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MOVING THE RED BULL



With a brace of RE and four local service movements each hour along the single line, the Tm shunting tractor cannot waste any time when transferring vans to and from Heerbrugg. A standard rake of nine loaded vans hurries through Au SG in the care of Tm 232 226.

ALL PHOTOS: Don Gatehouse

Don Gatehouse reviews the associated freight activity

While visiting east Switzerland a couple of years ago, I observed several freight movements around St Margrethen involving block trains of vans. Some were clearly local movements where a single shunting tractor was the motive power used, while other much lengthier trunk services were handled by DB Class 185 traction. I was advised that the vans were employed in the transport of palletized consignments of Red Bull, the well known energy drink.

The formula of Red Bull Energy Drink, and the development of the associated marketing concept, was created by the Austrian businessman Dietrich Mateschitz in the mid 1980s. In April 1987, this completely new product was launched, when

Red Bull was sold for the very first time in its home market in Austria. The subsequent growth in production has been amazing with the product now available worldwide, with a total of 5.2 billion cans sold in 2012 - representing 70% of the world's energy drinks market. In the first 25 years of production, this now iconic brand has seen overall global consumption exceed 35 billion cans. Browsing on the Red Bull website reveals how the company attempts to minimise the carbon footprint of its production and distribution. For example, the lightweight aluminium cans used, are 100% recyclable and each weighs 60% less than a decade ago. Once the Red Bull cans have been filled they are transported direct from the production sites in Austria and Switzerland to commence the export process to more than 160


countries worldwide. Red Bull's key transport needs are covered in the main by rail in Europe and by ship for deliveries further afield. While containers are used for the wider global shipments, with associated intermodal services routed via St Margrethen, Romanshorn, Singen and beyond, it was the van traffic within Switzerland that prompted some further scrutiny.

On a return visit to the One of the Austrian Red Bull trunk services to Bremerhaven-Kaiserhafen, Germany was seen passing Killwangen Spreitenbach in September 2012.



Bodensee area in June 2012, I ventured out one afternoon to seek out the Rauch drinks production facility at Widnau near Heerbrugg that was opened in 2005. This factory is the recipient of the empty vans from St Margrethen and the source of the loaded consignments from the Swiss-based Red Bull production lines. The short branch line from Heerbrugg also serves the SAW Spannbeton Werk AG facility that generates its own rail associated freight traffic, but that is another story. A short distance further along the branch I found the Rauch premises, where a rake of well-weathered vans was being loaded ready for the scheduled afternoon collection.

Sure enough at the expected time, a set of empty vans approached from Heerbrugg being propelled by an SBB Cargo liveried Class Tm 232 diesel hydraulic shunting tractor. A set of sidings amongst the trees adjacent to the factory was used to accommodate the rakes of vans awaiting transfer to the loading dock. Once the vans delivered, had been split into two equal rakes of nine wagons and stabled, the Tm232 entered the Rauch premises to couple up to the outgoing rake of loaded vans. Using a nearby run-round loop, the train crew wasted no time in completing the required exchange of vans. As with the delivery move along the branch, the loaded vans were then propelled back to Heerbrugg to await the booked path for the onward move to St Margrethen. These rail borne operations can be viewed Monday to Saturday each week with regular return workings between St Margrethen and Heerbrugg. Consolidation with other sets of loaded vans will take place at St Margrethen from where trunk services via Singen will depart in the early and late afternoon each day.

The Austrian production lines are based at Rankwell in the district of Feldkirch. The rail borne van arrivals and loaded output are routed via Buchs, from where the block trains of loaded vans run via Sargans and Zurich to cross the border at Basel en route to Germany for onward distribution. 

This lunchtime Red Bull departure from St Margrethen to Singen and beyond was recorded at Rorschach behind DB 185 094 in June 2012.



ABOVE: Having arrived with a train of empty vans, SBB Cargo Tm 232 226 was being coupled to the rake of loaded vans to be removed from the Rauch Trading AG premises at Widnau.

BELOW: The disused signal cabin at Heerbrugg marks the junction of the short freight only branch to Widnau. The mid-afternoon working of loaded vans waits for a path north to St Margrethen.

