

Zeitschrift: Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal
Herausgeber: Swiss Railways Society
Band: 5 (1997-1999)
Heft: 12

Artikel: Steam returns to Gletsch
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-854585>

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Loco DFB no.1 whistles at the start (A=Anfang) of the ramp from Gletsch to the Furka. 30/09/99

Photo. George Hoekstra

It has been 31 years since the F0 Railway ran its last steam train into Gletsch. Recently, on the 30th of December 1999 thanks to the efforts of the Furka Bergstrecke volunteers, a steam hauled works train was able to run once again into Gletsch station.

Regular readers will remember just over a year ago the running of the first works train hauled by a light diesel engine into Gletsch (see "Swiss Express" Sept. 1998, page 13). After a year of very hard work, the track is now able to take the much heavier steam locomotives. Hard work indeed and done mostly by volunteers. Only in the summit tunnel was a specialist firm needed to repair all the frost damage to the tunnel lining.

This damage had occurred mainly in the years after the F0 Railway had abandoned the summit route and before the volunteers

took over. Although the tunnel had doors at both ends to protect it from the snowdrifts in winter, nobody made sure that they were kept closed.. Thus, during winter, the snow was able to get deep into the tunnel from both sides. In summer it would melt and the water could creep into cracks in the lining. The next winter would bring back severe frost. Finally the freezing water would blast the lining off. However, as the loading gauge for the steam trains is less than that required for electric stock (which ran through the tunnel in F0 days), repairs could be made by attaching extra lining from the inside. The rails too had to be replaced, as these were still the original ones dating from 1926 when the tunnel was built! Also the rest of the line outside needed lots of repairs and replacements. The FO, knowing the line would be abandoned, only did a minimum

of repairs. For many years, the line was left to the ravages of the long and very severe winters you get in this area and at these altitudes.

To help pay for this work the Furka Bergstrecke is issuing another 3 000 shares of SFr. 300- each. Before this issue more than 11000 shareholders have already bought about 11 million francs worth of shares. At the moment all is going well and we can be reasonably confident that steam trains will be able to carry passengers past the Rhône Glacier again at the start of next season. This will not be before July 2000 as winter lasts very long here.

The first three days, July 14th, 15th and 16th 2000, will be reserved for the special

opening trains with reserved seats only and at a special fare. Every passenger for this event will receive a special commemorative gift and a personal numbered certificate. Book early as about 50 % of the trains are already sold out! The following few days are reserved for tour operator charter trains. From 24th July until 17th August trains will run daily. From 18th August onwards the trains will run every Friday, Saturday and Sunday, until the winter returns, normally at the beginning of October.

For further information write to: DFB, PO Box 35-9, CH-3999, Oberwald, or call (+41) 27 973 33 759 or fax (+41) 27 773 33 760

EXHIBITIONS REPORT - Andy Nelson

With Christmas fast approaching another year and this time a century and millennium passes. Firstly may I thank all those people who have helped me at our Exhibitions stand over the last year. And to everyone who I have met, had contact with and indeed all of you in SRS may I wish you all a happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year/Century/Millennium. It's not often you can say that.

The **SRS Stand** will be attending the following exhibitions in **2000**

15-16 Jan St Albans

16-20 Feb Eurotrack-Southampton.

18 Mar SRS AGM Derby

17 June New Continental Exhibition-Newmarket. See next edition for further details

Finally. Do you have a Swiss layout which you are, can or would like to exhibit at exhibitions and spread the good word further around the land? If so let me know. Try and give at least three months notice if possible. I have specific requests for the following.

2-4 June 2000 - East Anglia Railway Museum. Call Bob Boyce on 07899 841039, fax him on 01473 462990 or email on EARM@btinternet.co

17 June 2000 - New continental show at Newmarket. Phil Cotton - 01284 735457
SRS AGM at Derby. In particular for an HO layout, but all other offers welcome.

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