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A CAT ON THE LAKE

Ron Smith

Some time ago the Schiffartsgesellschaft des Vierwaldstättersee (SGV) decided that they needed a new ship in 2009 to replace an old one (note that the 'Schwyz' is 50 years old and the 'Rutli' 80 years old this year) and set-out a design brief. The criteria were: a speed of 30 kph (faster than any other SGV vessel); a capacity of 300 passengers; to be operated with a crew of only two; and with no steps to give disabled access - therefore all on one level. This gave the choice of either a very long or a very wide conventional vessel. Neither of these is desirable in a ship that has to have manoeuvrability and minimum water resistance. The result was a catamaran design that would give sufficient deck area without too large an area below the waterline. Tests on the design were carried out in the UK at Southampton using 1:16 scale models. The ship was built by the SGV at their shipyard on the lake and aluminium was used in the construction as much as possible. The new ship is named 'Cirrus' and joined the fleet in April, followed by its first revenue service in May. It has a length of 40m, is 12.5m wide, has a draft of 1.39m and can cruise at 26kph with its two 500hp diesel engines. Although it conforms to the operational and engineering brief, in my opinion it lacks the elegance and style of the rest of the fleet, as does a similar craft on the lake at Biel/Bienne. It is still to be seen which ship it replaces.

The MOB wagon on the B-C on 05/06/09.
PHOTO: *J-E Seewer.*