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MAILBAG

Model Railway at Pontresina

At the recent Society Spring Meet, Mark Fox and I were talking about the model shop list to which he was an early contributor. He also persuaded me to include the section on railway models in Switzerland (at the back of the model shop list if you haven't yet spotted it). He then asked me whether I knew anything about the model of the Bernina line at Pontresina. I told him all I knew.

In 1961 I first visited Pontresina and was delighted and amazed by this model. I have found some details in a scrapbook, including a publicity leaflet and an entrance ticket - cost 2.20 Sfrs. for an adult, at 12.00 Sfrs to the pound in those days! In that year, only half the model was open, that of the northern part of the line from Punt Muragl to Ospizio Bernina - the south ramp was under construction. The leaflet claims 680 sq.m. of scenery, 43 sq.m. of lakes, 346 m. of track, 150 points, 18 stations, 20 signal boxes, 350 relays, 2100 overhead line masts and 62 km. (!) of wire - quite a substantial investment! The publicity claims "the most extensive layout of its kind in the world... without equal in technical skill and scenery" - quite possibly true for its time - I don't remember much about the quality of the model to compare with modern models, but there was no Bemo then!

On a return trip in 1964, the southern part had been opened with the impressive loops and spiral. But in the 1980s, I was disappointed to find that the exhibition was closed and the building had been turned into a beer warehouse. Then on a 1993 trip, I found that the warehouse had been either rebuilt or enlarged, so no trace was left.

So Mark's question remains - what happened to this layout? Mark has made various enquiries without success, including the Internet (or information Super Railway as one SRS member refers to it), so now we turn to SRS members for their memories and contacts. If you know any more about this layout and its subsequent history, please tell us - either through the editor, to me below - or by email andy@ilocker.abel.co.uk.

Andy Micklethwaite,
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SK12 2DD.

Lake Geneva Paddle Vessels

As a follow up to my note on the Lake Geneva Diesel Electric Paddle Vessels (Swiss Express, Sept 96) it may be of interest to members to learn that the Compagnie Generale de Navigation (CGN) which operates these is looking at the possibility of re-installing steam engines in three of them.

If sufficient funding can be found the Vevey, Italie and the Montreux are the likely candidates for re-engining with diagonal compound engines based on those currently in the Savoie. The fourth DEPV, the Helvetie, would probably retain diesel electric power.

The likely builder of the new engines is SLM who recently supplied new steam locomotives to the Brienz Rothorn and other railways.

Information from the Autumn 1996 Bulletin of the International Stationary Steam Engine Society.

Andrew Wood,
Winchester.

AGM - Spring Meet 1998

Would any members having a layout, diorama or model/s for display please contact the Editor with details, space required etc.

I know its a long way away, but please come forward now and help us to plan your Spring Meet early.