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And finally... Freightliner wagons in Switzerland, 1968

Bryan Stone seeks help in solving an historic puzzle

This photograph has emerged in the archive of Hans Hürlimann, former SBB driver and engineer, now deceased, of a brake trial run for a Freightliner wagon set. This trial was being conducted by SBB, with Ce 6/8 No.14201, and Hürlimann photographed it at Villars sur Glâne near Fribourg. The Freightliner Company, was formed in Britain to carry containers in a new high-speed block train network. Its first wagon fleet was made up of small-wheel bogie wagons in fixed sets of five flat wagons. These had a two-pipe air brake system with disk brakes, and securing points for the then-new standard container sizes. It is known that in 1968 Jan Posner at BR loaned a set of British designed and built Freightliner wagons for trials in Europe. Intercontainer, in Baoperative set up by European Railway Administrations to handle expected container traffic, facilitated the loan. Although there was a hoperunning such wagons in fixed-formation container trains between Rotterdam and Milan for example, this was not realistic as technical incompatibilities were legion. Your correspondent joined Intercontainer shortly after these trials had concluded, apparently following a derailment. In another trial, by bilateral agreement a small number of Freightliner flat wagons ran in a shuttle service between the UK and Paris using the Dover – Dunkerque ferry, but this too was abandoned after a short time. I would like to hear from any reader who recalls this short period of trials. Events and passing years have dispersed, some for ever, those who might have known; and even today, getting approval for revolutionary rolling stock is, despite EU harmonisation and Interoperability, still very



wearying. But they had tried. Intercontainer later carried millions of containers, but there never emerged a truly specialised block-train network in Europe. It may yet come. 

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