

# Auto AG Interlaken : 'Ticket Collector' Michael Farr tells of his first encounter with Switzerland

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shortages reigned. The SNCF was prepared to let 2-3 trains run per day if SBB could loan them locomotives. The Swiss agreed to this and were also prepared to supply the coal required, on a 15 tonne-per-delivered wagon basis, as well as to supply the wagons. By March 1945 two-trains-daily were operating each way between Cerbère and Genève, and by October 1945 there were 12 C4/5 and 24 C5/6 in France. They were stationed at Ambérieu, and ran extensive distances, in total 580,000 km, of which 88,000 km were in Oct 1945 alone. The records do not show exactly where they worked, although it is always said that they ran to Toulon and Sète. However, they did work local diagrams all around Ambérieu, and as Lons-Le-Saulnier is only a short distance north this may explain the mural of No.2978 that Keith Scotland has written about. The locomotives were returned after Oct 1945 when brand-new American 141R locos started to be delivered to the SNCF, allowing the thirty-six 30 to 40-year-old Swiss engines (on expensive rental) to be handed back. Most of them lasted until the 1960s in freight or relief duty; many spent their last years as heavy shunters or as

breakdown train engines. Sister loco No.2965 is on display in the Verkehrshaus museum in Luzern.

*Editor's note: As the people depicted on the mural (painted in 1998) appear to be wearing Edwardian dress, from the period before the loco was built, I can only think that there is a lot of artistic licence at play here!* 🇨🇭

The mural on the café wall .

Photo: Keith Scotland



## AUTO AG INTERLAKEN

I was greatly cheered during our first Swiss holiday in 1990 to discover that

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Mr Edmondson's wonderful pasteboard tickets (invented in Cumbria), lingered on at less important stations and on certain private lines. Staying at Wilderswil, near Interlaken, meant we frequently used trains of the Berner Oberland Bahn, which had neat little litterbins between each pair of seats. Surreptitiously investigating these bins often revealed hidden gems of tickets and as the Swiss are generally a clean and tidy race anything discarded was likely to be in reasonable condition, though chewing gum could be a problem!

One day I found a ticket issued by Auto AG Interlaken for a coach journey. I wrote to their offices and soon a large envelope arrived containing a card on which someone had very carefully mounted, without the use of glue, what I assumed to be a virtually complete set of their issues. They covered bus tours from Interlaken to Blausee and Kandersteg; a 'Country Tour' through Emmental to Bern; a day trip over the passes Grimsel, Furka and Susten; a Cheese Dairy Tour; full day tours to Luzern and Montreux; an afternoon outing to the Reichenbach Falls and Ballenberg open-air museum, or an indulgent visit to a Chocolate Factory (probably the Nestlé/Cailler premises at Broc). Other afternoon trips were to Schwarzsee and the Trümmelbach Falls, Grindelwald, Stechelberg and the Schilthorn with its

"James Bond" revolving restaurant. I understood that Auto AG Interlaken was a subsidiary of

BLS but could find nothing to confirm this. I enlisted the aid of fellow SRS member and BLS expert Peter Marriott who found the answer in an official BLS book of 1998 that also noted Auto AG ran bus services around Interlaken in conjunction with SwissPost to Beatenberg, Bonigen, Habkern, Iseltwald and were solely responsible for the Niederried service. Sadly for me by the time I visited Interlaken drivers on these services issued machine-printed tickets. In addition Auto AG offered the selection of coach tours covered by the tickets illustrated here. Peter was even able to supply a photo of a model Auto AG coach!

Finally I would like to thank those members which have in the past put their used tickets aside and sent me a 'goody-bag' from time to time. Their kindness has been greatly appreciated not only by me but by other members of the Transport Ticket Society to whom I have passed any duplicates. However as I pass the 75 years mark, and with a collection of tens of thousands, space is at a premium and even my TTS friends are no longer able to accept large quantities of modern computer-generated tickets. I shall be very happy to offer a good home to any that you have in hand but please do not go out of your way to continue saving tickets for me. It is, rather sadly, the end of an era which I began on 1st June 1948! 🇨🇭

