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BEAUTIFUL SWITZERLAND



The Teufelsbrücke in the Schöllenschlucht

Though the pass that is now known as Gotthard was locally known in antiquity, it was not generally used until the early 13th century, because it involved fording the turbulent Schöllenen, swollen with snowmelt during the early summer, in the narrow, steep-sided Schöllenen Gorge, below Andermatt.

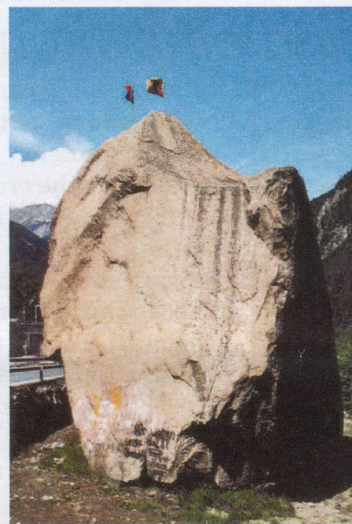


The Teufelsbrücke in the Schöllenschlucht

Seasonal deaths resulting from drowning reached a peak in April-May of most years, according to the oral histories of the nearby villages. The bridge that was built under such challenging conditions was one of the many bridges attributed, in folktales all over Europe, to the devil.

The Reuss was so difficult to ford that a Swiss herdsman, so the legend goes, wished the devil would make a bridge. The devil appeared, but required that the first soul to cross the bridge be given to him. The good people of Uri agreed, and the bridge was built overnight. But what now? Who would be the first to cross this bridge? The bridge was there in all its glory, but nobody set foot on it until the herdsman's daughter came up with a brilliant though somewhat deceitful

idea. She suggested that they could drive a goat across the bridge, ahead of them, fooling their adversary. Angered by this sham the devil grabbed the goat and descended with it to hell. He was back in an instant and went to get a huge rock to smash the bridge with. But an devout old woman held her cross high up against him so that he lost all strength and



The Teufelsstein in Göschenen



The Teufel and the goat

dropped the rock where he stood. The rock is still there, and in 1977 300'000 Swiss francs were spent to move the 220 ton rock by 127 meters in order to make room for the new Gotthard road tunnel.

Popular belief has it that the moving of the stone was the cause of an increased number of accidents on kilometer 16 on the St. Gotthard road tunnel – does this not remind you of the taniwha to whom a number of road accidents is attributed in the Waikato? *tb*

