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The Fürgen Bahn

by Ron Smith

Photographs by the author

The Fürgen Bahn is a somewhat secretive funicular that has to be discovered and is almost impossible to photograph. We chanced on it by accident. Just before Stansstad the lakeside walk takes a small detour to follow an inlet and there, to one side and almost lost among the trees was the faded sign *Fürgen Bahn*. Intrigued, I doubled back and found some concrete steps leading to a balconied platform with rails rising steeply from it, only to disappear round a bend in the lush foliage. A cable on pulleys was in the centre of the track and the entire ambience was of verdant decay. There was no method of obtaining a ticket, no signs and I assumed the line was abandoned. Then, suddenly and silently, a strange contraption came rolling down the track through the trees. It appeared to be a wall of wooden planks, darkly coloured to blend into the foliage. This box halted with a sigh at the

platform and complete silence reigned. The passenger accommodation, indeed the entire vehicle, is completely wooden, with a longitudinal bench across to the other side, covered in black PVC. There are no windows, just wooden posts supporting the roof. Suddenly, without warning, the cable tightened and it glided off back into the trees. This year I determined to find it again and, with the help of a friend, drove to the top of the line, the Fürgen Hotel.

Just to the side of the hotel there is a modest building which looks like the redundant top half of signal box, and there inside was the Fürgen Bahn car. Inside the cabin a video screen showed the lower terminus with people crowding into a car - there are two of them! Obviously there is a passing loop, although to find this would require abseiling equipment. When the lower cart was full, the upper car started its descent, but short of hanging upside

down under the large panoramic balcony of the hotel, it is very difficult to obtain a good photograph.

When the car with its strange tandem mini-panoptographs hove into view, it was seen to contain a wedding party. On arrival at the top of the line, the bride posed for photographs before entering the hotel, while more guests poured into the lower car.

The Fürigen Bahn has a quaint air of Victorian gentility about it and is in stark contrast to the modern plastic and steel versions elsewhere in Switzerland. It is a fascinating funicular while the tremendous views from the hotel balcony complete the experience.

Facing Page: Fürigen Bahn car ascending.

This Page: The top station of the Fürigen Bahn showing car in place.

Both photographs taken on Saturday 4 August 1993

Fürigen Bahn details

Opened 25 May 1927

Gauge 800 mm

Length 376 m

Climb 201 m



The New Gotthardbahn *Continued from page 11*

carried out between 1975 and 1981 allows the carriage of accompanied road vehicles of an angle height of 4.0 m (UIC 'C' gauge). The new tunnel will accommodate lorries of up to 4.2 m

angle height. It seems that the work now being brought to a conclusion beneath the English Channel is but an exciting foretaste of what is to come under the Swiss Alps.

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