

'A ticket to slide' : the Bergün - Preda Sledge Train

Autor(en): **Haas, Werner**

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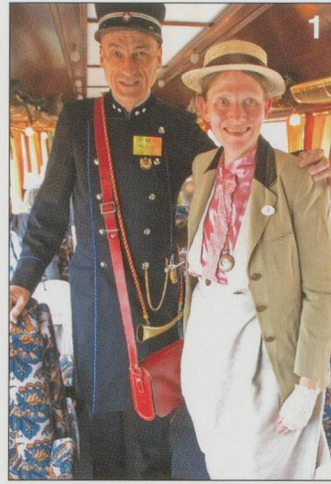
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Immensee; most Gotthard trains today take the Rotkreuz line, but a serious derailment near Immensee three days earlier still cast its shadow. The rain became heavier; at Airolo there was deep snow, but beyond Bellinzona, Italy and the lakes make themselves felt; Locarno, with camelias and magnolias, was still dry. At 17.47, after a historic walking tour and a rest in the finely restored Locarno station bar, where Colin Mitchell, one of Alby's British friends, was to be found, we left again, 9-cars behind No.11158, for the north, in rain, darkness and with a worthy dinner which kept us all quiet until around Arth-Goldau. The Piano-Bar was still in action as we stopped, at 21.55, in Basel SBB, after nearly 12 hours of a valued experience, a real tribute to Alby and his work and colleagues.

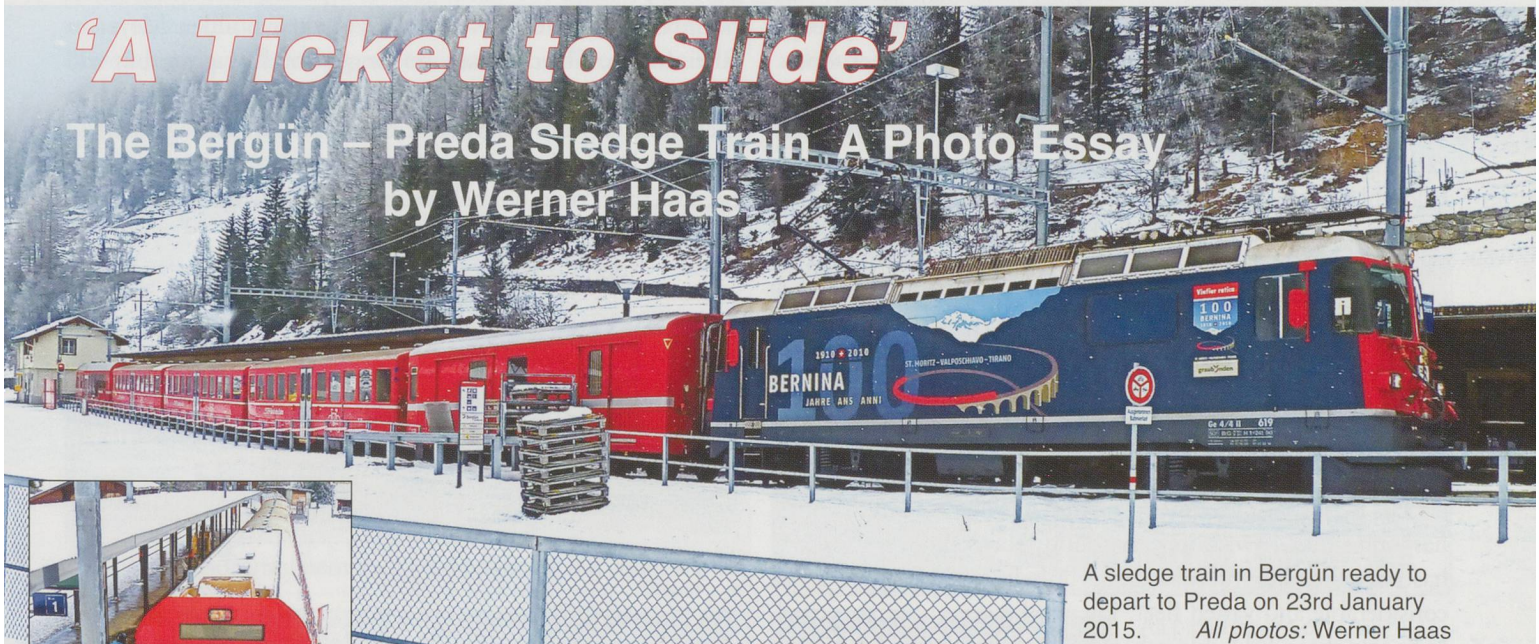
Alby's life with trains was very full, and much more comprehensive articles have appeared in German in RhB Culture magazine and in Eisenbahn Amateur (12-2014). Shortly before he died he had asked me to send him, from my private collection, pictures of British Pullman cars in regular service. Over 100 are on a computer file. Regrettably, he won't need them now.

1. Johanna Stone with SBB 'Historic Trains' conductor Daniel Gfeller (now retired).
2. Colin Mitchell from Britain boards the Salon Bleu.
3. Piano-Bar saloon.
4. Bryan and Johanna Stone joining in Basel.



'A Ticket to Slide'

The Bergün – Preda Sledge Train A Photo Essay
by Werner Haas



A sledge train in Bergün ready to depart to Preda on 23rd January 2015. All photos: Werner Haas



The arrival of a sledge train at platform 1 in Bergün-Bravuogn.

Every winter the 6km of winding road that runs down from Preda to Bergün is closed to traffic during the day and becomes one of the longest publically accessible sledge runs in Europe – and it's floodlit six nights a week! Key to the operation of the run is the shuttle-service of trains between the two stations provided by the Rhätische Bahn. If people have not brought their own sledges, toboggans, etc. they can be hired (from CHF12/day) in Bergün, where all the participants make their way to the station. Here they load their equipment onto to the Schlittelzug, a special

rake of coaches and baggage cars, for the 15-minute trip up through the famous spiral tunnels that lift the railway to Preda and the north portal of the Albula tunnel. After the run down the road back to Bergün there are many outlets around the attractive village dispensing warming drinks and hot sausages. Most people then return to the station for at least another train ride followed by a hair-raising slide as they descend some 400m down the valley. The service operates from 10.00 to 23.30 (except Mondays when it finishes at 17.00), and an adult day ticket costs CHF39. The shuttle train is stabled at the RhB's Samedan depot and travels to Bergün every morning to start its numerous runs that keep the winter sports fans happy.

SRS Member Werner is a resident of Bergün. 