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THE REVIEWS



TPC1: BVB - The Bex-Villars-Bretaye Railway

Produced by MITV. VHS/PAL/DVD. Digitally mastered. 52 minutes. £16.95.

Available from MITV or SRS Sales, see the adverts in this *Swiss Express*.

MITV's latest Video/DVD Iron Way/Granite Alp presentation is of the 17km Bex-Villars-Bretaye railway running from summertime Bex in the Rhône Valley to the winter snowfields of the Col de Bretaye.

The pictures, as ever, are clear and, as the line is quite short, we are entertained by a little more than usual history and information about the area and delightful villages that are served by the BVB. There is also a visit to the Salt Mine Museum near Bex. Personally I like this area of Switzerland and it is good to find out more about the history of the railways and locality of this beautiful part of the country. Showing the environment and history of the railways to my mind is a strong selling point of MITV's presentations and make them more attractive to a wider audience (our wives and families).

The other metre-gauge lines, which are part of the Transports Publics du Chablais system and are based at nearby Aigle, are mentioned in passing; presumably these will be part of a future presentation. The only criticism I have is of the background music, which is not to my taste, but fortunately there's not as much on this film as on some of the other Videos or DVDs.

As ever, find out when Sue and Chris are going to Switzerland to film, the sun always seems to shine!

GERLAD

Vaud: Guide to Lac Lemman-Lake Geneva, Jura and Alpine Regions

Author: Elisabeth Upton-Eichenberger. Published by the author and available from SRS Sales at £10 including postage. 296pp, A5, perfect bound, card covers.

This travel guide will not be to everyone's taste. There is not the mind-numbing detail of rolling stock to interest the avid railway enthusiast (though some routes are described), nor are there glossy spectacular views of mountain scenery to inspire the walker. Indeed, photos are few and far between, often seemingly irrelevant to the text. Some indifferent sketches and maps do not help either. Society members may be surprised to learn that the MOB is known the world over for its unusual track width (is metre gauge that rare?). But if the Vaud is one of your favourite areas in Switzerland, then there is bound to be something of interest here to supplement knowledge gained first hand or from the more obvious guidebooks. There is a rather eccentric mix of information on almost anything from towns & villages through to local recipes and an explanation of grape cultivation, all interspersed with advertisements. At almost 300 pages of tightly packed text, this book still offers good value for money.

BADGER

Swiss Railways in the 60s: Vol. 5 - Meander Through the Mountains

Produced by Alan Snowdon, app. 60 minutes long. VHS Only. Available only through SRS Sales. £10 inc. post and packing.

This video, the fifth in Alan Snowdon's archive series "Swiss Railways in the Sixties" covers a number of adhesion and rack-assisted mountain railways throughout Switzerland. Before reviewing the video itself, Alan has provided the following explanation for the long delay between Volumes 4 and 5.

Since the release of Volume 4, Alan has had a problem with the main item of his video editing equipment. The machine was with the repairer for many months waiting for a part. This was only forthcoming when Alan eventually wrote directly to the manufacturer, a famous Japanese firm, and complained at the delay, saying he would have expected better of such a well-known company. It would seem that even the British sections of Japanese companies cannot bear to lose face.

Despite the title, the earliest film on this video was taken in 1958 and the most recent in 1978. The programme starts with 1962 footage taken between Reichenau-Tamins and Andermatt. The 1978 footage between Andermatt and Brig includes film along the old line through Gletsch. After a visit to the Centovalli

line in 1958 (stations at both Locarno and Domodossola were still above ground), the video moves on from Luzern, taking in the Rigi, Pilatus, Brienz-Rothorn and Schynige Platte before ending on the First chairlift at Grindelwald. As with previous videos in the series, Meander Through the Mountains is accompanied by an entertaining and informative commentary by Paul Russenberger, and some typical Swiss music.

Your reviewers find archive film such as this fascinating, and the interest and enjoyment it provides more than compensates for any poor picture quality. The lines featured correspond with some of the popular tourist routes of the 21st century, and this video provides a fascinating historical comparison with more recent footage. It is surprising how little has changed over the years on some of the lines featured (eg the Schynige Platte!). We are very grateful that Alan Snowdon continues to make his archive material available on video and look forward to Volume 6!

CHAMBY

BVZ Zermatt-Bahn in Winter

Produced by REOS Image Productions. Original sound without any additional music or commentary. Subtitles provide information about the trains. 35 minutes.

Available from SRS Sales or at Society exhibition stands. £8.50 plus £1.00 postage.

Although only 35 minutes long, this video offers a wide variety of train views taken in February 2000 of the BVZ line between Visp and Zermatt. The programme starts in sunshine with some "old" snow, but as it continues the weather gets progressively more wintry with many shots taken whilst the snow is falling. All of the trains shown are powered by either the HGe4/4^{II} locomotives or Deh4/4 baggage cars and demonstrate the dependence of Zermatt on this railway for its supplies. There are many passenger trains with a wagon or two attached at the rear as well as some pure freight trains. Your reviewer was particularly impressed with the freights hauled by HGe4/4^{II} locomotives and could not help thinking that here lay some excellent food for thought for the modellers. Also memorable were a real time interlude with trains passing at Randers, and telephoto shots of trains which clearly showed the gradients on the line. Overall this was a very enjoyable video to watch, but was somewhat spoilt by the last six minutes being devoted to a rather uninteresting out of the window view of an edited run from Täsch to Zermatt. How much better it would have been to fill the time with more train shots of the quality in the earlier section of the programme. Nevertheless at half the price of most videos this represents good value and is worth buying.

CHERNEX

Touring around Wassen in winter

Produced by REOS Image Productions. Original sound without any additional music or commentary. 48 minutes. Available from SRS Sales or at Society exhibition stands. £11.75 plus £1.00 postage.

If you like looking at trains – lots of them – then this is for you. Recorded in February and March 2000, the video covers a relatively small, but nevertheless dramatic section of the Gotthard line. In all the scenes the ground is covered in snow to some extent, and in many cases the recordings are made with the snow falling. Because of these weather conditions the video pictures lack some sparkle, but this deficiency is more than outweighed by the diversity of the trains. The Regional, InterCity and EuroCity passenger trains are mostly hauled by Re6/6 locomotives whilst the many freight trains are in the hands of Re10/10 or Re 460 sometimes assisted by a banker. The occasional Ae6/6 is seen as well as a number of light engine movements. Sadly, the lighting conditions inhibit more than the occasional identification of individual locomotives. The camera locations, which are at various points between Gurtellen and the Mühl tunnel, are in many cases identified by sub-titles. There is extensive use of the telephoto lens to produce some excellent shots of trains in this stunning scenery. The video case has a good clear map of the line in the Wassen area, which helps in identifying the progress of trains either up or down the ramp. This video is a feast of trains, and despite the reservations already expressed about the lack of sparkle in the pictures, can be recommended as a valuable record of operations on the line at the turn of the century.

CHERNEX