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Traditional Names for New Trains



The old 'Uri' and the new 'Uri'.

All Photos: by Mario Gavazzi

As reported in *Swiss News*, SBB has revived the tradition of naming its flagship motive power after the Swiss Federation's cantons. Of the 29 new Class 501 'Girunos', 26 will be so "baptised". The first ceremony took place in Erstfeld on Saturday 31 August last. Mario Gavazzi was there to record the proceedings.

Erstfeld means "first field". They have an old time jazz band there called *First Field Jazzband*. The band was at the town's station on a sunny morning to provide a musical welcome to some 400 guests for the baptism of 501 007 as 'Uri'.

The new Stadler-built RABe 501 Girunos will soon be the stars of the Swiss railway network and in neighbouring countries too. It is good therefore to report that SBB has revived the tradition of naming its best trains after Switzerland's cantons, as it did in the 1950s when the Ae 6/6 locomotives were similarly named. This explains the presence at the ceremony of the beautifully restored Ae 6/6 No. 11402 'Uri' of SBB Historic.

Two members of Canton Uri's government, Urban

Camenzind and Dimitri Moretti, Erstfeld's mayor, Pia Tresch, and SBB's Head of Passenger Transport, Toni Häne, all oversaw the proceedings. In their speeches they referred to the great changes that had taken place at Erstfeld following the opening of the Gotthard Base Tunnel. This is a "hot topic" in Erstfeld as further job losses are likely following the introduction of the new SOB 'Traverso' trains on behalf of SBB in 2020. Some fifteen jobs are expected to disappear (possibly to Arth-Goldau). No decisions have been taken but those in power need to reassure locals that they will try to keep jobs there or bring in new posts to Erstfeld.

After the baptism everyone was welcomed on board 'Uri' for a trip to Bellinzona and back, using the Base Tunnel southward and the original line back. 

An exact aluminium replica of the Ae 6/6 nameplate adorns the restaurant car.

The 'First Field Jazzband' welcomes the guests.

