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Autumn Observations

by Richard Pinner

The following notes relate to observations made on a visit to Switzerland in September 1993.

Rhätische Bahn (RhB)

Credits for 1994 have been cut by SFr.24 million. This will mean cutting wages and staff and reducing services by 10%. The hourly Taktfahrt cannot be maintained on all lines.

Swiss Federal Railways (SBB)

Work has started near Muttenz for the new Basel - Liestal line. The Liestal - Olten section has been postponed because the route of the tunnel under the Jura mountains has yet to be decided. There are also funding problems.

Double-deck coaches for EC and IC trains are being introduced in 1997. Several European firms have tendered for a pre-production batch of 48. Future EC and IC coaches are to have pumped toilet waste. The present system of track discharge is not regarded as a health hazard but it is regarded as unpleasant. Doubtless this will mean the prohibition from using the toilets in station will no longer apply to this stock.

Test boring is taking place near Faido to check the geology in Piora Mulde, which is known to contain loose Dolomite rock. This poses problems and imposes high costs on the builders of the projected Alptransit tunnels.

Bern-Lötschberg-Simplon Group (BLS)

A part of the woods near Kandersteg has been disfigured by test drilling to a depth of 500 metres for the new base tunnel route.

A new footpath named *BLS Experience Path* is now open between Kandergrund church and Blausee-Mitholz station. This is fully signposted, as are the existing Kandersteg - Mitholz and Kandergrund - Frutigen paths. Some 35 information plates have been attached to buildings, rocks and masts along the routes with technical information about the line, signalling, traffic, locomotives etc. - all in German of course. The new path is a mountain path, calling for proper footwear, not trainers.

To overcome one rock face where the line is in tunnel, the path goes up a steel staircase attached to the face for some 1000 feet. It is

hard work. There is a handrail, but one can look through the gaps in the steps to the ground some hundreds of feet below.

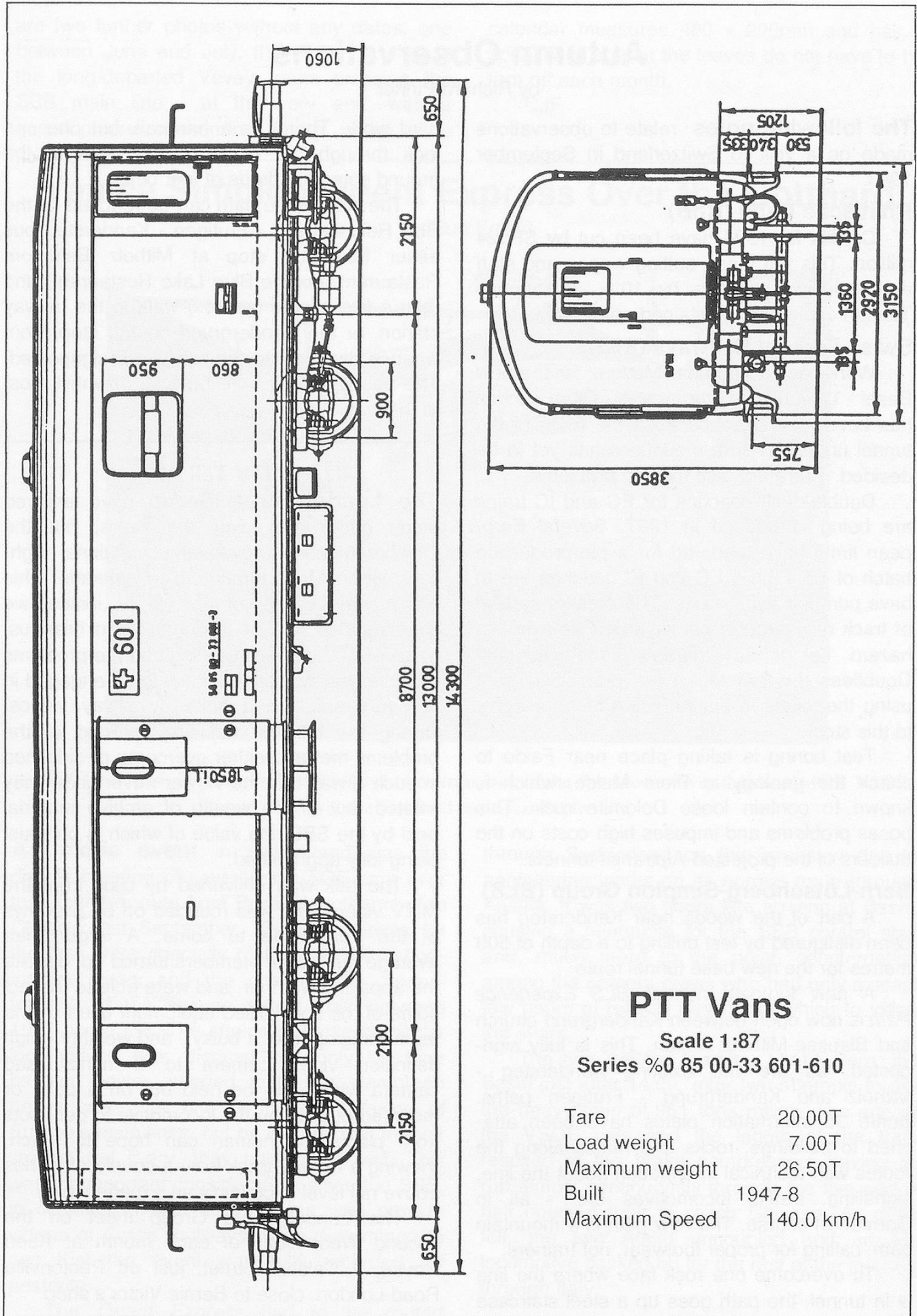
The start of the path can be reached by the BLS Reichenbach - Frutigen - Kandersteg bus either from the stop at Mitholz Balmhorn Restaurant (*not* the Blue Lake Restaurant) and then a five minute (approx) walk to the railway station, or the Kandergrund church stop, from whence the road to the railway is signposted. The easier way is from Mitholz, downhill most of the way.

MITV Tell All

The London Area Group have enjoyed many good talks over the years, but the October meeting proved an exceptional highlight, when MITV turned up to entertain. This was no mere display of their videos, instead we were regaled with an account, often hilarious, of how MITV came into being and the problems experienced by a professional team engaged in the very specialised field of railway videos. During the talk we not only learned of the problems met and either overcome or sidelined in such a way that the viewer never knew they existed, but of the wealth of archive material held by the SBB, the value of which is only just being fully appreciated.

The talk was enlivened by clips from the MITV videos and was rounded off by previews of the next three to come. A larger than average number of members turned up, despite the appalling weather, and were able to inspect some of the specialised equipment used by the team, ranging from a bulky - and weighty - high definition video camera to a miniaturised camera which can be held out on a pole, or mounted outside on the locomotive to get shots from places no human can hope to reach. Viewing a railway track from a couple of inches above rail level is certainly an experience.

The London Area Group meet on the second Wednesday of each month at Keen House, 4 Calshot Street, just off Pentonville Road London, close to Bernie Victor's shop.



PTT Vans

Scale 1:87

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Load weight	7.00T
Maximum weight	26.50T
Built	1947-8
Maximum Speed	140.0 km/h