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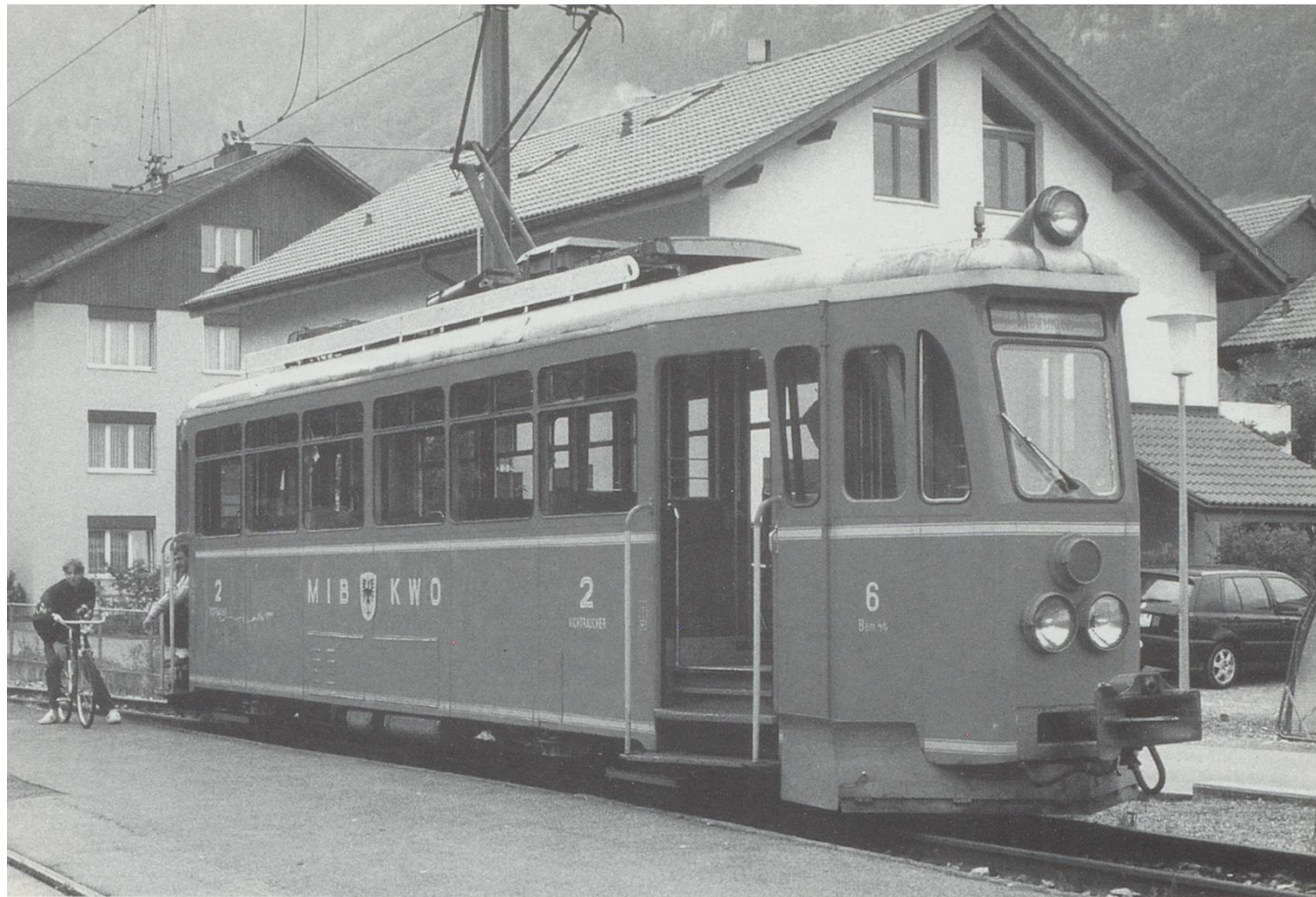
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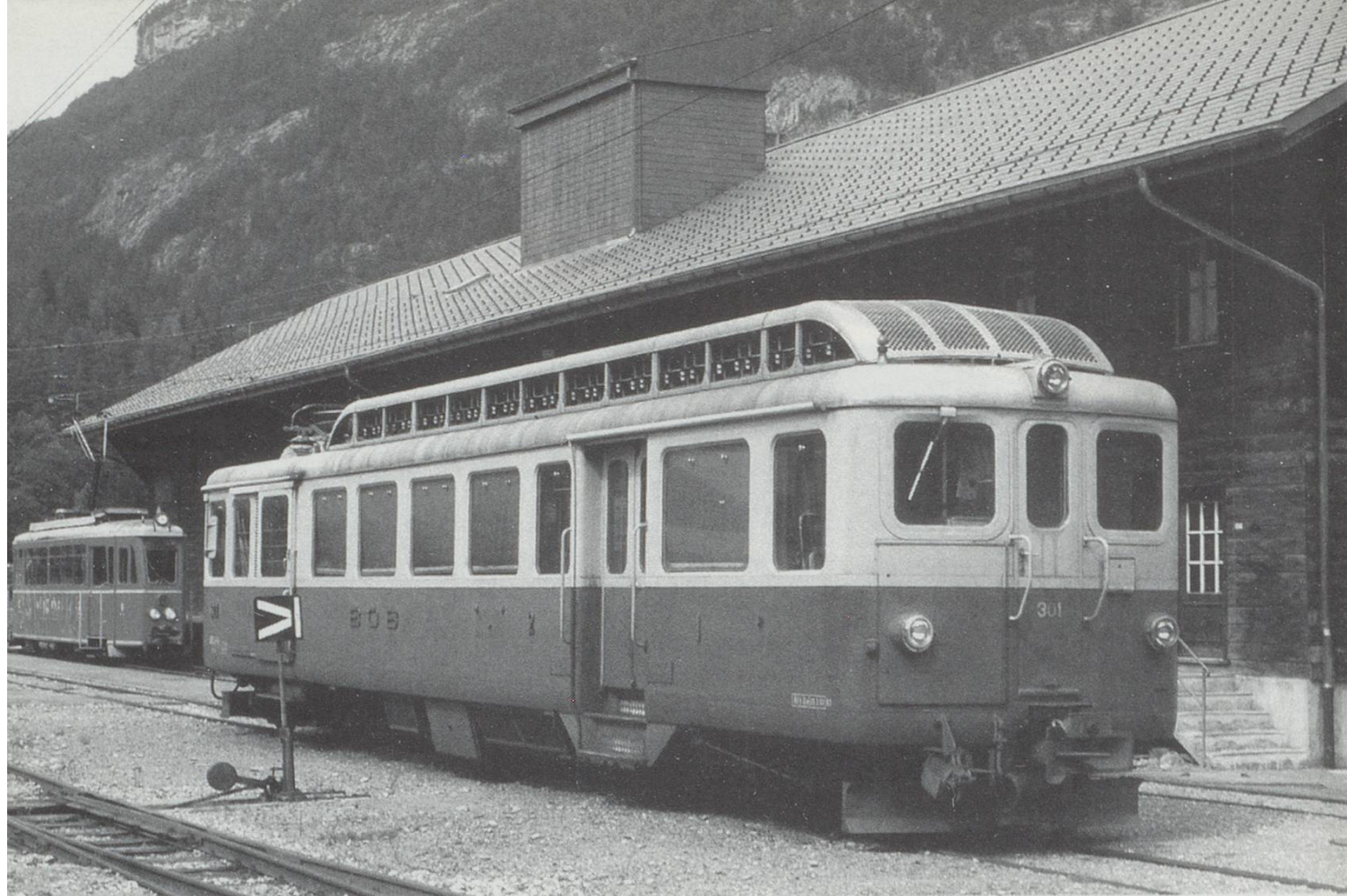
Meiringen - Innertkirchen by Ron Smith photos by Author

We had passed through Meiringen a few times and this year finally targeted it for a visit. It is turning into a theme town with a Sherlock Holmes statue, centre, shop, street, pub, etc. We walked through the town to the funicular up to the famous Richenbach Falls where Moriarty and Sherlock Holmes had their fictional fatal encounter. The funicular is a straight forward one, with two wooden cars passing at the mid point. The falls are impressive, although I haven't worked out where the water goes to - it certainly does not run down the valley. Presumably it is channelled away underground.

Returning to the valley it was time to travel on the Meiringen Innertkirchen Bahn. The MIB also calls itself the KWO - Kraft Werke Oberhasli AG, the hydro electric power company who presumably own the line.

This metre gauge line continues on from the buffer stops at the end of Meiringen SBB station, over the road to its own diminutive station 300 metres away, with a short siding which the train uses. Despite being small and basic, the MIB station is a delightful wooden chalet.

The railway was built in 1926 for the construction of the hydro electric scheme at Innertkirchen. When it was subsequently opened to passengers in 1946, battery railcars were put into service. One is now plinthed at the works at Innertkirchen. CFa2/2 No.5, built 1948/9 was in service until 1977 when catenary was erected and energised at 1200v.d.c., and two second hand trams bought from Mannheim. Tram Bem4/4 No.6 was in service when I was there. There was no sign of No.7, (Usually in the shed at the works-Ed.) or of new vehicles that I heard were on order. No.6 is a great vehicle, with black and white enamel signs inside, basic seats and wooden partitioning. Doors are operated manually by passengers, and the entire MIB staff is just the driver. He issues tickets from a board contraption around his neck, which also has tin tubes for small change. Then he walks through into the cab and off we trundle. As the roaring river was approached and paralleled the valley rapidly closes in and we plunge into a long tunnel, with dim light bulbs, swaying, rattling and rolling creating a great atmosphere. Then we



Above: BOB ABDe4/4 31 (leased from BOB) with MIB Bem 6 in the background at Innertkirchen Hydro Works

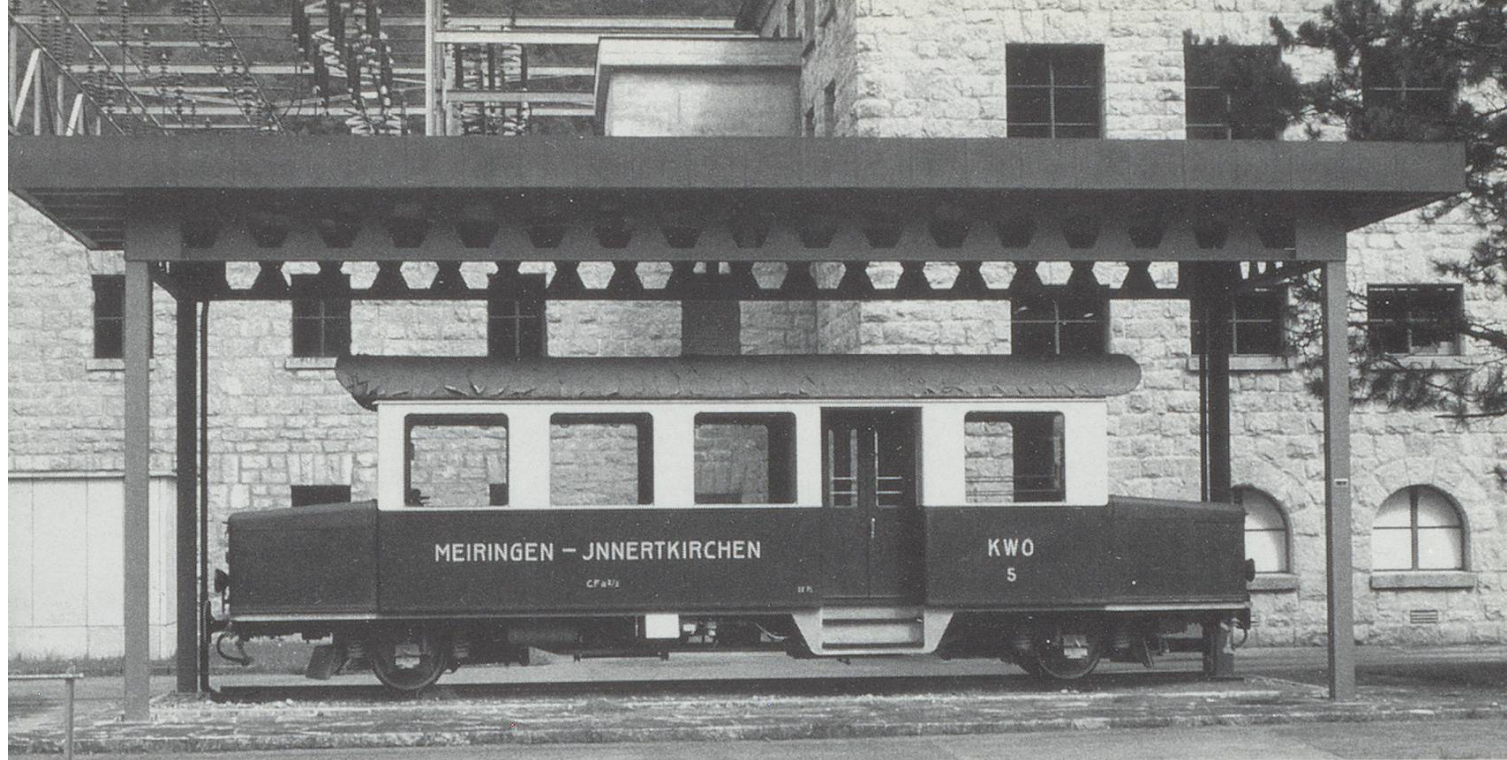
burst out into the enclosed valley at Innertkirchen. Most people departed from the train at the village centre chalet station, and the driver walked back to ask if I really wanted to go on to the "station". We then trundled on and the line opened out into a fan of tracks in the middle of the huge hydro electric works.

Here was BOB ABDe4/4 No.301. In 1994 I saw this same dusty faded railcar working the service, and I presume that it is hired by the MIB as a spare vehicle. At the works was the plinthead battery railcar, (the other is in Verkershaus, Luzern) and two BLS wooden bodied vans on transporter wagons, which proves that the tunnel is built to a generous loading gauge. A squad of men were unloading cables and boxes from the vans. As no locomotives were present, nor owned by the MIB, the railcar (or 301) must work freight traffic as well. On walking back the 200 yards or so to the village, I discovered the smallest snowplough I've ever seen, tucked away behind a little shed. I can't imagine it shifting a heavy snowfall! Continuing, the road passes over the raging river, milky from its passing through the turbines, as it tumultuously rushes out from the bottom of the hydro works.

This river is canalised right through to the Brienersee.

At the "town" station chalet there were many bicycles parked, and quite a few intending passengers. The tram appeared, and after a fair wait while the driver passed through issuing tickets, we set off with quite a full load. Over the 2.2km line there are three request stops, but in my trip all passengers went to the Meiringen terminus, a journey of 9 minutes. As Innertkirchen is in its enclosed valley with high mountains all round, the roads into it are fairly tortuous, and so the locals obviously appreciate the frequent train service right into the centre of Meiringen. Although my Swiss Pass was not valid on the MIB, nor did it allow a discount, the return fare of Sfr2.60 is quite reasonable, and certainly a bargain compared to the Sfr6.50 return fare on the short Richenbach Falls funicular.

The ride in the period tram was like travelling in a time warp, and to end up in the "station" which turned out to be a huge Hydro Electric plant was an added bonus to the trip.



Above: The battery railcar plinthed at the Hydro Works at Innertkirchen CFa2/2
Below: MIB X10 snowplough at Innertkirchen

