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Twenty Years On

Ron Smith recalls a celebration in Luzern in 1999



Photos: Ron Smith

In 1999 the VBL (Verkehrsbetriebe Luzern) celebrated the 100th anniversary of public transport in the city. In early March of that year I was privileged to have a private preview of the special Jubiläumsbus at the VBL's Tribschenstrasse Depot. This was a new articulated single-deck trolleybus, numbered 199. It was painted in the City's traditional blue and white colours and decorated with colourful hand painted butterflies. The slogan for the celebration was "Wir haben ab" that translated as "We are taking off" and the butterfly symbol supposedly represented the way that public transport vehicles flit from stop to stop, never in a straight line! On 19th March the official launch took place at the depot, and number 199 took to the streets.

The Swiss certainly knew how to celebrate with the main event, and this was followed across all of 1999 with many

other events. The Tribschenstrasse Depot had an open day, with many vehicles on display. I also recall a sales stand with old bus stops, and their signs; roller destination blinds, many smaller metal signs from the inside of old trams and buses (No Smoking; Hold Tight; etc.); lamps and too many tempting things that could never be brought back on an aircraft. Twenty years on I wonder how much these items are now worth! At the Verkehrshaus, there were big displays including "old timer" buses many of which operated special trips, and even regular routes interspersed with the normal buses, on lesser density routes. All buses and trolleybuses carried elaborate floral wreaths on their front bumpers. It was a great celebration of Luzern's first class public transport system.

I have recently retrieved some of the images of that day from my system and they are worth another view. 

