

RHEIN GOLD

A PHOTOGRAPHIC TRIP TO THE RHEIN VALLEY

GERMANY 14 - 18 AUGUST 2013

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RAILOGRAPHY
PRODUCTION

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Introduction

Above:

MRCE Dispolok's 185.552 hauled a solid block of Polish coal wagons down the Rhein Valley at Wellmich, north of St. Goarshausen, on 15 August 2013.

Burg Maus on the hillside behind dates back to the 14th Century.

Cover:

103.235 passed Bacharach with IC119, the 07:37 from Münster to Innsbruck on 16 August 2013.

In August 2002 I travelled to the Rhein Valley south of Koblenz to photograph the last of the iconic class 103s working InterCity services. Now, eleven years later, the 103s are back, or at least one of them is, booked to work a pair of IC trains between Münster and Stuttgart five days a week. There were plenty of interesting workings on both sides of the river to keep the interest up between the 103's appearances. These included a high volume of freight hauled by a wide variety of electric locos belonging to DB and independent operators.

Between Mainz and Koblenz the Rhein runs through a glorious landscape between steep hillsides dotted with castles and vineyards. The riverside towns are picturesque, with many buildings dating back to the middle ages and the shipping traffic on the river adds considerable interest. All this makes it an excellent place to photograph trains. I spent five days in the area from 14 to 18 August 2013.

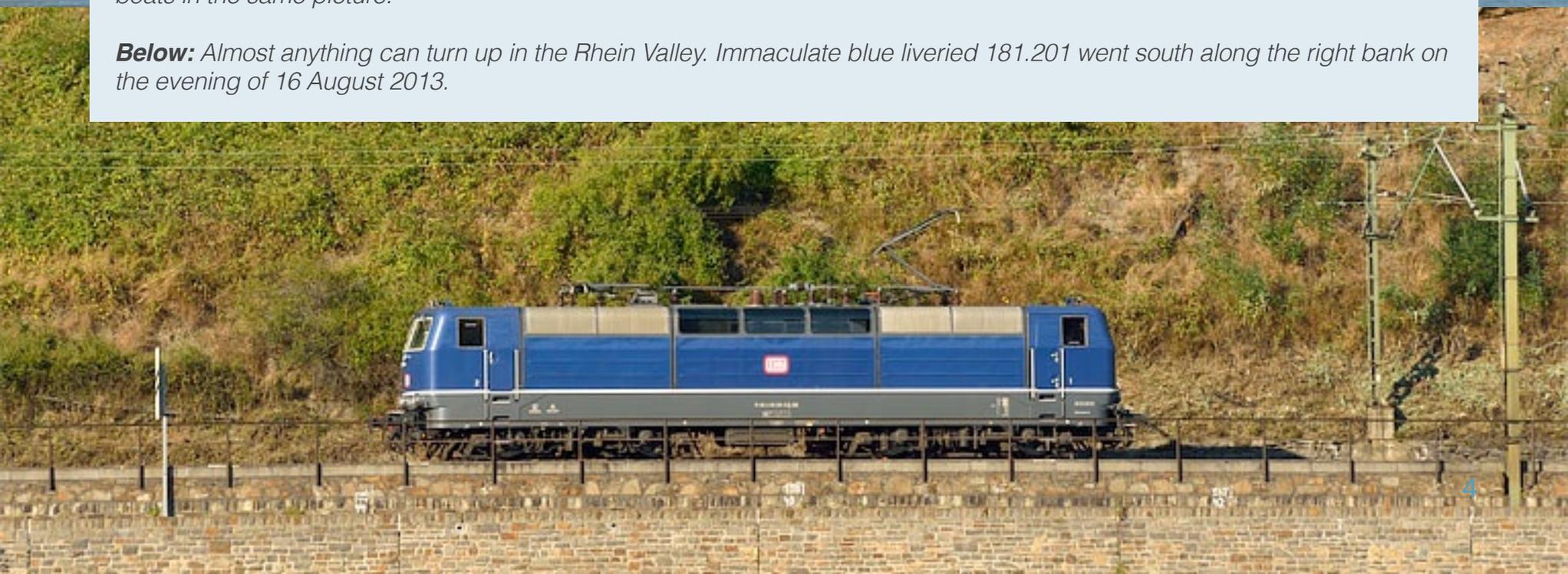
Travel Arrangements

I flew from Gatwick to Köln/Bonn and back with easyJet then used a hire car to get around. Accommodation was at the Hotel Winzerhaus Gärtner, just south of St. Goar, and booked through Booking.com. I had a view of the Rhein and the Loreley from my bedroom window, over the unsightly caravan park in between.



Above: 143.568 and 143.009 were photographed on the approach to Oberwesel, top'n'tailing RE4289, the 13:02 from Koblenz to Frankfurt, on 16 August 2013. The Rhein is busy with shipping traffic and it's not too difficult to get trains and boats in the same picture.

Below: Almost anything can turn up in the Rhein Valley. Immaculate blue liveried 181.201 went south along the right bank on the evening of 16 August 2013.





IC2011 was typical of InterCity services on the Rhein left bank, a long push-pull rake with a class 101 on the south end. 101.046 led the 14:51 from Düsseldorf to Tübingen past Oberwesel on 15 August 2013.

KBS471 Koblenz - Mainz

This is the traditional passenger route along the left or west bank of the Rhein, linking Köln and the Rhein-Ruhr conurbation with Frankfurt, Karlsruhe and southern Germany and passing through some well preserved old riverside towns such as Boppard, Oberwesel, Bacharach and Bingen. The line is electrified and double-track throughout.

Passenger Services

Until the opening of the Köln - Frankfurt NBS around a decade ago the line was extremely

busy with long distance passenger trains. Although the NBS has taken a lot of traffic away, there are still a fair number of InterCity passengers routed via Koblenz and Mainz and most are formed of loco and coaches. The basic service is hourly with plenty of additional trains making it half-hourly much of the time. Most InterCity trains are worked by class 101s at the south end of push-pull sets but there are a number of services formed of normal hauled stock and a little variety on the motive power front. EC6 and EC7 running between Hamburg and Chur are booked for a hired MRCE Dispolok class 182.5 on SBB coaches. The other

Hamburg - Chur train pair, EC8 and EC9 is also formed of Swiss stock and hauled in both directions, albeit by a class 101. IC2012 and IC2013 are also hauled both ways and booked for a class 101, however the Friday northbound and Saturday southbound actually ran with a class 120 on the front. Class 120s aren't particularly common in the Rhein Valley but one train pair they do work regularly is IC118 and IC119 on Tuesdays and Wednesdays northbound and Wednesdays and Thursdays southbound. On the other five days of the week, these trains, formed of ÖBB stock, are booked

for class 103 haulage and were consistently worked by one of the class throughout my stay. 103.235 worked until the Sunday morning but it was 103.113 that came back on the Sunday afternoon.

A number long distance trains on the left bank are worked by ICE sets, easily identifiable in the timetable by the "ICE" in the train number. Some services are worked by the original class 401 sets and others by the tilting class 411s. Occasionally a loco hauled set substitutes for an errant ICE.



The undoubted star of the show. 103.235 raced past Bacharach with IC119, the 07:37 from Münster to Innsbruck, on 16 August 2013.



RE4293, the 17:02 from Koblenz to Frankfurt, worked by 143.568 and 143.009, crossed 111.121 on RE12190, the 16:08 from Frankfurt to Koblenz at Oberwesel on 16 August 2013.

During the week there are two-hourly RegioExpress services between Frankfurt and Koblenz worked by pairs of class 143s top'n'tailing four-coach double-deck sets. A couple of additional REs run in the peaks formed of class 111s at the north end of single-deck push-pull sets. None of these RE services run at weekends but there are a couple of unusual REs on a Sunday. A Koblenz - Wissembourg and back runs with a class 218 diesel at the north end of a double deck push-pull set while a Karlsruhe - Koblenz via Bad Kreuznach gets a pair of class 628 DMUs.

Local passengers are operated by MittelRheinBahn, a TransRegio operation, using grey-liveried class 460 three-coach Siemens Desiro Mainline EMUs to work an hourly Koblenz - Mainz all stations service.

During my visit there was some disruption to services caused by a shortage of signalmen at Mainz Hbf and a number of InterCity and ICE trains were diverted via the right bank on the Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. At least in Germany, the chaos is usually reasonably well ordered and the same services were affected each day. The diversions all appeared to be trains going to, from or via Frankfurt. Trains to or from the Karlsruhe, Stuttgart and Basel directions continued to use the left bank as did all the local and RE services. The timekeeping of long distance trains was poor on some days with delays of 30 minutes or so not uncommon. Locals and REs tended to operate within a few minutes of right time so the cause of the delays was probably nothing to do with the Mainz problems. On the Saturday and Sunday all the ICs and ICEs ran on the left bank as normal.



Freight Traffic

The left bank line used to carry very little freight traffic but since the NBS opened it does see more. It was difficult to tell if there was a pattern as the disruption at Mainz meant that no freights came this way at all on Wednesday, Thursday or Friday. There were a number of trains on the Saturday and even a couple on Sunday when the right bank evidently had plenty of spare capacity. The mix of trains was similar to that on the right bank with most types of traffic seen including intermodals, hoppers, oil tanks and general freights. Traction could be DB locos or those of other operators, with class 185s predominating.

Photography

This wasn't the easiest line to photograph, hemmed in between the river bank and the steep hills to the west and sharing a narrow corridor with the main road. The best spots I found were the same ones I'd been to in 2002, a morning shot passing a row of mediaeval houses in Bacharach and an afternoon shot off the old city walls at Oberwesel. I did have a number of other locations in mind but those I looked at were either overgrown, too distant or too prone to being shadowed when the 103 passed. Getting the 103 shots was the top priority and I didn't want to take any chances. Despite this the shots taken were fairly varied but there are still quite a few left to try on future trips.



Top Left: With 143.647 leading and 143.216 bringing up the rear, RE4290 passed the Katzenturm at Oberwesel on 16 August 2013.

Above: 460.014 worked local MRB25322 north from Boppard on 14 August 2013.

Below: 103.235 wheeled IC118 through Oberwesel on 16 August 2013.





Locos of classes 139 and 140 were seen on several occasions during the trip but this was the only decent picture I got. 140.855 & 140.808 sped through Kaub with a long train of departmental flats on the afternoon of 14 August 2013.

KBS466 Koblenz - Wiesbaden

The right (east) bank of the Rhein has its own double-track electrified main line and this has traditionally been the main north-south freight route linking Dutch and Belgian ports and the Ruhrgebiet with the Rhein-Main conurbation, the rest of southern Germany, Switzerland and Italy. Apart from Rudesheim, the towns along this side of the river tend to be smaller and less touristy than their counterparts on the left bank but they're no less attractive and there are still plenty

of castles and vineyards on the steep slopes above the railway to spice up the pictures.

Passenger Services

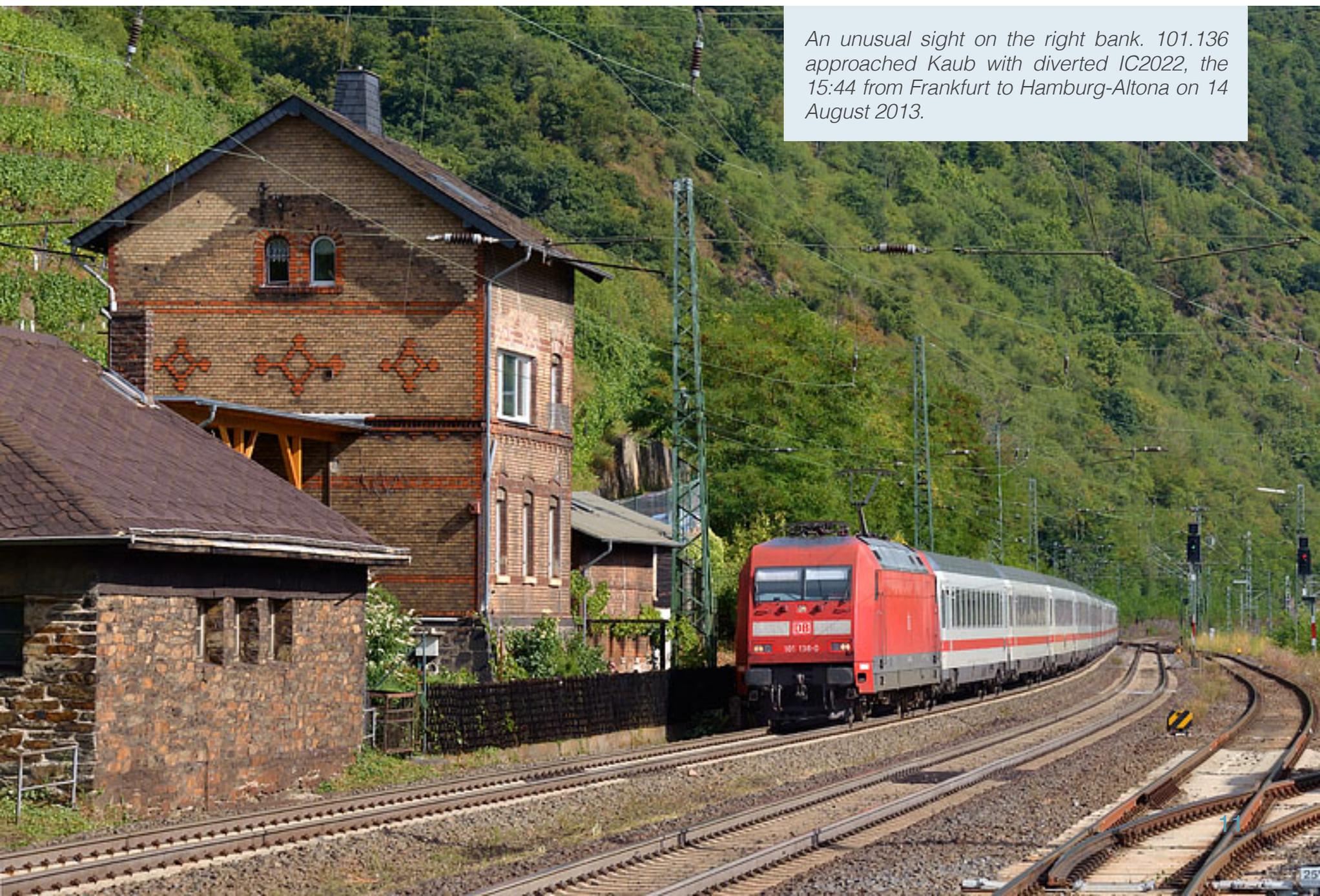
There used to be a few long distance trains routed via the right bank in the past but not anymore. All that's left is an hourly local passenger service, augmented to half hourly in

the peaks, linking Neuwied, north of Koblenz with Wiesbaden and Frankfurt. Services are operated by VIAS, a company jointly owned by the Frankfurt public transport undertaking and DSB, using a mixture of 3-car class 427 and 4-car class 428 Stadler Flirt EMUs.

As mentioned above a number of InterCity services were diverted via the right bank on the Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, some loco hauled and others ICEs. Late on the Thursday afternoon there was a period of around an hour when six ICEs passed, none of which fitted with services that might have been diverted from the left bank. These were all 8-coach formations with passenger accommodation in the end vehicles, probably class 403s, which would mean they were diverted from the NBS for some unknown reason.

Also worthy of note were the Autozüge and AutoSlaap Treinen, car sleeper trains linking terminals at Dortmund or 's-Hertogenbosch with southern holiday destinations such as Narbonne, Villach, Alessandria or Koper. These trains run once or twice a week, generally heading south in the evening and returning north in the early morning. Those that were seen hauled by DB class 101s or Dispolok class 189s, still in the old mustard and silver colours. A handful of trains should still get class 115 haulage but none were seen.

Ex ÖBB 1042.520, now owned by Centralbahn, worked a southbound special along the right bank on 15 August, probably an empty stock move judging by the lack of heads at the windows.



An unusual sight on the right bank. 101.136 approached Kaub with diverted IC2022, the 15:44 from Frankfurt to Hamburg-Altona on 14 August 2013.



155.008 led a long train of tanks south from Lorch on the morning of 15 August 2013.

Freight Traffic

At its best, the right bank could be extremely busy with a wide variety of freight traffic operated by diverse loco types belonging to many different operators. The most prominent types of train were intermodals, coal hoppers and oil or chemical tanks, usually operating as block trains. There were a fair number of mixed freights as well and the occasional block train of flats,

new cars, steel coil or vans of some description. Departmental workings were also fairly common and could consist of anything from a single track machine to a long train of flats or ballast hoppers. There could be as many as twelve trains in an hour but four to six was more typical during the week and there were periods when well over an hour would go by without a single freight in one direction. Saturday was quieter but traffic picked up to two to four trains an hour after

a slow start and Sunday was even quieter with maybe one or two trains an hour at best.

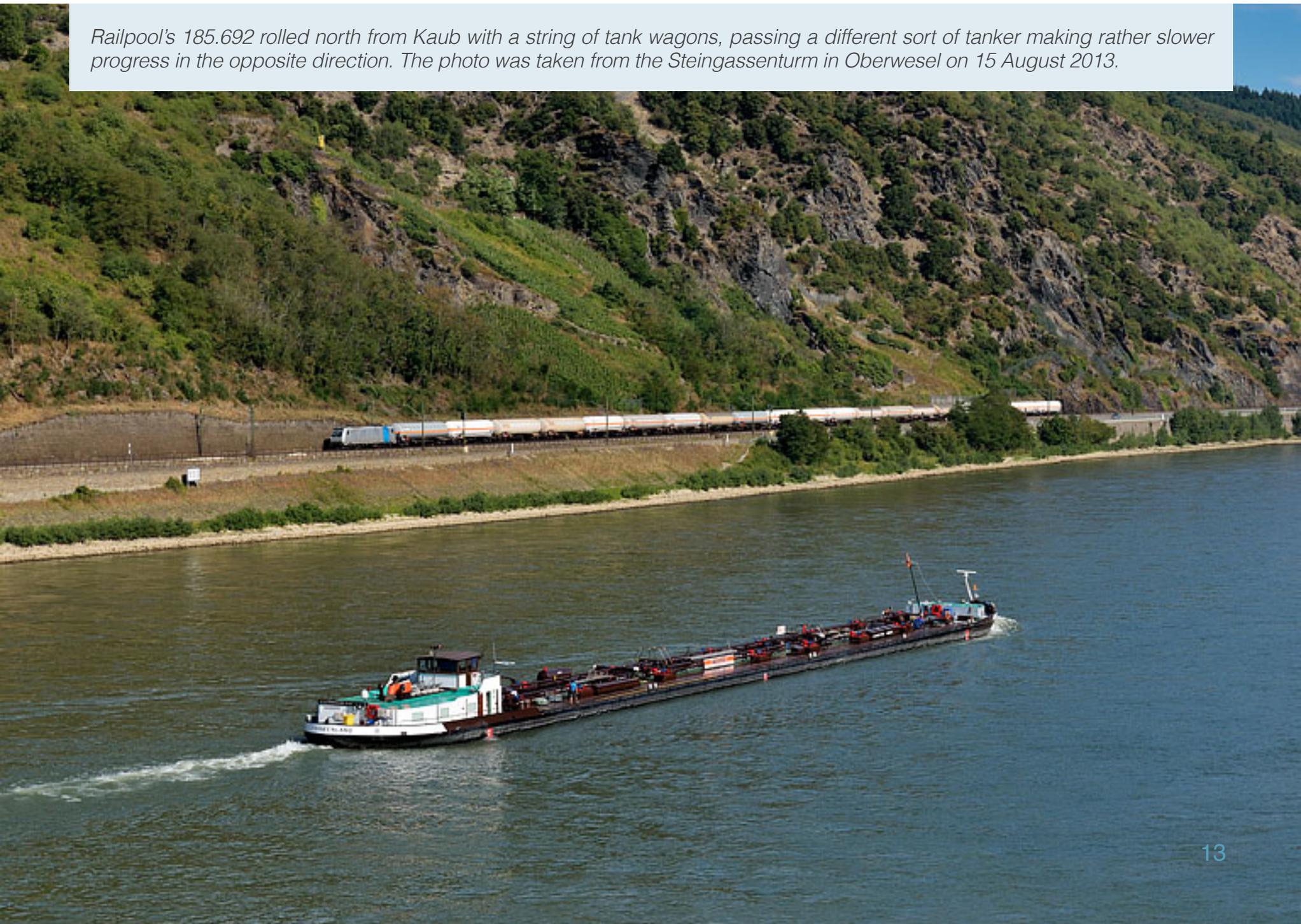
One class from one operator dominated the motive power scene. DB class 185s probably worked around half the trains seen with quite a number of double headers as well. Other DB locos included oldies from classes 139 and 140, which were more common than I expected, very occasional 151s, and a few 145s, 152s, 155s and 189s. The most common locos used by independent operators were classes 185 and 186, followed by class 189. Of the other operators, MRCE Dispolok and Crossrail locos were most common but Railpool, Captrain, Locon, ITL and SBB Cargo engines were also seen. The most interesting of the other operators

was RBH, the transport arm of Ruhrkohle AG, which was using pairs of 140s or 151s on block coal trains. Another non-DB class 140 was seen in the blue Press livery.

Diesel locos were not unknown either, with a few DB class 261s and 294s seen but only running light engine. At least three different DB V100s were seen on civil engineers' duties, one in yellow livery and two in weinrot. Yellow 218.391, of Oberstdorf fame, was seen moving track machines on one day and a pair of RTS liveried class 221s were on a similar duties on another.

A few revenue freights were also diesel hauled, mainly by class 266s but one by a Voith Maxima.

Railpool's 185.692 rolled north from Kaub with a string of tank wagons, passing a different sort of tanker making rather slower progress in the opposite direction. The photo was taken from the Steingassenturm in Oberwesel on 15 August 2013.





Locon's 189.821 brought a welcome splash of colour to the vineyards south of Lorch as it dragged a long train of vans southwards on the morning of 17 August 2013.

Photography

With the 103 running on the left bank, I'd expected to spend most of my time there and do very little on the right bank. However, the heavy freight traffic and the novelty of diverted ICs drew me across the river on three of the five days. Other factors in the decision included fewer trains than expected on the left bank, due to the diversions and the lack of freights, and difficulties finding a suitable variety of shots. Again, most of the locations I visited on the right bank weren't completely new, having been visited in 2002 or in May last year.

The variety of motive power was amazing but it felt like all the really exotic stuff was going the wrong way at the wrong time of day or when I was on the other side of the river. Although many different classes were seen, I actually ended up

with a lot of shots of 185s, a few 186s and 189s, a couple of 152s and 155s and not much else. The ones that got away included highly desirable machines such as 140s, 151s and even 221s.

Despite the diversions there were still long periods when very little passed in one direction or the other and other times when the action was manic. It just seemed to be luck what would turn up at any particular time on any particular day.

With some excellent locations and lots of trains, this is a great line to visit and photograph but you need patience to get the unusual stuff. A liking for DB class 185s also helps as you'll see lots of them for every 140 or V100 that shows up.



Above: Infrastructure liveried 218.391 headed north with a short departmental working at Wellmich near St. Goarshausen on 15 August 2013.

Top Left: 145.024 burst out of the Loreley Tunnel between St. Goarshausen and Kaub with a southbound intermodal on 14 August 2013.

Below Left: 428.148 and 428.139 worked SE25018, the 13:53 Frankfurt - Neuwied service past Burg Maus at Wellmich on 15 August 2013.

Below Right: 411.077 leaned into the curves south of Lorch as it worked diverted ICE1521, the 06:36 from Dortmund to München, along the right bank of the Rhein on 15 August 2013.





After mention of so many DB class 185s, it's only appropriate to represent the class here. 185.259 and 185.212 passed Kaub with a long train of hoppers on 14 August 2013.

Comments & Conclusions

Getting the shots of 103s passing Bacharach and Oberwesel in good light satisfied an eleven year ambition and was enough to qualify the trip as a success in my mind. However, there were plenty more good pictures on both sides of the river.

The weather always plays a huge part in determining whether a trip is successful and the first four days were mainly sunny with excellent clear light as well. It was only the overcast Sunday that dragged the overall sunshine average down below 70%, still pretty good for northern Europe at any time of year.

I had thought of doing the local travel by train but it wouldn't have worked very well. The area I wanted to cover was split between multiple Verkehrsverbund areas making ticketing difficult but the factor that killed it was getting from spots on one side of the river to spots on the other. This would have taken far too long as it would have likely involved a train, a ferry and probably another train on the other side. Many of the ferries dock a long way from the nearest station so there would have been some very long walks

as well. Unless you're going to stick to one side of the river or the other, using a car is far more practical.

The appearance of 140s and 151s in the colours of independent operators is very encouraging and hopefully means these classic locos will continue in service for many more years. It remains to be seen whether the 103 will continue to be used in front line service but either way, Germany almost certainly has the most interesting and diverse main-line rail scene in Europe and the Rhein valley is one of the best places to see and photograph the action. This won't be my last trip there, that's for sure.

111.115 accelerated away from Oberwesel, passing the Wernerkapelle with RE12192, the 18:08 Frankfurt - Koblenz semi-fast, on the evening of 16 August 2013. Across the river the right bank line is also clearly visible.

