

A snowblower for the DFB

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MEMBER'S LETTER


From Alan Mackie – by email

The excellent article "GotthardStaying" (SE 106) expresses concern that difficulties may be caused due to the signalling by ETCS Level 2 of the section of line between Altdorf and the Gotthard Base Tunnel, which will be "common user" by both tunnel trains and those using the existing route over the mountains. This need not be so, as ETCS Level 2 depends on traditional train detection (track circuits or axle counters) and can be overlaid on existing signalling. Whilst with Level 2 the lineside signals are usually not provided, in an existing installation they can also be retained for non-ETCS fitted trains and are a useful facility in a situation where non-ETCS fitted trains use a fitted line for short distances. It is only with ETCS Level 3 where train detection depends on a continuous data stream sent by the train to a Radio Block Centre [RBC] when the traditional train detection equipment is removed or not installed.


In the medium to long term SBB Historic will have to find a solution to the problem as ETCS becomes more widespread. Whilst diesel and electric traction can be relatively easily retro-fitted, the real problem lies with steam traction as currently no-one has come up with a viable

solution. The UK trial installation on the Cambrian Coast line which is now up and running is already causing problems for the heritage traction operators who regularly use the line. 

MEMBER'S ADVERTISEMENT


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MINI BOOK REVIEW

A mini review of two mini books. The author of the "Peter's Railway" series of children's books that we have reviewed previously has now produced two small books aimed at 3 to 6 year olds. The titles are "Little Peter's railway – Christmas Steam" and "Little Peter's Railway – Surprise Goods". They are small books for small people at a small price £2.99. Look out for them at bookshops, heritage railways, etc. 

A SNOWBLOWER FOR THE DFB

Ron Smith

A small but energetic group are working hard to restore Xrotd R12, a metre-gauge rotary snow blower, to operating condition for the DFB (Dampfbahn Furka Bergstrecke) which opened throughout from Realp to Oberwald in 2010. This section of what was once Furka Oberalp Bahn used to be closed every winter as it was just too difficult to keep it open and it was abandoned in 1982 when the base tunnel opened following which the DFB came into being. This large and powerful snow blower was built in 1913 by SLM (Schweizerische Lokomotiv- und Maschinenfabrik) at Winterthur for the RhB (Rhätische Bahn). At 14m length and carried on 740 mm dia. wheels, it weighs 57 tonnes service weight, including 2.5 tonnes of coal and 7.5 m³ of water and can reach 12 kph. Having worked away faithfully until it was honourably retired in 1970 it was given to the Blonay-Chamby Museum Railway who exchanged it in 1996 with the DFB, who gave the B-C Xrotd 9214 (also ex-RhB). In 2002 it was taken to Goldau, to be worked on by the R 12 Group. Progress has depended on available manpower and cash. To date, the boiler has been repaired and re-tubed, with the cladding going on during summer 2010. The steel framework for the wooden outer body has been shot blasted, primed and installed. The large rotary blades are completed and installed, and it is hoped that the snow blower will be ready for operation by 2013. The photograph by Martin Horath, the leader of the R 12 group, shows the machine in September 2002 posing on the Steffenbachbrücke on its journey to Goldau. This is the famous bridge that has to be dismantled each autumn and rebuilt each spring to avoid avalanche damage. More information about the work of R 12 Group can be found at www.dampfschleuder.ch. 

An old pre-preservation photograph.

No.1 "Muttbach" in its "clothed" condition with R12. PHOTO: Ron Smith

