

# **Walking the Schöllenenschlucht : David and Elizabeth Carpenter follow the MGB line from Andermatt to Göschenen**

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Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal**

Band (Jahr): - **(2017)**

Heft 130

PDF erstellt am: **29.04.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-853890>

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# WALKING THE SCHÖLLENENSCHLUCHT

David and Elizabeth Carpenter follow the MGB line from Andermatt to Göschenen



If you have travelled the steeply graded Göschenen branch of the MGB you will know that much of this route is through snow galleries or in tunnels. Whilst staying at Andermatt for the 'Gottardo 2016' festivities we made several trips over this short branch, and looking out of the train window we realised it should be possible to walk this section and see more of the gorge. Like the other walks we have previously described in *Swiss Express*, this is an easy downhill walk and gives some good opportunities to photograph the MGB trains on the way.

Starting at Andermatt, turn left out of the station and walk along Bahnhofstrasse to the end, passing the new 'Chedi' resort complex on your right. Turn left, go over the level crossing, continue along the road and the Göschenen branch of the MGB soon joins you on the left. A little before the road enters the snow gallery, there is a yellow Wanderweg sign pointing across the road. At this point you have a choice of continuing along the road through the gallery adjacent to the railway, or walking above this to get a better view. For the latter, cross the road and turn left onto a by-road which leads to a footpath taking you above the gallery, from where you can see into the top of the gorge. At the far end of the gallery you will come to a small structure with a door in it, and an image of some steps crudely painted on the outside. Inside there is a spiral staircase, which takes you down to the road. You will come out at the northern portal of the gallery, where you re-join the alternative route direct along the road.


Continue along the road towards the Devil's Bridge, but a little before you get to the lay-by turn 180° to the left onto a path which takes you under the railway to a bridge over the river. Cross the bridge, turn right and continue up to a viewpoint where there are good views both of the railway and the

Devil's Bridge itself. Beyond the viewpoint the path drops steeply down some steps to a hole in the rock face. Inside, you will find a well-lit tunnel, which brings you out on the road again opposite the Suworow Memorial, visible on the rock face across the road. This memorial, with its Russian wording, commemorates the Schöllenschlucht battle of September 1799 where Russian troops led by General Suworow defeated Napoleon's forces.

From here follow the road downhill. At the time of our visit (June 2016) the road below this point was under major reconstruction and the footpath diverted in several places. However, temporary blue footpath signs had been erected clearly showing the footpath route. These may change as the work progresses and will eventually disappear. This arrangement continues for some distance, and you will need to cross the road a few times. Eventually a blue footpath sign will direct you across some rough ground where you gain access to the top of another snow gallery, through which both road and railway run. At the end of this gallery the path descends close to the river, and you will reach the Häderlisbrücke. This vaulted arch bridge is an exact replacement of the original bridge of 1649, which was washed away in a storm in August 1987. This is a popular tourist spot and is quite photogenic.

Continuing along the path you will come to a more modern footbridge where you cross the river, and which is another good place to photograph the trains. Once across the bridge you will descend some steps and the path soon comes to a main road. Turn left here and follow the road into Göschenen. If you cross over the road (mind the traffic, there is no path on the other side) and look over the wall you will be able to see the northern portals of the original Gotthard



tunnel. A little beyond the derelict Hotel Bahnhof, cross over the road by a crossing and take the path down to Göschenen station. Light refreshments are available from the station buffets at Andermatt and Göschenen. If you venture beyond the station into Göschenen village itself, the Hotel zum weissen Rössli will serve you anything from a coffee to full meals. At a leisurely pace the walk should take about 2½ hours, and you will certainly see more of this attractive gorge than is possible from the train. 



OPPOSITE: An Andermatt bound train passing the Devil's Bridge on 05.06.16.

Photo: David Carpenter

ABOVE: MGB Motor luggage van no. 95 leads a Göschenen train past Häderlisbrücke (just visible centre left). 05.06.16 .

Photo: David Carpenter

LEFT: The Devil's Bridge.

Photo: Elizabeth Carpenter

RIGHT: Suworow Monument.

Photo: Elizabeth Carpenter



## Switzerland 1902 – It really was a different country!

### A follow-up to the article in *Swiss Express* about taxing a vehicle

Whilst doing some historical research in the records of the SBB/CFF SRS Member Adrian Friend came across a proposal (not proceeded with) made in 1902 to make automobiles, which were only just starting to appear in Switzerland, subject to the same laws on responsibility for accidents as railway companies. Adrian discovered a report (forwarded to *Swiss Express*) was produced on this proposal that gave statistics on the number of motor vehicles in Switzerland at that time, and the manner in which the cantons were proposing to deal with issues associated with them. It took until 1905 before the common registration system discussed in the March *Swiss Express* was adopted.

The 1902 report produced for the Federal Assembly is inconclusive as it notes that it had not received information from all the cantons, as some of them did not exercise control over motor vehicles, whilst others did not differentiate between the different types. The numbers listed by canton show a total of 457 cars and 99 motor powered cycles. For comparison when vehicle registration started in the UK in 1903 there were some 24,000 vehicles. It is forgotten that Switzerland was a poor country at the start of the 20th century. Genève with 185 cars, 26 'quadricycles' and 28 motorcycles had the most – almost 50% of the published total. Vaud followed with 97 motor vehicles; Bern with 41 cars and 23 'velocipedes'; Basel Stadt with 51 motor vehicles, Zürich with 38 cars and 7 'velocipedes'; Aargau with 27 cars and 15 motorcycles and

Neuchâtel with 20 motor vehicles. The cantons of Uri, Schwyz, Glarus, Appenzell, Graubünden and Valais reported that they had no motor vehicles. This probably reflected the local policies then in force in a number of cantons, that prohibited the movement of automobiles either absolutely, or at least on some mountain roads. The report notes that the vehicles listed are solely for the private transport of people. Some information was supplied that indicated that in the country there were 14 vehicles in use to transport private goods, 3 employed in commercial haulage and 4 used for the carriage of fare-paying passengers. Due to the lack of responses (or knowledge) coming from the cantons it is probable that these figures do not reflect the true number of vehicles in Switzerland. It is difficult to imagine that the unlisted cantons did not have any motor vehicles. It is interesting to note that Genève and Vaud, the cantons with the strongest cultural connections to neighbouring France, a country in a national love affair with the car by 1902, had the most motor vehicles. It is probable that the low numbers and slow spread of motor vehicles in Switzerland in 1902 helped account for the on-going development during this decade of tramways (and railways) into some of the more remote rural areas of the country. When motorised transport became more commonplace some of these schemes were to prove hopelessly uneconomic within just a few years. In 2016 Switzerland had 6m registered motor vehicles, 75% private cars. 