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A trip up Rochers de Naye by L. Heath

This railway, whose initials are MGN, but is usually referred to as the Rochers de Naye, this is written on the side of the modern stock, is a member of the Montreux Oberland Bernois group (MOB) and has its lower terminus across the service road from the MOB metre gauge line at Montreux. Two tracks shelter under the overhang of the Hotel Terminus and are adjacent to its buffet which is frequented by off duty railwaymen for both the CFF and MOB.

The line was built not only to reach the summit of the Roches de Naye (6,700 feet) but also to serve communities and hotels clustered above Montreux. Many of the hotels were popular with the British before World War I when the relative wealth of the two "Unions" was the opposite of what it is today.

The 800 mm gauge line is wholly rack and pinion to cope with the steep gradient.

The first section was opened from Montreux to Glion, where it met a funicular from Territet. The combined station boasts a cafe and terrace from which a splendid view can be enjoyed of

Lake Geneva and the Rhone valley toward Les Dents du Midi.

But let us retrace our steps to Montreux and look at the line in a little more detail.

The trains set off in a short tunnel emerging briefly near the sharp incline of the MOB 'main line' as it leaves Montreux. The steep climb, in tunnel, begins almost at once and the train emerges to cross a deep ravine down which plunges a torrent in the snow melt season, the source of which is near J'or on the MOB at the mouth of the Jaman tunnel. The crossing is effected by a light bridge which appears to be iron rather than steel. There are ever changing views as the train ascends to Glion where the line levels out in the relatively large station where some stock is often stabled.

After passing through a short tunnel, the main depot is found each side of the line and, often, to the right, the old loco 'MGN 2' with vintage coaches can be seen. The depot buildings on the left are being enlarged to take the newer stock introduced in 1983.



Above Left: The steam loco with Rochers de Naye in the background.

Above: The station at Glion is used at the moment as storage because the depot is being extended.

Photo: Les Heath

Above Glion, if one knows where to look at the left, one can see the CEV line to Les Pléiades and the MOB metre line near Les Avants - but it helps if there are trains!

Caux is a high level 'dormitory' and holiday village. Its station with short section of level track, includes a cafe from which one can watch the passing rail scene enlightened on the days when steam is in operation between here and the summit because the refuelling and watering point is on a separate siding. A wooden water tower, like a small version of the towers once familiar in the USA, is an obvious source but the fuel comes in a small hose placed in position by the driver who uses a modern aluminium ladder to get to the filler. The loco No.12 delivered in 1992 is similar to that on the Brienz Rothorn Bahn, and runs on Sundays from May till October.

From here, the climb becomes more exciting as it heads for a narrow ridge. To the left is the face of the Dent de Jaman with its serried ranks

of steel structures designed to break up avalanches. After a short tunnel there is a breathtaking view to the right and then the line sharply curves away into a tunnel from which it emerges in the bowl of what must surely be the crater of an ancient volcano.

Rochers de Naye, the two road station is partly under cover, a blessing in winter during heavy snow as the skiers climb off the trains to enjoy a day in this huge snow bowl. In the summer, easy paths up to and around the lip afford wonderful views and the abundance of wild flowers is always an attraction.

A few years ago, the company bored a tunnel through the mountain from the station to construct a restaurant in the mountainside giving a magnificent view down Lake Geneva.

Montreux station staff can tell you what the weather conditions are at the top. If they are good, don't hesitate to go. If they are not, at least go to Caux for a taste of this fascinating line.