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WALKING WITH THE GLACIER EXPRESS

Extracted from the MGB ZUGLEKTURE (06/2005)

The Wilerbrücke, located on the erstwhile Furka Oberalp above Realp, was originally built in 1913 as a five-arch quarry stone viaduct spanning the Furkareuss river.

In the early afternoon of 10th May 1955, totally out of the blue, one of the four masonry piers collapsed as a result of subsurface erosion during the period of rapid snow-melt and its remains sank into the surging waters. It was fortunate that the collapse happened around three weeks before the annual opening inspection of this section of the FO line that was closed each winter. Although nobody was hurt

that very morning a group of construction labourers working above the viaduct had driven over the structure in their service vehicle. As the overhead contact line remained intact these men did not notice the destruction until the evening when they were on their way home.

In the summer of 1955 the remains of the old viaduct were replaced by a simple composite bridge design consisting of steel girders supported with only one intermediate pier. The Glacier Express, however, did not stop running. During the construction work the train worked in two sections that terminated either side of the

site of the old structure. Passengers had to walk between the two trains via a footbridge below the works to the other side of the valley. The new bridge opened on the 8th September 1955 and continuous operation of the Glacier Express was ensured again

Wilerbrücke before May 1955

Wilerbrücke after September 1955

