

A Swiss undertaking in South Wales

Autor(en): [s.n.]

Objekttyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): - (1966)

Heft 1505

PDF erstellt am: **19.07.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-695922>

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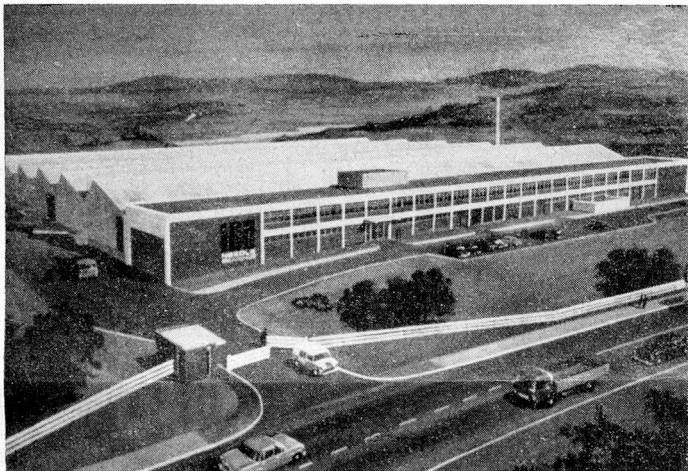
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A SWISS UNDERTAKING IN SOUTH WALES

Opening of a new INA Factory

South Wales — the very thought of it conjures up the grim picture of a depressed area, of glum and silent tin-plate factories closed down long ago. Of that chapter in South Wales's history, only four disused factory chimneys were visible at a certain place outside Llanelli on a sunny, breezy afternoon early in June. Black and solemn, they pointed to the blue sky, a reminder of the past, whilst a few hundred yards away, a modern streamlined factory was humming with activity and ready to receive the guests for its official opening. The Union Jack, the Welsh Dragon, the German and the Swiss flags fluttered a gay welcome to the 200 visitors who had been invited by INA Needle Bearings Ltd. to commemorate the beginning of a new era in the company's history.



The INA cage-guided needle bearings are the invention of a German, Dr. W. Schaeffler and are produced today in seven factories with over 5,000 workers in Germany, England, France and Brazil. The parent company of these INA works is the Industrierwerke Schaeffler at Herzogenaurach, near Nuremberg (Western Germany), with the exception of the INA Needle Bearing Company Limited at Llanelli, which is a wholly owned subsidiary of Hydrel A.G., Romanshorn and a licensee of Industrierwerke Schaeffler.

In 1956, INA Needle Bearings Limited opened an office for their sales organisation and market research in London at Swiss House, 34 Fitzroy Square, W.1. Two years later, at the instigation of the Board of Trade, INA took over one of the Government-built factories at Dafen, Llanelli, South Wales. They started production with seven people and today, the company employ 345 men and women in their new works at Llanelli, 2½ miles from Dafen and 11 miles from Swansea.

Over 3,000 types and sizes of needle bearings are manufactured. All B.R.M. racing cars are using them, and every Cooper and Lotus racing car success is a tribute to them. Needle rollers to a tolerance of ± 0.00004 " on diameter with a permitted speed of 300,000 r.p.m. are incorporated in the famous racing cars. Bearings are also used in a variety of engineering products in textile machinery, mechanical handling, machine tool and agricultural machine industries. INA in Wales specialise in inch sizes and even export them to countries where inches are in common use. But already, plans are in hand for the time when the metric system will be introduced.

The factory at Dafen was visited in January 1964 by the then Prime Minister Sir Alec Douglas-Home who was most favourably impressed by the skill and craftsmanship. Three times, the factory at Dafen had been enlarged, but it was not suitable for further expansion and changing to flowline production. It was only in April of last year that investigations regarding new premises were concluded, and already in January 1966, the new building was completed. The challenge to have it ready in six months was accepted by Messrs. Thyssen (Great Britain) Ltd in conjunction with the architects Messrs. G. A. Williamson and Partners.

The total floor area is over 85,000 sq. feet, and many modern designs were incorporated. Time and motion study had been carried out. As a result, the service block is in the centre of the works, which ensures the least possible loss of time and effort, for instance to go to the wash rooms during work. There are modern measuring machines and precision instruments, some specially imported from Switzerland.

The factory is a pleasant building, with light and airy halls and plenty of space for future expansion. Travelling from Swansea, one arrives at it across the Loughor Estuary. It is situated in open countryside, and flower beds and lawns surround it.

On the day of the opening, a large marquee had been put up in case of inclement weather. As it was, the canvas roof served as protection against the bright sunshine. The guests had travelled some 20,000 miles jointly and had journeyed from all parts of Great Britain, Germany and Switzerland. They were welcomed by the Chairman of the Board, Mr. Oscar Grob, K.S.G., former Sub-Manager of the Swiss Bank Corporation in London and a well-known personality in the Swiss Colony in G.B. In his address, he gave the historical background and a lot of information about INA. The former Secretary of State for Wales, the Rt. Hon. James Griffiths, P.C., M.P., for Llanelli, a Freeman of the Borough and recently created a C.H., replied and paid tribute to the firm and the architects — as one who had worked in the pit, he knew the



One of the largest bearings being inspected by Monsieur Gaechter of the Swiss Embassy, Mr. O. Grob, Mrs. M. Meier and other visitors.

value of good working conditions. He referred to the first industrial revolution of which Wales had been a centre, and to the second one now in progress, a technical and scientific revolution which would transform society for good or evil. The challenge facing modern industry was to modernise and grow or to stagnate and decline. INA was making a valuable contribution towards raising the standard of living and securing prosperity in the district. He said that Wales must not repeat the mistakes made in the past by the English, allowing industries to drift to just a few areas.

The next part of the ceremony took place in the entrance hall of the factory where Mr. Griffith unveiled a plaque. The Rev. Canon Williams of the Anglican Church read the 103rd Psalm, and a Welsh Presbyterian Minister delivered a message from St. Paul's Letter to the Corinthians. His Lordship, the Rt. Rev. Langton D. Fox, Roman Catholic Bishop of Maura, said a prayer of dedication, asking the Lord's blessing on all those connected with the new venture.

After an illuminating tour of the factory, refreshments were served in the marquee.

In the evening, the guests drove or were driven to the well-known Redcliffe Hotel in the famous beauty spot of Caswell Bay. It was a lovely drive through attractive countryside — the coastline of South Wales deserves its high reputation. The guests were received by Mr. Grob and the Managing Director of INA Needle Bearings Ltd., a young Swiss, Mr. A. A. Haslimann. The latter gave a welcoming speech after the party had dined and wine. He specially mentioned Mr. Griffith, Dr. Schaeffler from Herzogenaurach (who had come in his own aeroplane), and members of the Board of Directors of Hydrel A.G. Romanshorn: Dr. Egger (Chairman), Mr. Karl Bertsch, Mr. Max Tschudin (also a member of INA Llanelli Board) and Mr. Hirt, a member of the Board of Hydrel Holding A.G. Mr. Haslimann welcomed Monsieur J. R. Gaechter of the Swiss Embassy. The Swiss Ambassador had already paid a visit to the new factory on 6th April when he had shown keen interest and admiration. Next the Chairman greeted the Mayor of Llanelli and the Chairman of Llanelli Rural District Council and other distinguished guests like the Board of Trade Controller for Wales, a representative of the Amalgamated Engineering Union and the Church dignitaries.

Mr. Haslimann interspersed his greetings with suitable comments and compliments — the latter in particular to the ladies — and he thanked the staff. He said that INA's motto was *confidence*, confidence in supplying goods and satisfying customers, confidence in employees, directors, parent company, licensors, friends and customers; not to forget confidence of G.B. in the Continent of Europe and *vice-versa*.

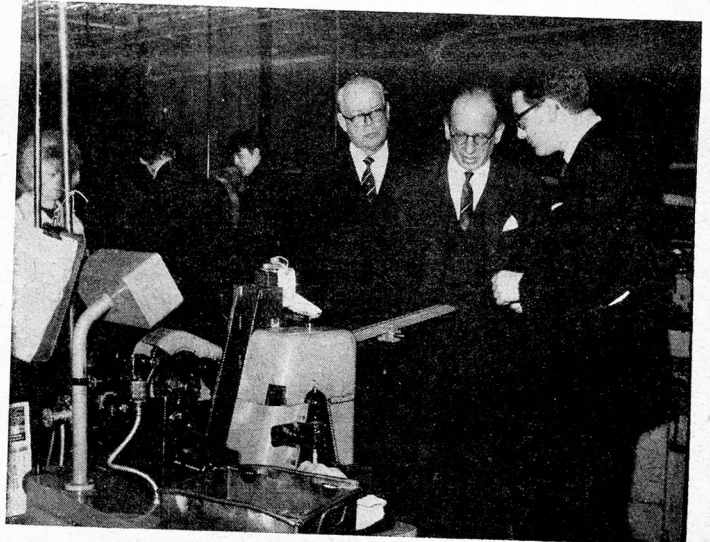
The Mayor of Llanelli complimented INA on their courage opening a factory in a development (nice word for depressed) area and their part in improving social progress.

The Trade Union Official commented on their good relations with INA who had embraced a community and had also let themselves be embraced. Mr. Tschudin proposed the health of the guests, and a "very satisfied customer" replied on behalf of the guests.

The happy gathering continued with cabaret and dancing, and all too soon, the red-coated toastmaster announced the end of the evening's entertainment.

The guests who had no transport of their own — they included the Swiss contingent from London: Mr. and Mrs. O. Grob, Monsieur Gaechter, Mr. M. Schneebeli (Swiss Bank Corporation) and the Editor of the "Swiss Observer" — were taken back to comfortable hotel quarters in Swansea. All were unanimous on the congenial atmosphere of the day's events, and on the excellence of the activities carried on by this Helvetic undertaking in the Celtic Principality of *Wealas*.

MM



The Swiss Ambassador shows keen interest in a machine for inserting the rollers into the cages. On the left, Mr. O. Grob and on the right Mr. A. Haslimann. (6th April.)

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