

Sidetracks... a miscellany of items

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● Infernal Dante

Piers Milne has written to point-out that the atmospheric photo of the RhB Krok on Opera duty shown on P 48 of the March magazine was taken by Colin Capell not by Piers as credited. Michael Robinson photographed the same train in more favourable circumstances on another part of the RhB and this appears on the front cover of this issue.

● Rhätische Bahn boring?

The RhB is developing proposals for a comprehensive renewal or replacement of the Albula tunnel. Opened in 1903, the 5865 m tunnel is the highest transalpine bore at 1800 m above sea level. An examination in 2006 found that the tunnel's condition is deteriorating badly, with around 60% of the lining in need of replacement. The bore is too small for current requirements and safety regulations, whilst the communications and power cabling are obsolete and the drainage needs renewal. This February the RhB announced it will develop two alternatives up to the detailed project design stage by the end of this year. These will look at either a comprehensive renewal, or the construction of a new bore to modern standards. Indicative costings will enable RhB to open discussions with both the Canton and Federal governments about funding options for a start at the end of 2011.



Double headed Southbound freight at Lugano led by Hupac Taurus class loco.

PHOTO: Glyn Jones.

● Hupac Growth

Despite the world economic turndown Hupac's Shuttle Net kept growing in 2008 – 2.5% overall in their core business of

unaccompanied road trailers by rail – although the fourth quarter saw a decrease in volume. However, Swiss domestic traffic grew 29% last year on the 20/week train-pairs running either between Basel and Chiasso or Aarau and Stabio (on a freight-only branch from Mendrisio). These services are mainly aimed at retail distribution with a new Sunday train from Aarau allowing supermarkets in the Ticino an environmentally friendly way of restocking their shelves on Monday mornings. Despite the economic turndown Hupac is carrying on with its expansion plans. These include the construction of a Hupac terminal in Antwerp, and further expansion at Busto Arsizio – Gallarate, near Milan. In December 2008 it started services between Duisberg and Vienna, Enns, Krems and Budapest whilst other new services are planned to both south east and south west Europe.

● Trespasser on the tracks

Late last year it was reported in *Le Quotidien Jurassien* that the SBB called the police one Sunday to remove a trespasser from the tracks near the station of Zürich Hardbrücke. The police quickly, and without difficulty, removed the intruder and took it to the lake at Zürich and released it into the water. It was a swan! The only disruption was to a train from Zürich Oerlikon which was stopped and backed up to Oerlikon.

● RAILplus

Members may not have heard of RAILplus which is an organisation made up of nine metre-gauge railways across Switzerland. It consists of the AAR bus+bahn (in Aargau); Appenzeller Bahen; Matterhorn Gotthard Bahn; Rhätische Bahn; BDMW Transport AG (in Bremgarten); Zentralbahn; Aare Seeland mobil; Regionalverkehr Bern-Solothurn and the Centovalli-bahn. These lines represent 27% of the Swiss network with 1,382km of route. Working together these lines are setting out to provide better facilities for their users whilst enjoying some of the benefits that larger organisations can achieve.

● SBB Cargo drivers change duties

The timetable that came into effect on 14th December 2008 increased train kilometres by 5.5%, necessitating more passenger train drivers. At the same time, the economic crisis has reduced the demand for freight trains. On top of this, 240 extra trains were organised for the winter sports traffic. The result is that 25 SBB Cargo drivers (shortly to be 30) have moved to passenger train driving, joining the 2200 drivers in that sector. This is not the first time that this cross over has happened; the first time was for the extra trains run for Euro 2008 football specials. The SBB have 140 new drivers undergoing training who will be qualified in 2009.

● The Driver's Locomotive

In September 2008, Re 460 021-9 was rolled out from the SBB workshops at Yverdon-les-Bains in a new livery created by two SBB drivers. The idea to have a locomotive promoting the profession of locomotive driver came from an SBB driver and it was accepted by the management. Walter Hofstetter, the Director responsible for passenger traffic of the SBB said "*A locomotive is a symbol of strength and dynamism, and so the profession of locomotive driver is able to benefit from this positive image*". In May 2008 the SBB launched a competition amongst all the drivers in the passenger division, to propose a livery for their own locomotive. Around 50 drivers took part, producing about 100 designs. A jury was formed of drivers, communication specialists and the senior management, and they decided which design was realistic and capable of realisation. The chosen design was the result of collaboration between two drivers, and a Zürich design company created the vinyl livery. The "Driver's Locomotive" was officially unveiled as part of the celebrations of the 150th anniversary of the line between Lausanne, Geneva and La Plaine. HAG SA have launched a model of this locomotive at CHF670. The two winners of the design contest, and the driver

who had the idea in the first place, will each receive a model courtesy of the SBB.

● Free Tickets!

Have you taken up the offer at Genève Airport of a free ticket throughout the "Tout Genève" zone of the Genève Public Transport system? This scheme has been in operation since January 2008 and is available to incoming passengers who must be in possession of a valid air travel ticket. Tickets are valid for 80 minutes and are available from a machine in the baggage claim area.



A southbound evening Cisalpino at Lugano.

PHOTO: Glyn Jones

● Cisalpino troubles continue

As reported in the March *Swiss Express* increasingly unreliable ETR470s and non-availability of ETR610s is causing many problems for Cisalpino. The new timetable from 14th December 2008 was planned around new faster services, but substitution by other train sets has caused great difficulties. In January Cisalpino announced that conventional trains were to be reintroduced on Basle to Milan services, to allow the ETR470s to be withdrawn for maintenance. As these are slower, passengers will have to change trains at Domodossola, Italy, into ETR470s or trains hired from Trenitalia. The route Zurich to Milan has four daily trains operated by ETR470s, and three with hired-in SBB tilting trains, which operate to Lugano, where passengers have to change trains. While these hopefully temporary measures are in place, Cisalpino

offer passengers a 30% refund for delays of more than 45 minutes, compared to the usual 20% refund. The heavy maintenance of the ETR470s is being transferred to a new site at Milano Greco, from Milano Martesana, while repairs are also to be undertaken at Fiorenza, near Milan. This change has caused more delays in maintenance, and a deterioration in quality, so Cisalpino has put in place a team of 30 people at Greco to try to ensure a 24/7 availability of maintenance staff. The Swiss would like to bring the maintenance in to Switzerland, but contractual obligations prevent this.

● TGV Lyria grows market share

In 2008 the joint SNCF/SBB TGV services between Switzerland and Paris continued to prove attractive to the market with the volume of passengers growing by 10% and the turnover by 16.6% resulting in 2.2m international passengers being carried. The service from Genève to Paris achieved a 2.9% growth in passengers, a 76% load factor, and 50% market share. The Zürich – Basle – Paris route recorded a 75% load factor, and over 60% of the Basel to Paris market. One service improvement that is planned is the use of new digital technology for translating on-board announcements directly from the Conductor's voice. These will be in three languages (German, French and English) with the possibility to add others, such as Japanese or Chinese. The new system will allow a great accuracy of information as it is linked to GPS so that automatically the messages relate to the location of the train. At the end of 2009 the three daily Zürich-Paris trains will be increased to five and in 2010 the Genève-Paris service will increase to nine a day. All services have meal-at-seat service for 1st Class passengers and when travelling from Genève taxis can be reserved from Paris Gare de Lyon. Also, unlike Eurostar which bans cycles, these can be carried on Lyria services for just €17. All this helps to grow the market share.

● SernftalBahn Museum Update

The SernftalBahn Museum in the original goods shed of the railway opened in April. This 13.8km 750V dc, metre gauge line ran from Schwanden SBB station, on the Lintal line through Engi to Elm. It was opened in 1905 and closed in 1969 with the trains being replaced by buses. The museum hosts an exhibition "*The last years of the railway*" and there will be ongoing additions of items such as uniforms, tickets, photos and films of the line. The museum will be open on June 20th, July 18th, August 15th, September 19th, and October 17th, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Entry will be free. More information is available on eisenbahnverlag@bluewin.ch.

● Ticketing problems

Between the 15th and 19th March over 50% of SBB's 1,100 first generation touch-screen ticket machines were out of action due to computer software problems. Theoretically any problems could have been sorted from a central location using the machines on-line connections but apparently this facility also failed, resulting in the 'dead' machines having to be individually dealt with on site. SBB indicated that surcharges for ticketless travel would be waived at this time. Enquiries indicate that this is not the first time this has happened.

● SBB watching costs

SBB intend to modernize 120 NPZ motor coaches and 121 driving trailers over the next four years. With the addition of up to four new intermediate coaches per shuttle train these will then become new 'Domino' units for use on regional trains at 75% of the cost of a new FLIRT EMU. In another cost-saving initiative SBB Cargo has led a move by 13 other freight operators in Switzerland, France, Germany and Italy to jointly purchase their electricity at a discount from DB Energie GmbH. This could result in annual savings for the company of almost CHF 0.5 m /year.

Information supplied from various sources including Piers Milne, Ron Smith, Bill Weber, RhB, Hupac, MGB, and the SBB.