

To the top of the Toggenberg

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TO THE TOP OF THE TOGGENBERG

KeithScotland



DUI Car 1 approaching the Bergstation on 23/07/2009

ALL PHOTOS: Ernst B Leutwiler

The Toggenburg is the name for the long valley of the River Thur that runs across the south of Canton St Gallen in eastern Switzerland. On its north side the valley is enclosed by the Alpstein Massive with the Säntis as its highest point. On the southern side of the Toggenburg the long serrated ridge of the Churfirten separates it from the Walensee and the major road and rail links between Chur and Zürich. At the eastern end of the valley are the small resorts of Alt St Johann, Unterwasser and Wildhaus, the latter being the birthplace of the famous Swiss protestant reformer Ulrich Zwingli. The southern slopes of the valley are a mountain paradise and over the years several methods of accessing these areas have been brought into operation. There are chairlifts climbing from Alt St Johann and Wildhaus, whilst from Unterwasser there is a busy funicular running up to Iltios.

This, the Drahtseilbahn Unterwasser-Iltios (DUI), celebrated its 75 years of faithful service to the Iltios and Chäserrugg alpine areas last year. The concession for the funicular was granted in 1933, the company formed on the

11th of September 1933, and with a remarkably rapid construction, it opened on the 26th July 1934. Today the third generation of cars, built in 1975 and capable of carrying 100 people each, operate throughout the year. These cars were built to the original 800mm gauge however, when the line was modernised and refurbished in 2005 at a cost of CHF5.5 million, the track was changed to be metre-gauge with the underframes of the cars being widened appropriately. From the Tal (valley) station at Unterwasser at 910m it climbs 440m over its 1210m length to reach Iltios at some 1350m. During the climb the line, which is generally raised above ground level, sweeps across typical alpine meadows and allows ever-expanding views of the broad Toggenburg valley. From Iltios a cable car lifts riders onwards-and-upwards to Chäserrugg at 2262m. There are many restaurants and ski lifts in the recreational area served by the DUI, and its popularity is reflected in the number of employees, 21 in summer, 54 in winter. The DUI carried 98,786 passengers in summer 2008, and 235,687 in the 2008 /09 winter season. At peak operation the

funicular can carry 750 people an hour. The 360° views from the Chäserrugg summit are fantastic. There are around 150 Steinbok (or Ibex) living up there too, and these are always popular with the tourists.

The nearest railway is the terminus of the SBB/SOB branch line from Wattwil at Nesslau – Neu St. Johann 12km away, where a PostAuto service to Buchs via Unterwasser meets the train. See David Adams' 'Bus to Bahn' article in Edition 99. The trains run to-and-from Wil where they connect with the

Zürich-St Gallen main line with the trip from Zürich Flughafen to Unterwasser taking just under two hours. Since November 2008 the funicular has been part of the Toggenburg Bergbahnen AG. To appreciate some of the magnificent views that will open-up for you when you travel on the line visit www.chaeserrugg.ch.

DUI Car 2 at the crossing loop. The Alpstein Massive is seen behind.

The winding equipment on the DUI.



SWISS RAILWAYS SOCIETY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2011

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the Swiss Railways Society will be held in the Midland Hotel, Derby on Saturday 26th March 2011 and will start at 1400.

NOMINATIONS FOR OFFICERS

Nominations are invited for the following posts: Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Editor, Membership Secretary, Publicity & Exhibitions Officer, Sales Officer and two other elected members of the Management Committee. Nomination Forms are available from the Secretary:

David Stevenson, 3 Aldersey Road, Worcester, WR5 3BG or by email at <Secretary@SwissRailSoc.org.uk>

Completed forms must reach him by post or by hand, but not by email, no later than Saturday 12th March 2011.

It is important to note that all nominees AND their proposers and seconders MUST have paid their subscriptions for 2011 PRIOR to signing the nomination form. Failure to do so will render the nomination form invalid. Members are advised that a list of nominees and a copy of any accompanying statement they may have made to support their nomination will be supplied by the Secretary on receipt of an application by post with an SAE or by email at the above addresses.

Any application for a postal vote must be accompanied by an SAE and will be sent out by post only to the named addressee who must be a member of the Society at the time of application. The application must reach the Secretary by Saturday 19th March 2011. Completed ballot papers must reach the Secretary no later than the start of the AGM meeting on Saturday 26th March 2011.

MOTIONS FOR THE AGM

Motions for the meeting, proposed and seconded by members who have paid their 2011 subscriptions, must reach the Secretary by Saturday 26th February 2011. This will ensure that they can be included on the Agenda together with any motions put forward by the Committee.