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FROM: JOHN EVE – HITCHIN

Some notes from the Berner Oberland

Having just returned from a short break in Interlaken I thought I would send some news.

Berner Oberland Bahn

The following are back in service in blue and yellow: Abt 411 and ABeh 4/4¹¹ 313.

BLS Alp Transit

I visited the Frutigen and Mitholz information rooms. The Frutigen one is about 15 minutes walk from the station. I'll send directions to anyone who is interested, e-mail <kandersteg@mac.com>.

Both have good displays, albeit in French and German, although part of the display at Mitholz has some English and an English-speaking representative. There are some English publications, which can also be downloaded from the Alp Transit site <www.blsalptransit.ch>. Whilst at Mitholz, I learnt that they have run into some unexpected soft rock formations, which are slowing down the work, but not enough to delay the project completion in 2007. After completion the 'overground' route will continue to have an hourly passenger train service from Frutigen to Brig, and about 30 other trains a day. The BLS bus service from Reichenbach to Kandersteg will continue as it serves a bigger population than a local train service would. Platform 1 at Frutigen is due to be completed later this year, having been rebuilt. That's according to the engineering planning bar chart outside the station. Can you see Network Rail publishing that sort of information in England?! Two long goods trains were seen at Spiez, one with an Re10/10 combination at the front and a Re485 at the rear. The other had two BLS Re4/4s at the front and one at the rear, all in brown livery.

BLS Ae4/4 No 251 was seen displaying vinyls commemorating 60 years of the Ae4/4 and was working the morning Golden Pass Express from Interlaken Ost to Zweisimmen.

FROM: TONY BAGWELL – TAUNTON

SRS Autumn Event Success

I was the Friday evening guest speaker at the SRS Autumn Social Event. Via the next edition of Swiss Express, could you please pass on my kind thanks to Roger Ellis and all the members who attended that Friday evening meeting as between them they donated the magnificent sum of £124.00 to the charity CLIC – Challenging Childhood Cancer & Leukaemia.

FROM: MICHAEL CROSS – HOCKLEY

What we did on our Holidays

My wife and I have just returned from our annual holiday in Wengen, and hope the following will be of interest.

Berner Oberland Bahn

The new Blue and Yellow livery now appears on a complete train, which presumably finds favour locally. Driving Trailer (BDt) No.403, also in the new colours, was seen at Zweilütschinen. Does this herald the elimination of "running-round" at termini?

Wengernalpbahn

New "Panoramic" 3-car sets (Nos. 141 & 142) are in service between Grindelwald and Kleine Scheidegg. They accelerate rapidly, as "push becomes shove" uphill from Grund to Brandegg. The centre "panorama" coach appears to be carried by the inner bogies of the leading/trailing vehicles. No doubt you will receive full technical details in due course.

Brienz Rothorn Bahn

Delivery of Steam loco No.16 is anticipated, and is illustrated on an information/sponsorship board at Brienz. It would appear that Rocher de Naye No.1 will become BRB No.16. (History repeats itself!)

Ballenberg Dampf Bahn

Loco No.1068 (ex-Meiringen plinth) is still "in works" despite earlier optimistic expectations (SE Dec. 2001 p44). The preserved 4/5 No.2969 seems to have contractual priority. How did they cage this "Elephant?"

FROM: TOM SHEARD – EAST LEAKE

Michael J Baggs

On Thursday October 7th 2004 Michael J Baggs passed away after a short illness. He is survived by June, his ever patient wife and his son Miles.

He had several layouts featured in Continental Modeller and other railway magazines. Building everything from scratch, apart from some of the rolling stock, he worked from his own photographs and extensive travel experiences.

Mike was a familiar figure around the shows with his unique Z gauge layouts, sometimes you had to wonder if they weren't Zm! He will be greatly missed for his humour, his perennial cigarette, mug of tea and his incredible modelling skills. His layouts were shown at the annual Loughborough, Derby and Mirfield shows and also the SRS AGMs. We have lost a great character and a very pleasant guy and friend.

FROM: MICHAEL FARR – CALLINGTON

Play your tickets right

Many members will know of my interest and passion for Edmondson tickets. In this connection I have a couple of polite requests.

Firstly. This morning I received a packet of tickets from Pfingstegg but all are new and unissued and so I fear they have succumbed to the computer. If any members have been to Grindelwald this autumn or may be going during the winter, I'd be glad to find out.

Secondly. Has any member travelled on the *Funivia Brusino-Serpiano* this year? When I tried to do so in September the service was suspended because the wind was considered too high for safe operation of the cable cars.

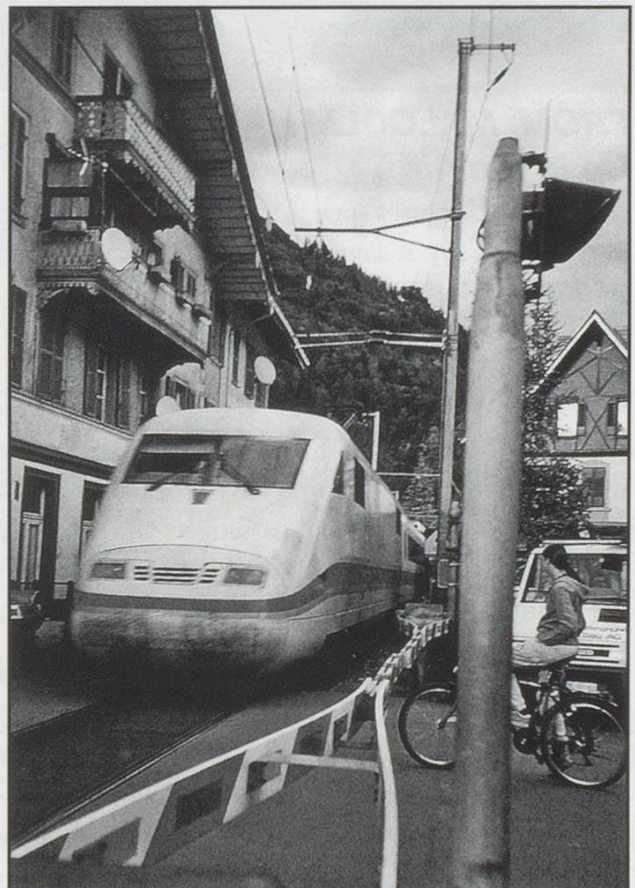
My reason for asking as always is to try to find out if they are still selling old style Edmondson card tickets or if they too have changed to a computer-based ticket system. If anyone can advise me I shall be very grateful. As a result of a letter to Brusino they have kindly sent me some ticket specimens but all are samples numbered 00000 so I suspect that the familiar tickets on sale when there in 2000 have been withdrawn – but I want to be certain of my facts as I am writing up my holidays for the Transport Ticket Societies' Journal.

Note from Ed: You can contact Michael by email: <mgdfarr@tiscali.uk>, or by sending snail mail to me at the usual address. Also worth mentioning is that a couple of years ago I went to the Stanserhorn, having been invited to a preview of the new revolving restaurant. When I got on the funicular car I was given an Edmondson ticket by one of the PR staff. I was very pleased by this and requested another for a friend in the UK who collected Edmondson tickets. "No problem, would it be for Michael, you know Michael Farr, he does have one of these already though?" A legend in his own ticket box.

FROM: BILL SCHWARTZ – ITASCA, USA

September Cover

Your September issue just arrived on this side of the pond. I was fascinated by the cover. Here is a photo I took at the same crossing in September 1999. Very different livery! I was very surprised when it appeared. Auto-focus was my only option.



LETTERS

FROM: MAURICE CRIDDLE - TEIGNMOUTH

Snaps and Schnapps

Several people have asked me where I took the photograph on page 24 of the last (September 2004) edition of Swiss Express, which won the scenic section of the annual competition. As the caption seems to have been mislaid somewhere along the line, I write to say that it was "Sunset at Weggis", which I photographed in September 2003 at this picturesque, well-situated resort on the northern shore of Lake Lucerne (Vierwaldstättersee)

While in writing mode may I say, as a member of the West of England branch, that we would welcome any members who would like to join or visit the branch. We are a merry, cheerful and humorous group (male and female) that enjoys talks, slide shows, videos etc, as well as an annual lunch every January (see the accompanying photo). Summer sees us on an annual outing to a railway or transport orientated venue in the West of England. Details of our branch organiser and where we meet are near the front of every issue of Swiss Express. We meet at a pub and enjoy a pub lunch at the interval of our daytime Saturday meetings



The West of England Branch enjoy their Annual Lunch in January. The Editor can vouch for the friendliness and warm welcome other members can enjoy here.

FROM: MALCOLM HARDY-RANDALL – SCOTLAND AND SWITZERLAND

Up in the Air

Just back from a spell in the sun and snow! I spent a day up the Stanserhorn and for most of the morning of the 24th Sept. it snowed. Coming back down in an old open funicular was rather on the chilly side.

Baggage Issues

I tried to hand my suitcase into Locarno station for the journey to Luzern and was told that same day delivery was no longer guaranteed. Internal transit of luggage is now two-day delivery.

Still on baggage issues. When I presented my suitcases to Luzern baggage office for check-in back to Aberdeen, I was told that they could not accept them or allocate a seat for my wife and me. The reason: we were travelling on KLM who have blocked SBB getting access to the reservation system computer since April. This problem will affect all passengers who are booked on KLM or any of their associated companies.

And finally, whilst travelling on the post bus from Stans to Beckenried the bus came to a halt way out in the country. The reason: we had to wait for an aircraft to taxi across the road to the Porter aircraft factory!

FROM: TONY ROWBOTHAM – ST ALBANS

The BLS Base Tunnel

In his letter in the September edition of Swiss Express, Mr Hawkins mentions the construction of the BLS Lötschberg base tunnel.

A couple of kilometres north of Frutigen where the new line diverges from the present line, not only are the masts for the overhead wiring installed, but some of the signals are already in place. However, I was not

able to see from the adjacent (lower) road, if any track work was in place. The whole area is beginning to look a lot tidier as time goes by.

At Mitholz strange things are happening. Two years ago an artificial road tunnel was being built on the surface just to the west of the existing road. This I assumed was to get the road through the area being used as a depository for tunnel spoil, and in time the tunnel would be completely buried. Last year the tunnel was in use, and very smart it was, with lighting along the kerbs. However, this year there is a new road on the surface just to the west of the tunnel, and slightly higher, and the tunnel is not being used. The photo shows the South end of the tunnel, looking north, with the new (presumably temporary?) road to the left. The original road was to the right of the tunnel, presumably underneath the 'new mountain' seen in the picture. It will be interesting to see what the situation will be next year.



FROM: GEORGE HOEKSTRA – KANDERSTEG **Some Observations**

I am writing to answer some points made by Richard Hawkins in the September Swiss Express.

Swiss Travel System

For quite a few years now the rules for routes not offering free travel, ie those marked in black on the map given with the pass, have been as follows: for the Swiss Pass and Swiss Flexi-Pass (unlimited travel tickets) at least 25% reduction. A 50% reduction was never guaranteed for this type of ticket and it was always left up to the individual operator what discount was to be given. I do know with some operators it depended on the staff in the ticket office at the time! The reduction is dependent on the percentage the operators get from the total sales of Swiss Passes and Flex-Passes. The rule is different for the Swiss Card. This ticket gives one round trip from the border or airport to the holiday destination and 50% reduction on all participating on all other trips with participating operators for up to one month.

Blick Newspaper

This is Switzerland's tabloid newspaper, the only one fortunately, and famous for overstating everything. Like announcing the death of Pope John-Paul twice, months before he actually died. Many times persons as well as firms read about their disasters without them actually being aware of it. You get paid if you phone them with a tip about a "story" – and it sells newspapers! The fire on the engine at Goppenstein might well have happened. As a matter of routine all persons suspected of having inhaled smoke, are sent to hospital for

a thorough check up. That services would be affected by such an incident where the damage was only to the locomotive is highly unlikely. In Switzerland we do not get hordes of different police, as well as health and safety inspectors fighting over a crime site possession.

Grindelwald Post Auto

The yellow bus with Grindelwald on its side belongs to a private operator, not the Swiss Postal Service.

Devastation of the Kander Valley

The new base tunnel is in the process of construction. Near Frutigen the new line will be underground (so-called cut and cover construction) and the old line will be re-routed and straightened. As normal traffic over the Lötschberg has to be maintained while all this is going on, the building site for such a major project might look like devastation to a layman. Lots of piles of materials, rock excavation and earth are deposited on the side. A great number of very heavy machines are running around. Cranes and huge towers of concrete mixers are everywhere. As no lorries may be used in Switzerland for the transport of large amounts of excavation there is also an abundance of conveyor belts. But in the end, most of the materials lying around will disappear as they are used; a large part of the rock is crushed to size and re-used for making the enormous amounts of concrete that is needed in the tunnels as well as for infill. When everything is finished and covered up the earth (humus) will be re-used for planting. As for real problems, over 95% of the actual tunnelling for the Lötschberg base tunnel is finished. In the last 5% a zone of unstable rock formation with a layer of coal (anthracite) was hit! This is no technical problem, it just means a lot more strengthening of the sides in the tunnel is needed. It will take more time and money. As construction up to now has been well ahead of the timetable, the official starting date for the services is not in danger.

Tabloid speculation, nothing like it!

FROM JAMES HENDERSON – TETBURY

What I did on my Holidays - the numbers refer to the photographs

Having recently returned from a holiday based in Interlaken I thought the following notes may be of interest.

Berner Oberland Bahn

The Berner Oberland Bahn (BOB) has just put into service its new 3-part driving trailer unit (ABt 421). On the 29th September, when I visited Zweilütschinen, it was operating between Interlaken Ost and Grindelwald, but was being hauled from the driving end (Interlaken end) by one of the BOB ABeh 4/4 Triebwagen, so maybe its driving capability is not yet in operation. **(1,2)**

There are some photos of the new unit, both external and internal. A feature of the design is the horizontal split of the windows - the top half lowers, but the bottom part is fixed and sealed to the bodysides to prevent water ingress causing corrosion inside the bodysides. The horizontal bar is above seated passengers' eyelevel, so it does not spoil the view. **(6,7,8)** Similar windows have been fitted to the BOB ABeh4/4 313 that has been repaired after the Gsteigwiler collision in 2003 (see article in *Schweizer Eisenbahn-Revue* 10/2004).

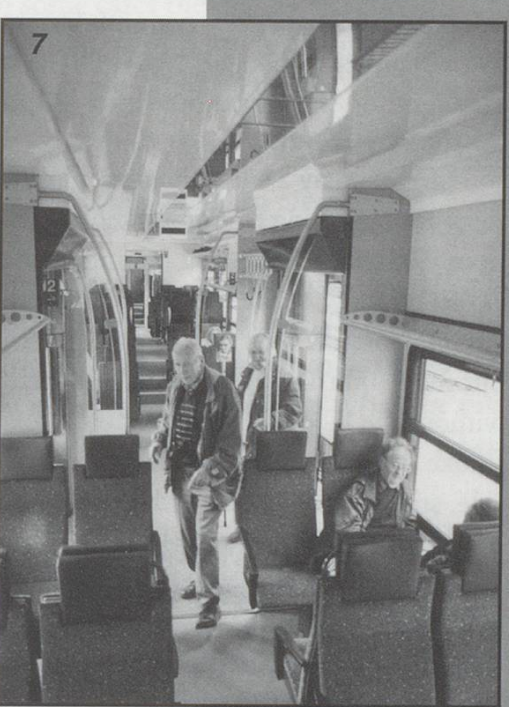
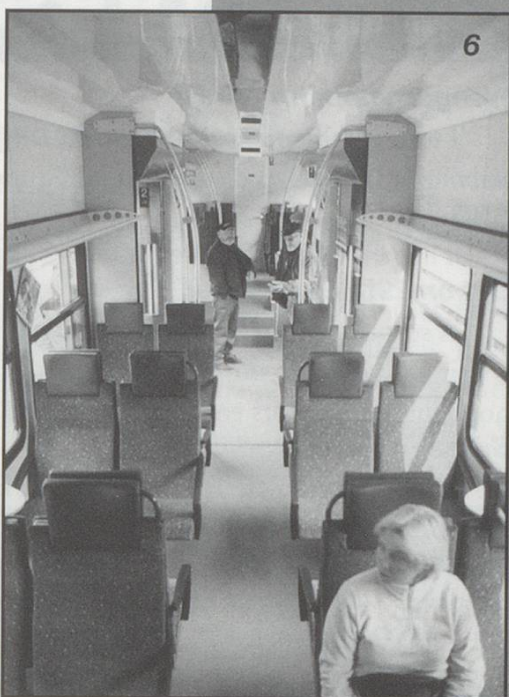
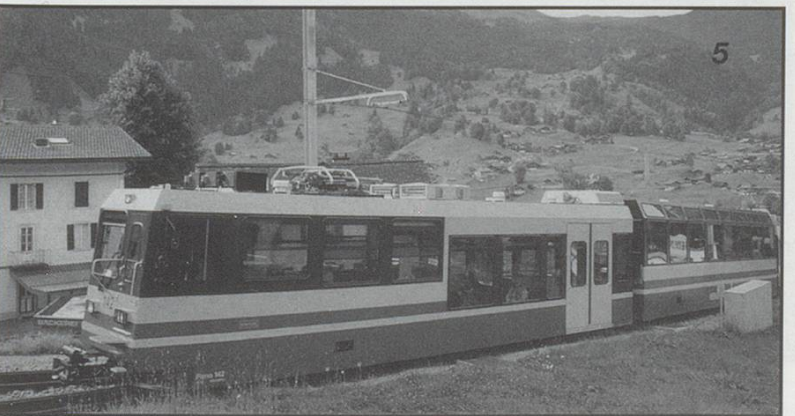
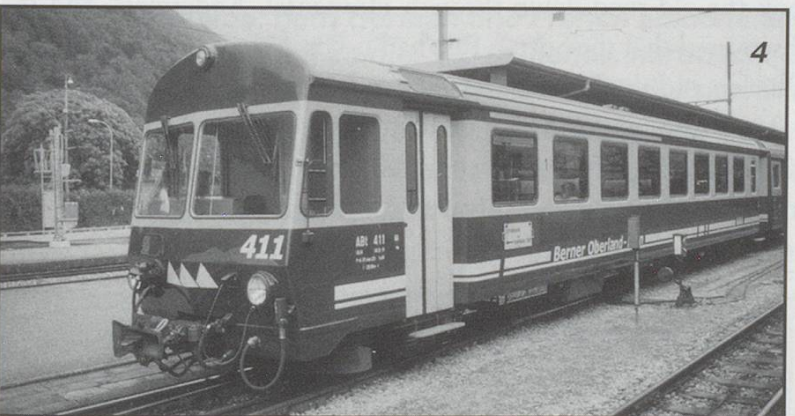
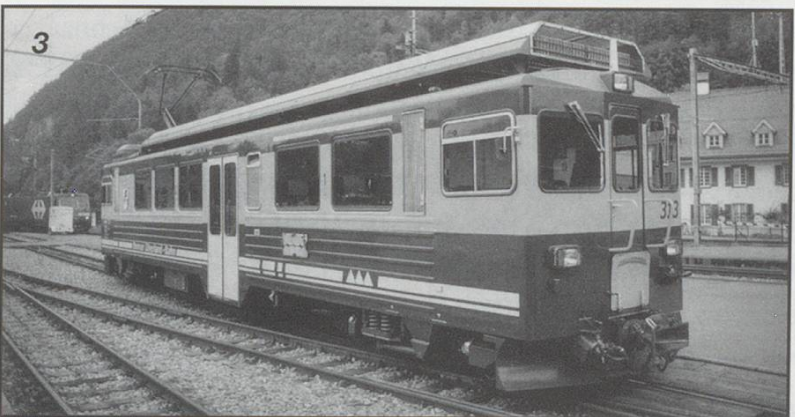
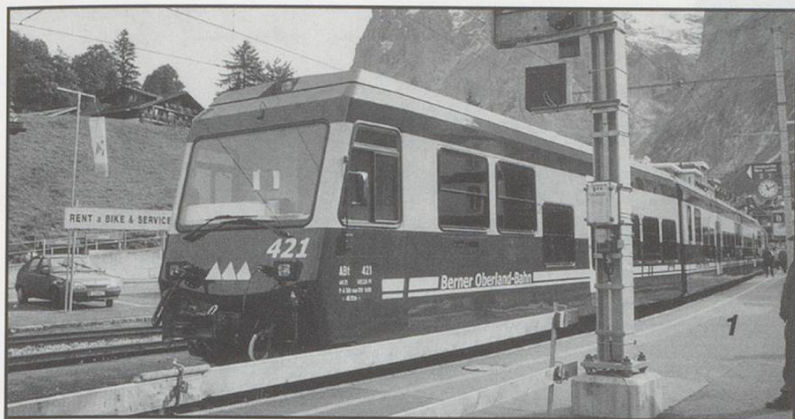
The repaired ABeh4/4 313 is in the new yellow/blue livery, with 'Berner Oberland Bahn' and the 3 Peaks logo on a steel plate welded on to bridge the 2nd and 3rd corrugations up from the bottom. It is not clear if this is for reinforcement or convenience, but the paint is showing some signs of cracking as if there are stresses present. **(3)**

The other BOB ABeh 4/4 involved in the Gsteigwiler collision (No 305) has also been repaired and is back in service in the yellow/blue colour scheme.

The BOB has some 2nd class coaches converted to "BD" configuration (BD 502 & BD 503) replacing the normal doors with single wide doors at one end of the coach, and rearranging the interior (photo of BD 503 enclosed). These coaches may have come from the SBB Brünig, as they do not appear to be conversions of BOB stock.

The BOB coaching stock mentioned in 'Notepad' in "Swiss Express" September 2004, had not yet departed for their pastures new when I was at Interlaken in late September.

Behind the BOB Works at Zweilütschinen were three RBS vehicles - driving trailer 205 and two Triebwagen (601 & 605). Pictured is a completed conversion, ABt411. **(4)**



Wengernalpbahn (WAB)

I took a photo (**5-see previous page**) of one of the new Niederflur-Panorama-Gelenktriebzüge. Nr 142 arriving at Grindelwald station from Grund. (See *Schweizer Eisenbahn-Revue* 10/2004 for more details)

SBB

The new 'Werbelok' Re 460056-5 "pro infirmis" in yellow livery was at Interlaken.

Ost on 29th September

A surprise visitor to Interlaken Ost on 24th September was the restored preserved RAe TEE^{II} Nr.1053 on a visit with a group outing from Basel, with a ship trip on Brienzensee. Sadly the weather was not good but I hope that the visitors enjoyed their day out on such a special train.

Swiss Railway Models

Visiting the Suisse Toy exhibition in Bern on 23rd September I found a Liliput 'Limited Edition Schweiz' set of 2 coaches - BLS AB and a BN AB - in cream/light blue livery, with yellow lettering. This was Art.-No. L350054 @ SFr 75.00 I think. I have not seen these coaches advertised or in stock anywhere else. Also there was a superb HO scale model showing three major parts of the BLS South Ramp - Hohtenn and the Luogelkinn Viaduct, the Bietschtal Bridge, Ausserberg Station and village, - with trains running very realistically through them. I think that it had been sponsored by ROCO.

At Modellbahn Boutique in Luzern I found ROCO Doppelstock Bt 'Kinderwagen' in the "Moon" (Mond) livery, catalogue No. 45469 (The "Dino" version is 45468). Again, I have not seen this in any catalogue, or even at the Suisse Toy exhibition.

September Snow

On Saturday 25th September I joined the Bernair Reisen "3 Passes" trip in a preserved Saurer 'Schnauzer' Reisebus belonging to Autoverkehr Spiez-Krattigen-Aeschi with a Furka Dampfbahn trip over the Furka Pass from Gletsch to Realp. On joining the bus at Spiez Bus-Bahnhof we were informed that the Grimsel Pass was closed by snow, so we had to go up the Kander Valley and via the Autoverlad through the Lötschberg tunnel to Goppenstein, and thence down into the Rhone valley and up to Gletsch. At Gletsch it was snowing heavily, but the 1400 train nevertheless left on time. HG 3/4 Nr 9 "Gletschhorn" found it slippery crossing the road without the rack. We were pushed through the Furka Summit Tunnel by a diesel shunter to avoid too much smoke in the tunnel, and stopped for refreshments (hot coffee with Schnapps, Bratwurst etc.) at the other side, still in heavy snow, with more underfoot, and poor visibility. It was fun to get pictures passing over the Steffenbach Bridge in snow!

At Realp we rejoined our coach and took the old road down through Hospental, Andermatt, and the Schöllenen O. Gorge to Wassen, where we discovered that the Susten Pass had become closed by snow during the day! Our route therefore continued via Flüelen and the Brünig Pass back to Interlaken and Spiez. It was a great day out and we had an excellent commentary from our organiser on the things to note en-route, and had seen the work on both the Lötschberg and Gotthard Base Tunnels. I commend Bernair Reisen to you - they are organising a "Red Arrow" Christmas Market shopping trip to Montreux on Saturday 4th December 2004 - if you happen to be in Switzerland! (see www.bernair-reisen.ch)

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GLACIER EXPRESS 75 YEARS

As most of you know 2005 will be the 75th Birthday of the Glacier Express. Many special trains and celebrations are planned. At a recent Travel Trade Fair I met representatives of the RhB and MGB, Reto Rostetter and Helmut Biner, respectively. I asked them how things were going for next

year and was shocked to discover that 80% of the special trains have already been booked by groups. Although more information will be available for the March Edition, if you are thinking of travelling on the special trains then I would suggest an early call or email to the special Glacier Express contacts:

Tel: ++41 (0) 27 921 4111 / Fax: ++41 (0) 27 921 4119 / www.glacierexpress.ch / info@mgbahn.ch