

Centennial of the Axen Route

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CENTENNIAL OF THE AXEN ROUTE

On 8th December 1864, the Axen Route between Flüelen and Brunnen was opened to traffic for the first time. Up to then, the trip had been made by ship on the Lake of Lucerne. The new road represented the final link in Switzerland's north-south highway network. The initiative for construction of the Axen Route had come in 1859 from the Federal Military Department, based on national defence requirements, and the military expert on the project was no less a personage than General G. H. Dufour. From the plans submitted, preference was given to those which allowed for construction of a future railway line between Brunnen and Flüelen, since the Gotthard Line project had already been foreseen. Completed in 1864, the road met the nation's needs for seventy years, until modern traffic made an expansion necessary. The Axen Route was widened in 1939, in the process of which the world-famous Axen Gallery was circumvented by means of a new tunnel. Since then, a second renovation was carried out (in the 1950's), and today there is already talk of a second road to take some of the pressure off the present one. The automatic traffic-counters recorded a peak total of 367,000 vehicles on the road during July 1964, with a daily average of 21,212 — the highest one-hour count was 1,521. Although there are plans for another highway on the left shore of the Lake of Lucerne, as part of Autobahn N-2, the Axen Route is almost certain to retain its importance as a traffic artery leading to the Canton of Uri. For this reason, studies are being made for a portion of the road to be further expanded.

[S.N.T.O.]

THE SWISS FLAG ON THE HIGH SEAS: A CENTURY-OLD IDEA

It was not until 1921 that countries without direct access to the sea were authorized to sail ocean-going ships under their own flag. Twenty years later, in 1941, the necessary legal foundation for the creation of a Swiss merchant navy was laid. The idea of a Swiss national fleet was first officially launched a century ago, in 1864, by Jacob Dubs, a Federal Councillor, who submitted a bill to this effect to the Swiss Parliament. His proposal was turned down, but the Government was however asked to sound out the maritime powers. It is a century therefore since a far-sighted Swiss took the first step leading to the creation of an ocean-going fleet flying the Swiss flag.

[O.S.E.C.]

SWISS INDUSTRIES FAIR 1965

Some 2,500 exhibitors will participate in the forty-ninth Swiss Industries Fair to be held at Bale from 24th April to 4th May 1965. The Fair will consist of twenty-eight Display Groups who will be showing their products in twenty-five halls with a total of more than forty acres of floor space.

Certain display groups are not represented every year; thus apart from the regular groups, it will this year be the turn of those covering woodworking machinery, boiler-making and radiator constructions, optics and photography, mechanical conveying and handling, and coachbuilding, heavy motor vehicles, and trailers. The groups dealing with machine tools and electrical engineering in industry will not be represented this year, but will return for the 1966 Fair.

[S.N.T.O.]

TOURISTS IN THE LOETSCHENTAL?

Before the remote Lötschental in the Valais was linked to the world by the Simplon-Lötschberg railway, it was one of Switzerland's most secluded Alpine valleys. Its inhabitants are of Celtic origin like those of Ireland, and in this solitary part thrives a fairy world of gnomes, giants and ghosts of erring souls. The French writer Guy de Maupassant conjured up this eerie loneliness in his short stories from the Lötschental. At Carnival-time the unreal comes into life in the Lötschental, and the inhabitants scare away winter from behind weird masks which seem to originate from the South Seas. They express their deep religious belief in a custom as moving as it is picturesque: in past centuries young men from the Lötschental stood on guard in Rome, Versailles, Madrid and Naples as mercenaries; and so the "Grenadiers of the Lord" still wear their colourful uniforms on the day of the mightiest of all Kings. — So as to offer the population of the Lötschental an adequate living, the development of tourism has been considered, for which the scenic beauty of the place offers unlimited possibilities. Some of Switzerland's mightiest peaks are just within reach, like the Aletschhorn, the Breithorn, the Jungfrau, and the Bietschhorn (12,970 ft.) right next door is praised for its magnificent view by experienced mountain-climbers. Sir Leslie Stephens, the literary philosopher and father of the essayist Virginia Woolf, was the first to climb the Bietschhorn in 1859. Not only can holiday-makers ski right into summer in the Lötschental, but sundrenched mountain paths and shady woods offer inexhaustible hiking possibilities. In order to open the valley to tourism, an aerial cableway is to link it with the Bernese Oberland; a motorcar road already leads to the Rhone Valley and another is planned to the Fafleralp right at the far end of the valley. According to press reports a new tourist centre is to be built in the vicinity of the villages of Kippel and Wiler.

[S.N.T.O.]

GENEVA CUP CONTEST AT CHATEAU D'OEX 1965

More than seventy competitors came to Château d'Oex from Villars, St. Moritz, Lenk, Mürren, Wengen, Zermatt and Verbier this year for the beautiful Challenge Cup offered by the Geneva Tourist Office to members of the National Ski Federation of Great Britain coming to Swiss Winter sports resorts, which are reached through the Geneva Intercontinental Airport.

The best performance of the day was made by: R. Bruneau, D.H.O., who, therefore, wins the Geneva Cup for one year. Prize giving, as every year, was effected by the Geneva Tourist Office.

One could notice the presence of Mrs. Hepworth, D.H.O., Wengen, Miss Levenson, Villars, Miss Roe, Zweisimmen, Major Fielding, Prince Nicholas von Preussen, Competitor, and the Earl of Ancram (Oxford team) Competitor.

The Geneva Watchmakers Association, through the saleshop of the Geneva Airport joined the event by generously offering a splendid watch to the winner of the first place in each category.

The results are the following: — Gentlemen: 1) D. Barrere, 2) S. Beddington-Behrens, 3) O. Hart. Ladies: 1) Shelagh Murphy, 2) Lady Mary Kerr, 3) Patricia Hodgson. Girls: 1) Sally Ireland and Lady Cecil Kerr, 3) Linden Carr. Boys: 1) R. Bruneau, 2) A. Ballantyne, 3) G. Miller.