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ZB GOES UNDERGROUND



Mario Gavazzi reports on the closure of part of the historic Brünig line in Luzern

Exactly 3 -minutes after Midnight 8th/9th November, the last train travelled along a section of the original Brünig line (now the Zentralbahn - ZB) between Steghof and Allmend/Kriens Mattenhof in Luzern. And the last train was also an original touch – a steam train headed by G 3/4 No.208 of the Ballenberg Dampfbahn (BDB), hauling an historic composition full with people on the way to Dallenwil along the Engelberg line. Here they enjoyed a “Midnight Dinner” before returning by VBL bus to the City. For days before this last train many people had taken their last chance to travel by train on the line, called locally

the ‘Barrieren-Linie’ (barrier line), because of four crossings within some 500m, all with full barriers, severing busy main streets many times an hour. Also many people, both locals and visitors, took photographs as last souvenirs of this historic route especially on Thursday 8th when the BDB loco ran a number of special trips.


A nostalgic feeling was present during those days, especially for the author of this article, who spent his youth a short distance from the railway tracks. Older people still called it the Brünig-line because in 1889 it was opened over the pass of that name to Meiringen by the Jura-Bern-Luzern Railway. It was later extended to Interlaken prior to becoming the only metre-gauge section of the SBB. Years later the Kriens-Luzern-Bahn (KLB) used the route, overlaying their standard gauge (1435mm) line to give a four-track layout. Also, from 1964, the Luzern-Stans-Engelberg-Bahn (LSE) used the line with their new trains after



ABOVE: On Thursday 8th November G 3/4 No.208 of Ballenberg-Dampfbahn operated several trains on the old line.

All photos: Mario Gavazzi
LEFT: ZB train emerging from the tunnel through the ongoing works a contractors loco in the foreground.

the link to their original line was completed. The ZB is the outcome of the merger between the SBB/Brünigbahn and the LSE.

After a frantic weekend of realigning the connecting tracks, on Monday 12th November the ZB opened the 2km line through the newly-constructed, double-track, Haltiwald tunnel. The westbound track in the tunnel has been laid with a third rail to allow standard gauge freight operations to continue. From the start of the new timetable period on 9th December 2012 a new underground station on the route at Allmend Messe was opened by the ZB. It is unclear at present as to what will become of the old alignment. The tracks were lifted within days of its closure and an old bridge removed. Possibly parts of the route might be used for a new city highway called 'Südzubringer' forming a direct link from the A2-motorway to the Tribtschen area near the main station. Whatever happens in the future a new era for the two lines to Brünig-Interlaken and Stans-Engelberg has now begun! 



TOP: ZB-train to Engelberg crosses the Steghof-bridge. In the foreground the new railway line to the tunnel is prepared, a second track will follow in 2013.

ABOVE: Old and new railway tracks near Kriens-Mattenhof.

LEFT: Removing the 1897 Steghof Bridge after the new line opened.

BELOW LEFT: Entrance to the new station on ZB Tunnel line.

BELOW: ZB train calling at Allmend Messe.

