

The SGV Millennium parade

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Saturday 15th April, the day chosen for the Paddle Steamer Parade to celebrate the return to service on Lake Lucerne of the DS Schiller, began with dry pavements. But as I walked briskly from Luzern's Hotel Central, appropriately named and ideally situated for journeys by train (4 mins) or ship (6 mins), a light drizzle started. By the time I had met with the rest of the SRS contingent, Maurice Criddle carrying his video camera, and Colin Jarman toting his camera, the rain was quite heavy.

Thus we needed little persuasion to report at 08.30 to the media desk under cover on Brücke 2 to receive our press pack in a special carrying case and our traditional Edmondson card type tickets for the Fotoschiff, MS Weggis. It augured well, for the same vessel had been

used for the 1997 parade due to its speed and manoeuvrability.

Coffee and croissants on board were followed by a briefing to the media pack by SGV director Dr Hans Meiner, Paddle Ship Friends Group president Dr Josef Nigg and Peter Rüeegg, the ever affable Marketing Manager of SGV who towers above everyone else; no wonder he gets the best pictures with no-one else's head in the way!

The briefing was in high German, but with English subtitles kindly provided from time to time for us and for the reporter from Ships Monthly magazine. We were told how the finance was raised for the ChFr 6 million rebuild of the Schiller, which was launched in 1908. Individuals and organisations had sup-



*"Schiller" starts her engines prior to departure. 15th April 2000
Photo: Colin Jarman*



A heavy list to starboard as guests flock to catch a glimpse of "Schiller". 15th April 2000

Photo: Colin Jarman

ported the project and SGV were no doubt relieved at the prospect of receiving the final cheque for two million francs later that day.

The briefing over, the media moved to the top deck, so that members of the public who had bought tickets for the photoship could take their places down below. Such was the interest shown that the MS Gotthard also spent the day shadowing the five paddle steamers as they made their way to Flüelen. On board her was a contingent from the Paddle Steamer Preservation Society, responsible for the continued operation in British waters of the paddle steamer Waverley and cruising ship Balmoral.

The Weggis weighed anchor and pulled back to be in the best position for the photographers to record the departure of all five paddlers. As they set out along the Luzerner See and into the Vierwaldstätter See proper, they took up various formations as far as the Schiller's first port of call, Buochs. Crowds here lined the lakeside, colourful umbrellas

protecting them from the now continuous rain. A brass band played, as did alpenhorn players and flag-wavers stood by.

The journey continued with calls at Brunnen and Flüelen, where most of the worlds press left the photoship, having managed to consume enormous quantities of an excellent hot buffet, washed down by a few dozen litres of alcohol!

About three years ago the magazine TT Revue had a cover shot which I have always envied. One of the paddle steamers was tied up at Trieb and the little red car of the Seelisberg funicular was just leaving the bottom station; I assume it had been contrived or the photographer was able to walk on water. Today they had re-enacted this scenario and we had an opportunity to take the same shot, the car stopped towards the bottom of the gradient, with children waving. It was then that my new camera played-up and I fear that I do not have the shot!



*Above: DS Schiller turns into the homeward leg of the journey as she passes near Meggen. April 2000.
See SGV Article.*

*Photo: Michael Farr
Photo: Pete Dyson*

Below: RhB ABe 4/4 501 prepares to leave Spinas. June 1993.





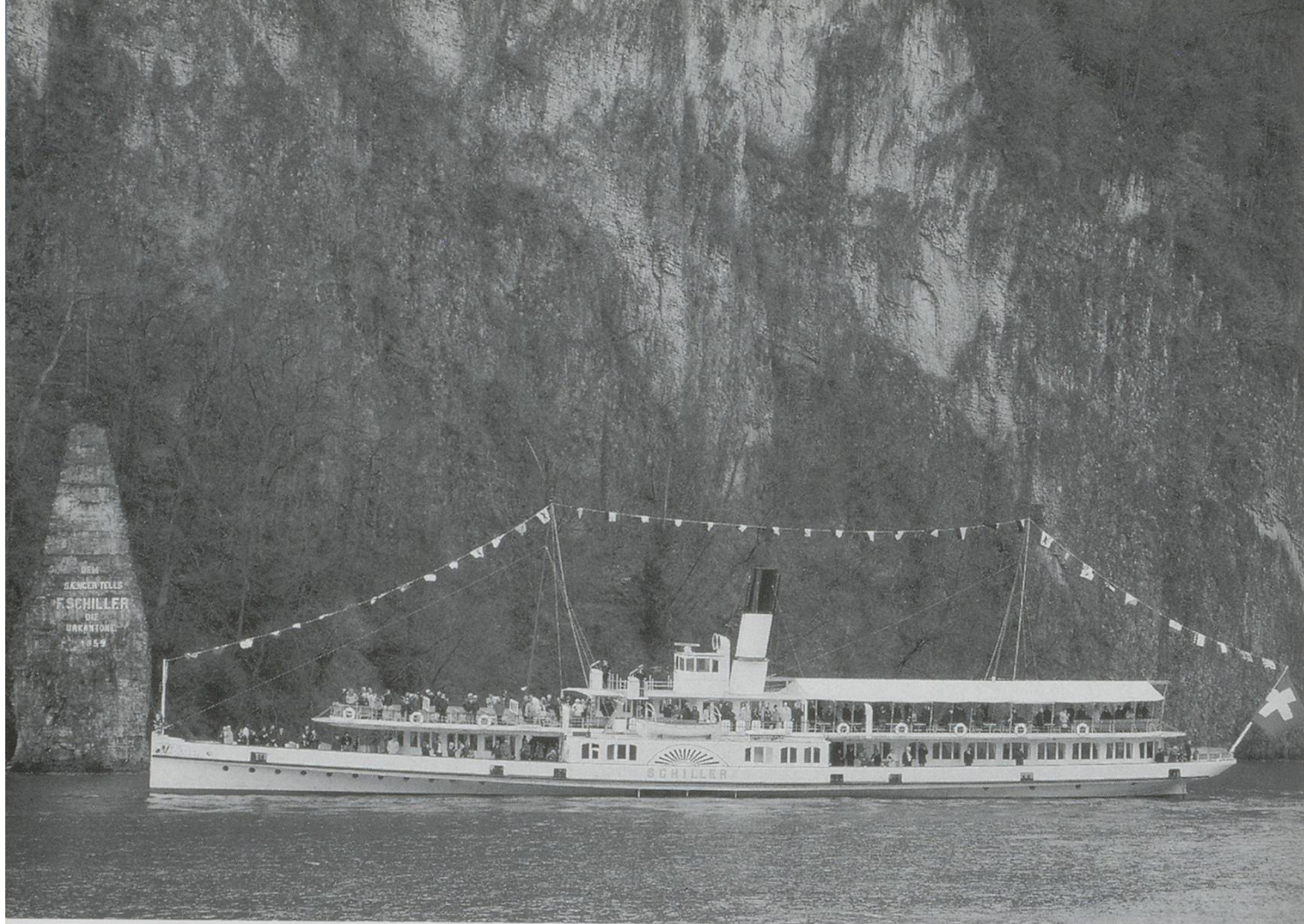
Above: The MOB's mystery Ge4/4 8003 at Gstaad, 1/3/00. See Notepad.

Photo: Don Newing

Below: Appenzellerbahn BDeh 4/4 no.17 prepares to leave Gais for the short, highly dramatic and very steep journey down to Altstätten. May 1998.

Photo: DS





"Schiller" stops to pay its respects to Friedrich Schiller at the Memorial Stone. 15th April 2000.

Photo: Colin Jarman

Passenger numbers on our ship having been decimated, when not on deck peering into the viewfinder, I was able to sit in the Rondelle, the front cabin of the Weggis. Alas, the rain on the windows affected our visibility and with no sign of the rain abating, Maurice and Colin decided to leave the ship on its call at Brunnen on the return journey so they could catch a train back to their hotel in Erstfeld.

As a result they missed a series of very, very, very long speeches on the quay at Brunnen, all spoken in German of course, and relayed over the ships loudspeakers. The theme of the speeches was to praise the hard work and enthusiasm which had contributed to the successful completion of Schiller in less than four years and to emphasise how important was the SGV fleet to the tourism of the area, particularly since the dedication of the Swiss Way around the lake to Rütli meadow where Switzerland began.

A lighter note was struck by the appearance of the miniature paddle steamer Liberty Belle dodging in and out of her bigger cousins; her captain must have needed a strong stomach and good rain gear!

When we eventually left Brunnen, sailing alongside the Schiller and the other paddlers, the sky ahead was brighter. By the time we reached the cross-funnel, where the various fingers of the Vierwaldstättersee meet, we were treated to some watery sun, though with a bitingly cold wind.

Schiller tied up at Küssnacht, where she received a similar welcome to the other ports of call. The four other ships did a lap of honour around the harbour before lining up with the sun in just the right position for photographers what a shame the majority of the professionals had already left the ship.

However, even better was to come, for as the ships processed out of the Küssnachter See

and into the Luzerner See, with Schiller leading, the sun picked her out, leaving the other ships in a slight shade. It was a sight I shall never forget, and I just hope that I have it successfully on film. (*see colour section!*)

Some people on board Weggis wanted to watch the steamers go safely back at their moorings, but many passengers had to catch trains and so we tied up, unusually, at the Schweizerhof quay. This gave a good view of the four ships berthing whilst Schiller stood alongside the restaurant ship, Wilhelm Tell, which is her sister if you can call a ship with a male name "her!"

With Schiller back at her berth, I went to leave the Weggis, only to find that we had already cast off. Looks like you're coming with us said Christine Hüsler, SGV's Marketing Assistant who, with Peter Rüeegger, had made sure the British contingent was not left out of things, telling us what was going on and about announcements made only in German, for instance.

Members who have taken part in branch line rail-tours in the UK will know that some participants insist on walking to the front of the train so they can say they have done the full length of the line. Now Weggis took me right into the SGV dock area, stopping a few feet

short of the doors to the dry dock, and so I can now say I have done the SGV shipyard!

Obviously it would have been nice to have sunny weather for such an auspicious event, but everyone to whom I have spoken, including paddle steamer enthusiasts travelling on Schiller on its regular journeys during the following week, were full of praise not only for the superb restoration of the ship but for the equally superb arrangements made by SGV for the day.

Those travelling on the lake on Sunday would have enjoyed that longed-for sunshine, but I chose to follow two charter steam trains up the Rigi and when I took the farewell trip of my holiday, returning from Gersau to Luzern on Schiller, the weather was again wet. But, fortified by an excellent meal prepared in the ships kitchens, I was not unhappy. For nothing can compare with the sound and smell of the well-oiled steam engine whether on rails or water and it did indeed bring back memories of many happy journeys down the Bristol Channel watching the engines and the paddle wheels when I was a lad.

Maurice Criddle is very pleased with the rushes from his video camera and is now editing something in excess of four hours filming down to reasonable length for showing to Society meetings and other events. Please contact the Editor in the first instance.

Copied from Transports Régionaux Neuchâtelois information 23.09.99 by Michael Farr

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*Above: The worlds most powerful rack locomotive (see Tooth by Tooth) FO HGe 4/4¹ 103 backs down on to a Glacier Express having dropped off an RhB Restaurant car. Photo: Stuart Frost (see article).
 Below: Prior to the extension to Brig VZ HGe 4/4 no.16 is pictured at Zermatt in the summer of 1963. A delightful reminder of the past. Photo: Robin Cooper*





Above: RhB Ge 4/4 waits in the snow at Davos whilst a mad englishman takes it's picture. February 2000.

Photo: Geoff Turner

Below: The same mad englishman hangs out of the window to take an RhB Ge6/6^{II} unusually heading a passenger train down the Prättigau between Saas and Küblis . February 2000.

Photo: Geoff Turner

