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Twenty Five Years of Preservation in Zug

Mario Gavazzi reports on the work of the Orion Club Zugerland



The Orion Club Zugerland aims to preserve the history of public transport in Canton Zug. The club was founded in the spring of 1994 with the assistance of both the cantonal government and the local public transport operator Zugerland Verkehrsbetriebe (ZVB – www.zvb.ch). Founders were Robert Bisig (then a government member) and Hugo Berchtold (then ZVB manager).

The club is named after the “Orion” bus No.5 pictured left. Orion, based in Zürich, manufactured buses for Zug in the early years of the last century. No 5 was used between 1904 and 1913 on the routes Zug-Menzingen and Zug-Oberägeren until those services were converted to tramway operation by the Elektrische Strassenbahnen in Canton Zug (ESZ). After the conversion No.5 saw further service as an overhead repair vehicle, until the closure of the tram system and conversion to buses over the period 1953 to 1955. Subsequently its chassis was displayed in the Swiss Transport Museum in Luzern.

The elephant of Zug

The club's first restoration project was CF4/4 tram No.3, pictured left. This car, along with most of the withdrawn trams, found further work on the Langenthal- (later Oberrargau)-Jura-Bahn (now part of Aare Seeland mobil). It remained there, latterly as a repair car, until 1993. The “Elephant of Zug” as it is called, was then rescued by the ZVB management and returned back home to Zug.

The full restoration of the “Elephant” was carried out by a team of active and retired ZVB staff, all members of the Orion Club. This same team then gave the Orion bus its new look. Thanks to the survival of the original drawings it was possible to create an exact replica of the bodywork.

MS Schwan II

The third project was the restoration of the MS Schwan II pictured left. This motor vessel operated on the beautiful Aegerisee in the 1920s as the MS “Morgarten”. It was subsequently sold to the BLS who operated it first on the Thunersee and later (renamed “Harder”) on the Brienersee. Since 2001 the veteran has operated on the Zugersee as MS “Schwan II”. The name recalls an earlier vessel that sailed on the Zugersee from the 1920s to 1978 until



TOP: “Orion” bus no 5.
MIDDLE: The “Elephant” of Zug.
LEFT: MS “Schwan II”. All photographs: Mario Gavazzi

its sale to private buyers in France. In 2013 MS “*Schwan II*” became the responsibility of Schiffs-Agentur (www.schiffs-agentur.ch), which keeps it in public service under its chairman Heinz Amstad.

Model tram


Orion Club Zugerland also owns a collection of original documents (photos, other illustrations, old timetables amongst many other things). A beautiful ‘souvenir’ is a model of tram No.2 of the Zugerberg-Bahn (ZBB) which is owned by Luzern resident Arnold Stockmann. The ZBB operated two-axle trams from 1907 to 1959 between Zug and Schönegg to connect with the funicular to the summit of the Zugerberg. The ZBB was a separate concern to the ESZ, but they cooperated on joint workings and the ZBB operated most services between Zug and Baar until 1953 when buses took over. The ZBB proper to Schönegg closed in 1959.

About 15 years ago a trailer for post and freight services, used on the bus routes from Zug to Menzingen and Oberägen, found its way into the collection. The picture right shows the trailer attached to preserved ZVB Saurer no 113. On the left can be seen an FBW bus in the orange livery of the 1970s known as VST-orange.

The museum

The model tram, the original documents and the historic trams and buses are all housed in the Zuger Depot Technikgeschichte – www.zdt.ch – at Neuheim. The chairman of the ZDT is Alfred Heer who, together with his team, manages this “working museum”. The building at Neuheim was formerly a Swiss Army depot before it became available to the member associations of the ZDT. They organise open days every year. The next date is Saturday, September 7th 2019 from 10am to 5pm, entrance free, gastronomic service!

Every year the Orion Club Zugerland organise an excursion. Here they are with the steam tram in Bern on November 3rd last year.

Thanks to this association the history of public transport in and around Zug since the operation of the first motor bus in 1904 by the Automobil-Gesellschaft Zug has been properly documented. Let us hope that it is possible for them to preserve and maintain this collection for a good many years to come! 

TOP: Model of ZBB No.2.

MIDDLE: Preserved buses and freight trailer on display at the ESZ’s 100th anniversary jubilee.

