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News from the Bolnay-Chamby

Our contributor Le Vaudois reports . . .



The ex BOB stock which joined the Blonay-Chamby in December 2013 .

Photos: Alain Candellero

Following the news in the March edition of the severe fire at the Ballenberg Dampfbahn's Interlaken depot, I was saddened to learn from SRS member Jim Cook that the Blonay-Chamby Museum Railway had suffered a similar fate. I immediately sent commiserations from the Society and the Swiss Express team to the B-C's President, Jean-François Andrist, who is a good friend of the SRS. He has kindly sent us a report of the events of Sunday 15th December, and the progress of restoration of vehicles and buildings.

“Eventful days at the B-C

The last thing I wanted to receive on that Sunday morning was a call from the Montreux Fire department saying "parts of your shed are on fire, please come". From the start it was clearly an arson attack, which we later learnt was caused by a former volunteer and former employee of a local metre-gauge railway with severe problems caused by private and professional issues. In a weekend nights' fever, fuelled by alcohol and drugs, he had been trying to run parked railway stock all around the area, as well as setting vehicles on fire! The result for the BC was that:

- GFM F 424, an interesting covered van has been destroyed and is now scrapped. This was specially designed for parcel and milk churn traffic with doors for through passage at both ends. It also had lighting and a through heating cable so that it could be placed between an electric unit and further coaches. At Chaulin Dépôt the B-C volunteers had replaced all external planks, and its interior was being converted into a mobile workshop at the time of the fire.

- Four other vehicles were damaged - GFM shunting loco Ge4/4 No.75 and coaches MCM BCFe 4/4 No.6, MOB C4 No.45 and RhB C2 A 121. Our insurance will cover the refurbishment of these, which is progressively taking place at the MOB workshops in Chernex at a total cost of about CHF100,000.

- The cleaning of the shed and its contents (mostly soot) has taken 8 weeks at a cost of more than CHF100,000.

- Work yet to be done includes replacing part of the roof and rebuilding the store room which is likely to cost between CHF100,000/150,000.

Except for the GFM F 424 van, the other items were well covered and the insurance company is working swiftly, as did the Fire Brigade and Police. The media response was extremely strong once it became evident that the fire was intentional. The B-C members were disappointed at the slow progress of the authorities in taking preventive measures against the suspect for several days, but the overall mood has definitely been that "we shall overcome" and the team has been very united during these tough days".

Moving-on

On a more positive note Jean-François has told us of two pieces of good news. Firstly a funding campaign during the second half of 2013 was most successful, when the Loterie Romande gave the museum CHF400,000 (to which the President comments "even if not in seven figures as seem usual in UK, it is still a very nice amount!") and other private sponsors about CHF 200,000. On this occasion the money will not be spent on railway stock but will contribute to the refurbishment of the 1973/75 shed-cum-workshop, which

was never fully finished, as well as for enlarging the popular gallery of their refreshment and souvenir shop. Just before Christmas, in an overnight operation (after scheduled services had finished), BOB Hge 3/3 No.29, SLM/MFO No. 3127, 1929, and 'Kaiserwagen' B3 6 (a local conversion, not the original build) were loaded on trucks at Wilderswil station for transportation by road to Vevey. M. Andrist describes the present BOB line as a 'Tourist Metro' that runs with an intensive timetable and now has no time or interest in running heritage trains - although the Schynige Platte Bahn is their own heritage line. After being hauled by former RhB railcar No.35 from Vevey to Blonay, a trial at powering the little engine was made and it was quite successful, despite the MOB/TPC/MVR/B-C network being at 900V, while BOB runs at 1500V. This small engine is quite suited to the B-C's minor local railway style and an official inauguration will take place between 13th and 21st September 2014 during two 'Bernese-themed' weekends.

The mild winter has been appreciated for helping the railway get on with its various projects with volunteers showing-up in good numbers. **Finally a WARNING.** Due to the arson attack the Depot area now has an intensive security system in operation with CCTV and alarm system. Hence casual visitors (often UK rail enthusiasts) who like to wander around Chaulin are being advised not to try and enter the area outside scheduled open/running days. This is regretted, but a sad sign of the times, even in Switzerland. ☒



TOP: The first step of the current shed renewal with the rather awful Eternit cladding replaced by a much better suited wood front. Expensive, but a real improvement to the whole area. In front of it some long running "work in progress", the SernftalBahn set, which is next in line for refurbishment.

BELOW: Another view of the SernftalBahn set.

SBB Police s'Murmeli

A member's photo of an SBB Police car in Canton Glarus posed the question: who are they, and what do they do? They date from the early 1990s, when conductor-less trains in the Zürich suburbs led to complaints, violence in trains, and vandalism. Personnel were recruited, trained internally as 'Bahnpolizisten' and accompanied certain S-Bahn trains. The department concerned was in 2002 merged with a widely active private company, Securitas, as 'Securitans' to maintain safety, and protection of buildings and installations. The officers are now trained at the inter-cantonal police school near Luzern, receiving similar training to the Police of the civil authorities. The service is now called 'Swiss Transport Police'. Since 2012 they may be armed. Normally discreet, often working late hours, and perhaps most visible when there is an unruly football crowd, they also help in protecting staff against abuse; in keeping good order on stations and trains; in high-security situations such as around international conferences, and also by supporting civil police actions where the railway may be involved. A national law on transport policing now regulates



this. The arrangement has been politically controversial, as in Switzerland each Canton has its own Police force, which helps little on moving trains, but can lead both to joint efforts and to interest conflicts. Another co-operative interface concerns the Frontier Police, which is Federally organized, and which may also be seen on international trains. The Transport Police work both in uniform and in plain clothes, and their mobility, to respond to calls, and quickly reach trains and stations, explains the police car, of which there is a small fleet, including some not marked. Their headquarters are in Olten. ☒