 200 passengers being evacuated from the train onto a road crossing that the train was fouling. From there they were taken by bus to Goldach where onward transport by S-Bahn resulted in a 90 minute late arrival in St.Gallen.

Construction of new carriages at Bombardier's Villeneuve plant continues. Trains are stored at St-Tiphon before acceptance by SBB. As further space where remedial work can be carried out, Bombardier has leased two tracks in the new station building at Le Châble. Drivers of TMR (Transport

de Martigny et Régions) have been trained on them as SBB continues to suffer a footplate shortage.

Unit 502 216 has been fitted with a variable-width pantograph. The wide setting allows operation in Germany and Austria and the narrow setting is for Switzerland.

ERTMS Rhone Valley

The European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS) has now been installed between Lausanne (excl.) and Villeneuve, as evidenced by the blue and yellow marker boards and removal of conventional signalling. Two and three letter location codes are used on the marker boards, e.g. VV for Vevey and VIL for Villeneuve. Sidings in this area now have ground signals which show two blue lights arranged horizontally - it would be interesting to know what these mean. (*Can any reader provide the answer? - Ed*)

Single line working is currently in force between Burier and Clarens (between Vevey and Montreux) due to tunnel works. The ERTMS appears to do a good job of regulating trains through this section - we travelled it several times in a week and were never actually stopped awaiting clearance of the single line section.

David Carpenter

Inter Regio 90 substitute set

On at least 5 and 6 September a substitute scratch set of 5 coaches with an RE 4/4 loco on either end was used on an IR90 working between Genève Aeroport and Brig, instead of the normal class 460 + EW IV coaches. On 5 September this set was crowded with standing passengers west of Montreux.

David Carpenter



Re4/4 11191 leads a scratch set at Martigny. 05.09.19.
Photo: David Carpenter

DB wins SBB coach refurbishment contract

On 19 August SBB awarded DB a contract to modernise 93 EW IV carriages as part of a CHF 90m project to renovate 203 vehicles. The EW IV fleet is scheduled to remain in service until the 2030s.

DB will carry out the work in Wittenberg and Neumünster starting in 2020.

SBB says it is necessary to outsource this work as its own workshops are at capacity. Josef Meyer Rail of Rheinfelden has already carried out work on 15 carriages over the last few months.

The work involves removing corrosion, repainting exteriors, reupholstering both classes and replacing tables. The existing partition walls in the carriages are to be removed.

SBB and BLS settle differences over concessions

It was reported on 22 August that SBB and BLS have come to an amicable settlement in relation to their long-running dispute over the award of long-distance concessions (see report page 32 of *Swiss Express* 139).

BLS will now operate the current SBB Bern-Biel services from the December 2019 timetable change, under the auspices of a long-distance concession from SBB. Bern-Burgdorf-Olten, Bern-Neuchâtel and Neuchâtel-La Chaux-de-Fonds services will transfer to BLS under similar arrangements from December 2020. Although operated by BLS using its own rolling stock and personnel, these services are awarded under an SBB operating licence. BLS has voluntarily waived the licence previously awarded to them and, in turn, SBB has withdrawn its complaint against that award.

The compromise settlement is reported to have followed a series of long-distance conference calls brokered by Federal Councillor Simonetta Sommaruga and Bern Government Councillor Christoph Neuhaus.

BLS, of course, already operate the service from Bern to La Chaux-de-Fonds. However those current services operate under a regional concession with subsidy from Canton Bern. From 2020 that subsidy will be replaced by a contribution from SBB. In the medium term, as part of its plans to improve connections between La Chaux-de-Fonds and western Switzerland, SBB will take back the services between Neuchâtel and La Chaux-de-Fonds. BLS will be compensated for this in a way that has yet to be decided.

To operate its new services BLS has founded a new subsidiary, BLS Fernverkehr AG.

SBB to continue operating German regional services

SBB Deutschland, the SBB's German subsidiary, will continue to operate regional services in Baden-Württemberg until December 2027 under a new agreement with that state's Ministry of Transport. The services concerned are the "Seehas" (Engen-Singen-Radolfzell-Konstanz) and Basel S-Bahn services S5 (Weil-am-Rhein – Lörrach – Zell im Wiesental) and S6 (Basel SBB – Lörrach – Zell im Wiesental).

The current 30-minute frequency on the S Bahn services is set to be cut to 15 minutes once infrastructure improvements have been made and multiple unit operation is planned starting in December 2020. SBB Deutschland also operates the Schaffhausen S Bahn service to Erzingen(Baden).

First commercial IC4 journey in Switzerland

Deutsche Bahn IC4 unit 9017 operated an IC61 Basel SBB to Interlaken Ost on 18th August.

Monte Ceneri opening now less than a year away

In nine months' time the ceremonial opening of the Ceneri Basis Tunnel is due to take place on 4 September 2020. This will mark the conclusion of the NEAT project (Neue Eisenbahn-Alpentransversale).

On 5 June this year SBB, DB and FS signed a strategy document named '*Chance Ceneri 2020*', which sets out the three railway organisations' intentions for joint services through the tunnel. A three-hour journey time for Zürich-

Milano is envisaged with eight to ten through journeys per day with connections to Genoa, Bologna and Venice. The purchase of online tickets will be improved.

TRAXX MS3 tested on Lötschberg Bergstrecke

In early June a new Bombardier TRAXX MS3 locomotive numbered 188 006 could be seen undergoing tests on the Bergstrecke. Together with a BLS Re 425 as a leading locomotive and twelve loaded spoil wagons, standing starts were made from various locations on the 27‰ gradient.

New Cyberdefence unit at SBB

SBB is to set up a cyberdefence unit to protect critical safety infrastructure from hackers, according to a report in *Schweiz am Wochenende* over the weekend of 7 and 8 September.

A railway spokesperson told the newspaper that the system was exposed to hacker attacks almost daily.

Meanwhile *Sonntags Zeitung* warned that digitalisation and automation would likely generate up to 3,400 job losses out of the total number of employees, that currently stands at 26,400.

Skip stopping occurs in Switzerland too

The practice of omitting stops when a train is late in order to restore the timetable is not a uniquely British phenomenon. It also occurs in Switzerland but not without political controversy that would be unlikely here.

Earlier this year passengers on a train headed for St. Gallen were informed over the train's public address system shortly before arrival at Winterthur that, in view of the fact the service was running fifteen minutes late, subsequent stops, including one at Wil, would be omitted. Passengers were redirected towards an all stations stopper (or "Bummller"). This sparked a heated political discussion that culminated in the civic authorities in Wil referring the matter to the Bundesamt für Verkehr (BAV - Federal Transport Ministry). The BAV were tasked with adjudicating as to whether SBB was in breach of its service obligations.

As might be expected, SBB pointed out the need to "stabilise the remaining traffic and to prevent the domino effect of delays". "We come to the conclusion that the measures mentioned, in a reasonable way serve the fulfilment of the duty to operate" was the BAVs equally predictable reply. This did not satisfy the Mayoress of Wil, Susanne Hartmann. "I am surprised and astonished by this answer from the BAV," she said. "I interpret the passenger transport law differently". She intended to take the matter further and was seeking an audience with SBB CEO Andreas Meyer.

More individuals under investigation in PostAuto fraud scandal

Criminal proceedings have been launched against three more people for their alleged involvement in the PostAuto fraud that came to light in February last year.

Fedpol, the Swiss Federal Police, confirmed a report that appeared in *Sonntags Zeitung* on 1 September that the number of persons under investigation was now six.

If found guilty, those under investigation face five years in prison or fines up to CHF 30,000.

Those now under suspicion include André Burri who managed PostAuto's western division before becoming head of CarPostal France, the controversial French subsidiary of PostAuto. In July 2018, PostAuto admitted to hiding profits in its operations in neighbouring France. Three French companies also accused CarPostal France of unfair competition eventually reaching a settlement deal of CHF 7.1 million last year. Burri was subsequently dismissed.

Bernmobil orders 50 Stadler Tramlink trams

Bernmobil is the latest operator to award Stadler a contract for the supply of Tramlink Light Rail Vehicles.

The order is for up to 50 units with Stadler set to supply a first batch of 27, which will enter service over the period 2023 to 2025. The new vehicles, 20 of which will be double-ended and the remainder single-ended, will replace the 12 Stadler-built 'Vevey' trams (Nos. 731-742) and the 9 RBS trams used on the service to Worb Dorf. The additional vehicles will also support the extension of Line 9 to Kleinwabern which will also involve an increased frequency.

The new trams will be 42.5m long with 52 seats and six doors in bi-directional format and 68 seats and seven doors for the single-ended variant.

An option exists for a second tranche for delivery in 2027 onwards presumably in order to support the Tram Bern Ostermundigen project.

Bernmobil is the fourth operator to order Tramlink after Ferrovie Luganesi (for Lugano-Ponte Tresa), Aargau Verkehr (for the Limmattalbahn) and Basel Land Transport (for Liestal - Waldenburg).



Photo: Stadler-Rail-Group

SBB and ÖBB to expand Nightjet offering

Following on from our report in the last edition of *Swiss Express* that SBB was investigating re-entering the sleeper market, SBB and ÖBB have now formally announced plans to increase Nightjet services between Austria and Germany. Currently, ÖBB's Zürich/Basel, SBB-Berlin/Hamburg services operate at capacity.

The two operators are also assessing which cities can be added to the Nightjet network to provide more overnight connections to Switzerland. At the moment Zürich is the second busiest Nightjet hub after Wien.

The introduction of couchette cars on the overnight service between Zürich, Innsbruck, Salzburg and Prague is also under investigation.

To improve the economic viability of overnight trains initiatives such as a CO2 levy and reduced track access charges are being mooted.

In the meantime the frequency of EuroCity services from Zürich to München is set to double in 2020 from three to six per day, following the completion of electrification in Germany.

Stadler reports record order book and good first half results

In its half year results presented on 3 September Stadler announced that it had received orders totalling CHF 2.3bn during the first half of 2019. The corresponding figure for 2018 was CHF 1.5bn. Revenue was CHF 1.1bn (up 40%) and pre-tax earnings CHF 46.9m (up 33%).

Stadler says that around only one third of its net revenues are generated in the first half of the year, as the company does not account for revenue until a train enters service and the majority of new trains do so at the December timetable change.

The highlight of the new orders received this year is considered to be one for 55 battery-electric First-Akku multiple units for Schleswig-Holstein.

The company's order backlog now stands at CHF 14.4bn

SOB sells four Re 446

With the introduction of the new 'Traverso' copper-coloured Stadler Flirt units on Voralpen-Express services, the four venerable Re4/4 Class 446 locomotives, that have been the mainstay of this service for many years, have been sold. Their new owner is Eisenbahndienstleiter GmbH (EDG) of Thayngen (SH) who will use them on goods traffic. These four locomotives were built by SBB as Re 4/4^{IV} Nos. 10101 to 10104 in 1982.

Interested parties are also being sought for the purchase of the six former Re 4/4 Bodensee-Toggenburg locomotives of Class 456.



446 015 at Herisau on 14th February last. Photo: Bill Salter

Swiss Combi AG takes stake in SBB Cargo

On 30 August Swiss Combi AG (which comprises leading Swiss logistics players Planzer, Camion Transport and Bertelschi) announced that they had taken a 35% stake in SBB Cargo. The partnership is aiming to increase capacity in wagon-load and combi traffic and accelerate transfer from road to rail. The decision awaits regulatory approval from competition authorities.

SBB Cargo orders 20 Vectron MS locomotives

SBB Cargo has placed an order with Stadler for 20 Vectron MS machines with an option for 20 more. They will be leased from Süd Leasing. The 6.4MW locomotives will be built in Allach, München with delivery scheduled from the end of this year to mid-2020, i.e. in time for the opening of the Ceneri Base Tunnel.

STOP PRESS: On 21 October Siemens Mobility announced an order from BLS Cargo for 25 similar machines.

New unit on TPC Les Diablerets working

On 3 September one of the new Stadler 2-car sets was used on an early afternoon working to Les Diablerets from Aigle. There were two men in the cab, one of them obviously under instruction, who took the sharp curves extremely cautiously. As a result, the train was several minutes late by the end of the journey. The unit was then shunted into one of the sidings and one of the older BDe4/4 sets arrived empty to form the return working.

David Carpenter



Three trains at Les Diablerets on 4 September.

Photo: Elizabeth Carpenter

Unusual Zentralbahn Engelberg working

On 10 September one of the Luzern - Engelberg sets was unusually formed with a loco and hauled coaches (as normal), but instead of the usual driving trailer on the other end there was a class ABe130 3-car railcar. Pantographs on both the loco and the railcar were raised, so I assume both were under power.

David Carpenter

Launch of first stage of the Limmattalbahn

With the total rebuilding of the Farbhf tram stop in Zürich that saw its closure from 13 July to 18 August, the first stage of the Limmattalbahn is complete. From 2 September trams on Line 2 have operated through Farbhf to Schlieren Geisswald.

On the same day work on the construction of Stage 2 commenced with the simultaneous inauguration of work sites at Schlieren, Urdorf, Dietikon, Spreitenbach and Killwangen.

It should be noted that, after the first stop on the extension (Micafil), the route lies outside the Zürich City Fare zone 110.

Sihl Tunnel track works completed

After complete renewal of the track in the Sihl Tunnel, SZU services on Zürich S-Bahn lines S4 and S10 resumed on 2 September, after a seven week shutdown. Some 800 metres of rail and sleepers were replaced between Hauptbahnhof and Selina.

TRAVYS seeking buyer for Re 4/4^{II} 420 503

This locomotive, formerly with BLS and originally SBB 11119, is up for sale. With only three careful owners during its 52-year existence and a mere 4'428'863 km on the clock, a bargain at the asking price of CHF 650,000.

Self-driving minibus in Zug

A self-driving minibus has been operating in Zug since the beginning of the year. Until now its only passengers have been specially invited groups and a backup driver for safety. On 10 September, however, a one month trial commenced whereby the service was open to any member of the public who wanted to sample the innovation, which operates under the name '*My Shuttle*'. The aim of the trial is to establish just how acceptable the concept is to the public (initial reaction is not uncritical).



Photos: Mario Gavazzi

Jungfraubahnen 2019 half-year results

Turnover increased by 6.5% to CHF 106.7m compared to the corresponding period in 2018. Results were boosted by a successful ski season. Registered skier visits increased by 8.4% to 904,200. The number of visitors to Jungfraujoch increased slightly to 470,900 (up 1%).

The group expects similarly good results in the second half. Large visitor numbers were recorded at the mountain top in July - possibly as a result of the hot weather.

A new flagship store was due to open in Interlaken in October and the group is also expected to take over the management of the restaurants at Jungfraujoch and Eigergletscher in November.

Some Bernese Oberland notes

Sholto Thomas provided these notes following a week in June centred on Interlaken:

BLS: For fans of loco haulage there are still a couple of EWIII/Re4/4^{II} sets on Interlaken-Zweisimmen workings, though a 465 did appear one day. A third out-of-use EWIII set and derelict Re4/4^{II} were in the Interlaken Ost sidings.

SBB: An ICN set was unusually on a Basel-Interlaken round trip on 22 June covering for a DB ICE1 set. Also in the Interlaken Ost sidings in the week ending 23 June were a set of DB IC2 Dostos and a couple of Railpool TRAXX 3 locos front/rear. Does SBB want DB to provide a set of their stock to cover for ever-late or missing ICE workings? Or is BLS short of stock and can't wait for new MUTZ units?? Hence the (presumable) testing.

BOB were busy laying rack rails right up to the buffer stops at Grindelwald. Rack rail has also been laid into the platforms at Lauterbrunnen. Presumably this is to allow trains to depart both termini faster, especially the 3-set rakes now

on the Lauterbrunnen leg which involves a time-consuming crawl to engage the cogs. Or is it to provide better traction for trains coming up the hills into both termini, as the rack used to finish rather abruptly at the top of the summit when most of the train was still on the gradients? Sholto Thomas

Work on BOB platforms at Interlaken Ost

In addition to the new level access from the town to platforms 1 to 5 at Interlaken Ost (see *Swiss Express 139*), work has been taking place since mid-July to raise the height of BOB platforms 1 and 10 so that they are compliant with Persons of Reduced Mobility requirements.

Platform 1 will be raised over its full length in order that, like Platform 2 already, it can accommodate a full 15-carriage (250 metre) train. Platform 10 only needs raising over a length of 100-metres. Work should be completed by 20 December. No reduction in train service has been necessary during the construction period.

BOB Interlaken Ost to Lauterbrunnen bus replacement

Services between Interlaken and Lauterbrunnen are currently interrupted. Extensive road works are taking place at Wilderswil (the village is to be bypassed by means of a tunnel) and services have been replaced by buses since 31 October, with rail operation due to recommence on 6 December. Trains have been operating to a revised timetable between Zweisimmen and Grindelwald.

BLM fleet replacement

Bergbahn Lauterbrunnen Murren (BLM) has announced a CHF 17.3m order for Stadler to provide three new railcars to replace the current life-expired rolling stock. The new units are due to enter service in September 2023.



Artist's impression of the new BLM trains.

Source: Jungfraubahnen

RBS "Worbla" coupling difficulties

Software problems are believed to be the cause of problems that RBS experienced over the summer in coupling and uncoupling its new Worbla trains. Trains are formed as multiple units at peak periods but RBS was operating them only in single formation at the end of July.

RhB Ge 4/4^{II} withdrawn following accident

On 14 May RhB RegioExpress train RE1768 (Disentis/Mustér – Chur) struck a large stone that had fallen onto the track near the station Tavanasa-Breil/Brigels. The

train locomotive, Ge 4/4^{II} 628 ('S-Chanf/Fairtiq'), and the leading EW II carriage were derailed and damaged. The driver suffered light injuries.

Damage to the vehicles has now been estimated at over CHF 1m. It has therefore been decided that repairs are not cost-effective and both the locomotive and carriage will be written off.

RhB At Driving Trailer loses its vacuum pump

On 24 June, RhB Driving Trailer At 57804 lost its vacuum pump near Felsberg whilst heading train IR 1149 Chur-St.Moritz. The train had to be terminated at Reichenau-Tamins.

As a result all the first class driving trailers (At) and the Universal driving trailers (Bt) were withdrawn from service for checks. It was immediately realised that faulty fixings were the cause and measures to correct the problem taken.

Rebuilt station building at Poschiavo opens

After a three year construction period, the RhB celebrated the reopening of this station on 24 August.

Improvements included a wider and higher main platform which now meets legislative requirements for persons of reduced mobility. Track, overhead and security installations have been improved. To the north of the station the new double track section to Val Varuna is now in operation. Together with a further crossing point at Pradei to the south, this new stretch of track has allowed timetable improvements.

New sidings have improved facilities for the formation of freight trains.



Photo: ©swiss-image.ch

Boost to restoration costs of RhB No. 1 'Rhaetia'

Canton Graubünden has agreed to contribute CHF 160,000 toward the estimated CHF 938,000 costs of restoring the veteran steam locomotive to operational status.

New Stadler Be 4/8 for LEB arrives

The first of six Stadler Be 4/8 ordered in 2017 by Chemin de fer Lausanne-Échallens-Bercher (LEB) has arrived. No. 61 is very different to the existing Stadler trains on this line. It is a three section unit based heavily on the RBS Worbla design.

MBC vehicles sold to Guinea

On 13 August four EW I / B60 carriages of MBC were placed on low-loaders for transport to Antwerp for onward shipping to Conakry (Guinea) where they were expected at the beginning of September. They will be used on the 45km

long line between Conakry and Dubreka.

In their new home they will join six former Zentralbahn (SBB Brünig) carriages that were exported in 2015.

Appenzeller Bahnen carriages also sold to West Africa

Some 15 vehicles previously used on Gossau-Appenzell-Wasserauen services, superfluous following the arrival of the new Walzer stock, are destined for further use in West Africa. Representatives from railway administrations in the Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso inspected the vehicles at Herisau in February and a subsequent sale contract was signed. A full refurbishment of the trains will be carried out in France before their onward transport by sea.

The vehicles involved are BDe 41 – 43, ABt 141 – 143, B236-238 and B241-246.

Their new route will be somewhat longer than Gossau to Wasserauen. They will be used on a service between Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) and Abidjan (Ivory Coast) – some 1200 kilometres and taking 18 hours.

SBB Historic Ae 6/6 to be broken up

After a previous attempt by preservation group Team 10439 to preserve Ae 6/6 11456 'Stadt Olten' failed as a result of insufficient sponsorship, ownership passed to SBB Historic. The latter has now decided not to keep it and it will shortly go for scrapping to Thommen AG in Kaiseraugst.

11456 was the last of the "Town" Ae 6/6 without the chrome stripes. It is seen here in its final days in a photo taken by John Jesson on 16 September 2009 at Othmarsingen, awaiting a pathway with a freight and already minus its crest.



Photo: John Jesson

Bus garage to store historic stock

A bus garage situated in the grounds of the erstwhile terminus of the Sernftalbahn at Elm is to become the home for the preserved rolling stock of the former line. A wind- and watertight shelter for the two bright-red motor cars is a necessity. The Verein Sernftalbahn received planning permission for the change of use at the end of May and track was laid down within the hall in late August.

Smilestones Phase 2

The second phase of this popular new attraction opened on 28 September.

John Steedman visited the model village in June and found that work was well advanced on the second phase in a further room which he was able to view. This new phase, to

be known as Schweizer Bergwelt, features the Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau plus Matterhorn mountain backdrops with a Lauterbrunnen model in build. The active modeller informed John that they were confident the room would be fully operational and open to visitors in the autumn.



Eiger in build.

Photo: John Steedman

Editor's Note

Sometimes these reports contain prior notice of planned work and interruptions of normal services. These are without guarantee. Readers must check locally, or on websites, when travelling to avoid disappointment, but also because such projects can change even at short notice.

Swiss News was compiled by the Editor with input from David Carpenter, Sholto Thomas and Robert Amstutz. 



RhB ABDe 4/4 No. 452 at Mesocco in 1976.

Photo: Martin Fisher

Forty years ago this month, on 9 December 1979, the upper section of the curious line that threaded the Misox valley, straddling the Ticino/Graubünden border north east of Castione-Arbedo, was formally closed. In fact it had been impassable since 6 August the previous year after prolonged torrential rainfall had breached the formation in no less than twelve locations. It was the beginning of the end for the branch which had been conceived with high ambitions but, in truth, was doomed to failure from the day it opened.

The electric railway Bellinzona-Mesocco (BM) stemmed from the idea of a rail connection between the capital of Ticino and the Graubünden transport crossroads of Thusis.

For that reason construction was carried out as far as possible according to the standards of the Rhätische Bahn (RhB). It was electrified from the outset at 1,500 volts DC with energy being supplied from a hydro-electric plant at Cebbia, above Mesocco.

The line was 31 km long and its trains had to overcome a height difference of 538 metres over that length which necessitated a ruling gradient of 60%. In all there were sixteen crossings and halts, crossing facilities being provided at ten points. From Bellinzona to Mesocco the line crossed 26 bridges (total length 561m) and three tunnels (85m). The maximum line speed was 45 kph.