

Time with timetables

Autor(en): **Stone, Bryan**

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undamaged, remained in use and this railway, now some 120 years old, still operates with wooden-bodied cars. One of these is an original, the other a modern replica built following its predecessor being destroyed in a collision with a truck in 2011 at a point where the line crosses a road. Between 2011 and 2012 a further major change was made to the top section when the 36 year old cable car system was replaced by a new 'Cabrio Luftseilbahn' where each cable car rides between two cables instead of hanging below a single cable. This system allows a conventional enclosed cabin to be supplemented with an open top deck, allowing passengers to enjoy a wonderful open-air ride and amazing views. The new operation opened on the 29th June 2012 when my wife and I were fortunate enough to be able to sample this unique experience. The opening of the 'Cabrio' system attracted major media attention and, as could be expected, there was a gala atmosphere in the restaurant at the top. Visitors to Stans can now enjoy both one of the oldest, and the most modern, forms of mechanical mountain climbing. 



BELOW LEFT: Stanserhorn 2-tier luftseilbahn arrives at summit.

TOP RIGHT: Stanserhornbahnhof, Stans.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Wooden-bodied car on funicular above Stans.

All Photos: Arthur Turner taken on 29/6/2012

TIME WITH TIMETABLES

Bryan Stone

The VÖV (the Swiss Association of Public Transport) has its office appropriately in the 'Diplomatic Quarter' of the Swiss capital, Bern. Its various functions on behalf of its members, which are all the railways, SBB and private (including the mountain lines) bus, tram and ship operators, and also most of the cable cars, need much diplomacy. One function is to manage the annual tariff reviews, and to co-ordinate and adjust the shares of receipts for each undertaking from through bookings, in the different classes, and all-line passes such as Swiss Rail and General Abonnements. It also ensures harmonized conditions and use of through tickets. There is also an international element, and this, finally, is only one part of what they do. They do not however co-ordinate timetables. That is done by the Bundesamt für Verkehr, the Federal Transport Department, who start from the Interval Timetable and the availability of paths in the network. Both of these tasks require the Wisdom



of Solomon and the Patience of Job, given the number of consulted interests, including regional and political bodies, to be weighed in the balance.

Perhaps it was thus that from January to April 2013, the VÖV presented an exhibition of historic posters on the theme 'Timetables' at its offices. SBB Historic, also in Bern by the main station, has a large collection of those travel posters that carried the legendary Swiss graphic art of the last 150 years, and was the VÖV's partner in organising this event. The exhibition, which opened on January 15th with the classic Apéro, displayed 34 posters from the 19th C. scenic artwork with connections from Paris or London, to the classic Timetable promotion. Here some facts are telling. Around 1882 the Swiss Public Timetable sold about 300,000 copies twice a year - they were bought like warm croissants at the kiosks and stations of the various lines. They were compact, dense and tightly packed with one book containing all trains (including international services), ships, PostAuto services, and mountain lines. Around 2002 the sales fell below 100,000, and today they are 45,000. It's still a big business with sales now stable despite on-line Apps, etc. Today the timetable changes every year in December, but now it is a huge work weighing 2.4 Kg. and produced in three volumes: one with rail/lakes/mountain and cables, and the other two with buses. You don't take it all with you anymore, whereas the old one was a companion for long trips, nights in guesthouses and so on. Switzerland is now even a curiosity; very few other systems now publish an all-line timetable.

As the exhibition showed, the first Swiss timetable was not an official one, but a private one, Bürkli in 1856, a 32 page booklet with 6 tables. In 1872 the new National Railway Law, among many improvements, established an obligatory harmonized timetabling process, including the obligation to connect, and a single Indicateur Officiel/Amtliches Kursbuch was published. Bürkli continued for many years (independent, as was Bradshaw in Britain) and many of us have Bürklis in our collections.



The exhibition has a strong social element. While the posters were sending British or Russian aristocracy to St Moritz or Bad Ragaz, workpeople took their times from the big, once familiar wall timetables in stations, or the once ubiquitous Nigg aluminium wall table with its set of figures carefully placed in its frame by the station agent. Spine-chilling is a poster from the Val-de-Ruz, nr. Neuchâtel, with suspension of the public service on August 4 1914, and times shown for the general mobilization of soldiers. Another which caught me was a complete poster of BLS trains, Delle to Domodossola, from May 1913, displayed at the opening of the route whose centenary is celebrated this year. Finally, there was room to show modern timetable concepts, graphical forms and the Swiss network timetable, which only shows trains by the minutes in the hour in which they arrive and depart. It is a huge puzzle, but very valuable; however most of us will stick to our 'table' of times. That was also the motif for perhaps the most famous poster of all 'Der Kluge reist im Zuge'. This spawned a phrase that is still on the lips of Swiss you will meet, and means, as you might guess 'The wise go by train'. Classically simple, showing no more than a passenger's seat, his arms and an open newspaper, relaxed crossed

legs and, with as background, the timetable, Table 10, Geneva – Lausanne – Bern. Hans Thörni, the then SBB Publicity Manager, designed it in 1958. Nothing since has come closer to the essence of Swiss travel. So thank you, Hans-Kaspar Schiesser of the VÖV, and Barbara Imboden of SBB Historic, for a fascinating evening and a truly instructive exhibition. 