

Zeitschrift: Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal
Herausgeber: Swiss Railways Society
Band: - (2008)
Heft: 96

Artikel: A line with an Alpine view
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-854652>

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A LINE WITH AN ALPINE VIEW

David Adams

PHOTOS: David Adams



Part of the Alpine chain seen from the train near Yens 06.03.08. Some of the peaks visible are identified in the main text.

Some members reading the title may be surprised to learn that its claim concerns a metre gauge Swiss line which rises to just over a modest 700m above sea level at its highest point and is only 382m above sea level at its lowest. The view concerned can be enjoyed from the train at a height of about 550m and the distance that can be seen at this point on a clear day is surprising. No doubt many will be puzzled – so before there is a stampede for a Schweers & Wall atlas I will give a hint by revealing that the line in question is the BAM (Bière-Apples-Morges).

Following short Swiss holidays in both March 2007 & 2008 I managed to fit in rides over this line on my way back to Genève Aéroport for my flight home. The “main” line to Bière is worked by Be4/4 units with a drive-end trailer. Unit No.15,

formerly No.3 of the Yverdon-les-Bains – Ste-Croix SA, and still in its former livery but with BAM branding, provided the transport to Apples in 2007. I changed there and took the branch train to L’Isle-Mont-la-Ville. This branch has a restricted train service, a mini bus being used mostly outside the periods when school children are travelling. The journey time by both train and bus from Apples is 14 minutes. The rail experience is like taking a trip back in time in a well maintained single BDe4/4 unit dating back to 1943, and the lunchtime round trip fitted in perfectly with my other travel arrangements.

The following year I covered the remaining section to Bière where one of BAM’s two Ge4/4s, Nos. 21 & 22, was stabled. One of these locomotives works an early morning passenger train from Bière to

Morges otherwise the pair work freight as required including military traffic down a short branch to Bière-Casernes which deviates just before arrival at Bière. Freight is also carried along the branch to L'Isle, at least as far as Montricher where two bogie bolsters were being loaded with logs. The freight traffic is carried in standard gauge wagons on metre gauge "wheel skates". Two standard gauge Te tractors, Nos.147 & 155, are kept at Morges for shunting wagons on and off the "wheel skates" and have recently passed from SBB-C to BAM ownership. In keeping with BAM's rolling stock fleet as a whole, they are arguably the smartest looking tractors still working in Switzerland, No.147 having received a repaint.

On the climb from Morges after about 5 miles, on the right-hand side between Yens and Chardonney-Château, there is a view of the Alpine chain stretching from above Lausanne to a distant point in an East

North East direction. In 2008 the weather was exceptionally clear with cloudless skies but there was an uncharacteristic NE gale howling through Morges station and despite the bright sunshine it was none too warm. I took a few images from the train and when I saw the results at home I was intrigued by the number of peaks that were in the shot. I also took some shots from the aircraft after take off as we headed out towards Thonon-les-Bains and then banked left to head NW over Nyon and pass just west of Le Brassus. Unfortunately at this height most of the individual peaks of Alpine chain had less clarity but the Eiger was visible from this higher elevation. I spent much time poring over Swiss maps with a scale rule trying to identify the peaks in the shots and despite seeking help from a few experts in things Swiss I was unable to come to a definite conclusion. I eventually sought the assistance of the Office du Tourisme in

BAM Te Tractors Nos.155 & 147 at Morges, 06.03.2008.





Ge4/4 No.22 & Be4/4 No.11 at the Bière terminus, 06.03.2008.

Morges and in less than four hours I received a very informative and helpful reply to my e-mail - where else but Switzerland could you receive such service?

After receiving such an excellent response I thought it only fair to share the information with both those SE readers who tried to help me and the SRS membership. I must admit that, in the event, my own identification efforts were very wide of the mark and I was quite right to disbelieve what I thought I was seeing, namely the Wetterhorn and nearby peaks. The following gives some detail of the accompanying view.

The tallest peak to the left above the pine tree is Le Moléson, 2002m and 25 miles distant. This peak lies SSW of Bulle and about 9 miles due east of Palèzieux. In the gap to the right of that tree are two peaks, the right hand one is Vanil Noir, 2388m which is slightly south and 5 miles east of Le Moléson. The giants of the

Bernese Alps lie hidden behind this range due to the low elevation. The distant peaks to the left are in Canton Fribourg, 40 miles distant, and lie NW of Boltigen on the Simmental line between Spiez and Zweisimmen. Now you may all rush for your Schweers & Wall or a similar reference to find Hohmattli, 1794m, which lies to the left of Le Moléson in my shot.

Maybe some of you will be attracted to the BAM as a result of this article but luck is certainly needed with the weather conditions. However, as the line passes through a largely rural area the BAM has its own delights and if a very clear day is not forthcoming a ride on the line can still provide a very enjoyable experience.

Finally my sincere thanks go to Giulia Chiani and Anne Vladyka of the Morges tourist office without whose help the view from this line could not have been described in such detail.



Apples 08.03.2007. Be4/4 No.15 approaching with a service to Morges passing the mini bus used for off peak services to L'Isle.

RIGHT: A view of the driver from the luggage compartment of BDe4/4 No.3 about to depart Pampigny on its way to L'Isle, 08.03.2007

BOTTOM: BDe4/4 No.3 at the L'Isle terminus, 08.03.2007.

