

# RhB might-have-beens : die Ofenbergbahn

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# Die Ofenbergbahn

by Mike Polglaze

**The history** of the Ofenbergbahn began on 22 May 1906. On this day the directors of the Bozon-Meranbahn sought a concession from the state for the line. The concession was however first given on 22 December 1909 for a period of three years. Due to financial difficulties, this was twice extended, until World War I brought the whole project to an end. The length from Mals to Zernez would have been some 53 km.

## The proposed line from Schulderns (0 km) to Zernez (53 km)

The line would have begun with the connection to the then under construction (1906) standard gauge Meran - Mals line of the KUK State Railway, the Kaiserlich Königlich Staatsbahn (1880 Austrian State Railway)

The route of the Ofenbergbahn would have then crossed the Etsch on a light falling grade and entered the Munstertal after Bahnhof Latsch. Here it was to traverse the left valley side, through Taufers and on to Santa Maria (Sta.Maria). This section of line would have had no noteworthy constructions along its length. The valley step between Sta.Maria and Valcava would have been negotiated by a 1030 m spiral

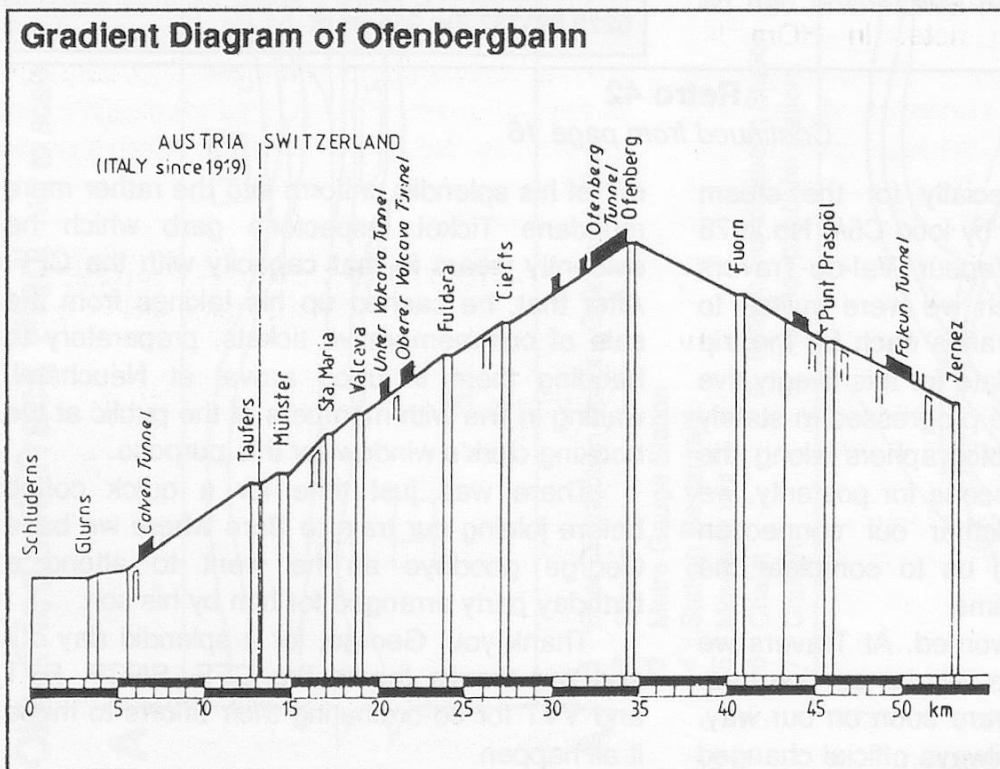
tunnel, the second valley step, after Fuldera likewise with a 1190 m spiral tunnel. Up to the Ofenbug Tunnel the line would have again been on the left hand side of the valley. Cierfs Station (7800 m) would have served the Upper Munstertal.

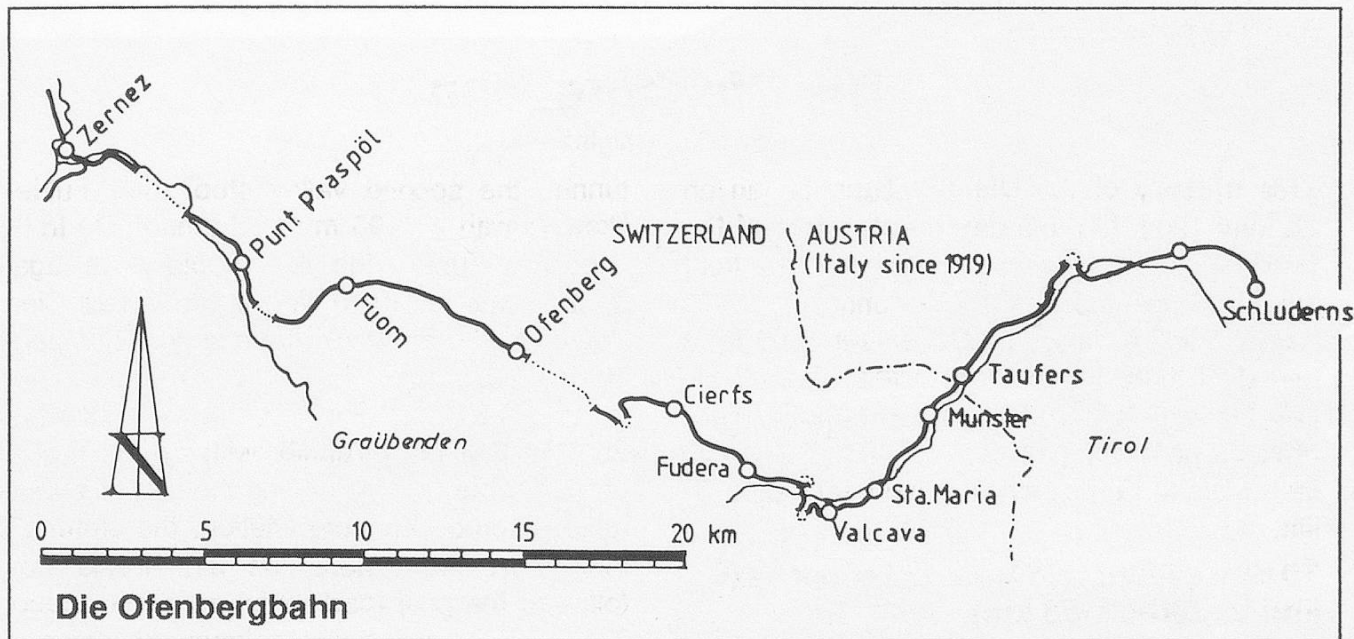
At km 31.1 the line would have entered the 2520 m Ofenberg Tunnel, with an uphill climb of 35%. Shortly after leaving the tunnel it would have entered Ofenberg Station, the summit of the route. From here the line would have followed the post road as far as Fuorn Station. This stretch of line would have presented no major constructional problems, unlike the next 9 km through the Spol Gorge. After leaving the gorge the line needed only to cross the Inntal before arriving at the projected RhB station in Zernez.

It is interesting to note that the Ofenbergbahn would have had its own station in Zernez, some distance from the RhB station on the Bever - Scoul line.

## Technical Requirements

- The Ofenbergbahn would have been a metre gauge adhesion line, with electric traction. The concession had a clause for the operation of steam traction over the line.
- A power station was planned on the Etsch near Mals ( km 2.5) to provide the necessary power for the line. It would also have provided sufficient power for the surrounding villages, and in all probability for the Meran - Nauders Railway as well. This was to have been standard gauge and may well have





become part of the VSB to Landeck.

- For the overhead power on the Ofenbergbahn a single phase 6000 V system was envisaged. To overcome power loss over the line, 20000 V would have been carried over separate feeder lines and to feed the overhead through lineside transformers at km 20 and km 40.
- The catenary wire would have had a cross section of 50 mm<sup>2</sup> and the carrying wire a cross section of 60 mm<sup>2</sup>. The catenary would have been carried on 8 m wooden masts.
- A minimum curve radius of 120 m was envisaged. (Editors note. In HOm this would be 1380 mm!)
- Motive power was to consist of five 1200 hp locomotives and three 4-axle 300 hp railcars, the former being for freight and heavier passenger trains, the latter for local trains. Further rolling stock would have comprised 15 BC passenger coaches and 10 each open and closed wagons with a 10 tonne capacity.
- Passenger trains would have had a maximum speed of 30 km/h and freight trains a maximum of 15 km/h.
- In summer a minimum of four and in winter a minimum of two trains per day were to run in each direction.

### Gradients

- The stretch of line Taufers - Ofenberg Tunnel North Portal (except where in station) would have had a gradient of 40%; in the

Ofenberg Tunnel itself this was to have been 35%.

- The average gradient for the whole line would have been 29.4%.

Had the line been built is speculation as to if and when it would have become part of the RhB. From a modelling viewpoint one would imagine that it did take place and the line converted to the RhB 15000 V 16<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub> Hz supply. Alternatively one could retain its independence and run whatever stock one fancied on it.

My son, David, has now given up the DB and is modelling Fuldera on this line. That now means that most of the lines are in model form, *Via Mala*, David Broomfield with *Maloja* and now another Polglaze with the Ofenbergbahn. Is anyone doing the Scuol - Landeck bit?

I would like to acknowledge David's help in the preparation of this article.

Ofenbergbahn : Station Statistics		
	Distance (km)	Height (m)
Schluderns	0	922
Glurus	3.0	922
Taufers	12.4	1230
Münster	14.1	1251
Sta. Maria	17.2	1371.6
Valcava	19.0	1429
Fuldera	24.3	1622
Cierfs	27.6	1729
Ofenberg*	34.8	1987
Fuorn	40.8	1825.4
Punt Praspöl	45.6	1675.9
Zernez	53.1	1475

\* Shown as Buffalora in Marshall's *Metre Gauge Railways in South East Switzerland*