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The next renovation project on Lake Lucerne is the flagship 'Stadt Luzern', here with 'Gallia' at Seedorf on a special cruise for the Association Dampferfreunde Vierwaldstättersee.

the general renovation of the SGV's 'Stadt Luzern' commencing at the end of 2018, whilst on the Thuner See it is hoped that restoration can commence on the 1901-built 'Spiez'. This screw steamer lost its boiler and engine in 1950 and since then it has cruised as a diesel ship. Thanks to a sponsor who has given CHF1m it is intended to rebuild 'Spiez' with new steam driven machinery. So, if everything goes well, in 2018 the Thuner See will have a second steamboat. More information is on www.spiezerli.ch. These three projects, and


the future plans on Le Léman, show us a very important fact: that the work of steamship salvation in Switzerland will never end!

In addition to all the hard work that has gone on in Switzerland, south of the Alps our Italian friends have also been active. Back in 1961 the Italian Government, who owns the navigation rights on the Swiss/Italian Lago Maggiore, decided to save the 'p/s Piemonte' the last steamer in their fleet. After four years of renovation, in May 1965 the 'Piemonte' returned to service as the first lake paddle steamer in Europe preserved as a historic steamer able to cruise using its original steam engine. The 'Piemonte' sails only for charters and only seldom are public sailings organised. However, on Saturday 21st October 2017 she will sail from Arona and Stresa to Locarno and return to Arona. For more information on this unique voyage see www.corona-sapere.ch.

It is to be hoped that all the active steamers will have a good and great future as they are a very good example of the best of Swiss tourism and are a very important marketing argument to visit Switzerland. Even when Switzerland is seen as too expensive for many people from other parts of Europe to visit, the fact that most of the steamers can be used with normal tickets (also Swiss Pass, half price tickets, etc.), everybody has the opportunity to take cruises on our lakes using historic vessels. This is thanks to the first generation of steamboat enthusiasts who started in 1967 with no money, but good arguments for saving the steam navigation. 


A New Diamond for Luzern

Mario Gavazzi

Sunday 9th April was a sad day for Luzern and for all enthusiasts of the fleet of ships that sails on the Vierwaldstättersee. On this day the veteran 'm/s Rigi' made her last public appearance on the lake, watched-over by her namesake mountain. In practice her last operational sailing was on 31st December 2016 when her Captain, Kurt Hunziker, also retired. From January to April she had been chartered by the cultural organisation 'Kunststube' as a floating exhibition venue, and it was with a private art cruise that she finished her service. The 'm/s Rigi' has been replaced in the fleet by a new five-deck hybrid motor ship the 'm/s Diamant'. This state-of-the-art vessel is electric powered, with 'clean' diesel engines generating the electricity, and was brought into service during a ceremony at Luzern on the 4th May 2017. She has a capacity of 1100 passengers and will be scheduled on public services and cruises as well as being used as an event ship. The new 'Luzern Diamond' gives the feeling to her passengers that they are on a yacht cruise, and it is certain that she will become a popular vessel. 



Where's Heidi?

In which station did Heidi find this impressive mural? 

Answer on page 36.

sections of the network as against the normal upper limit of 120kph. This is achieved as at lower speeds less road space is taken-up by safety gaps left between vehicles by drivers, with no detriment to overall safety. However this easy short-term gain can raise political opposition from the right-wing automobile lobby, who campaign for investment in major new roads not just 'improvements', although even if politically approved these take many years to implement.

A 'convenient' way to travel!

The Swiss National YodelerFest occurs every three years and in 2017 took place in Brig. This brought around 150,000 people to the town over the weekend it took place in June. The MGB train, on which member Ron Smith travelled down from Morel to Brig, was so crowded that, as you can see from the photograph, the generous dimensions of the Persons with Reduced Mobility toilet, formed a useful addition to the available space. It was all good-natured. *Hopefully no one had the need to use the facilities en-route! Editor.*



Crowded train Morel to Brig 25.6.17.

Photo: Ron Smith

Late News

This Swiss News feature was compiled at the end of June. However in July, whilst we were still putting the magazine together, news came through from Switzerland that SBB had



Brig Yodeler Festival.

Photo: Roy Marriott

announced that, should its application to renew its concession be successful, it was willing to pass the operation of several Inter Regional (IR) services to the Sudostbahn (SOB). It is reported that these are: Bern-Burgdorf-Zürich; Zürich-Chur; Basel-Luzern-Erstfeld; and Zürich-Erstfeld-Göschenen-Bellinzona. If the award decision is confirmed at the end of the year, and the transfer of these services to the SOB does come to fruition, this will impact on the moves by the BLS, reported elsewhere in this Swiss News, to seek an expansion of its operations. It could be seen that this is a 'spoiling' move by the SBB to trim the expansionary wings of the BLS, and that the SBB feels it is safer to 'get-into-bed' with the smaller operator than risk losing larger parts of the network to its bigger rival. Railway politics appear to be alive and well in Switzerland! If the SOB does achieve this large expansion of their operations it is also reported that they would place an order for 20 additional FLIRT units from Stadler. Given this rolling-stock constructor's currently overflowing order book (they are building several fleets of trains for UK TOCs, apart from large orders from both SBB, BLS, and other European operators) it is unclear when these units would be available. ✚

Swiss News is compiled by Bryan Stone and includes input from SRS members and other sources.

Where's Heidi?

She was at Thun where the station is next to the end of the lake.

