

John Atkinson was fortunate to participate in the celebrations to mark 125 years of the 760mm gauge Steyrtalbahn in September 2014. *Photographs by the author.*

Steyrtal 125

A major anniversary on the Austrian narrow gauge

On 19th August 1898 the first section of the Steyrtalbahn, from Garsten to Steyr in Upper Austria, was opened. Apart from its importance for the local inhabitants, the line is particularly significant as being the first railway built to 760mm gauge, which became the norm for narrow gauge lines throughout the country and elsewhere in the Austro-Hungarian empire. It was used so extensively in the Balkans that even in Austria it is commonly known as the *Bosnaspur*, Bosnian gauge. Regular CM readers will recall the line's history up to its closure by the Austrian state railways (ÖBB) in 1982 was described in the June and July 2014 editions. Part has been successfully preserved by ÖGEG, the Austrian Society for Railway History.

Naturally, the 125th anniversary was appropriately celebrated. On the actual day, a special train left Steyr Lokalbahn at 1400 hauled by locomotive No.2 *Sierning* which was built by Krauss at Linz in 1888. *Sierning* was suitably decorated with a commemorative plaque and a floral wreath and many of the two hundred passengers filling the train of eight four-wheel coaches and a luggage van wore historic clothes or uniforms, as did the train staff. Photographers enjoyed several special stops and run-pasts and the special eventually reached the southern terminus –



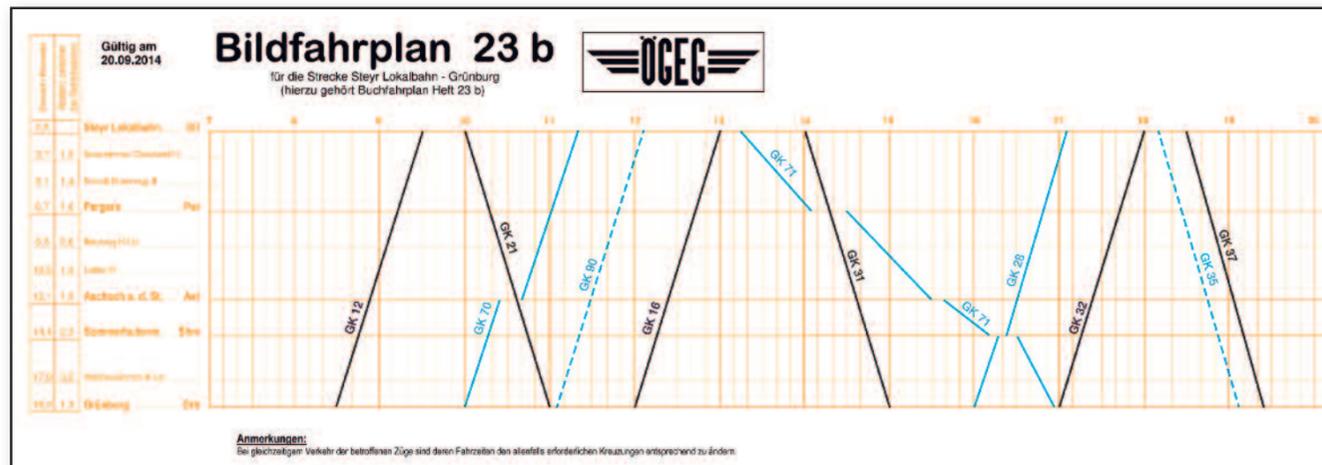
Left
The commemorative stamp issued by the Bundespost.

Right
A busy moment at Pergern – No.6 *Klaus* and No.2 *Sierning* double-heading on the left, while on the right 764.007 heads the photographers' train ahead of the goods.

Below
No.6 *Klaus* storms up the bank approaching Neuzeug with a mixed train.

Below left
Trachtenmusik Grünburg on parade to mark the occasion.





and the line's principal operating centre – of Grünburg at 1600, where the ÖGEG catering service offered the requisite victuals until return departure at 1700.

However, the main celebration was not held on 19th August. In order to ensure maximum attendance, it was deferred to the third weekend of September, when there were two days of intensive operation, with speeches and a VIP special on the Sunday. Normal fares applied but on each day a *Tageskarte* was available for €25 and covered unlimited travel on all trains. The Schmalspur Modulbaugruppe also mounted a free exhibition of their members' relevant HOe modules in a hall in Steinbach an der Steyr, but a few minutes' walk across the river from Grünburg.

My wife and I were fortunate to be able to participate in the festivities, as did a number of other visitors from the UK, one couple coming because they had learned of the event through CM. Four engines were in steam – 0-6-2Ts *Sierning*, No.6 *Klaus*, built in 1914, and 498.04 of 1929, plus a Romanian 0-8-0T, 764.007, dating from 1953. Also active were a couple of diesel shunters, a *draisine* offering exhilarating rides to the middle of Waldneukirchen bridge, and a couple of other very individual vehicles.

On Saturday 20th September, as will be seen from the train diagrams, there were a number of train crossings, including all four locos being present in Pergern simultaneously, double-heading, plus a photo special freight. At times

Grünburg was very busy indeed, with all running tracks occupied and much shunting and re-marshalling of trains.

Sunday was VIP day and started at Steyr Lokalbahn. The first train out was at 1000, and a little before 0930 a good crowd had assembled to be entertained by the

Locomotive diagrams

20th September

No.2 *Sierning*: GK12 – GK21 – GK16 – GK31 – GK32 – GK37

No.6 *Klaus*: GK21 (double-header) – GK16 (double-header) – GK31 (double-header) – GK28 – GK35

498.04: GK70 – GK71-2 (photo freight)

764.007: GK90 (loco only) – GK71-1 (photographers escort train)

21th September

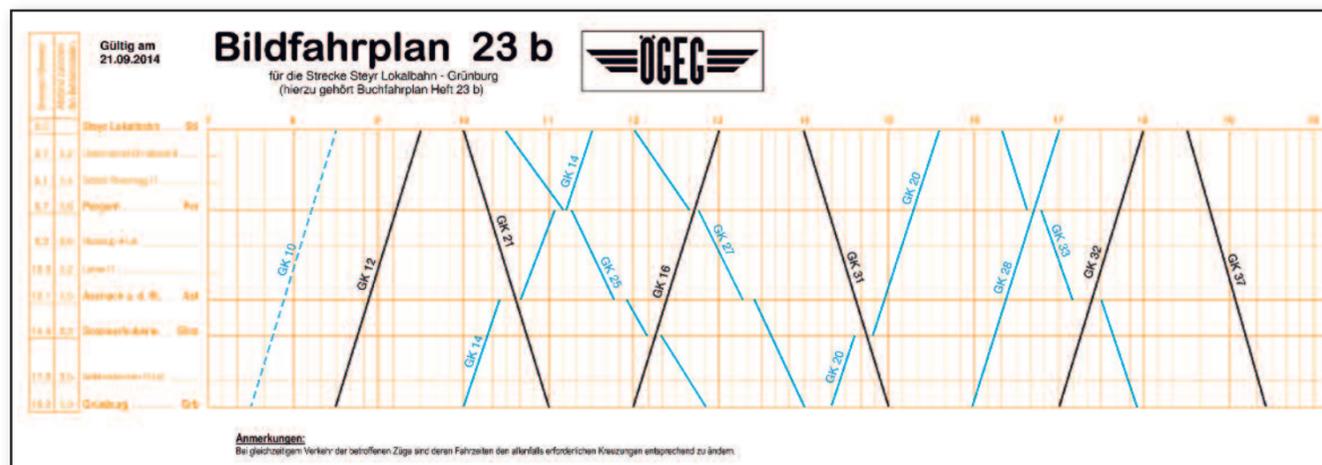
498.04: GK10 (running light) – GK21 – GK16 – GK31 – GK32 – GK37

No.2 *Sierning*: GK12 – GK25 (with photo stops) – GK20 – GK33

No.6 *Klaus*: GK14 – GK27 (with photo stops) – GK28

Train diagrams by courtesy of ÖGEG.

Timetable diagram key
 Black line = service train
 Blue line = special
 Blue line dashed = special not for passengers.
 'GK' is the former ÖBB code for 'main line' Steyrtalbahnn trains, derived from the two termini, Garsten and Klaus.



Stadtkapelle Steyr band and to listen to speeches from the ÖGEG President, Herr Karl Mader, and regional dignitaries. Herr Andreas Gabriel, Head of the Austrian Post stamp service, also presented a special commemorative stamp.

Similar speeches were delivered in Grünburg, where entertainment was provided by both the Trachtenmusik Grünburg and the band Smokey Two, the latter providing country and western and similar music until 1500. Naturally, catering was available and taking a break at one of the local Gasthöfe was also very easy.

Despite the atypically poor weather, there were some bright intervals, and enthusiasm was of a high order throughout both days. Both days were well supported, both by inhabitants from the immediate vicinity and visiting enthusiasts from further afield.

Harald Süß and all the ÖGEG team are to be congratulated on organising a weekend of interest and fun for all and for creating a very relaxed atmosphere whilst maintaining due vigilance on the health and safety front.

Above No.2 *Sierning*, suitably decorated with headboard and Austrian flags, approaches its train after running round at Grünburg.

Right No.2 *Sierning* seen from the opposing working during the cross at Aschach.

Right Stadtkapelle Steyr were also on hand to enliven the official proceedings.



Left, below, and below right The Schmalspur Modulbaugruppe staged a display of modules built by individual members depicting scenes along the line in a hall at Steinbach an der Steyr.





Above left and above
No.6 *Klaus*, celebrating its own centenary this year, runs round its train at Grünburg.



Left
Coupled to the train and ready for the return run. The loco is clearly in superb condition following a lengthy overhaul.

Below
No.6 *Klaus* and No.2 *Sierning* ready to depart from Grünburg.

Below
This small inspection trolley is still used by track maintenance personnel – hardy souls indeed. One hopes that the primitive suspension might encourage them to do a good job on the track!



Above
The *draisine* was being used to take visitors to the bridge at Waldneukirchen.



Above right
The interior of the *draisine*, showing the controls and the rather basic conditions.



Top
Former Romanian forestry 0-8-0T 764.007 bustles through the yard.

Above
Between trains, 764.007 is serviced by the loco shed at Grünburg.

Below
ÖBB 498.04 Uh class 0-6-2T with the demonstration goods train at Pergern.

