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EVEN SWISS DEFINITIVE STAMPS HAVE PICTURES

Michael Farr



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Unlike in the UK, everyday stamps - which philatelists call definitives - in Switzerland have for many years carried illustrations. Sixty-five years ago, in 1934, six denominations of stamps from 5c to 30c were issued, all of them having a transport connotation.

The 5c stamp showed Mt Pilatus which must be visible from every part of Lucerne and which was conquered by an audaciously-steep railway in 1889. Sadly the detail does not show the trains but ships are visible on the lake.

The main subject for the 10c stamp was Chillon Castle, whose stark but imposing outline stands guard over the eastern end of Lac Léman and is served by ships operated by CGN, the Compagnie Générale de Navigation sur le Lac Léman. Lurking in the corner of the design are the tracks, sadly without a train, of the main line which skirts the lake on its way from Geneva to Brig.

To cross the Grimsel Pass (shown on the

15c stamp) it is necessary to take a PostAuto - as with the Via Mala gorge which appears on the 25c stamp - though our much-missed modelling member Mike Poleglaze offered a convincing case that a railway did exist with his superb Via Mala layout!

On the 20c stamp there is actually a train visible on, a particularly attractive design which features the south ramp of the Gotthard Tunnel and, finally, the 30c stamp shows the Rheinfalls Bridge in the distance with the raging waters of the river foaming in the foreground.

The quality of printing of this series of stamps makes up for their comparatively small size and indicates the skills of the designer and engraver who produced the origination for them. As definitives are generally on issue for several years it is likely that many members will have examples of such everyday stamps amongst the collection which you inevitably accumulate with correspondence from our favourite destination country.