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bridge, the leading engine No.203 suddenly fell, turned 90° right and went into the riverbed killing its driver, followed by No.209 and 7 coaches. These were light wooden vehicles which were totally shattered, resulting in heavy casualties amongst their occupants, hence the high number of dead and injured.

The subsequent accident report was damning. The Bridge was then seen as too lightly built from the start; the ironwork did not meet laid-down standards; the flood of 1881 had left damage, which seriously weakened the bridge; and the strengthening of the bridge in 1889 was only partial. There was some evidence of excessive speed before the accident, and the resulting heavy braking for the Münchenstein stop was perhaps a contributory factor. The train had not derailed before the bridge failure and the engine crews were not criticised. The bridge was subsequently rebuilt as another lattice girder structure that is still in place. It can be seen from trams on BLT Line 10 as they traverse the nearby bridge to the north.

125-years-on there is a close link with the Basel of today. Visitors to the city love the cast iron street fountains that once numbered fifty – with some 28 remaining. Their central feature is a mythical creature the Basilisk, half cockerel, half serpent, which since the 15th C at least has been a symbol of Basel. It was reputed that the creature could kill with its stare. These fountains were designed by Wilhelm Bubeck, a German engineer who worked on the Gotthard Railway project, moved to Basel, and became Director of the Business School and Trades Museum. In 1888 he had won first prize, with his basilisk design, in a city competition for new street fountains. There was some delay, but in 1891 the fifty castings were commissioned from the Von Roll iron-works in the Klus, near Balsthal. The designer, alas, never saw them as they were installed shortly after the Münchenstein disaster, where Herr Bubeck was sadly one of those killed. However, they stand today all over the city, loved and photographed, having become Bubeck's unwitting memorial - and a daily reminder to those in-the-know of Münchenstein in 1891. ❑



TOP: Workers clamber onto the remains of the bridge to survey the damage.

ABOVE: Railway staff and others look on at the remains of the coaches.

LEFT: No. 209 more or less still upright amongst the remains of the bridge.

Photos: Courtesy of Verkehrshaus collection

RIGHT: One of the fountains designed by Wilhelm Bubeck who sadly died in the accident.

Photo: Bryan Stone



Where's Heidi? Where is this Emmett-like piece of machinery? See page 46 for the answer.




And finally... Freightliner wagons in Switzerland, 1968

Bryan Stone seeks help in solving an historic puzzle

This photograph has emerged in the archive of Hans Hürlimann, former SBB driver and engineer, now deceased, of a brake trial run for a Freightliner wagon set. This trial was being conducted by SBB, with Ce 6/8 No.14201, and Hürlimann photographed it at Villars sur Glâne near Fribourg. The Freightliner Company, was formed in Britain to carry containers in a new high-speed block train network. Its first wagon fleet was made up of small-wheel bogie wagons in fixed sets of five flat wagons. These had a two-pipe air brake system with disk brakes, and securing points for the then-new standard container sizes. It is known that in 1968 Jan Posner at BR loaned a set of British designed and built Freightliner wagons for trials in Europe. Intercontainer, in Baoperative set up by European Railway Administrations to handle expected container traffic, facilitated the loan. Although there was a hoperunning such wagons in fixed-formation container trains between Rotterdam and Milan for example, this was not realistic as technical incompatibilities were legion. Your correspondent joined Intercontainer shortly after these trials had concluded, apparently following a derailment. In another trial, by bilateral agreement a small number of Freightliner flat wagons ran in a shuttle service between the UK and Paris using the Dover – Dunkerque ferry, but this too was abandoned after a short time. I would like to hear from any reader who recalls this short period of trials. Events and passing years have dispersed, some for ever, those who might have known; and even today, getting approval for revolutionary rolling stock is, despite EU harmonisation and Interoperability, still very



wearing. But they had tried. Intercontainer later carried millions of containers, but there never emerged a truly specialised block-train network in Europe. It may yet come. 

Where's Heidi?

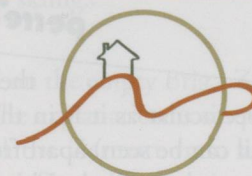
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