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AND FINALLY...

Bryan Stone



Les Ponts-de-Martel - an unlikely refreshment stop at the end of the TRN line from La Chaux-de-Fonds.
Photo: Bremgarten

My local paper recently wrote that the classic 'Dorfbaiz', the Swiss village restaurant, is dying out. It has, for 150 years, served substantial hot meals, beer, wine and coffee, to local and passing trade, and you could read the local paper, rolled on a stick, with scandals and tractor adverts. Some delay the inevitable by becoming noble, often failing; others simply give up, or, more discreetly, when the elderly host couple retires or dies, no-one new comes. Two years later the spot in the village square may be occupied by a new concrete block with four apartments. Things may be better in the Romandie, where a tradition of eating (and drinking) out is still strong, but in the new agglomerations around Zürich and other northern cities, it shows. SRS members alighting around midday at the end of an inviting-looking branch line may look in vain for the

'Restaurant Terminus', or 'Bahnhof', or 'Kreuz', or 'Bären'. Do we go back then to the junction and look for the Migros? Well, the local people may know where to go; walking up the main street may help; and sometimes we find places which still prosper, even indeed station cafés. Your Editor will recall finding with me in Les Ponts-de-Martel, at -20° C, a bowl of soup in a warm corner of the little station. Another old-fashioned station buffet is the one in Kandersteg that we highlighted on P13 in SE109. One lunchtime recently, I was at Arth-Goldau, that extraordinary 3-way station, with 35-min to train time. I found the self-service corner, with soup, pizza, coffee and a bowl of water for Bramble the Setter. The young woman insisted that I sat down while she brought everything, and it cost CHF15 (plus CHF1 for the staff fund). There were, however, no local papers. ☞

SWISS NATIONAL DAY 2012



London's hosting of the Olympic games encouraged several countries to set-up venues in the Capital, where their Nationals could meet and celebrate the event. The Swiss chose to take over Glazier's Hall, and the small adjacent Cathedral Square that lies between Southwark Cathedral and the Thames, and here they created 'The House of Switzerland'. The event was open to all-comers although the majority of attendees seemed to be ex-pat Swiss based in London and the UK. August 1st is Swiss National Day and this year it also marked the 100th Anniversary of the opening of the Jungfrau (JB,) so there was a double cause for celebration. The JB had organised a series of presentations, talks, etc. that took place on the venue's riverside stage and at 6pm this culminated in a live video-link from the top of the Jungfrau. This involved the CEO of the JB addressing the London crowds on huge screens that had also shown live Olympic events where Swiss athletes were involved. The evening celebrations, over beer and bratwurst, were launched by the Swiss Ambassador and a Federal Councillor who gave patriotic speeches before mingling with the packed crowd. Switzerland had truly come to London SE1. ☞