

Happy birthday 'Uri' - "Tell me"

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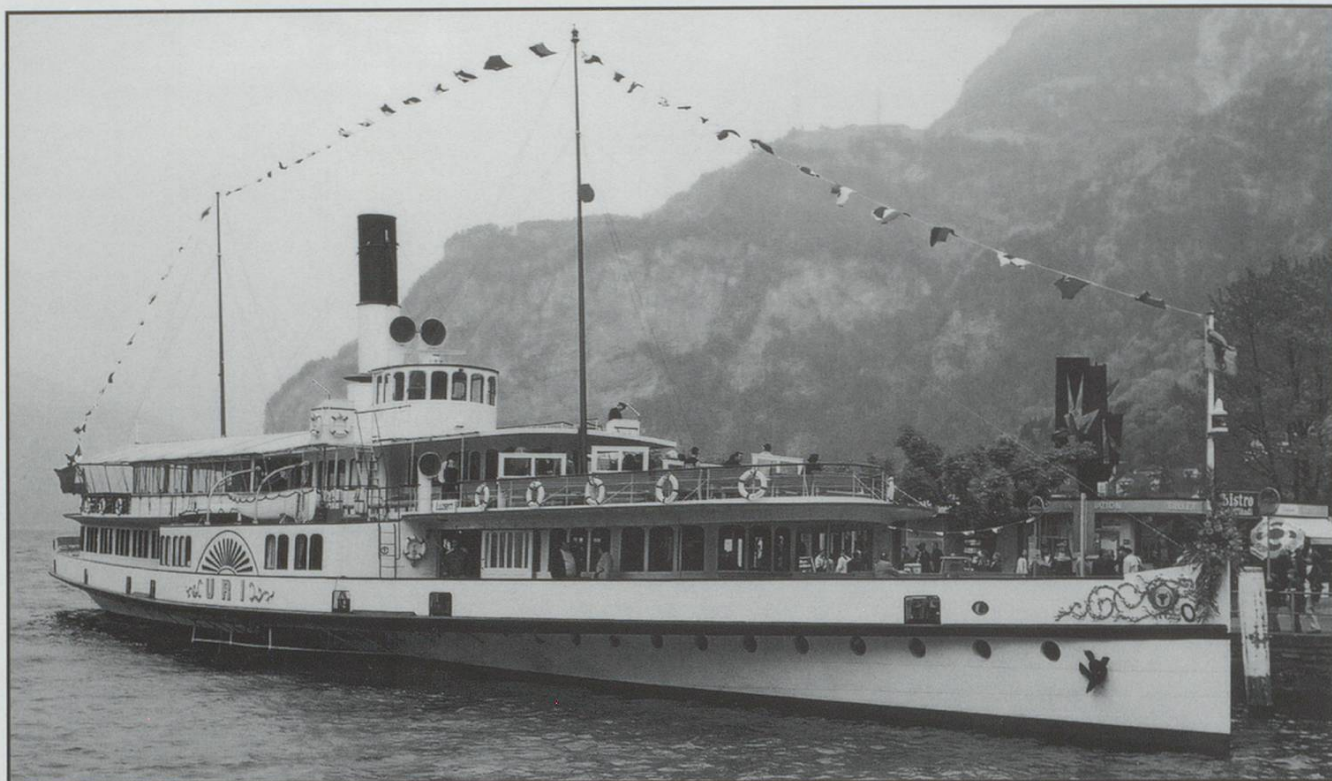
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*DS Uri lies at Luzern Quay waiting for the passengers to join her for her 100th birthday. 4/5/2001.
Both photos: DS*

During a recent visit to Luzern I was invited by SGV to join in the Jubilee celebrations surrounding the 100th birthday of *Uri*, the oldest paddler still in service in Switzerland. To coincide with this SGV have also introduced a new attraction based around the legend of William Tell.

I joined the party for the evening of Friday May 4th 2001. This date is significant as it was exactly 100 years since *Uri* set sail on her maiden voyage. The panel gives more details of *Uri*'s history but suffice it to say that SGV had "pushed the boat out" for the day.

The concept of "TELL ME" was mentioned briefly in the last edition of *Swiss Express* and having experienced it I can vouch for it being both interesting and relaxing. A perfect way to spend a few hours on the calm waters of the "Vierwaldstättersee".

SGV were very conscious that they needed something professional and spectacular but at the same time they needed to keep it simple as it was to be produced in several languages and

be capable of simultaneous or consecutive presentation in a relatively short time frame.

As the lake boat glides round Urnersee, generally regarded as the most picturesque part of the four lakes, landscape and history are put across using four short four minute modules. These are played at Treib, the Schillerstein, Rütli and Tellskapelle. The modules combine music, sound and text and, during the evening sailings, lighting which is directed by a member of the boat's crew. Whilst these presentations are playing the boat remains still enabling videos, and in the lighter evenings, photographs also to be taken. It is difficult to convey these modules in a magazine. Descriptions of decisive moments in the history of the founding of the Helvetic Confederation, the legend of William Tell and other items are combined with suitable music and sound effects all illuminated by spotlights.

SGV were kind enough to provide an excellent meal which was taken in the upper dining room and being washed down with

100 YEARS OF URI

DS *Uri* was not the first steamer on the Vierwaldstättersee. Original steamers dating from the 1830s had oscillating cylinder engines the design of which meant low steam pressure, large cylinders and slow, albeit relatively powerful motion. Large diameter paddle wheels were needed.

Uri is the oldest surviving steamer powered by a newer design from the late 19th century, the diagonal compound engine. Pressure could be more than doubled and the superheated steam produced meant that the new engine could also be a compound. The higher power output and a lower crankshaft meant that smaller diameter paddle wheels could be used. The blades incidentally are movable and linked in such a way that they are kept perpendicular in the water; this further improves the transfer of power.

The original boilers were replaced in 1991 by a similar but refined design allowing power output to be three times that of the original simple designs. New cylinders were also required and these were machined by Sulzer from the original drawings. The 1991 renovation went very much further than just new engines. Modern hydraulic steering and navigational gear were just part of a 26 month refit. The superstructure was renewed including restoration of all the interior wood panelling. Original carvings lost over the years were also replicated by an Italian craftsman who carved them from scratch. *Uri* was returned to service in 1994, in plenty of time for her 100th birthday.

copious quantities of mineral water cunningly disguised as very nice Swiss wine made for a convivial and pleasant evening.

"TELL ME" is operated as a public excursion on Saturday evenings during the high season and is well worth it. For private charters the programme is available at no extra cost. SGV have already taken several bookings as you can imagine.

A lot of people were involved in the production of "TELL ME". I do feel that I should mention one in particular, Peter Rüeegger of SGV, who was the project manager and ensured that the execution was first class. Some of you will know Peter from his main job as SGV's Marketing Manager. He has been and will, I am sure, continue to be a good friend to the SRS. I would like to thank him personally

TECHNICAL DATA - DS 'URI'

Builder - Sulzer **Constructed** - 1901
Renovations - 1949/1961/1981/1994
Weight - 293.6 tonnes
Boiler pressure - 12 atmospheres **HP** - 650
Length overall - 61.8 m **Breadth overall** - 14m
Capacity - 800 (593 outside, 207 inside)
Max. Maintainable speed - 14.8 knots

FURTHER INFORMATION:

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for the invitation and to congratulate him and his team on an excellent concept carried out to perfection.

Add it to your list of things to do next year.

The picturesque landing stage at Treib with the Treib-Seelisberg Bahn car. 4/5/2001.

