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BLS Autoverlad Löttschberg by Peter Marriott

The popular press recently had extensive coverage about the fire on an HGV shuttle in the Channel Tunnel. Members will be aware that Channel engineers and designers consulted with their opposite numbers at the BLS to gain experience with tunnel and rolling stock design. I am informed that since 1913 the Löttschberg tunnel has not been closed because of an accident or a fire.

Members who have used both the Le Shuttle and BLS Autoverlad services will have had experience of the closed wagons beneath the channel and the open sided wagons on the BLS. Whilst Le Shuttle services take approximately 35 minutes the Autoverlad service between Kandersteg and Goppenstein through the Löttschberg Tunnel takes 15 minutes. It is interesting to compare road distances using the Autoverlad; from Bern via BLS to Gampel-Steg (in the Rhone valley) the distance is 76Km. To travel all by road via Martigny increases this to 192Km.

The Autoverlad timetable and information

leaflet for the tunnel "motorail" services carries the two slogans, "every 30 minutes a 15 minute break" and "stress free through the Alps". The 1996/7 fares from 25 Sfr single journey for a car (up to nine passengers) to 180 Sfr for a 36+ seat coach. It is also possible to purchase 12 car journey tickets for 225 Sfr which represents a useful saving for regular users of the tunnel. The BLS have various telephone numbers to obtain general information, fares, traffic conditions and maximum load dimensions. Within the tunnel by tuning to 88.2 Mhz frequency Radio DRS 1 can be listened to. The current timetable applies from June 2 1996 to 31 May 1997.

The busiest months are usually March, April, July and August with November regularly being the least busy. In 1995 the monthly total of road vehicles using the service varied between 120953 and 68046. In the same year the total of 1206895 vehicles comprised 1145236 cars, 2175 buses and coaches, 41756 lorries and 17728 motorcycles. This represented an income to the BLS of nearly 38 million Swiss Francs or



Previous page: A view through the windscreen driving onto the train at Goppenstein. 25/1/97.

Above: Vehicles loading at Kandersteg. 25/1/97

Photos: Les Heath

approximately one third of its income.

To strengthen the BLS fleet of vehicle carrying wagons for the tunnel services 1996 saw the arrival of eight new wagons built by Talbot - Autowagen. The roofs on the existing wagons are angular but these new wagons have curved roofs.

The accompanying information has been taken from official BLS sources. I am very grateful to Hansueli Kunz of the Marketing Dept. of the BLS, Bern, for all the information he has supplied.

Goppenstein/Kandersteg service

Daily half hour service between 6.05 am and 23.05 pm

First train from Kandersteg 5.05 am

First train from Goppenstein 5.35 am

Last trains of the day from Goppenstein and Kandersteg midnight

Additional trains during peak periods

Distance

Kandersteg to Goppenstein 17.4 km

Lotschberg Tunnel 14.6 km

Journey time 15 minutes

Rolling Stock

8 rakes of vehicle carrying wagons

Capacity 70-80 cars each train providing the transportation of between 550-600 vehicles each hour

Vehicles carried

1960 13718

1970 227070

1980 750144

1990 1231601

1995 1206895

Passenger carrying vehicles 95%

Minibus, Vans and lorries 3.5%

Motorcycles & luggage trolleys 1.5%

Reason for Travel

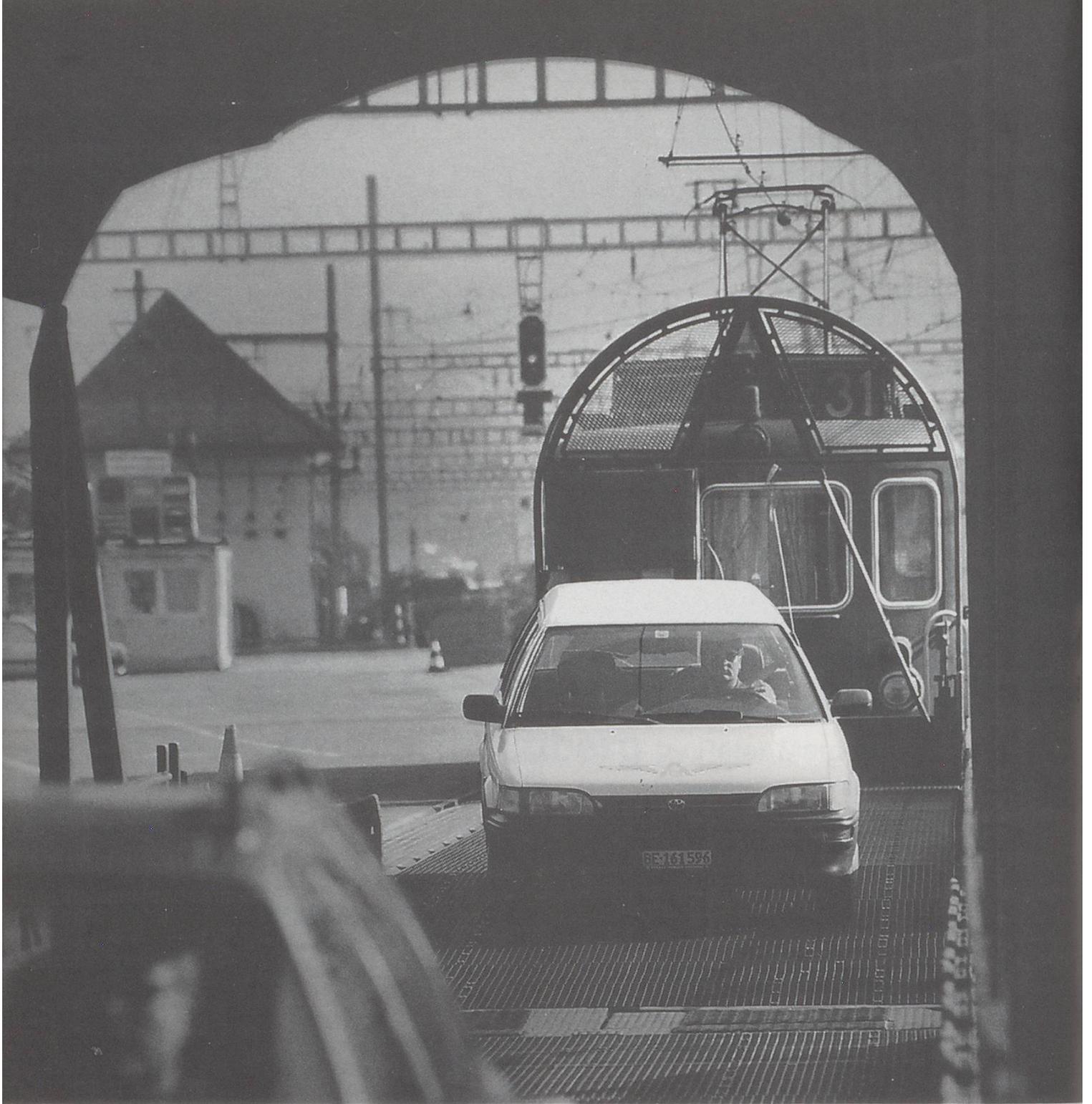
Vacation 62%

Business/Training 11%

Excursion 15%

Visiting relatives and friends 11%

Other 1%



Above: A view from the train of cars loading at Kandersteg. Photo BLS.

Origin/Destination

Switzerland 66%
Germany 22%
Benelux 10%
Others 2%

Frequency of use of the service

First time 18%
1-4 yearly 56%
5-11 yearly 15%
At least once a month 11%

North to South Traffic destinations

Swiss Canton Wallis 96%
Italy 4%

Source of information

Road map 52%
From friends and family 38%
Motoring Association 12%
Travel brochure 8%

Source: BLS.