

Friedrichshafen 2008 by Train

By John Crabbe G3WFM

I would like to tell you how Marjorie and I made the trip to the Friedrichshafen HamRadio 2008 rally in June. We had planned to go on holiday to Lake Constance in June so I booked it with a travel company who specialise in holidays by rail in Europe. We had travelled with them previously, and as I knew when the rally was, I picked that week.

We arrived early on Saturday morning at St. Pancras International station and after going through passport and security checks, we boarded the Eurostar train for an 8am start. In previous years, the Eurostar started from Waterloo and the journey was always slow through Kent, as the train had to use the third rail system shared with all the commuter trains. This year the train travels on a dedicated overhead 25kV track at speed. Soon after leaving St. Pancras, we crossed over the Kings Cross main line and dived into a long tunnel. This takes the train right under East London until it surfaces near Stratford. We were then served with an airline type meal from the French crew just as you would on an aircraft. After passing the Dartford M25 bridge on the right, the train turns right and dives into a tunnel under the Thames and emerges in Kent. Here the train really speeds up and travels at near 100mph on a very straight track and in no time, we were into the Channel Tunnel. The ride is very smooth here as the speed is lowered because air pressure build up would be too great and could cause damage.

After about 20 minutes, we suddenly emerge in France where once again speed builds up, as the track is straight. There is then another tunnel as the train goes under the town of Lille. Soon the train arrived at Brussels where the Eurostar terminates. After about a one-hour wait we boarded the Thalys train bound for Cologne via Achen on the German border. On arrival in Cologne, we checked in at a hotel right opposite the station and after a short visit to the Cathedral, we returned to the hotel for a meal and to bed after a tiring day.

Next morning we caught a DB train for our journey down the Rhine. It was not a very modern train, corridor, but with separate compartments holding six passengers and luggage. It reminded me of some of the old BR carriages, but the scenery as we sped down the western side of the river made up for it. There were snacks provided but nothing like Eurostar; the route took us through Mannheim, Stuttgart and Ulm before finally arriving at Lindau, our final destination, late afternoon. We stepped out into a heat wave, temperature about 31 degrees and high humidity, which lasted the rest of the week. Lindau is on a small island on the NE side of the Lake Constance and has been preserved as it was in the 10th century. Our hotel, the Bayerischer Hof, was right on the waterfront and we were able to observe the numerous ferryboats coming in and out of the harbour.

During the week, we took various trips by train and boat to Austria and Switzerland and visited the

Zeppelin Museum at Friedrichshafen, which was interesting to me as I remember my father telling me about these, bombing London in the First World War. He was in the army working on plotting the incoming Zepp's and telephoning instructions through to aerodromes, including North Weald, to send up fighters. One was shot down here in Potters Bar and another near Cuffley.



(L to R) John G0VEH, John G3WFM and a US Ham (from Texas, but staying in Liechtenstein) discuss lack of DB trains



Whilst walking one evening through the cobbled streets of Lindau, a voice shouted, "I recognise those voices", and it was John Ray G8DZH. He was staying with John G0VEH in Lindau before going to the rally. We arranged to meet there at the RSGB stand. So on Friday morning we went to the station, which is right outside our hotel and in my best German asked for tickets to Friedrichshafen only to be answered in perfect English!

We boarded the train waiting there, and who should be sitting there, but John G8DZH and John G0VEH.

The train left on time, but only got as far as the next station and then stopped. After some time an announcement was made that, everyone was to get out! The train then went back the way it came and left us standing on the platform.

We met an American ham who was staying in Liechtenstein and had travelled from there since early in the morning; he was not impressed with the service! I must say I didn't think much of the general conditions of the locos and rolling stock in Germany, I think they are a lot better in Britain except for their intercity services ICE and tilting trains which go to Berlin which I have travelled on.

Also John G0VEH and I inspected the interior of a signal box on the platform and it was like something out of the days of steam in Britain although they did have a computer in there, and signals were still operated by wires and pulleys, fascinating to the railway enthusiasts like us!



Well we did finally arrive at the rally somewhat later than expected and I was very impressed with it, it was like three Pickett's Lock in one and so much equipment there, so there wasn't enough time to see it all.



John G3WFM & XYL Marjorie travelling to the HamRadio 2008 show

We saw some of the staff of RSGB we knew and I rejoined ARRL because I can no longer see QST for free hi!

I didn't buy anything because I found all the prices high, no doubt due to the poor exchange rate. However, a good time was had by all and we left about 4.30pm after a well-deserved drink.

I expect John will give you a report on the rally so I won't say more.

The return journey back to UK was on Sunday and was much the same as the journey out arriving Monday afternoon at St. Pancras about 15 degrees cooler! I hope I haven't bored you all too much and I expect many of you will say wouldn't it be easier by air, but you may not be a train buff and its much greener hi!

73

John G3WFM

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