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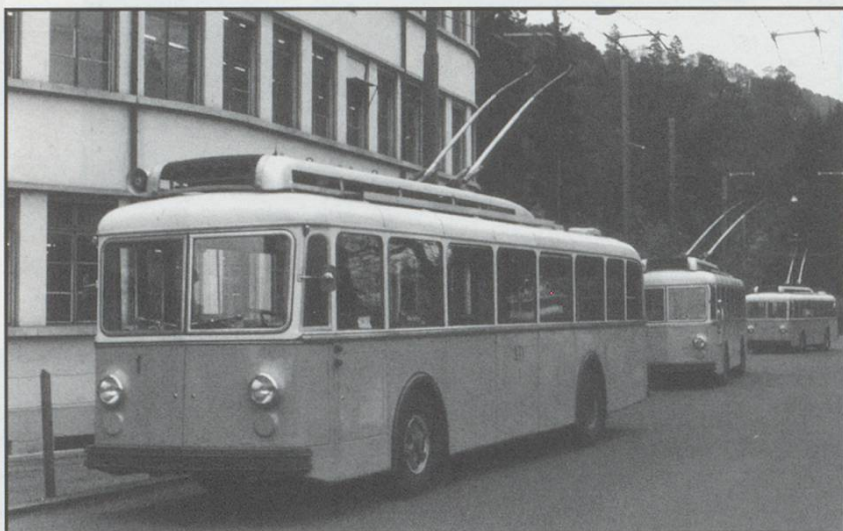
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Silentio ad draconem

Little did I realise just how much is known about the trolleybuses that used to ply the northern shores of Lake Thun. I had more replies on this subject than any other to date. Curiously all the replies gave slightly different information so I am using most of the replies rather than picking bits out here and there. I must mention in particular Stefan Unholz who was kind enough to send me some STI pictures in response to my urgent request. Roger Barton also wrote in. His letter is in the letters section



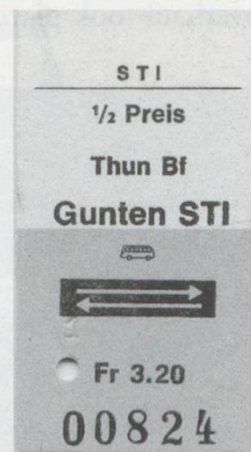
Trolleybus no. 1 heading a line-up ready for departure at Thun
All the pictures are by Stefan Unholz

FROM: STEFAN UNHOLZ

I was leafing through the March issue of *Swiss Express* (before enjoying it more thoroughly this evening) and was delighted to encounter two nice pictures of STI trolleybuses on page 33.

I am a Committee member of the Swiss Trolleybus Society (<http://www.trolleybus.ch>) and certainly could provide some additional information on those buses.

So here is some brief info on the line. It was named STI, Steffisburg - Thun - Interlaken, and replaced a tram in 1952. However, the catenary did not span the entire line to Interlaken but only as far as Beatenbucht where there was a loop for the trolleybuses. A total of nine two-axle trolleybuses were built by Berna, Gangloff, Ramseier&Jenzer, and Sécheron and ran there reliably for 30 years. There were also trailers for the trolleybuses, among them two very rare PTT trailers. In 1982 the trolleybus service was



Ticket courtesy
George Hoekstra

unfortunately replaced by standard diesel buses. Two of the trolleybuses were saved from going to the scrapyard, number 1 by the STI and number 7 by the Tramverein Bern (TVB). One bus is currently being restored by the TVB, and they are using the best parts of the two buses mentioned for this task.

FROM: NICK POTTER

The STI (Steffisburg-Thun-Interlaken) opened as a metre gauge tramway on 10.10.13 to Oberhofen, on 24.12.13 to Beatenbucht and on 20.06.14 to Interlaken. The section from Interlaken to Beatenbucht closed on 18.12.39, from Beatenbucht to Merligen on 31.01.52 and from Merligen to Thun on 18.08.52. The final town section to Steffisburg closed on 31.05.58.

Trolleybuses were introduced between Thun and Beatenbucht on 19.08.52 and closed on 14.03.82. The fleet consisted of nine trolleybuses (1-9), five passenger trailers (21-25), seven luggage trailers (61-67) and two postal trailers (71-72). The route operated rather like a railway, with booking offices at the main stops. Route boards were used, with journeys connecting with motorbuses at Beatenbucht showing "Interlaken".

FROM: LYNDON ROWE

The March 2002 edition of *Swiss Express* included two excellent colour photographs of trolleybuses at Gunten on the north bank of the Thunersee and the caption thereto sought further details about the trolleybus system.

Trolleybuses between Thun and Beatenbucht were managed by the STI (Verkehrsbetriebe Steffisburg- Thun - Interlaken) and replaced trams on this section of line. The first trolleybuses began test operations between Merligen and Beatenbucht from 1st February 1952 but passenger operation throughout from Thun to Beatenbucht began on 19th August, when the official opening ceremony was held. This new form of transport cut back the tram system to the section between Thun and Steffisburg, the line between Beatenbucht and Interlaken having already been replaced by buses in 1939 when the canton rebuilt the road over this section. Tramway operation had commenced in 1913 between Steffisburg and Beatenbucht and on to Interlaken in 1914 and the remaining trams between Steffisburg and Thun were finally replaced by buses on 1st June 1958.

The length of the trolleybus route was 13.4 km and nine vehicles were purchased to run the service. This they did for almost thirty years, until replaced by buses in 1982. Over this time each vehicle ran more than one million kilometres in service through some of the best scenery on any European trolleybus route.

Berna supplied nine two-axle vehicles to run the service and these had bodies by Gangloff (odd numbered vehicles) and Ramseier and Jenzer (even numbers). The bodies were identical and no destination blind equipment was provided, destinations from Thun Station being shown on coloured boards placed in a nearside window above the front



Trolleybus no. 3 "en route"

axle. The board for Hünibach was blue, Oberhofen Dorf - green, Gunten - orange, Merligen - white and Beatenbucht - yellow. Where a trolleybus connected at Beatenbucht with a motorbus for Interlaken, a red board replaced the yellow one.

In addition to the rigid vehicles, there were five passenger trailers (numbered 21 - 25), six two wheeled baggage trailers (62- 67) and two postal trailers (71 - 72). The postal trailers were used by the Swiss Postal Authority (PTT) to transport mails from Thun Station to the villages en route and mail sorting was carried out in the trailers on the journeys towards Thun, ready for easy onward despatch at Thun Station. Sometimes trolleybuses could be seen towing a postal trailer and a baggage trailer one behind the other, the baggage trailer often being detached at Gunten for onward passage to Sigriswil behind a motorbus.

Sadly the decision to replace the trolleybuses was taken in February 1980, the cost of vehicle replacement being a major factor, especially as the line was energised at 1100 volts. The last trolleybuses ran between Oberhofen and Beatenbucht on 21st February 1982, with the final closure taking place on 14th March, when trolleybuses 1, 5, 6 and 7 were the last to operate. After closure, trolleybus 1 was retained by the STI and number 7 was preserved by the Tramverein Bern. Postal trailer 71 passed to the



Trolleybus no. 3 "en route"

PTT Museum. Thus ended one of the most interesting trolleybus systems to be found anywhere in Europe.

FROM: MIKE TUCKER

The trolleybuses were operated by the Steffisburg-Thun-Interlaken (STI) Company. Nine four - wheeled, two - axle, trolleybuses were purchased by STI to replace the earlier tramline which ran along the north side of the Thunersee. The single route ran for 13.3km from Thun to Beatenbucht.

The route opened for public operation on 19th August 1952 and as commented in your caption featured the use of trailers. The company owned trailers for passenger and postal use and these could be towed by all the nine trolleybuses. The upper picture in the March issue showed Trolleybus number 5 with what appears to be trailer number 71.



Trailer 71 was actually a postal sorting trailer.

All nine trolleybus chassis were built for the STI in 1952 by Berna. They were all fitted with bodies made from steel and light alloys giving the trolleybuses a tare weight of 10.6 tonnes. The vehicles were powered by direct current with series-wound motors producing 118 kilowatts of power. Electrical equipment on the trolleybuses was supplied by Sécheron. Each vehicle had seating capacity for 40 passengers with a further 33 places for standing.



PTT postal trailer no. 72 at Thun

The system survived for only a further six months after Beat took his photographs, finally closing to passengers on 14th March 1982, after less than 30 years service. Two trolleybuses from the system survived the closure and went into preservation. The STI Company initially preserved trolleybus number 1 and Tramverein Bern preserved number 7. However I believe that both vehicles are now under the care of Tramverein Bern so that one complete trolleybus can be reconstructed using parts from both.

Trolleybus no. 1 next to passenger trailer no. 23 at Thun