

Zeitschrift: Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal
Herausgeber: Swiss Railways Society
Band: 5 (1997-1999)
Heft: 7

Artikel: Night ferry to Switzerland
Autor: Della Gana, Giles
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-854540>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 23.02.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

Night Ferry to Switzerland - by Giles Della Gana

The following article was prompted by a conversation at the Model Railway Club during the course of which I surprised the other participants by stating that there had once been a through passenger service from London to Switzerland! This service was also responsible, though in a very roundabout way, for my first encounter with Wagon-Lits.

In a box of memorabilia I have the souvenir programme (price 1/-) for the first railway 'open day' that I recall attending. This was held on 15th. July 1967 at Old Oak Common Diesel Depot. Several things impressed me, among them a 'Blue Pullman' unit, an experimental lounge car and a Type F, Night Ferry, Wagons-Lits car. This Wagons-Lits vehicle, number 3985, had ventured off its beaten track to advertise a forthcoming service between London (Victoria) and Basle attached to the established "Night Ferry" service to Paris and Brussels.

'Railway Magazine' for September 1967 noted that the new service had been announced a few weeks after the reduction in number of cars working to Brussels. The service ran for only two seasons, London/Basle 16/12/67-16/03/68 and 20/12/68-28/02/69 and Basle/London 17/12/67-17/03/68 and 21/12/68-01/03/69. Type F Wagons-Lits cars 3789, 3805 and 3985 were allocated to the initial service with 3985 and 3988 running during the second year.

The Basle sleeper was attached/detached to train 336 DB southbound and 335 DB northbound at Lille. Departure from Victoria was at 21.00 hrs. with an arrival at Basle at 14.12 hours the following day. The return journey commenced at 15.50 hours with arriving Victoria at 09.10 hours the next day. The route taken from Lille was via Valenciennes, Charleville-Mezieres, Metz, Strasbourg and Mulhouse. (these details are taken from the Winter 1967-8 timetable). The carriage-side route read a somewhat terse 'BALE - LONDON'.

However interesting for we students of railway

operation, the service was unattractive to its intended clientele - the winter-sports fraternity. There was no through service to any of the major Swiss resorts. With no through baggage cars, as was the case between London and Paris, there was little room for the stowage of skis, etc. The long journey time meant that half a day's holiday was lost each way when compared to air transport.

The success of this year's (1998) through winter sports services from Waterloo to the French Alps using a small batch of Eurostar units modified to work on 1500 volts DC has prompted the SNCF to adapt further sets. Who knows - with this spirit of enterprise we may again see some sort of through working to Basle?

Publications Consulted:

When I came to look for information on the service it was my turn to be surprised - there was so little to be found. The main enthusiast magazines of the day seem to almost ignore it completely. My main source of information has been the fascinating book 'Night Ferry' by George Behrand & Gary Buchanan. Other sources were:

Old Oak Common Diesel Depot Open Day 15/07/67 Programme

Railway Magazine - September 1967

Today's Railways - Issue 27, March 1998

Please submit articles for the
December "Swiss Express"
by the 20th October.

THANK YOU