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CHF12m restoration for the 'Stadt Luzern'

Mario Gavazzi reports on SGV's flagship with its historic Queens Salon



Welcome song by senior choir of Brunnen on the 23rd June cruise. *More photos on Page 35.*

Photo: Mario Gavazzi

The *ps* 'Stadt Luzern', flagship of the Schiffahrtsgesellschaft des Vierwaldstättersees - SGV, (www.lakelucerne.ch), is 90 years old. The ship has a very special history. She was built in Germany by Gebrüder Sachsenberg at Rosslau-an-der-Elbe in 1927/8. The double-deck steamer, with a beautiful maritime architecture - described as 'Corbusier-style-on-the-Lake', started her career with big troubles: After just three days of service the steam engine was damaged, this presumably caused by some manufacturing errors by its builder, Sachsenberg. The navigation company then ordered from Swiss engineers Gebrüder Sulzer at Winterthur a new, three-cylinder steam engine that was delivered in 1929 with the ship then successfully entering regular service in July that year.

Since then the 1,200 passenger 'Stadt Luzern' (the third steamer on the lake to carry that name) has been one of the most important members of the SGV fleet. In 1940, during WW II (the Swiss 'National Emergency'), General Henry Guisan with the officers of the army, used the ship for the legendary 'Rütli Rapport', a meeting for a declaration of Switzerland's defence strategy in case the neutral country was drawn into the European war. Since 1954 the two Sachsenberg boilers have been fuelled by oil instead of coal. These will be replaced during the restoration. After 1945 the navigation company started a programme to renew its fleet by replacing the steamers with modern motor ships. Except for the 'Gallia' and 'Stadt Luzern' all the paddle steamers had been planned to be withdrawn from the fleet list by 1986! Thanks to the association Dampferfreunde Vierwaldstättersee, founded in 1972, five historic ships have now been saved, restored and prepared for a long future of service on the lake.

On 2nd May 1980 HM Queen Elizabeth II accepted an invitation to cruise on the 'Stadt Luzern' whilst she enjoyed a Dinner in the First Class Saloon on the upper deck. Since then

this room has been known as the Queen's Salon, and its historic ambience has been enjoyed by all those fortunate enough to sail on the flagship of the Vierwaldstättersee fleet. This room too will be given a new life under the forthcoming restoration that will commence at the end of 2018, with the ship returning into service in spring 2021 when it will begin a second life.

The restoration will cost some CHF12m and the Dampferfreunde Vierwaldstättersee is committed to raising CHF4m of the total. The necessary fundraising commenced on Saturday 23rd June, this being the actual 90th Birthday of the original entry-into-service of this great ship. This started with a special cruise from Luzern to Flüelen, the ship being feted at many of its regular ports-of-call, and a kick-off party on Luzern's Europaplatz in front of the KKL - Kultur- und Kongresszentrum Luzern. Other events in 2018 include the fleet parade on Sunday 16th September, and the last timetabled trip on Sunday 21st October before the ship spends more than two years in the shipyard at Luzern. This 2018 season is the penultimate one of the flagship's Captain, Kuno Stein, as he retires at the end of 2019. Kuno Stein is one of the founders of 'Dampferzeitung', a publication for steamboat and navigation enthusiasts (www.dampferzeitung.ch). In the early 1970s he was one of the most important personalities at Luzern in the steamboat preservation movement. Together with the nautical and gastro team he is a good reference for the flagship, and also the whole SGV fleet.

There will be many activities associated with the on-going fundraising campaign, more details can be found on www.dampfschiff.ch, and how any of the 'Stadt Luzern's' friends outside Switzerland can contribute. Sales of special souvenirs are already in full swing, and on all the lakeside piers there will be collecting boxes shaped like the ships ventilation 'horns' where people can place their donations. 