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TRAM-MUSEUM ZÜRICH

Neil Wheelright



Three ages of tram.

PHOTOS: Malcolm Bulpitt

Saturday 26th May 2007 saw the public celebrations for the opening of the new Tram-Museum Zürich, the official opening having taken place on the 24th. The museum, the first public tram museum in Switzerland (although large preserved fleets exist elsewhere), is run by the Verein Tram-Museum Zurich (TMZ) at the old VBZ (Verkehrsbetriebe Zurich) Burgwies Depot on Forchstrasse.

The TMZ had run a museum in the old Wartau Depot in Zurich Höngg since 1989; however this was far too small to store their fleet. In April 2004, the Zurich 'Stadtrat' agreed to partially fund the new museum while the Wartau depot would become the TMZ workshop. TMZ hope to double the number of annual visitors, from 8,000 at Wartau to 15,000 at the new museum. Burgwies depot, built in 1893, is the oldest remaining tram depot in Zurich and was in full use by VBZ until 1997,

after which it became a store for reserve and historic vehicles. The museum provides 1200 sq m of exhibition space including cover for around 25 historic vehicles on 280m of track. However, these will not all be trams, as the museum is also intended to cater for preserved Zurich buses.

A small branch of Migros has opened in the building, appearing to have taken up much of the original office space, and their delivery area at the rear is on what appear to have been old storage tracks. Of the original six full depot tracks four remain available, two having been taken up by the Museum's office and shop space. These facilities have been built within the Museum fabric and they have exhibition space on the 1st floor for small exhibits and a Gauge One model tram layout. The tram track circling the outside of the building remains. The museum shop has the biggest selection of Swiss public transport literature

that I've seen, including many out of print titles.

The day was structured around two 'Sternfahrten' which brought people from all areas of Zurich to the museum in the morning and returned them at the end of the day in preserved trams and buses. During the day, many of the trams ran on Museum Line 21 running between Bahnhofstrasse and Rehalp. Additionally, the Forchbahn ran a couple of their preserved vehicles to and from the museum. The six buses were used on a public tour in the early afternoon. Vehicles not in use during the day were displayed in the museum or lined up outside. Migros contributed to the opening weekend by issuing what are believed to be the largest ever tram tickets - a 'paper' carrier bag printed with details of the opening weekend and available for the usual price (SFr 0.30). This was valid as a public transport ticket to and from the opening exhibition. The Museum Line 21 ran for most of the day and was open to anyone with a valid VBZ ticket. This proved very popular with the public as well as enthusiasts - I spoke to one non-enthusiast who was making several journeys on an 'Elefant' (a centre entrance bogie car of 1930) because those were the trams she had ridden on to and from school.

As usual at this kind of event there were a number of supporting activities including local a steel band, children's activities and the inevitable snack bar featuring Bratwurst, etc. Sales stalls were provided by local preservation Societies and included an excellent second-hand bookstall. Rather than list all the vehicles present, I'll just note a couple that caught my attention:

- BVB (Bex Villars Col de Bretaye) Be2/2 8 (ex VBZ of 1907) - part of its floor has been replaced with glass so that the under-floor equipment can be seen from inside - it was also positioned over a publicly accessible inspection pit;
- Departmental 2 axle 1935 of 1914 - great to see the 'hidden' fleet represented;



TOP: A scaled-down mock-up of a Cobra tram that children can "drive" sits with the historic stock.

BOTTOM: LSB No.2 from 1900 stars along with its postal trailer.





- works tram shunter 1905 of 1962 (conversion);
- 'Karpfen' bogie car 1430 + 785 of 1960 – the most recent addition to the TMZ fleet as the class has just ceased service;
- Forchbahn CFe 2/2 4 – the first time I have seen this car despite many visits to Zurich and the FB;
- Bus 239 built by FBW in 1959, with an unusual raised driving position;

TOP: "Pods" with interactive computer terminals feature amongst the exhibits.

BOTTOM: TMZ's Sales Stand set-up alongside Works Car No. 1935 from 1914.

- the TMZ's star of the show – Limmattal Strassenbahn (LSB) No.2. of 1900 - plus postal trailer.



Burgwies has its own stop on tram route 11 towards Rehalp. Whilst the Forchbahn uses the same tracks, their trains do not stop at Burgwies. For more information on the Museum see www.tram-museum.ch.



RIGHT: Line 11 from Bahnhofstrasse takes visitors out to the museum.