

The letters pages

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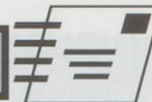
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Letters are welcomed on any relevant subject. Please ensure that when you send an email letter you include your address.

From: Brian Kay - Leeds

Interlaken and Graves, Some Answers

Following the last *Swiss Express* a friend in Interlaken, Albrecht Wenger, sent the following:

As for the "mystery" of Interlaken, we can tell you the following after having contacted a friend of ours who knows all about the subject.

The railway track that Mrs Smith came across during her stay was an industrial one leading to a mill across the river Aare which was moved to Burgholz near Spiez in 1983 (*Please refer to the pictures*). The line and the bridge in particular are regarded as a bit of a nuisance and even dangerous. So far, however, no-one seems to want to pay for its removal. From 1926, when it was constructed, until 1983 the track was frequently used to transport cereals to the mill which then provided bakeries all over the Berner Oberland with flour. In those times, transport of cereals was almost exclusively by rail, so the mill owners decided to build the line from West station to the mill at their own cost.

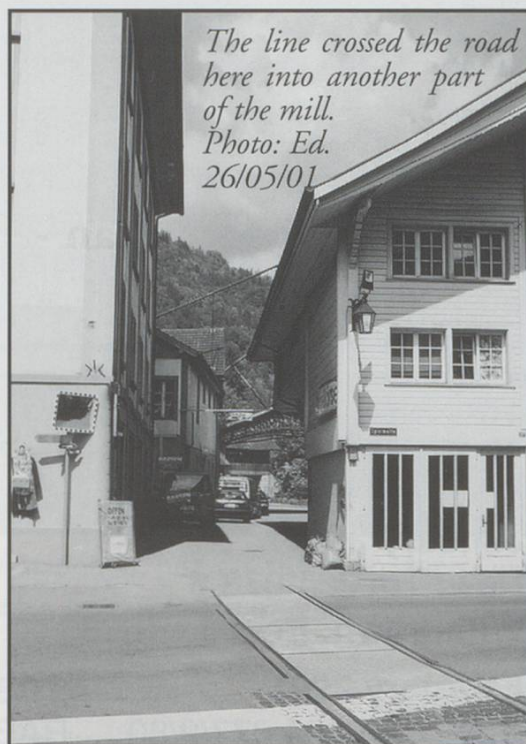
Shunting and haulage along the line was done with the mill's diesel shunter, Montana, which is still in use at Burgholz at the new mill. Incidentally the electricity works Mrs Smith alluded to still belong to the mill company and are still running, although the power produced is used for the local network.

Now to the Gsteig graveyard. D. Hughes presumes quite rightly that the carvings on the headstones he or she took photographs of refer to the professional occupation of the deceased. The three men lying under the three headstones shown in the magazine were in fact all railwaymen. I obtained the address of a retired senior engine driver who knew them all and he gave me this information:

Re: Friedrich Johann Knecht, 1898-1979, worked at the engine depot at Zweilütschinen as a mechanic and

A general view of the former mill, In the foreground is a turntable to gain access to the other side of the road and behind is a weighbridge. The tlt is big enough for the shunter which I have seen at Burgdorf.
28/05/01

Photo: Editor



The line crossed the road here into another part of the mill.
Photo: Ed.
26/05/01

used to serve as an engine-driver to Schynige Platte at busy times. The carving shows a Schynige Platte train entering a tunnel.

Re: Heinz Schönholzer, 1960-1983, (figures checked by myself as they were unclear on the photograph) was a Jungfraubahn mechanic and engine driver at Eigergletscher. He was very keen on mountaineering and died at the age of 23 in a climbing accident.

Re: Fritz Zurschmiede-Balmer 1902-1996. He was an employee working at Wilderswil.'

We are indebted to Herrn Wenger and Brian Kay for the detailed answer.

From: Alfred Hauser-Gubser - Hettlingen

The Gsteig Graves

With regards to the request made by D. Hughes, Colyton, I am familiar with the headstones pictured, because my mother rests in this graveyard. Similar headstones can be observed in all mountain valleys where the railway brought a better living and last but not least an improved social standing. For centuries these valleys lived on the meagre harvests and in these surroundings the priest or pastor and the teacher were the sole persons of some standing. The district authorities were 'far' away. Railwaymen, being carefully selected by the communities rose to a good standing. Therefore, many families choose to give an indication of the former profession of the deceased.

From: Barry Vaughan - Kingsbridge

Valances

The lovely blue Re 460, gracing the cover of the March 2001 *Swiss Express*, shows the front obstruction guard being changed towards blending in with the 'design feature' of the inward curve shielding of the lower valances.

I feel that it is essential to maintain front obstruction shields exactly like the most successful of all Swiss engines, the Ae6/6, which is blessed with a definite pick up angle out towards the direction of movement, and which will tend to pick up particularly tenuous obstructions such as steelwork, which otherwise, as at Selby, would crowd under the buffer beam and derail the engine.

From: William Cookson - Kidderminster

An Enjoyable Experience

I hope members will be interested to know that during my holiday in Switzerland in September 2000, I had a very enjoyable day travelling from Grindelwald to Kleine Scheidegg where I had a stop for lunch, dining on bratwurst and fried diced potatoes, very nice it was too. Kleine Scheidegg, as I am sure you know, is an absolute Mecca for photographers with the different companies' colourful trains arriving and departing at that station. One funny photo which I took there was of two railwaymen pushing a flat truck, which tempts me to put a caption on it saying 'Swiss Railways runs out of electricity and steam, so they have turned over to manpower'; it looked very hard work. I also photographed the little red-bladed snowplough with its determined-looking eyes.

People, who worked for the various railway systems, were so friendly and helpful as I found when travelling in the Jungfrau Express. I was suffering from inflammation of a tendon in my right leg at the time and it was very difficult to walk. When the train stopped in the Jungfrau tunnel so that passengers could walk to the observation windows to view the magnificent scenery, I was well behind, the Inspector called to me to follow him to another observation point along a corridor, where he pointed out places of interest between the mountains. When he mentioned Lake Thun, I said we had travelled alongside it, at which he was very interested and we had a nice chat.

The Ice Tunnels with the sculptures of eagles, penguins, bears and for the thousands of Japanese visitors a sculpture of a Sumo wrestler, all carved from ice, were preserved by the extremely low temperature. Views from outside the Jungfrauoch were wonderful. I wanted a box of Alpine flower-embroidered handkerchiefs for my wife, and guess what, it was the only one in front of a myriad of things in the Jungfrauoch station shop, so I thought 'that was that!' as not many shop people in England would have bothered to have got them for me under similar circumstances. "No trouble" said the lady from the shop, and 'dived' through the many items in the way to get that box of handkerchiefs.

I spoke to the young lady ticket collector on the return journey, saying how much I envied her job. "I look forward to it every morning, enjoy your holiday" she said. At Kleine Scheidegg, there was a train parked across all the lines when I got there, and a man's voice shouted "This is your train sir!"; this was a man who I had chatted to on the way up. A train packed with Japanese looking like one of those Tokyo underground trains arrived at Kleine Scheidegg, causing a smile from onlookers. The Jungfrau 'Experience' is a must for

all railway enthusiasts - the only trouble is the it makes one discontented, as one wants to do this exciting journey again.

From: Michael Feaver - Tunbridge Wells

ALP 2000

Can any members let me know how one can get news of the progress of Alp 2000 - in English and in large black print? (i.e., larger and blacker print than *Swiss Express*) I recently saw a lot of work going on at the south side of Zürich Hauptbahnhof, and would like to know what is envisaged. Also I twice passed through Frutigen, but could see no signs of any digging for the Lötschberg base-tunnel. Last year I twice passed through Erstfeld, and again could see no sign of digging for the Gotthard basis-tunnel. Someone kindly sent me a cutting with a picture of the Bodio exit. Is there any summary of the plans and progress?

From: Kenneth Follett - London

Filisur - 4th to 11th March 2001

I feel compelled to write to you having responded to the advert for the Hotel Grischuna at Filisur that has been carried in recent editions of our Society journal.

With my fiancée and two other family members, we booked our week's Swiss winter break there. The itinerary and journeys both getting there and on the Rhätische Bahn are all well documented and familiar. The point in writing is to let you know that the hotel is excellent and thoroughly recommended. Superbly located on the platform of Filisur Station, the food was excellent (alternatives were prepared on occasion when we did not like the set menu), the cost was most affordable - £290 for seven nights including 4-course evening meal each night, a 5-day regional rail pass and a pass for the Bergün/Preda toboggan run. Only the drinks were extra, and they were reasonable.

We were made really welcome throughout our stay, and our inability to speak German was a source of amusement with us all, particularly at meal times. It all helped to make for a thoroughly enjoyable holiday for us all and for me especially being the Swiss railway enthusiast amongst us.

As is usual I will be doing a pictorial travelogue for what was until recently my local railway enthusiast's society in Gravesend, which will allow me to relive the Albula, Arosa and Bernina lines once again.

...and thank you for the advertisement that ultimately gave us such a good holiday.

From: David Skales - Gorran, Cornwall

RhB Lokdienst - Filisur

May I add a little to the comment in a recent *Swiss Express* (Nigel Pocock -Dec 2000) on this subject. When staying in Filisur in February I spoke with the station officials about the Lokdienst - which shows the daily operations of each of the RhB's locomotives. It seems that this four sheet document is faxed out each day from HQ in Chur - not Landquart.. There was no indication on the document which other stations received it and its purpose in Filisur seems for display only . The official happily gave me the current day's copy before inserting the next day's on to the notice board. Closer study of the document shows that it is prepared quarterly but each day's version is amended as may be necessary. Each day is different as not all locos end the day where they started. All locos are included and this includes those which are out of service - e.g. the remaining Ge6/6"s. Surprisingly the 1914 built Ge4/6 No. 353 was shown as taking a trip from Samedan to Scuol-Tarasp and back.

Whilst at Filisur I had been interested in the arrival at 08.52 of a two coach train from Davos hauled by one of the Ge6/6" s. It returned to Davos at 09.10 and quickly disposed of its two coaches. The Lokdienst showed this trip as a gap in a day of freight duties. To make full use of this document you would need details of freight and passenger services as shown in Fahrplan Grafisch. Whilst some rotas are short there are several lasting for more than 18 hours, for example, the Vereina Tunnel shuttles.