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INTERNATIONAL

CIS

The main test programme for the ETR 610 fleet was completed in July, and crew training is under way. One set has achieved a speed of 262 kph in the Lötschberg base tunnel. Entry into passenger service is planned for the main timetable change on 14th December.

To allow upgrade work on the ETR 470 fleet, CIS 151 / 152 (Zürich – Milano) was turned over to conventional stock from 8th September to 10th October, with an extended journey time of around 30 minutes due primarily to the engine change at Chiasso. However, the normal CIS supplement was suspended.

SWITZERLAND

SBB

The second phase of repairs to the embankment damaged by landslips in July 2007 near Wünnewil started on 17th July, well after the end of Euro 2008. The Bern – Fribourg line is reduced to single track between Flamatt and Wünnewil, mostly over the south track but with a slew over the north track over the affected embankment. For train services, there was a conflict between the xx.34 IC departure from Bern and the xx.54 IR arrival at Bern; normal practice was to give priority to the eastbound service to maintain the crucial connections at Bern, the approximate five minute delay at Flamatt to the westbound IC service being managed by holding the one significant connection, cross platform at Lausanne into the xx.49 IR departure to the Rhône Valley, as necessary and retiming the flight of departures from Lausanne towards Genève as necessary to minimise delays.

On 29th August the new platforms were opened at Lausen, between Liestal and Sissach, which are around 400 metres nearer Liestal. The old station is being rebuilt as a regional centre for SBB Cargo.

The Bodio – Lavorgo stretch of the Gotthard south ramp was closed twice in early September. On 4th September, the line was closed until 09.30 following an overnight collision between a track machine and a rake of ballast wagons in the Travi tunnel, while on 7th September the line was closed for several hours due to avalanche risk after heavy rainfall.

The first refurbished Kolibri was released for test running on 8th September between Solothurn and Grenchen Süd. This was as a two car unit (RBDe 560 / ABt), as the first of the new NFP centre cars (Niederflur Personenwagen)

was not delivered from Bombardier Villeneuve to Yverdon Works until 29th August. (The motor-coaches are being refurbished at Yverdon, the driving trailers at Olten Works). The complete 3-car unit, one of the Region Alps variants with a 12 seat first class section was put on display at Yverdon on 15th August. Now known as 'Domino' units, the set then went on display at the Innotrans Exhibition at Berlin between 23rd and 26th September.

From early September, work recommenced on extending the double track from Cham towards Rotkreuz. Zug S1 services which previously terminated at Hünenberg Chämleten were cut back to Cham.

A further 32 FLIRT units have been ordered from Stadler for delivery from 2010, 2 RABe 521 for the Basel area, 19 RABe 523 for services from Lausanne and 11 RABe 524 for TILO, including the new link between Varese and Malpensa.

TeIV 8203 can be found working the long industrial siding alongside the Luzern – Rotkreuz line between Ebikon and Root.

BLS

The first six-car 'Lötschberger' unit, RABe 535 101, was delivered from Bombardier Villeneuve to Spiez on 28th June, with staff training starting in mid-July. The first outing in public service was on the weekend of 6th and 7th September, part of the 'Lötschberger Week' special events which ran from 6th to 14th September. It remains to be seen whether the summit line RE services can manage with fixed formation EMUs on a regular basis; an RE service observed on 15th September was around 10 very mixed vehicles including two 'Jumbo' B6 articulated coaches.

On 24th June a second track was commissioned on the 5.1 km section between Ins and Fanelwald (between Gampelen and Zihlbrücke). Gampelen station has been modernised with outside platforms.

Re 485 003 now carries its full UIC number with country suffix – 94 85 4485 003-8 CH-BLSC. The engine is branded 'BLS Cargo – Die Alpinisten'.

SBB / BLS

Traffic through the Lötschberg base tunnel remains buoyant, with regular relief services, particularly for the CIS services, running at weekends. As a measure of the improved access from central Switzerland to the Visp valley, in the first half of 2008 traffic on the MGB as a whole was up by 22% while the Gornergrat line saw an increase of 17%.

SBB Track Recording car XTmass 160 001

checks the Lötschberg base tunnel on a two weekly schedule, being observed leaving Spiez southbound on 15th September.

SOB

Despite all the FLIRT units being nominally available for service, a three coach Pendelzug set (1980 built BDe 576 048?, B ? and ABt 154), all in the old SOB livery, was observed at Arth-Goldau on 17th September on a local to Biberbrugg.

Tm^{III} 9516 / 9597 have been acquired from SBB and renumbered 236 010 / 011.

AB

The last of the three new Trogenerbahn units Be4/8 33-35 entered service on 20th June, making the 1970's units 21-25 redundant and reducing set 31 and 32 to spare status. The new sets are fitted with two pantographs to address the one significant problem with the first two sets, the difficulty of clearing ice from the overhead on frosty mornings!

ASm

Be4/4 101 was transferred from Langenthal (OJB) to Ins (BTI) on 12th July to take over duties on gravel trains from the withdrawn Be4/4 524.

The new STAR units have been undergoing commissioning trials on the freight only St Urban – Melchnau section. Be4/8 112 was named Venus on 23rd August.

MGB

This summer, Visp – Andermatt local services have been running with a BD van (ex Zermatt – Täsch) attached to the standard four vehicle Pendelzug set. They are even prepared to take the extra coach down to Goschenen if required!

The new line from Bitsch into Brig includes a short section of mixed gauge track just east of the tunnel under the Simplon main line, giving access from Brig SBB yard to works sidings on the south side of the Rhone.

Panorama coaches Bp 4023-6 (ex FO, 1993) have been sold to the RhB.

MOB / BLS / ZB

On 3rd October, the MOB unveiled its proposal to run gauge changeable trains on the Golden Pass Montreux – Luzern service. This is based on a new bogie design coded 'EV' (Écartement Variable) with the wheels mounted on stub axles allowing these to slide sideways on specially designed change tracks. The plan is for 7 daily return services using 5 train sets at 2 hourly intervals, at a cost of SwF 44m (the third rail option was costed at SwF 260m!) and could be operational by 2014.

RBS

Be4/6 83 is the first completely Blue unit for the Bern – Worb service.

RhB

Bernina EW II A 1261 and 1262 have been modernised, and have had one vestibule converted to a luggage area.

The Disentis line was temporarily closed between Trin and Valendas on 7th September due to flood risk following heavy rain. Bus replacement services were run between Chur and Ilanz via Flims.

The RhB has adopted a renumbering plan which will ultimately see all vehicles carry a five digit number, with the first digit indicating the vehicle type. The first vehicles to be renumbered under this plan were 1993-built Panoramawagen 4023-6, purchased from the MGB and renumbered Bpm 52521-4, the '5' indicating a passenger coach and the last four digits following on from the existing Panoramic coaches. Another vehicle with a five digit number is Xm4/4 92020, seen at Samedan on 13th September. (The number is underlined.)

WAB

1988-built Bt 231, out of use since the introduction of the low floor driving trailer sets, has gone for scrap.

The last three modernised wooden-framed coaches of 1893, BD 34, B 36, and B 38 have been presented to the 760mm gauge Wassertalbahn in Romania for use on tourist trains.

ZB

Money has been found to reinstate the loops on the mountain section at Kaiserstuhl, Kapelli and Brunnenfluh, decommissioned on cost grounds when the section was resigalled.

It was noticed in early September that a neat '4/8' had been added in the appropriate place to the number of ABe 130 008

URBAN TRANSPORT.

BVB

The Basel trolleybus routes have been handed over to bus operation, and the modern (1996) trolleybuses put up for sale.

TL

Formal approval of operation of Line m2 as an automatic Metro between Ouchy and La Sallaz was given on 14th September, allowing the official opening to go forward on 18th September as planned. Although a limited public service was provided over the following weekend, not stopping at certain intermediate

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stations, full opening was not scheduled until 27th October at the earliest.

HISTORIC

AB

On 17th August, a heritage shuttle service was run between Appenzell and Wasserauen, providing a half hourly service. In service were BCe4/4 30 (AB), BCFeh4/4 5 (SGA) CFe3/3 2 (AG) and Te2/2 49 (AB) with appropriate heritage stock. The Verein AG 2 group opened the shed at Wasserauen to public inspection, on display were the unservicable BCFm2/4 56 (AB) and G3/4 14 (RhB).

BC

MOB DZe6/6 2002 was transferred from open storage at Saanen to Chernex on 11th July. Despite having not worked since 1995, the MOB workshops were able to make the MLV serviceable and she was delivered to Chaulin on 19th July as the centrepiece of the 'MOB Nostalgie' weekend on 19th / 20th July, working

three round trips to Blonay on the Sunday with MOB C4 45 and Ars 101. Availability is very restricted until a full overhaul can be completed.

DBB

The overhaul of Bern Schwarzenburg Bahn Ed3/4 51 was completed in August.

BLS

The "Slow-Up Emmental" weekend on 14th September saw the operation of an hourly steam shuttle service between Ramsei and Huttwil, as a replacement for the suspended bus service. Two train sets were provided, with three passenger coaches and two vans for bikes or skateboards. Four sets of locomotives were used, allowing time for servicing at each end. Engines used comprised SMB Ed3/4 2 + LHB Ed3/4 11, SMB Ec4/5 11, EBT Ed4/5 8 + BSB Ed3/4 51 and DB 64 518, working in sequence as shown. Despite the dismal weather in the morning, great fun was had by all both on the train and cycling/skating, etc along the parallel road.

BOOK REVIEW

Rigibahen

Author and Publisher: Ron Smith, "Rhus", Banff Road, Keith, Morayshire, AB53 4DT. Language: English and German. 44 pages of photographs in full colour. Format: A5 - 5" x 8". Softcover. ISBN: 0-9547007-0-8. Price: £6.50 including P & P from SRS Sales.

This slim volume is a nicely produced photo essay by SRS member Ron Smith that sets out to show various aspects of the two

railways that serve the Rigi from both Vitznau and Arth-Goldau. Originally produced a few years ago this is a welcome reprint that was launched last July at an event on the railway. The majority of the photographs have been taken in this decade although the author has used a few images going back to the 1980s to illustrate certain aspects of the operations. Some of these have come from his Swiss colleague Ernst Leutwiler. The book does not just concentrate on the usual passenger trips but also shows how the railways help serve the whole community on the Rigi. Ever wondered how that ice cream you enjoy on a hot day gets up to the retail outlets on the peak without melting – this book shows you how. This does not purport to be a historical or technical document, but it makes a nice souvenir of a visit to the Queen of Mountains or could help fill a Christmas stocking.

JJ



Ron Smith at the re-launch of his book on the Rigibahn, 27. 7. 08