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RAIL OMBUDSPERSON

An National Ombudsperson to adjudicate intractable problems has been appointed. First introduced in Sweden many years ago there are now also a number in the UK as well as Switzerland. This however is one of the first to be introduced in a railway context.

The Ombudsperson is someone to whom members of the public can turn if a carrier is unable to settle a case or problem to the satisfaction of the complainant. Although a part of the customer services in general the fact that he/she is totally independent and neutral leads to confidence on the part of the complainant and promotes goodwill on both sides.

So who is the Ombudsperson? She is Ms Cornelia Füeg, a lawyer and former public transport advisor to Canton Solothurn. She follows the principles laid down by Ombudspersons elsewhere. The carrier and complainant will not have settled the dispute. There are no restrictions on who they can talk to. Every avenue should have been used to settle the dispute prior to the Ombudsperson becoming involved. Timetable disputes are not part of the remit as there is another avenue of complaint to the official 'Fahrplanverfahren'. Any complaint must be in writing and should have reached the highest possible level within the carrier's procedures. The Ombudsperson can also be contacted by phone or letter for guidance prior to them being involved officially. In other words it is a last resort.

One question remains: when will they ever be used? We are talking about Swiss railways after all.

INTERNATIONAL

SBB Cargo, BLS and Hupac established a joint company "RALpin" on 4th April to operate the "rolling road" services between Freiburg im Breisgau (D) and Novara (I) over the Lötschberg - Simplon axis from 11th June 2001. This service, starting at four train pairs per day frequency and planned to increase to seven train pairs from September, uses motive power and stock hired from the parent companies. This includes Hupac's 1116 901.



SBB CFF FFS

The first summer of 'full' ICN service has by no means trouble-free, a shortage of ICN sets has meant that during most of the day they are restricted to the Zürich - Lausanne or Geneva section only, with through passengers having to change at Zürich Hb. To add to the problems, a unit derailed at Zürich Oerlikon on July 29th and the subsequent inspection led to the complete fleet being stopped for bogie inspection and modifications at the Zürich and Lausanne depots on 13th August. Conventional trains replaced the ICN workings for the duration of the crisis, expected to last about a week.

To add to the CFF's woes, a collision occurred at Champ du Moulin at 09.35 on Saturday 11th August. This involved two local trains on the joint CFF / TRN (RVT) service between Neuchâtel and Buttes. Fortunately, only four people were injured

and normal services were resumed during the Saturday afternoon.

The pilot bore of the Varen tunnel, the main work on the new double track section between Salgesch and Leuk in the Rhône valley, broke through on 19th July. Following a shunting accident at Effretikon in February between RABDe12/12 "Mirage" units 510 010 and 510 013 a 'new' unit 510 013 has been formed from the undamaged vehicles of the two sets. The overhead between Buchs and Rorschach via St Margarethen has been modified to accept +BB pantographs with effect from 10th June.

BLS Lötschbergbahn



A new livery style for BLS *Pendelzug* sets has appeared on Nina unit 525 001; the base colour is light grey with cream and darker grey bodyside bands, doors and the cab fronts are in pale green and

the unit is branded "bls". The new logo is seen on the front of the Nina. The picture was taken by George Hoekstra at the launch. A further article on both this and the BN 100 years celebrations will appear in the next *Swiss Express*

OTHER STANDARD GAUGE

CF Pont Brassus (PBr) and CF Yverdon – Ste Croix (YSC)-ng

In the north of Canton Vaud, the CF Pont Brassus (PBr), CF Yverdon – Ste Croix (YSC) and the Transports Public Yverdon Grandson (TPYG) bus company have agreed that they will merge under the title Travys (Transports Vallée de Joux, Yverdon, Ste-Croix).

mittelthurgaubahn

The new approach from the south to Kreuzlingen station opened on 4th June. The new alignment takes a wider sweep around the Tägerwil curve, where the line turns through 180 degrees. A second track has been provided from Kreuzlingen Bernrain station, through the replacement Tägerwil Dorf station, to Kreuzlingen, and was brought into use from the timetable change on 10th June.

METREGAUGE



The Apples - L'Isle branch service is now covered by a bus except at peak periods.



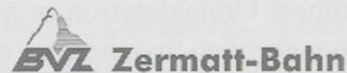
The Bremgarten Dietikon Bahn (BD) and standard gauge Wohlen Meisterschwanden Bahn (WM) have formally merged under the above title, having been under common management for many years.

To celebrate the 125th anniversary of the Wohlen – Bremgarten West section, which has been worked as a mixed gauge line (metre gauge passenger, standard gauge goods) since 1912, WM BDe2/4 3 and a SBB Cargo Re460 were displayed at Bremgarten West on 30th June and 1st July.

Brünig Line

Mixed gauge at the Luzern end of the line now extends to Horw. A virtual loop has been provided at the junction with the Kriens Luzern Bahn line at Rösslimatt, where the standard gauge line makes use of the KLB exchange siding for 0.6km.

In connection with the relaunch of the Golden Pass Panoramic Express, two coaches, including newly rebuilt WR 423, as well as locomotive HGe 101 967, have been turned out in a gold and white livery.



The merger of the FO and BVZ has been proposed. While there are strong operational reasons for the merger, the structure of the two companies are very different. The BVZ is profitable and as much as 40% of its stock is in private ownership; the FO is heavily subsidised and 72% of its stock is held by the state. The Oberalpsee avalanche gallery is being renewed this summer. At the same time, Oberalppasshöhe station is being rebuilt, the loop lengthened and the obligatory platform provided.



Work on the new adhesion section from Grafenort to Engelberg started on 15th June.



The Riviera members of the MOB group, the Chemins de Fer Électriques Veveysans (CEV), Montreux Territet Glion Naye (MTGN), Les Avants Sonloup (LAS) and Vevey Mont Pèlerin (VMP) funicular have now been merged under the title Transport Montreux Vevey Riviera (TMVR).

A third Golden Pass Panoramic set has been formed from refurbished "original" Panoramic coaches. New seats have been fitted, as have retention toilets. This set normally works with Ge4/4 8001 or 8002 and retains vacuum brakes. As 118 is being used for a pilot passenger information project; it has been fitted with a GPS system which is used to display the train's speed and position (and altitude??) on six internal screens. Sets 1 and 2 (the reformed Golden and Crystal Panoramic sets) use air brakes and work with Ge4/4's 8001 and 8002. 8001 is painted in 1901 style on one side and 2001 style on the other. (8002 now carries a Golden Pass Panoramic advertising livery; a similar livery is carried by a BLS Re465 and Brünig Line HGe 101 967).

Regionalverkehr Bern-Solothurn (RBS)

The first low floor sections for the "Mandarinli" units 47 – 61 are now in service. Box shaped and

painted in a mustard and red livery, they don't quite match the more rounded 1970s driving vehicles.



The Arosa line was blocked by a landslide near the Steinboden tunnels between Chur and Lüen-Castiel from 24th April until 20th May. Stabilisation works in the area resulted in the line being closed between Chur and St Peter-Molinis from 6th to 29th June and again from 16th July.

Bernina Line Gem4/4 801 is in Landquart works for re-engineering. With a complete replacement of the diesel engine, electrical equipment and matching to new cabs (in the style of the Ge4/4III's), the RhB will get back an almost new locomotive.

Transport Publics du Chablais (TPC)

A landslide between Bex and Gryon blocked the BVB line for around four weeks from 7th April.

The new units for the Bex-Villars-Bretaye line, Beh4/4 91 and 92, are now in service. These sets are wider than the previous stock and only just fit the line's loading gauge – that is, between the buildings at Bex-Place-du-Marché!

TRAMWAYS



Services on BLT Lines 10 and 11 were rerouted over the new link from the Münchensteinbrücke to Basel SBB station from 29th June

Verkehrsbetriebe der Stadt Zürich (VBZ)

Prototype articulated unit Be4/6 1801 has been withdrawn.

Burgwies Depot, dating back to 1893, will not be required for service trams once the fleet renewal is

complete. It is planned that from 2005 it will become the Zürich Tram Museum depot, holding around 25 trams from the VBZ heritage fleet and other groups.

PRESERVATION

Misox Line (Castione – Grono)

Appenzeller Bahnen ABe4/4 41 has passed to the SEFT group for service on the RhB's Misox line.

Riffelalp Tram

This line, now marketed as 'the highest tram in the world', opened on 21st June. See the article published elsewhere in Swiss Express.

Steam Adventure Tours

This Zürich-based organisation staged an extensive tour on 12th May using SBB A3/5 705. The route used was Zürich – Aarau – Olten – Solothurn – Lyss (lunch) – Murten – Payerne – Yverdon – Biel – Solothurn – Olten – Brugg – Zürich; this included working over the freight only section from Solothurn to Büren an der Aare, now restored as a through (but unelectrified) route after being severed for road improvements to the south west of Solothurn.

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Brian Hemming

SWISS FEDERAL RAILWAYS-STOCK CHANGES

MAY 2001

New: RABDe 500 020/1

Withdrawn: Te^{III} 127 Tm^I 441/60 Tm^{II} 676/90, 704/85, 815 Ee3/3^{II} - 16504

Rebuilt & renumbered: XTm 91581 to XTms 95 85 581

JUNE 2001

Withdrawn: Te^{II} 72, 93