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QUINTEN-SENTIAL SWITZERLAND

Rob Morrey continues his quest for quiet places.



MS *Alvier* arrives at Murg West.

ALL PHOTOS: Rob Morrey

An earlier Swiss Express contains an 'article listing an A to Z of my favourite off-the-beaten-track Swiss locations, but it omitted Y and Q as I had not been to anywhere suitable. The editor noted that Yens and Quinten would fill the gaps. Enough said.

In July 2008, when I and my Swiss Pass were on holiday in Vevey, one sultry afternoon I took a train to the lovely lakeside town of Morges and awaited the BAM local to Bière. The 2-car train duly arrived – but in disguise. The power car (No 15) was in the red and cream livery of the YSteC, but coupled to a driving trailer in 'proper' BAM green and cream. In a short while I alighted at the small, unstaffed (but immaculate), wayside station of Yens. The train departed and silence returned, the station being in a very rural location, so I walked up the gentle hill in search of 'downtown Yens'. I easily found the centre where nothing/nobody stirred. I had found a backwater par excellence, on the quiet side of soporific, yet not that far from Genève and Lausanne. Feeling somewhat conspicuous I returned to the station and waited, alone, for the next train, leaving Yens to slumber in the summer sunshine.

Moving on to September last year and I was in the town of Konstanz. True, it is in Germany – but only just - and SBB operate the train services into their home territory. Quinten still needed to be explored so on a quite glorious morning, having purchased an YSteC No.15 forms the Bière train at Yens. Nobody about.

Ostwind Tageskarte, I set off at 08.21 and via a four-train meet at Kreuzlingen headed alongside the Bodensee to Romanshorn. Here I joined a 'Voralpen Express', its SOB stock headed by an SBB Re4/4, on its run through St Gallen and Wattwill (and numerous tunnels) to Uznach and an immediate connection to Ziegelbrücke where a Kolibri unit on the 11.02 local to Chur was waiting. All very slick - and very Swiss. Three stations later, de-training at Murg and walking the 300m along by the Walensee to the tiny landing stage of Murg West, I joined a couple of dozen fellow passengers waiting to board the *MS Alvier* of the Schiffsbetrieb Walensee AG (SWAG) that formed the 11.45 departure to Quinten.



This small ship was built in 1919 and has accommodation for 60 passengers. We called at Murg East to collect two schoolchildren, then made a 15 minute run across the lake to the tiny hamlet of Au before reaching our destination. I spent some time meandering around the tranquil, picture-postcard village with its two cafés and a couple of visitor-orientated shops. The simply stunning panorama of the mountains that surround this lesser-known lake is complemented by long-distance views of trains on the Zürich-Chur mainline running along its south shore complete the idyllic picture. Enchanting - for those who like to get away from it all, look no further!

I reluctantly returned to civilisation joining another Chur-bound stopping train at Murg, travelling alongside the magical Walensee before changing at Sargans for Buchs, and a break in the journey to watch ÖBB trains coming and going. Buchs is also the Swiss terminus of vehicles from the Liechtenstein bus fleet in their garish bright green livery, a real contrast to the drab and dirty Austrian trains. I concluded my grand tour with trains to Rorschach, Romanshorn, Kreuzlingen and 'home' to Konstanz. Although all the changes of train involved tight connections, they all worked smoothly in the usual ruthlessly efficient way that the




SBB operates. I would not have missed this memorable day for the world with quiet Quinten, *quintessentially Swiss*, as the wow-factor!

ABOVE: Yens centre. Still nobody about!

BELOW: Quinten from the Walensee.



The Editor's postscript.

Quinten is a small village with a permanent population of around 50. It is a south facing suntrap, surrounded by woods and some 8ha of vineyards, which shelter under the steep slopes of the Churfirsten Massive. It is renowned for its mild, almost Mediterranean, climate that allows its fortunate residents to grow not just grapes but exotic fruit like figs, kiwi fruit and even bananas in their gardens. There are no roads along the north shore of the Walensee so access is either a 7km walk from Walenstadt at the eastern end of the lake, or by boat with the post, provisions, building materials, etc, as well as people, coming this way. The SWAG also runs a freight barge, the *MS Gonzen*, to service the isolated communities on the north shore. The *MS Alvier*, the regular ship on the cross-lake service from Murg to Quinten and Au, has a complex history. It was built in Germany in 1919 and entered service on Berlin's Wannsee as the *MS Dornröschen*. In 1921 it moved to the Zürichsee as the *MS Seebueb* and it continued to operate on this lake until 1954, when it was moved to the Walensee where it was renamed as the *MS Quinten* (1). It was refurbished in 1987 and finally became the *MS Alvier* in 1990. 

ABOVE: The 11 45 to Quinten at Murg West.

RIGHT: Journey's end.

BELOW LEFT: *MS Alvier* waits over lunch at Quinten.

BELOW RIGHT: Auf Weidersehen, Quinten. Bis bald!

