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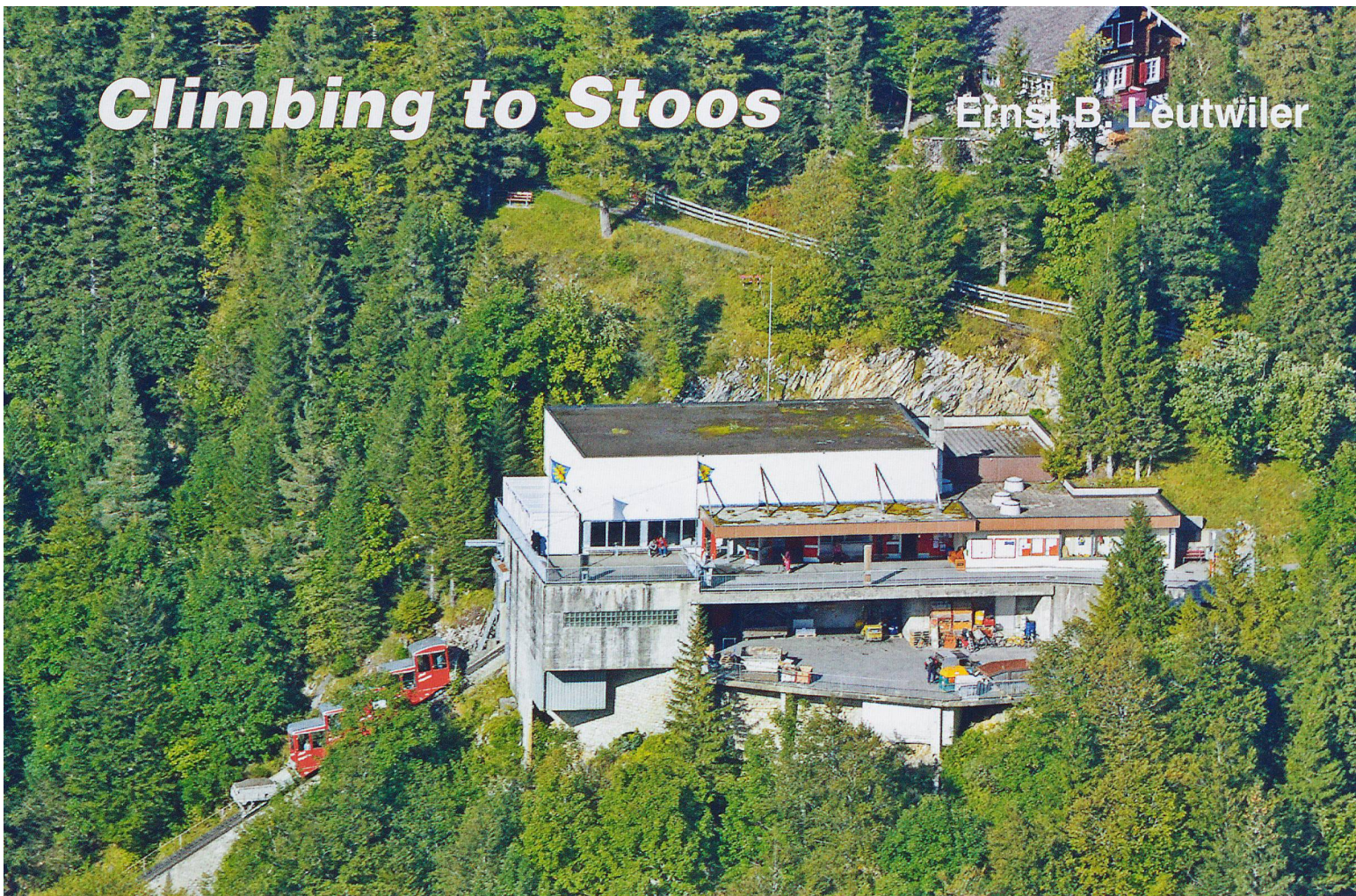
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Climbing to Stoos

Ernst B. Leutwiler



Stoosbahn Bergstation prior to the modernisation. Note the freight facilities.

Photos this page: Ernst B. Leutwiler

Sited on a 1,300m high plateau above the Muotathal in Canton Schwyz is the small, car free, alpine resort village of Stoos with a permanent population of around 150, which can rise by some 2,500 at the peak of the summer and winter tourist seasons. A large and popular ski area spreads across the plateau to the south of the village and this too serves as a magnet for hikers in the summer. Vehicle access is only by special permit along a narrow and serpentine mountain road that climbs up from Muotathal. The commune of Stoos is a part of Morschach. The main access

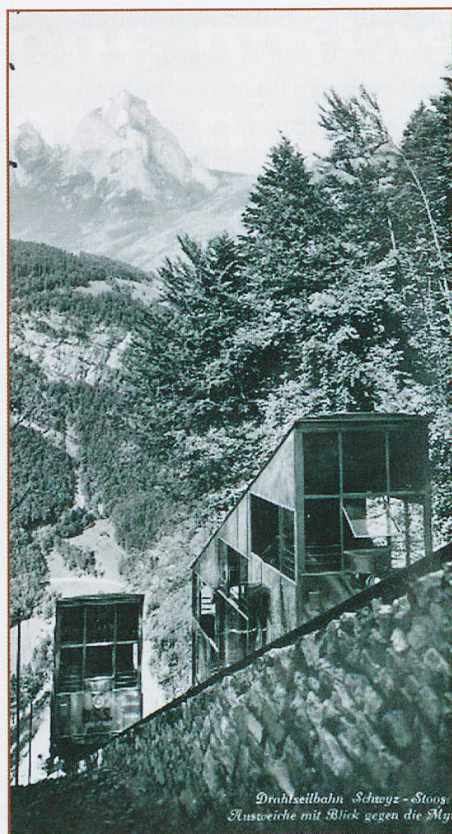
to the village for both people and freight is the Drahtseilbahn Schwyz – Stoos (DSS), the funicular that rises over 700m from Schlatti in the Muotathal. This is reached from the town of Schwyz by buses on Line 1 of AAGS, or drivers can make use of the extensive parking facilities at the base station.

In the 1920s there was a proposal to extend the rack-assisted Brunnen-Morschach Bahn to Stoos but following surveys and site investigations this idea was dropped. The BrMB itself closed in 1969. In 1928 a local committee was set up to promote an initiative to build the DSS and the route

was accepted by the Swiss Federal authorities in 1930, with the organisation being given an 80-year concession. Work on the project was completed within three years with the funicular opening on the 19th August 1933. With a maximum gradient of 78% it became one of the steepest funiculars. The line uses the unusual track gauge of 800mm, has a length of 1361m and passes through two short tunnels en-route, as well as passing over two bridges, a spectacular 60m long one over the gorge of the river Muota immediately after it leaves the base station. Like similar funiculars it has a conventional



The Stoosbahn crossing a chasm.



Three views of the Stoosbahn from past times.

passing loop at its halfway point. The original 50-seater cars were replaced in 1971 by new 97-seat vehicles (with an unusual stepped roof line) from Gangloff of Bern that gave the line a peak capacity of 1,000 passengers/hour. Both the original and replacement vehicles included facilities for handling freight, with around 7,000t being handled annually in addition to some ½ million passengers. At the time of the replacement of the cars the whole of the line was modernised with a new cable drive, new valley and mountain stations and a replacement bridge by the base station. With the concession due to expire in 2010 the operator commenced a feasibility study in 2004 to consider the optimum manner in which to upgrade the facility. Many options were studied and rejected and ultimately, with time running out, the Federal Office of Transport (BAV) was forced to give a 3-year extension to the franchise, and has subsequently given

two more resulting in the current line having to close by the end of 2017. In practice the line will run its last trips on the 16th December 2017, when a completely new funicular on a new alignment is due to open the next day.

In addition to the funicular, the village of Stoos is also served by a 150 person/hour cable-car from Morschach, built in 1981 by a private company and now owned by the funicular organisation. Other cableways on the Stoos plateau are two linked four-seater chairlifts dating from 2000 that climb to the Fronalpstock (1922m); a six-seater chairlift (with seat heating!) that opened in 2007 and climbs to the Klingenstock (1935m) and the ski lifts Maggiweid, Sternegg and Holibrig among other tourist facilities for skiers or hikers. +

To be continued, when we will look at the new funicular.

Where's Heidi?

If you wanted to look down on your fellow waiting passengers, where would you find these unusual double-stacked platform seats? +

Answer on page 43.

