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Lake Lucerne Navigation Company (SGV); part 1

MS "Waldstätter" - a new ship bearing an old name on Lake Lucerne. Peter Marriott begins a three part series on the SGV by looking at the latest addition to the fleet.

For the 1998 summer season the Lake Lucerne Navigation Company (SGV) brought a new salon motorship, the MS "Waldstätter", into service. With the MS "Waldstätter" a famous name returns to Lake Lucerne.

The new ship has been designed for all-the-year round operation. The hull and main deck structure were supplied by the Meidericher shipyard in Duisburg, while the design of the upper deck superstructure and the completion of the ship were carried out by SGV employees. The ship has a classic external appearance with large sun decks. The interior furnishing has been carried out with "youthful and stylish charm" according to SGV literature.

A few facts about the new MS "Waldstätter";

- this is the third ship on Lake Lucerne to carry the Waldstätter name
- she is 58 m long and 11.5 m wide
- the engines provide 1,200 hp
- passenger capacity includes 300 seats for banquets in 3 rooms.

Earlier boats carrying the name "Waldstätter"

The first ship which carried the name "Waldstätter" was built by Joseph Ditchburn and Charles John Mare, shipbuilders at Blackwell, Middlesex. The engines and boilers were built by John Penn and Son. The ship arrived at Lucerne in wooden boxes and containers where it was assembled and entered service as a flush deck paddle steamer in late 1847. She survived - after a series of transformations - until 1925, when she went to scrap.

The second boat to bear the name "Waldstätter" also had a connection with the UK. The ill-fated experiment of the London County Council to provide a boat service on the Thames from June 1905 ended in liquidation (please excuse the pun) and left 30 paddle-steamers up

for sale in 1909. The SGV sent a party of engineers sent to London to inspect these boats and they acquired the "Ben Jonson" for £1,100. She was towed to Rotterdam and Duisburg. Under her own steam she travelled up the Rhine to Basel where she was taken apart and sent to Lucerne by rail. The ship was then reassembled and modernised to a paddle steamer carrying the name "Rhein". She was intensively used and made her final round of the lake in summer 1939. It was planned to transform the paddle-steamer into a flush deck motorship but the war delayed these plans. Two thirds of the original hull were used for what became the MS "Waldstätter" II which was the first larger boat to be built at the SGV yard in Lucerne. In early 1949, the "Waldstätter II (ex "Rhein", ex "Ben Jonson") was put into service. She was used extensively on the lake until December 1995 when she was taken out of service, mainly for comfort reasons.

Current timetable

The new MS "Waldstätter" usually operates on the following services:

- departure from Lucerne at 12.03 as the lunch cruise service via Vitznau to arrive at 1.44 pm
- the afternoon cruise to Küsnacht am Rigi, Alpnachstad or Flüellen
- the 7.15 pm departure from Lucerne as the sunset-cruise via Vitznau where she arrives at 9.40 pm

In addition to the normal scheduled services she will be used for events and special excursions for groups.

When in Switzerland telephone 0041 41 367 66 66 for automatic information about alterations to the service in German. For information in English please ring 0041 41 367 67 67 (Switchboard).

This information has been gratefully received from Peter Rüegger of the Lake Lucerne Navigation Company. We will be supplying more historical information about the SGV in the next issue of Swiss Express.