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'Plattform der Kleinserie'

Mark Fox describes a fantastic day out for railway modellers



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Ex SBB E3/3 No.8518 at Bauma.

Photos: Mark Fox

At various Swiss Railway Society AGMs over the years I have pleaded the case for not holding our event on the same weekend as The London Festival of Railway Modelling as it is often hard to negotiate two days away from family duties over one weekend. Having the events on different weekends this year bore fruit as I made it to Alexandra Palace. Here, while viewing a Swiss narrow gauge layout, I got chatting with past-chairman Paul Russenberger, who was enjoying attending the second of the two events. In conversation I told Paul about my visit to one of the great railway modelling events in the Swiss calendar, 'Kleinserie', something that Paul said he hadn't come across. I suspect that others in the Society also haven't so, at his suggestion, I have put together this article to spread the word.

The formal name of the event is 'Plattform der Kleinserie', and more details are on www.kleinserie.ch.

As could be implied from the name, it is a showcase for specialist manufacturers of Swiss model railway products. It is usually held around the second or third weekend in October, from Friday to Sunday in the Swiss village of Bauma between Winterthur and Zürich. There some 60 manufacturers of Swiss model railway products, buildings and accessories attend. With the exception of Bemo, who always put on a big presentation and usually have an RhB narrow gauge model railway on display, most of the others are tiny one or two man businesses dotted all over Switzerland, Austria and Germany. The chances are that you won't even have heard of at least half of them! In these days of Chinese mass production the only way high cost countries, like Switzerland, can compete is with very specialist products in small runs (hence the name), that are often hand crafted. Of course there is a drawback. If you want to switch from window-shopping to serious buying I advise a very large chequebook or credit card limit... However, it is often possible to buy bits and pieces for your layout that you will never find in England for very reasonable sums, and that will add hugely to the atmosphere. There is a certain thrill to having items on your layout that no one else has ever seen and at Kleinserie there never seem to be any other English voices to be heard.

The event is held in three different buildings in the school at Bauma that is a short walk from the station. Many of the small firms simply can't afford the cost of appearing at large exhibitions such as Nuremburg, whereas a local school in a small village is perfect for them. There is always at least a couple of food outlets offering excellent, very Swiss, cuisine and, of course, a beer tent. Why Bauma? Well as some will know, it is the headquarters of the Dampbahnverein Zürcher Oberland - DBZO. Even if you have no interest at all in model trains, you can clamber over lots of preserved rolling stock in its yard and during the Kleinserie event there is usually at least one engine in steam and some years one or more of the great vintage electric engines turn up, as my photo show.

As to the logistics of getting there I always catch the Swiss flight at 06.00 from Heathrow to Zürich, which if booked decently in advance can be cheaper than all the so-called budget airlines**. I have the advantage of living a convenient motor-cycling distance from the airport and parking the machine is far easier and cheaper than a car. The flight arrives at 08.40 Swiss-time, so without baggage it is possible to be on the platform at the airport station by 09.00 to catch a train for the short trip to Winterthur. From here there is a frequent service to Bauma, either by direct train, or train and bus, so it is easy to be at the exhibition by 10.30. Three to four hours are plenty of time to wander around, take in all the stands and enjoy the vintage stock outside. So you can catch a return flight around 17.00 arriving in London before 18.00. Last year we went for a meal with friends on the Saturday evening of the trip. I do confess to dozing off slightly by the end of a fantastic day out, and they were clearly struggling a bit when I said that I had been to a Swiss model railway exhibition, ridden a Swiss steam train and had some excellent Swiss food since getting up that morning! I can thoroughly recommend the whole outing, and this year it is over the weekend of 10th-12th October. If you are thinking of going, let me know and maybe we can have an SRS members' trip. My e-mail is markfox1959@gmail.com.

**As of May 2014 the 11th October return fare on Swiss was £82, including all taxes, charges, etc. 