

# Express parcels! : Keith Scotland recounts a student prank that went wrong

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wine enjoyed to Modern Jazz. Private spaces off city streets not normally accessible were opened for some sessions where smaller ensembles played, whilst the bigger and more raucous bands played in the larger open areas. We moved, often with some difficulty, through the crowds around a number of locations enjoying different sounds and savouring the atmosphere - as well as the wide range of beers and food on offer. One of our favourites was 'Gleis 4'. Not a railway platform - but four German female saxophonists playing Modern Jazz in the courtyard of a small museum ([www.gleis4-saxophon.de](http://www.gleis4-saxophon.de)). These women were one of eight German jazz groups amongst the seventy. One band was from France and the rest came from across Switzerland with 24 from Basel alone. It is not just railways that the Swiss do well - jazz is up there as well. Next year's 'Em Bebbi sy Jazz' is on Friday 21st August. Book your hotel in advance, or stay out of town - the trains and trams run late! 



TOP: Crowds in Basel's Rumelinplatz.  
 ABOVE: SBB RABe 521 008 waits at Zell to return to Basel.  
 LEFT: Crowds enjoying Jazz in the Schnabelgasse.

## Express Parcels! Keith Scotland recounts a student prank that went wrong

**D**uring the night of the 16/17th May 1950, eleven students left the Gasthof Sternen at Muri, near Bern. Being very happy after a night's drinking, they had a bright idea to hijack some horses to get back to Bern. This was 65-years ago and at the time this area was still quite rural. But, of course, there were no horses about; however there was a motorised parcel van Fe4/4 No.25 of the Bern Worb Bahn sitting in the station after the last BWB service train had long since departed. The students couldn't persuade the van to move, even though they managed to raise the pantograph to the overhead contact wires, and tried to activate the controls. What they did not realize was that the BWB switched off the power overnight. Having failed to find some transport they set off to walk back into Bern, having no idea of the potential consequences of their actions. Next morning, when the power was switched on, van No.25 set off all by itself along the first part of the route to Bern that is flat, and as early in the



morning in that era there was little road traffic about, the road crossings at Burgenziel and Thunplatz were luckily crossed without problems. However, the line then descends Thunstrasse on a downward slope and the No.25 gathered speed. The parcel van, already over 40-years old was theoretically limited to a maximum of 50kph, but at this point it was estimated that it was doing some 70kph. Its progress was summarily halted at the then terminus of Kirchenfeld, (the line is now extended across the bridge into the City Centre), as it derailed at the entrance to the station, hit a tree, scraped along the station building and finally came to a halt by crashing into the fountain at the telegraph monument. The "fourgon" was beyond repair and was scrapped, whilst the fountain was quickly repaired. It is understood that the members of the student association were prevailed upon to subscribe towards a replacement vehicle for the BWB. History does not recall if they did. 