

Zeitschrift: Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal
Herausgeber: Swiss Railways Society
Band: - (2017)
Heft: 131

Artikel: Tracing a ticket. Part 2, A puzzle left to us by Peter Hobbs
Autor: Bulpitt, Malcolm
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-853909>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. [Siehe Rechtliche Hinweise.](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. [Voir Informations légales.](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. [See Legal notice.](#)

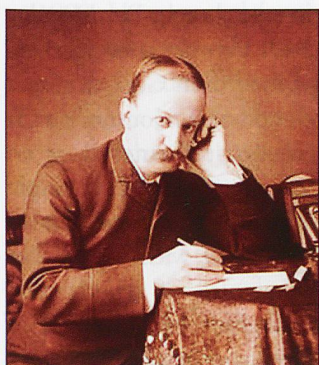
Download PDF: 13.05.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

Tracing a Ticket

Malcolm Bulpitt

Part 2 of a puzzle left to us by Peter Hobbs



Edward B Evans.

We left 'Maj. Evans' and his colleagues in the PTA's 'Section B, Tour 3' Interlaken group in Switzerland on the 4th August 1914 as WW1 broke out.

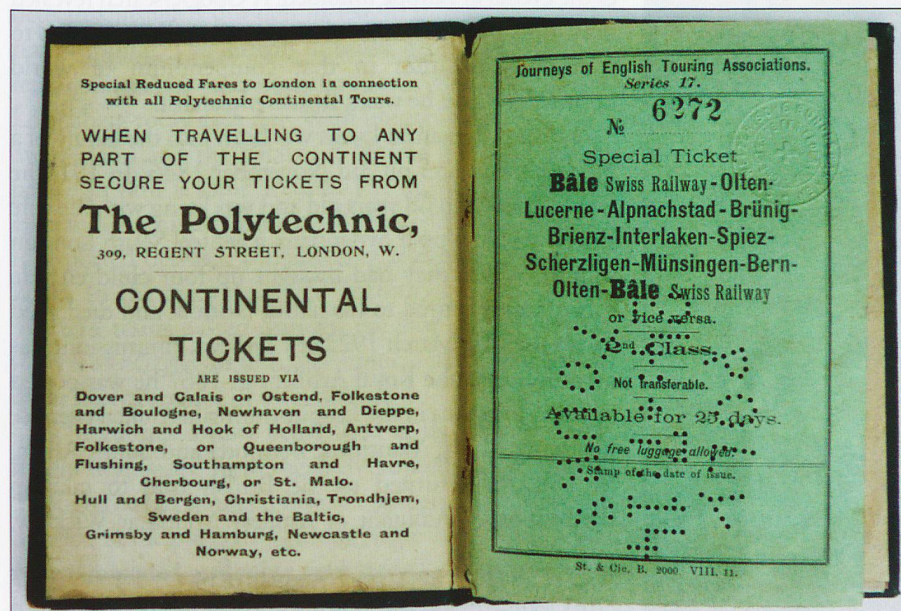
Well, a bigger disaster than anyone in this genteel tour party could possibly imagine ensued in the next four years, and they were trapped in Switzerland at the very beginning of it.

Major Evans and the PTA group we have been following were just a small part of a large number of tourists and travellers whose travel plans were thrown into total disruption by world events. A report in the 'Birmingham Mail' dated 13th August claimed, "close upon 10,000 British subjects were stranded in Switzerland". Of course these were not all tourists, as a number were semi-permanent residents (Switzerland was then a relatively poor country and an affordable retirement destination for the well-off) and many were patients recovering from TB in the numerous sanatoria. In some ways they were fortunate to be located in neutral Switzerland rather than in Belgium, Germany, the Balkans, or other less peaceful areas. With homeward travel disrupted for those on holiday, and often at the end of their stay with currency reserves almost exhausted, some British visitors to Switzerland had little choice but to throw themselves on the benevolence of their local hosts, or to approach the British Embassy for assistance. The same 'Birmingham Mail' article notes that many of the British were in financial difficulties, as it was the custom for them to carry little cash but to trust in the old system that used Letters of Credit or cheques neither of which could easily be exchanged, or may

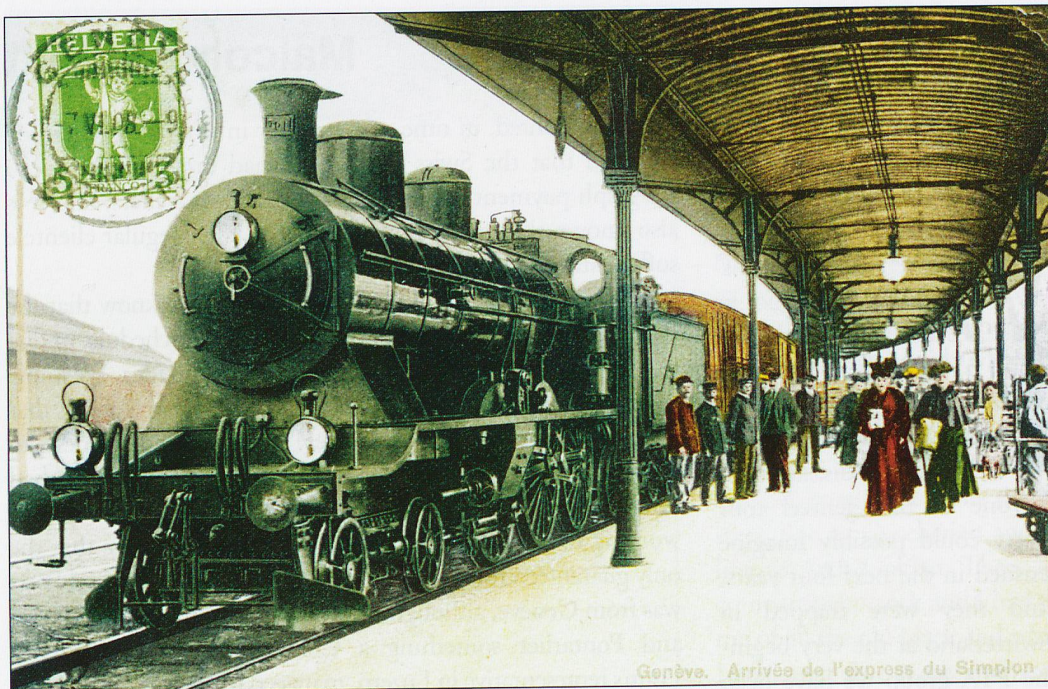
not be honoured, in time of war. Later in August 'The Times' reported that the Swiss Bankverein had organised a special telegraph payment system to assist British travellers, and it is also known that many hoteliers trusted their regular clientele sufficiently to advance them credit.

From the evidence of the Ticket Booklet we know that the PTA party had reached Bern, but if this was on schedule, or due to a rapid departure from Interlaken, we have no idea. We know from the records that the Embassy, and the British Consuls that were then in most Swiss cities, were swamped with requests to assist in securing a safe homeward passage for people who had been staying in the country. No doubt PTA's Agents were also working to help their clients return home. It appears that the only guaranteed route back to Paris and on to the Channel Ports was from Genève, although it was possible to travel via Vallorbe and Pontarlier something a Colonel Purchas, Sir Henry Lunn's representative in Luzern, managed to achieve. Apparently with the assistance of the stationmaster at Pontarlier he commandeered the carriage that the German Ambassador had travelled in from Paris to Switzerland seeking refuge on the outbreak of hostilities, and managed to persuade the railway to carry him and others back to the capital in it. We lose track of our Major Evans at this point but it is probable that he too made it home via Genève, where it was reported that all the hotels were very crowded and that schools were being used as dormitories for British and Americans who were in transit. It is also worth remembering that today's concept of 'travelling light' was alien to travellers at that time as most would have been burdened with several heavy suitcases, or even cabin trunks. The mass of luggage would have added to the chaotic situation both in hotels, and when trying to board overcrowded trains. Once at Genève their troubles were not over, for even when the French Government allowed a vestigial passenger service to recommence the journey to Paris, normally 10 hours, was apparently taking some 27 hours - and could take up to 40 hours. From Paris they then had to get to the Channel Ports, but it is understood all the stranded travellers eventually arrived safely back in England.

In 2007 and 2008, Keith Fletcher, a member of the Helvetia Philatelic Society (HPS) wrote two articles for their 'Newsletter'. These were based upon a collection of postcards from summer 1914 that he had acquired, along with some then-current newspaper cuttings. I have already referred to some of the cuttings, but the information contained on the postcards sent by a British traveller stranded in Switzerland helps shed some light on the conditions in that country at the time. It is interesting to note that although the British were 'trapped' by the chaotic situation on the French railways, the Swiss ensured that the post was getting through on a regular basis! Writing from Zürich on Saturday



Railway Tour Ticket Book 3. Photo: Bob Medland



Genève Station in 1908. *Paul Jenkins Collection*

22nd August the correspondent, who had travelled up from St Moritz, noted that all trains in Switzerland were running slowly, and stopping at all stations, whilst all night trains and restaurant car services had been suspended. The postcards also make it clear that the only route open into France was via Genève and that it was taking some 13 hours to do the railway journey there from Zürich. The person commented that there were thousands of soldiers on the streets of Zürich and that soldiers with fixed bayonets were guarding the Banks and railway facilities. It would appear that the writer had good connections as one of the British

Consuls had organised their accommodation at the luxury Hotel Baur au Lac on Talstrasse in the heart of the city, although it seemed that soldiers with their fixed bayonets were also present in the hotel. By Monday 24th the correspondent was writing from Genève, after a tiresome train journey on the Sunday that moved at an average speed of 12 mph. They were staying at a lake-side hotel with a group of others, all of whom were trying to make the best of waiting to move-on to France and home. No doubt this too was the fate of the PTA's

'Section B, Tour 3' and our Major Evans.

But who was 'Maj. Evans'? Up to now we have been on solid, factual, ground but to trace the man who kept his Ticket Book with its unused coupons we have to start to make some educated guesses. It is noted in a postscript to the 2007/8 articles in the 'HPS Newsletter' that Peter Hobbs had found the Ticket Book at a 'Flea Market' in Bath, and he noted the unused portions in relation to the curtailed visits to Switzerland. However Peter was a collector of philatelic material, and not specifically of railway linked items, so we must speculate that he picked up the little green folder along with other items of more philatelic interest. If so was the Ticket Book part of a philatelist's collection of

publications that was being disposed of? It seems strange that it should have survived on its own and had not been previously acquired by one of the numerous collectors of railway memorabilia. Was 'Maj. Evans' perhaps a philatelist, and the remnants of his collection were being sold-off by a later generation? What we can be sure of is that this Major was not a serving officer in 1914, as he would have been 'called-to-the-colours' and not on leave as the events in Europe unfolded. A Google-search revealed only one Major Evans who was of sufficient note to warrant a mention in that compendium of world knowledge - and he was a British philatelist!

Edward Benjamin Evans was born into the family of a Norwich Barrister on 3rd November 1846. In 1914 he would have been 68 years old and was living with his wife Emily (61) in Upper Sydenham, a genteel South London suburb, where they had brought up four children. He subsequently retired to his native Norfolk and died aged 76 on the 21st March 1922 at Cantley. Commissioned as an officer into the Royal Artillery in 1867 he was posted to many locations in the Empire during his military service including Malta, Mauritius, Bermuda and South Africa. In 1880 he returned to the British Isles to take-up the position of Adjutant of Artillery Militia at Wicklow,



Switzerland1914-1918.net



Switzerland1914-1918.net

ABOVE: Italians at Basel in August 1914.


LEFT: Some of the Swiss Army at Basel in August 1914.

Ireland, where he served until 1885. His military duties must have been light during his career as he became involved in numerous philatelic studies in all the locations where he served and wrote many papers and articles about his research and collections. By 1875 he was elected a member of the Royal Philatelic Society becoming a member of its Council from 1891 to 1900. He apparently was always known as Major Evans, never Edward Evans or Mr. E.B. Evans. Leaving the army he edited the 'Stanley Gibbons Monthly Journal' from 1891 to his retirement in 1914. It is also on record that in 1914 Major Evans had sold his notable collection of stamps of the American Confederate States. Could it be that anticipating his retirement from his editorial role, and having acquired money from the sale, he opted to go on a trip to Switzerland, something that he may not have had the time or money to take previously? We may never know but it is quite possible that the philatelic world's Major Evans could have been the 'Maj. Evans' the 1914 Ticket Book was issued to. If so, as an inveterate collector it is highly likely that he would have kept the little object after the unplanned disruption of the homeward journey.

The PTA's papers are now held in the archives of Westminster University. With more time it could be possible to access these to see if the booking records exist for the participants in 'Section B, Tour 3' that left London around the 17th July, during the fateful summer of 1914. If so did they include the well-known philatelist, and possibly even his wife? Perhaps I have spent enough time on this already! Regarding the Ticket Book itself it is understood that European railways were still issuing similar



Hotel Baur au Lac in Zurich in 1939. Photo: MRC Collection
books of tickets/coupons for use by individuals and tour parties up to the early 1960s. Branches of large international travel agents often held sets of pre-printed pages with their fixed itineraries in stock to be made up into something similar to our 1914 example.

The author wishes to thank Bob Medland (for setting this hare running), Bryan Stone (for his knowledge of railways in Prussian-ruled Alsace), Michael Farr (for his expertise in railway ticketing) and my wife Elizabeth (for her unerring ability to trace people through the internet). Thanks also to Richard Donithorn for allowing me to quote extracts from the HPS 'Newsletter', and for agreeing to the reproduction of this article that first appeared in his journal. 

Swiss News

Ten Years of the Lötschberg Base Tunnel

On the 15th June the BLS's 35km long Lötschberg Base Tunnel was 10-years old. In that period the tunnel has become an integral part of both the Swiss and European rail network. The tunnel is controlled from Spiez, both operationally and technically. There are 146 Video cameras and some 2,200 detectors installed through its length to monitoring safety and train running. The growth in traffic generated by the tunnel is remarkable. Prior to its opening some 7,600 passengers used the Lötschberg route each day. With journey times between central Switzerland and the Valais cut by one hour the current daily passenger flow is some 13,000. The increase in freight traffic is even more dramatic; a rise of 408% to 33m net tonnes of cargo transported between the planning reference year of 1999 and 2016. In the ten years since opening the BLS reported that 314,814 trains passed through the base tunnel of which only 0.1% was delayed for technical tunnel malfunctions. There were other delays because of train defects.

The tunnel is now being used at its capacity limit. Some freight trains are now regularly routed via Kandersteg and through the old tunnel. However, due to an ill-advised political decision at the project's planning stage, only 14km of the 35km were completed as double track and the need to complete the job is now recognised as urgent. Another 14km of tunnel was

excavated but left without technical installations; and a further 7km of tunnel has still to be bored. Advanced work on this now essential project, is well advanced and in June the Federal administration approved the next part of the process by granting 'Planning Credits' to the project.



Vintage BLS Blue Arrow enters the old Lötschberg tunnel at Goppenstein. Photo: Roy Marriott

Side by side

Thoughts on two news items from the 18th May 2017

'Yesterday morning a train arriving in Schlieren damaged the