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Autor: Bulpitt, Malcolm
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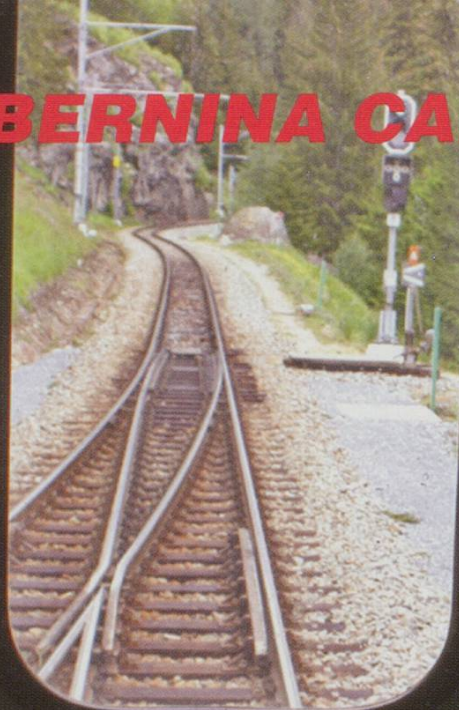
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BERNINA CAB RIDE

Malcolm Bulpitt



PHOTOS: Malcolm Bulpitt

Sometimes we are lucky and are in the right place at the right time. On a trip north on a normal Rhätische Bahn (RhB) service train from Poschiavo over the Bernina Pass during 2007 I was fortunate enough to be in the right place.

Having joined the front saloon of ABe 4/4¹ No. 48 after it had led its train in from Tirano we noticed that a colleague of the driver was standing in the open doorway of the cab talking to him. Noting the ever present (whilst on the railway) camera in my hand I was waved forward and invited to join them as the train started up the climb from the station. This is a long slow haul as the railway climbs some 1800m out of the Val di Poschiavo up to and around the series of zigzags that lead to Cavaglia and on to Ospizio

Bernina. It was interesting to see how the driver used his controls to maintain a steady speed as the gradient varied over the climb.

Before we left Poschiavo a small group of local people had boarded the unit and a kilometre-or-so into the climb we pulled-up at a footpath crossing to allow them to alight together with their numerous bags of shopping. At the end of the day the RhB is there to serve the public and knowing local people and their needs is all part of running a successful railway. We see the operations as tourists but riding up front on the local train you begin to

realise that we are the icing on the RhB's financial cake.

In all too short a time the service had reached Alp Grum and then we were approaching Ospizio Bernina where the

driver's colleague left the cab and it was obvious that my time in the cab should probably end as well. The rest of our trip down to St Moritz proceeded uneventfully but with the knowledge of the care and skills that were being exercised up front.

