

SOB “glass box” ABe 4/4 No.5 should be running again soon!


By Bernhard Studer

FOR MANY YEARS in Wald in the Zürcher Oberland, a small, tightly knit, knowledgeable and highly motivated team of volunteers from the “Verein Historischer Triebwagen 5” has been working on the refurbishment of a pioneering vehicle. Despite all the setbacks, ABe 4/4 No.5, which was in service on the Südostbahn until the 1990s, is to be brought back to life.

A decisive step was taken on 4 November 2022: in a spectacular action, the largely completed refurbished coach body and the bogies previously refurbished in the RhB workshop in Landquart were reassembled. Two huge road cranes were used in the operation.

When the vehicle entered service with the SOB in 1939 as Ce 4/4 No.12 together with five other railcars of similar design, it was in many respects far ahead of its time. These were amazingly efficient lightweight vehicles, they were equipped with a regeneration brake right from the start and passengers were thrilled by the spectacular all-round glazing. This is how the cars got their nickname “Glaskasten – glass box”.

The railcar received its current number 5 in 1949, after a small, upholstered first class compartment had been installed.

Let us hope, together with the volunteers who invest a considerable amount of their free time, that the historically significant railcar will be running under its own power again next summer! 



Assembling the body of ABe 4/4 No.5 and the bogies at Wald ZH, on 4 November 2022.
Photo: Bernhard Studer



ABe 4/4 No.5 at Rapperswil on 22 May 1985.
Photo: © SRS collection/the late Neil Wheelwright



Soon the ABe 4/4 No.5 will be running under its own power again! Here are pictures from its last days in service taken at Arth-Goldau on 8 July 1990 (above), and between Wollerau and Samstagern on 18 August 1990 (right).
Photos: Bernhard Studer

