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## **THE CHAIRMAN & SVEA AT LIESTAL**



416 626 (Ex. RE 4/4<sup>i</sup>) of R4C at Muttenz Yard.

All photographs: Paul Russenberger

Arriving outside Liestal station I was handed my pack for the Schweizerischer Verband Eisenbahn-Amateur Annual Meeting and Weekend, giving me directions to the hall where I would find the others. I set off along the road beside the railway leading to Basel and fell into step with a gentleman also heading in the same direction. He introduced himself and said he was from Lugano. I responded explaining who I was, to be taken aback by his reply "Yes, I know." Is my German that bad, or what? It seems to happen every year! Unfortunately, there was not quite time to photograph the preserved post bus about to depart with the lady guests, before I had to scramble into the hall to find the Union Flag and my place at one of the long tables.

We were greeted formally by an official from the local Gemeinde, proffering his

apologies that the Neubaustrecke precluded a view of most passing trains. (Possibly a good thing – they were a distraction; I had not been expecting to see BLS Re4/4s on freight!). He emphasised the importance of the railway to the locality, the Swiss Central Railway having reached Liestal in 1854; today as part of the S-Bahn network around Basel it continues as a link to both local and national communities. Herr Wägli of SBB also extended the greetings of the Bundesbahnen, reminding us that it is the 100th anniversary of the opening of the Simplon Tunnel, he went on to speak of the advantages to the SBB of the Lötschberg Base Tunnel. Contributions then came from MOROP (of which the SVEA is a member), the VHS and from other countries, including the SRS in the UK.

Following a break, because the hall was rather warm and we were often distracted

by the passing trains, the formal meeting proceeded. It included elections to sub-committees, the presentation of a pepper mill in the shape of a starting bell to one member and the re-appointment of the President and Vice-Presidents. Here I shall cut across the SRS constitution by remarking that one of the Vice-Presidents is Rudolf Steinmann who is a member

of the SRS; this demonstrates the standing the Society has in Switzerland and bestows on us all the responsibility of maintaining it. The president of the Thun club described what was in store for those attending the meeting on the last weekend of April next year, such as an O-gauge display, pre-dinner drinks at the Rathaus and a trip to the Berner Oberland.

After the meeting we repaired to a training centre on the south eastern outskirts of Basel for the dinner and night. Over pre-dinner drinks we were able to view a large O-gauge test track on which various trains were circulating. It was a change to see modern and steam American



*460 067 propels a Basle train from Liestal.*

models among them.

In keeping with tradition, the next day involved a special train. When told that the meeting was to be in Liestal, I had expected a steam train on the Waldenburgerbahn, but it was not to be. With great respect to steam and the narrow gauge, I think we were treated to something better. Buses took us to the St Josefs Stadion station, where we photographed trams while waiting for the special train which was made up of three Mk 4 coaches hauled by the unique Bm4/4 diesel-electric locomotive 18451 built by SLM in 1939.

*Passengers prepare for 18451 to make its run past.*



We proceeded eastwards along the inside southern edge of Muttenz marshalling yards to Pratteln, where the locomotive ran round. Recalling steam Railtours of 1967/8, along with a very few others I sprinted successfully to the adjacent platform to get an image of it without a platform in front of it and the sun behind me. (British enthusiasts are clearly made of sterner stuff than the Swiss as at least 90% of the participants remained next to the train!) The train then headed off a little way into the yard before setting back onto a non-electrified branch line leading towards the Rhein. Here we got off for a photographic run past, away from the clutter of railway infrastructure and with perfectly positioned sun.

Back on the train we proceeded to reach other parts of the railway that other (passenger) trains cannot, by running through the northern side of Muttenz yard. This gave views of the locomotive holding sidings, which are at a lower level, explaining why they cannot be seen from the main line. The two yards are laid out so that one of the yards deals with traffic inbound to Switzerland and the other outbound. Both comprise of reception, sorting and departure sidings. It was interesting to note a red Re 4/4i belonging to the R4C group which specialises in the rail haulage of chemicals. Given the continued trend

towards international block train working, it will be interesting to watch the future use of these yards.

Being in a marshalling yard, "permissive working" was in force. This worked well until we came to stand behind a rake of wagons, only to discover that it had no locomotive on the far end! We backed up! At the western end, we left the main line and took a branch that descended to reach the Rhein at a station proclaiming the name of "Hafenbahn BL". Here there was another chance for photography and a visit to the interior of the locomotive – of which I have to confess I did not take advantage – before a stroll to the ship which was to take us up river and provide an excellent lunch. In conversation with Scott Rankin of the Lausanne club we found that the time passed all too quickly and we were soon disembarking for the short bus ride to Liestal.

As with every visit, it is clear that the Swiss value our connection with the SVEA. *Eisenbahn Amateur* is the publication of the SVEA and it is available at a very favourable rate to members. A subscription form for it came with the September "Swiss Express" and as the closing date for subscribing is 9th December, if you have not done so already you should still have time to dispatch your cheque to John Stokes.

## Bill Weber

### **BACK IN BLACK**

#### **– Furka Oberalp No 4 returns to service**

The SLM Steam Locomotive FO No 4 returned to Realp on 18 July after seven years of restoration by volunteers of the Verein Furka Bergstrecke (VFB)/Dampf Furka Bergstrecke (DFB) at the workshop in Chur, Switzerland. This locomotive was built by SLM Winterthur in 1913 as factory No 2318, delivered as BFD No 4 and in 1926 became FO No 4. This all-black locomotive will be used for passenger service starting on the 23rd June