

Non Silentio ad Draconem. Part 1

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HOPEFULLY READERS WILL REMEMBER SOME ARTICLES ABOUT THE LAKE THUN TROLLEYBUSES. DAVID BAKER, OUR NEW ARCHIVIST, WRITES ABOUT THE ORIGINAL TRAMWAY IN DETAIL. MUCH OF THE MATERIAL AND THE PICTURES ARE TAKEN FROM THE BOOK *STRASSENBAHNEN UND UBERLANDBAHNEN VON THUN UND BERNE* BY CLAUDE JEANMAIRE, WHICH IS NOW OUT OF PRINT. WE ARE INDEBTED TO THE AUTHOR AND PUBLISHER FOR PERMISSION TO USE THE PHOTOGRAPHS AND MATERIAL. IT WILL BE CONTINUED IN THE NEXT ISSUE



By 1911 the BLS ran through from Bern via Thun to Interlaken on the south (left) bank of Lake Thun. The villages on opposite bank had no public transport. The STJ was formed in 1911 with the purpose of building and operating a street railway along the right bank of Lake Thun in an area offering the finest views of the alpine mountain chain. The title STJ seems odd to us, but is probably a reversion to the use of a capital J instead of an I, as in Latin. Later on it was changed back to I.

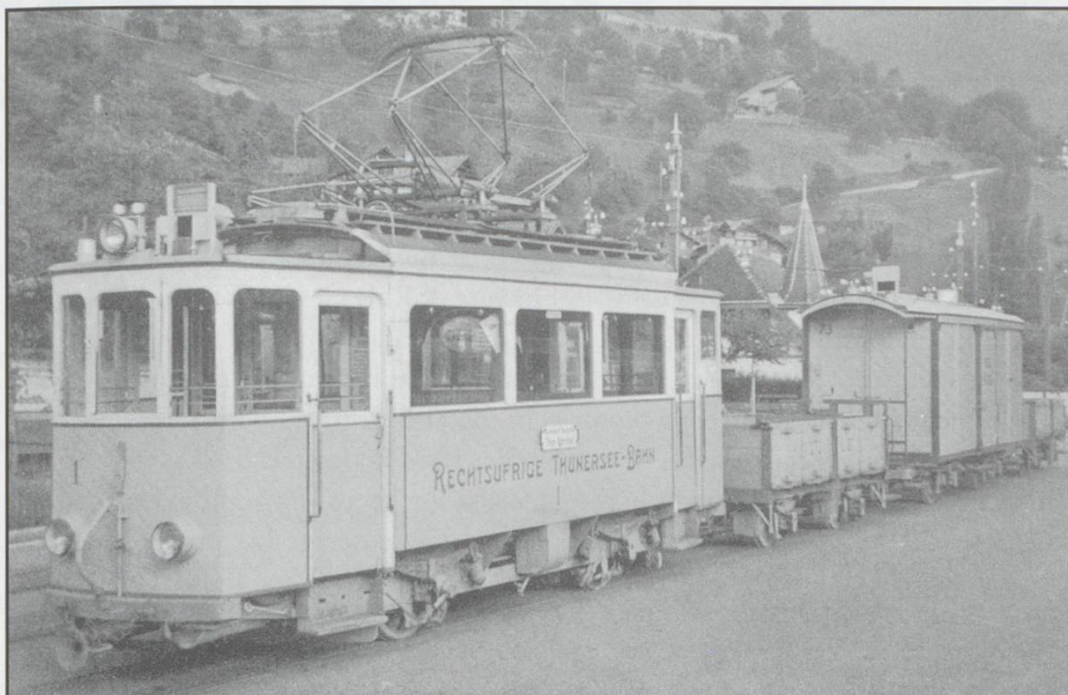
Provision was made for construction in either three or four sections. From Steffisburg to Gunten via Thun, Gunten to Beatushöhlen and then into Interlaken. A further extension to Wilderswil and Gsteig was envisaged as a possibility for a later extension.

The Company Offices were at Thun and the initial shareholders held a General Meeting on 16 December 1911. The first section of line was opened from Steffisburg to Oberhofen on 10 October 1913, with the next stage to Beatushöhlen following on just before Christmas. The first timetables had 64 daily

runs from Thun to Steffisburg and 52 to Oberhofen.

The long awaited completion through to Interlaken was made in 1914, which brought the total length of the 1000 mm gauge line to 26 kilometres. The line, however, was constructed as cheaply as possible. Very light profile track with thin base plates was used held down with rail-pegs. This totally inadequate construction was to cause problems of wear and tear throughout the whole life of the line. This was a great pity, as the technical know-how was available at the time, and this line was a comparative latecomer. This meant that throughout its life this lack of foresight involved large expenditure for repairs and improvements. Special problems were encountered on the cliff-side near to Beatenbucht where extensive blasting was necessary to break through with a route for the tracks. The whole section contained 20 stations and 34 halts.

To commence operations the company, with a staff of 46, had to provide adequate rolling stock and the inventory included:



chassis from passenger coach B31 were used for the construction of the water-sprinkler vehicle. It was put in service in 1917.

The long running First World War affected the line severely and, along with the main line railways also, the

- 14 Ce (later Be) 2/2 motor-coaches (1-14)
- 4 B2 trailer coaches, (31 – 34).
- 4 B2 trailer coaches, (51 – 54).
- 2 FZ (later Z) Post vans, (91 –92).
- Various low and high-sided wagons.

A consolidation of their finances was necessary in 1916 and a special share issue was made. The name of the company was confirmed as “Rechtsufrige Thunerseebahn, elektrische Bahn, Steffisburg – Thun – Interlaken”, which decorated the motor-coach sides when next painted. The title is shown on the original station at Thun.

The state of the roads at this time was poor and a special vehicle was constructed, which played an important role for many years reducing the dust along the railway tracks. The mechanical and electrical parts from a “written off” motor coach, No. 2, and the

timetables over the long-awaited and newly built line were restricted. The first accidents with motor vehicles were recorded in 1917, one with a motorcar in Thun, and the other with a Gunten to Sigriswil *autobus* in Gunten. Snowfalls and landslips in the Zwolfikrache Gorge at Beatushöhlen meant the replacement of several masts to maintain adequate safe clearances.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

