

The "fête suisse"

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SWISS CLUB MANCHESTER EASTER WALK

It was Saturday morning before Easter, when a lazy but good humoured sun pierced the early mist and tried to send its warming rays through the smokeless area of central Manchester. It picked out a modest and elderly coach whose driver was ready, and when eventually a lonely figure emerged from the darkness of the empty seats we were glad to recognize the first passenger as our dear president and guide, Mr. Henry Monney, who was waiting for his flock.

However, people soon began to appear, either by car, bus or on foot, and after a late straggler had been heartily welcomed and comfortably installed in the last available seat, off we went.

As the City and its suburbs were left behind with their hustling and busy people, drab houses and streets, and we entered the open country with green fields, trees and rivers, all bathed by the sun and ever changing patterns of shadow and light, the happy crowd within our rattling and slightly asthmatic coach, opened their hearts and minds to the fullness of the fresh and lovely spring morning. There were several young girls from Switzerland, who warmed our hearts with their songs and laughter, inherent to those who are young and healthy, or feel so.

It was a long but most interesting drive, over moors and through the dales and villages of Derbyshire, but eventually we reached Alsop-en-le-Dale, the starting point of our Easter Ramble.

The choice, this year, fell on lovely Dovedale and to all those of us who did not want to join in our five mile walk, the excellent New Inns Hotel and its friendly and very helpful proprietor provided a homely and cosy shelter.

Let some of our good English friends tell us what Dovedale really was a century ago, and we find that all those years of growing urbanism and industrialisation did not change very much this charming district which forms part of the valley of Dove, winding through crags and hills, and presenting at every turn scenes of the rarest beauty.

In the strict sense of the word Dovedale is not a Dale, but a narrow gorge-like valley, some three miles in length, with wooded slopes rising almost sheer from a crystal stream. Here and there the walls of foliage are broken by limestone rocks which mimic every variety of architectural shape. Bastion, basilica and buttress, minaret and pinnacle, pyramid and

arch, turret and spire, tower and cupola, follow one another in bewildering beauty. The whole dale is a fairylike combination of woodland, rock and water, a scene of hemmed-in loveliness, of compressed beauty.

Amid these surroundings we stopped for our mid-day picnic with everyone in a happy and hungry mood. The weather was kind to us, and we enjoyed a well-earned rest. Around us were many signs of awakening nature and new life showing here and there, a true and eternal testimonial of the Easter message.

Soon we reached the village of Thorpe with its Norman tower and font, and our good old coach which was waiting for us brought us safely back to the New Inns Hotel, where we all met again, and where we were greeted by many more of our friends who had joined us by car. It was indeed a colourful and happy crowd, and it was a special pleasure for us to see our dear Consul, who takes such good care of we Swiss in the North, and always manages to support our Club's efforts.

High tea was then served to our very imposing gathering which included several past presidents, a few prominent members and their ladies, and as mentioned before, those young folk, boys and girls, who did not allow a moment of relaxation, but kept us busy and alert the whole time, and with their songs brought back memories of our dear Homeland, and times long passed. For the more thirsty amongst us there was afterwards an excellent and very cosy bar, and the time passed only too quickly, in animated and friendly discussions.

As the evening closed in with a fine and cool drizzle, we left as we came, by car and by our dear old, noisy and grumbling coach, but even the growing darkness descending slowly on the countryside could not dampen our high spirits, our resolve to meet again, soon, on one of the many official and unofficial outings and rambles for which our Manchester Club is noted, even beyond the small circle of our members and many friends.

E. BERNER.

THE "FETE SUISSE".

A full report of the "Fête Suisse" celebration which took place on Thursday, April 21st, 1955, at Central Hall, Westminster, will appear in our issue of May 13th, 1955.

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