

Shunting, Swiss style : Chris Chick looks at some Swiss shunting procedures

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companies did not reach a long life, but the Canadian operated locos operated until the early eighties. Also in the US the New Haven RR had 60 FL9s, which were General Motors FP9s extended with a trailing A1A bogie to reduce the axle loading, and to carry the third-rail collector shoes fitted so they could work into New York on lines where only electric traction was permitted. These were built in 1956-60, but several survive, some in working order, but as diesels only. Whilst on the other side of the Atlantic a new class has been fairly recently created in Cuba! This country's railway is now home to some GM Switchers that were originally built with A1A-A1A bogies for lightly laid Canadian National branch lines. Some of these are now operating as A1A-Bo locos using two-axle power bogies cannibalised from other similar elderly GM machines.

Several asymmetrical bogie engine classes have operated in Japan. The main type is Class DE10, 1067mm gauge diesel locomotives with 2-bogies described in a reference book as AAA-B. In the Japanese system DE10 'translates' as D for Diesel, E for five powered axles, and 10 for Class of loco. Introduced in 1966 some 700 were built in two versions.

A limited number of Class DE11 was also built in 1970. A Class DE15 appeared from 1973 as the power units of snowploughs. Many of these locos are still in service with JR Freight and on several tourist railways spread all over Japan. Interestingly JR Freight was still using DE10s in 2013 to supply the area around Sendai after the earthquake, as some ports had not been rebuilt. Also in Japan are the distinctly odd Class EF55 electric locos, which had a 1Co-Co2 arrangement. From the 1Co end they looked like a typical American box cab design with a central cab door and end platform. The 2Co end had a bulbous semi streamlined snout, which looked faintly ridiculous, especially as their maximum speed was 75kph. Three were built in 1936 and one survived into the 1980s. They were nicknamed 'Moomin' from the first 'Moomintroll' stories that appeared in the late 1940s.

Editor's Note. Ron Smith has certainly opened a can-of-worms here. Although the topic is quite interesting (for some!) we have drifted away from Switzerland and I believe that it is time we moved-on from this esoteric subject. 🇨🇭

Shunting, Swiss Style

Chris Chick looks at some Swiss shunting procedures



At St Moritz, Ge4/4III No. 643 reverses towards its train, pushing a Gourmino dining car. The shunter contemplates the last few moments before the buffers meet.



At Luzern, the wagon on the right is stationary. The one on the left is moving towards the shunter who is standing between the rails!
Photos: Chris Chick

Michael Donovan's account of a shunter hitching a ride on the end of a train in "Report from Rhatia" reminded me of a couple of incidents that I witnessed on recent trips to Switzerland.

Arriving in St. Moritz on a Bernina line train on Christmas Day 2012, I stepped out onto the platform to see a Ge4/4 III locomotive reversing a dining car towards a train waiting at platform one. The shunter was standing on a small platform on the end of the dining car. My camera was quickly switched on and set to maximum zoom, so the resulting photos are not the best of compositions but they show the procedure that was probably repeated each day. It might have been Christmas Day, when nothing moves on U.K. railways, but in Switzerland life goes on as normal. This method of operation is presumably standard approved practice, as the little fold-down platforms seem to have been added since the coaches were originally

built, as I cannot see them on photographs from an earlier era.

The second incident was in September 2014 in the freight yard behind the Radisson Hotel in Luzern. On this occasion the pictures were taken through the mesh of a wire fence and have been cropped to remove the wire. The shunter was standing between the buffers of a stationary wagon, facing towards a wagon being propelled towards him. Once buffer contact had been made, the couplings were joined and he ducked out from under the buffer in less than a minute. I was filled with admiration, remembering the pathetic slowness of my own efforts to couple a locomotive to a coach during an 'engine driving day' on the North Norfolk Railway. Such a procedure, with an operative standing in the path of a moving item of rolling stock, would be a no-no in the UK. One hopes this chap never gets seconded to the narrow gauge, where the central buffer would make this procedure singularly inadvisable! 🇨🇭