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buying your ticket from the travel centre at Martigny station you can save CHF11. You do have to change the voucher they give you for the normal Edmonson card ticket at the funicular booking office, but it is well worth the saving.

From: Trevor Bond – Southwell, Notts


I thought the Swiss edition of Michael Portillo's 'Great Railway Journeys' TV programme, shown in the UK last December, was the best of the series. There must have been a lot of planning and research before the programme was fixed; however they missed a splendid opportunity. After referring to his 1913 "Bradshaw" Mr Portillo then stepped onto one of the modern diesel ships of the SGV for his journey to Luzern. It would have been the 'icing on the cake' if he had been able to travel on the PS Gallia, which was built in...1913.

Ah well! 


Editor's Note: I agree. The production team did approach the SRS prior to making the programme and they were given some ideas and contacts. Unfortunately these were not used to their fullest extent.

From: Don Gatehouse – By Email

I refer to Keith's 'complaint' about the Hotel Grischuna (*Swiss Express* 112) and the fact that breakfast is not served

until 07:30, thus implying that the earliest train departures available would be about 09:00. Having stayed at the Grischuna several times, my wife and I have toured the entire RhB network and well beyond with no difficulty, having first enjoyed a splendid buffet breakfast (inclusive of freshly boiled eggs and two cups of coffee!) and never once missed our intended departure based on the 08:00 trio of services. Staying in Zurich, or other centres geared to the needs of early starters, breakfast can easily be obtained at an earlier time but Filisur is aligned to the leisure end of the market where there is little call for such an early start. Indeed, whenever we have been down for our 07:30 breakfast we were more often than not the only such guests about, and those that were, joined us on the platform within the next 30 minutes to commence their respective tours, no problem. The Grischuna team are very well in tune with the needs of the railway traveller and deliver a timely service as their part of the Switzerland experience. 

MEMBER'S ADVERTISEMENT

Wanted. Triang TT gauge A-1-A (Class 31) loco in any condition as the bogies are needed for my MOB diesel shunters. Non-runner willingly considered. Michael Farr, 01579 383482 or pandmfarr@talktalk.net 

BOOK REVIEWS

Die Themse-Schiffahrt des London County Council (L.C.C.) und die Schicksale seiner 30 Raddampfer


Mario Gavazzi looks at a special book that links some British ships with Switzerland.

Author: Dr Juerg Meister.

Published by the author at Hechtliacker 44, CH-4053 Basel. Email: meister.verkehr@sunrise.ch.

Language: German. 128 pages with 101 illustrations. ISBN 978-3-906023-05-2. Price (outside Switzerland) €33 plus delivery.

Juerg Meister – probably the best known author on steamships in Switzerland – has published a new book. It tells the story of the thirty paddle steamers operated by the London County Council's navigation service on the River Thames between 1905 and 1907. When the service failed most of the steamboats had to be sold and they found new homes around Europe – with one even making it to Argentina! Three ships came to Switzerland, two operating on Lake Lugano for just three years before the onset of the First World War in 1914 stopped the service. After many years being idle in the shipyard there was no chance to refit them for a new service period. A third ship the 'PS Ben Jonson' crossed the Channel under its own steam power and eventually arrived on the Rhein at Basel. It was then dismantled and transported in pieces by train to Luzern where – after being rebuilt – its second life started as 'PS Rhein'. Parts of the hull were used in 1948 for the first double deck motorship the 'MS Waldstätter II' which was only scrapped in 2001.

This, and many other very interesting stories, are presented in the book. 

Schweizer Bahnen – Berner Oberland

Bryan Stone describes the launch of a new book on Swiss railways.

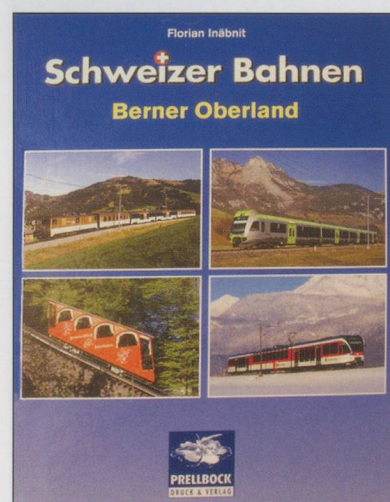
Author: Florian Inäbnit.

Published by: Prellbock Verlag, Krattigen (BE).

Contact: www.prellbock.ch. Language: German.

336 pages with numerous illustrations.


ISBN 978-3-907-579-70.1. Price: CHF59.



On Friday October 26th, as the Swiss News Editor of *Swiss Express*, I was invited by specialist railway publishers Prellbock Verlag to join a group at what was called a 'Summit Meeting'. Around 25 of us first met in Brienz for a sample journey, with the Brienz-Rothorn-Bahn's 121 year old HG2/3 No. 5 hauling

the legendary 'Salon Rouge' some 250m from the station into the workshop. This was full of engines already being prepared

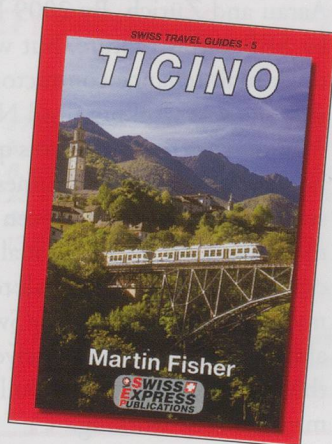
for the next season. There the classic Apéro awaited us along with CEO Simon Koller who greeted us and introduced his railway and his team, allowing open house to see work in progress. Next was a transfer to Interlaken on one of the newest 'Fink' (Finch) Class 160s of the Zentralbahn with a presentation by ZB's CEO Dr Renato Fasciati, and Urs Wieser the engineer at Stadler Rail responsible for rack railway projects. Since the ZB order alone is worth CHF160m he has a big job in hand. We particularly heard of innovative work incorporated in the 'Adler' (Eagle) and 'Fink' units, which will give greatly improved productivity, both in maintenance and on the track. They are already entering service, but it will be 2013 before the full, accelerated timetable is introduced.


In Interlaken a bus of the STI awaited us. This organisation was once a tramway from Interlaken to Thun and Steffisburg, then a trolleybus operator, and now is the major bus operator around the Thunersee. We then visited the Heimwehflüh, a hill above Interlaken West with a short but historic Funicular, where at the upper station a remarkable 60 year old '0-gauge' model railway continues to attract many visitors. For your correspondent, who has known it for many years, it tends to be a classic 'rainy day' outing when in the area. The bus was waiting to take us to the Beatenberg and Niederhorn funicular and cable car operation. At the Niederhorn summit (1965m) apart from a commanding view to the mountains over the clouds filling the valleys, we were informed on current projects of BLS, STI and ZB, before the new book by Florian Inäbnit was finally unveiled and celebrated. The book '*Schweizer Bahnen - Berner Oberland*' follows a similar work on central Switzerland published in 2009. Thirty one railways and funiculars are described in the volume including closed or absorbed lines. It is a thorough, though necessarily brief, and in my view indispensable, historical reference work for each line. Although in German, the schematic presentation also makes it accessible to non-linguists. There are many books about railways in the Berner Oberland, indeed Prellbock has some in its selection, but this is a compendium. By the time we were down again and catching our trains home it was raining - and next morning we had deep snow throughout the country. Thank you, Florian and Alexandra for a long, but very worthwhile, day. 

Swiss Travel Guides No. 5 - Ticino

Author: Martin Fisher.
ISBN 978-0-9563436-7-3
Paperback A5 size. 40
pages with numerous
colour illustrations.
Price £7.00 by mail order
from Society Sales

This latest volume in the growing series of SRS booklets on Switzerland takes the reader beyond the high Alps to the Italian-speaking canton of



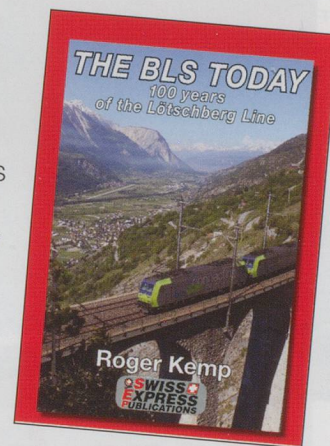
Ticino. This large canton has its own distinctive culture and Mediterranean orientation, being markedly more relaxed than elsewhere in Switzerland. Having visited Ticino on a number of occasions, I can confirm that any journey over the Gotthard route to the beautiful natural features of either Lakes Lugano or Maggiore is well worth the time and effort. My wife endorses that view and that is praise indeed! This guide follows the well-established format of how to get there and then how to make best use of the excellent transport facilities in the most cost effective way, to suit your interests and budget. Locarno, Lugano, Bellinzona, Valle Maggia and the Val Verzasca are all featured. Other highlights include a description of the Gotthard line and a trip over the Cenovalli Railway to reach the Simplon route. The easy-to-read, informative script is well supported by a portfolio of fine images both scenic and with an appropriate transport flavour. Pass utilisation and illustrative fares are quoted to assist in planning excursions and numerous tips to help the intending visitor are included. There is such variety to cater for a spectrum of tastes from a lake cruise to a 'bungee-jump' (by prior arrangement!), and the prospect of splendid weather is not to be overlooked. The various Internet links and bibliography also provide the means to readily seek out more detail, as required. This guide represents a sound investment and hopefully a suitable temptation to visit Ticino soon, be it a return trip or a new area of Switzerland to savour.  DCG

The BLS Today - 100 years of the Lötschberg Line

Author: Roger Kemp.
ISBN 978-0-9563436-8-0
Paperback A5 size.
32 pages with numerous
colour illustrations.
Price: £7.00 by mail order
from Society Sales


'The BLS Today' has been produced in advance of the Spiez-Brig line centenary celebrations to be held in 2013.

While focussing on the Lötschberg summit line in particular, the guide is intended to provide a summary of the present BLS network of lines and related services. However, the author concedes that the scale of the BLS operations precludes a detailed analysis of the various network constituents in such a short publication. Brief summaries of both the history and present day operations of the BLS are provided, illustrated with a selection of images from the official BLS library. A route guide on a journey from Bern to Brig is then presented. Having previously purchased the initial booklet of the *Swiss Travel Guides* series, I found that the Bern to Kandersteg and the Interlaken and Zweisimmen lines had already been suitably documented in that earlier SRS publication. Indeed, a



number of the supporting illustrations used in this BLS guide had been reproduced from that earlier publication. To complete the author's journey over the Lötschberg summit line he continues into the Rhone valley with the descent to Brig. The booklet concludes with a section on the Lötschberg Base Tunnel, before brief mention is made of the shipping services and train maintenance facilities based at Spiez.

A book dedicated to the workings of the BLS should prove an attractive addition to any library and 'The BLS Today' title will catch the eye of many, especially when linked to the centenary celebrations to come. For me, a more concise route guide would have provided sufficient space for a better coverage of what the BLS represents today. In terms of content, details regarding the BLS operational fleet and significant freight operations were somewhat fragmented.

A map of the BLS network would have been most helpful and a bibliography, including some key Internet links, would have introduced the reader to other publications and/or web pages to browse for more detailed information and analysis. There have been many key changes on the Lötschberg route coupled with significant investment across the BLS since the start of the 21st century. The BLS has re-structured its operational sectors to better cater for business needs, provide an improved customer experience and to exploit potential growth areas, BLS Cargo being a prime example. In summary, 'The BLS Today' as a precursor to the Lötschberg centenary anniversary could have provided the reader with a good deal more to meet the expectation set by the publication title.  DCG

AND FINALLY...



'Here be dragons'

s'Murmeli

I was reminded of this note that once appeared on old maps, on learning that Bm6/6 No.18511 was active in Tavannes, on the Moutier – Sonceboz secondary line through the Bernese Jura. No.18511 is one of only four remaining engines of the fourteen 106-tonne heavy-duty diesel-electrics built for the SBB by SLM with Sulzer engines between 1954 and 1961. This class was originally intended to replace the C5/6 2-10-0 'Elephant' steam engines in the Swiss strategic locomotive fleet. They have lived hardworking, unexciting lives, mainly out of sight except when turned out in emergencies, but are now very elderly. No.18505 was the last on the SBB books, recently based in Brig; two more are in private hands and used to shunt in the intermodal yards at

Aarau and Zürich. By 2009 No.18511 had been withdrawn by SBB Infrastructure, but was then refurbished for hire to track maintenance contractors. Word got round the system that she was working until November 2012 on a night-time maintenance project on this quiet line, and spent the daylight hours laying-over in Tavannes yard. There was no record that such a machine had ever been there before, so on a cold sunny morning, with the occasional snow shower making Tavannes even bleaker than this small town often appears, I rearranged my schedule to find her for Swiss Express. She looked her age, although still truly impressive, and though limited at 75kph this 60-plus loco will still pull anything on the drawbar. Long may she keep working. 