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The section above Planalp opens out onto the alpine meadows and provides the wondrous views both upwards to the peaks and downwards across the valley and its lake towards Interlaken. Our guests were soaking it all up, expectant of what was to come. Crossing the Chüemad meadow and then the Kühmatt Tunnel we arrived at Oberstafel loop, where once again, we were able to pass waiting trains, full of clicking and flashing cameras, catching our excursion at every angle. The non-stop tempo soon had us crossing Dirrengrind, (site of the legendary derailment), and entering the last section traversing the craggy landscape of the Rothorns' upper reaches, the hotel building getting ever nearer. The final series of avalanche galleries and tunnels at Schönegg open out to the final approach onto the summit station Rothorn Kulm, 2244m above sea level and over a mile

above this shimmering turquoise of Lake Brienz far below.

High heels and short skirts were once again put to the test as our group proceeded to the hotel and the sumptuous meal Sandra's team had prepared for us. (Following the main course by-the-way, we all had to take a very sedate walk up the final slope to the summit. Not just for a last group photo but also to make space for dessert – but that's another story).

Our thanks to the BRB team, in particular Doris and Kurt who together made the event a truly 'Grand Day Out!' ☑

Editor's Note. Mike Ellis lives in Switzerland and acts as BRB's sales representative for English-speaking regions. He also undertakes marketing, translations, web editing, writing articles and conducting workshop tours and footplate trips for the railway. For further information on the BRB contact him at michael.ellis@brb.ch or at www.brienz-rothorn-bahn.ch .



MIRACOLO DI COMO

Mario Gavazzi reports on the rebirth of a favourite paddle steamer

For a lot of Swiss the Italian Lago di Como, and its namesake town, are considered to be almost a part of their country. Indeed Como almost considers itself Swiss. In a recent unofficial referendum carried out by a local newspaper, a large majority of the town's citizens suggested that they would like the location to be annexed by Switzerland! At its nearest point the border is only 2km distant from the town and its beautiful stretch of water. Consequently many Swiss steamship enthusiasts are as interested as their Italian counterparts in the shipping services that use the lake. This interest from Switzerland was apparent on Friday 19th July when the town of Como was en-fête to celebrate the re-inauguration of the 100-year-old *PS Patria* after more than 22 years out of service. The official ceremony was organised by the Provincia di Como in the beautiful 17th century Villa Gallia located near the lake at Como. In an interesting coincidence a few



100 years old and so young - *PS Gallia*, fastest steamboat in Switzerland!

Photo: Mario Gavazzi

days later at Luzern another ceremony was held to mark the centenary of the SGV's *PS Gallia*. The Swiss and Italian steamship enthusiasts have to be thankful to a number of organisations for the superb restoration of the *PS Patria*. Foremost were the Provincia di Como, and its President Leonardo Carioni, plus the Association Famiglia Comasca and its President Piercesare Bordoli. The restoration work was supported by financial help from the Italian Department of Infrastructure and Traffic, the administration of Regione Lombardia and the foundation of the Bank Cariplo. It is hoped that the first regular sailings of, and visits to, the restored ship *PS Patria* will take place next year. The administration of Provincia di Como have opened a «**facebook piroscalo Patria**» where all the historic details and current information about the project, sailings, etc. can be seen. ☑