

Landsgemeinde comes of age

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the last few hundred feet to the meadow at Hardcastle Crags, which looks so much like the Ruetli, birthplace of Switzerland.

Looking after the Inner Man. That too, had its charm. How relaxing to sit in the sun or under shady trees, enjoying a picnic lunch! Now those who had carried heavy and rather mysterious packs, could triumph — they quenched their thirst with a drop of the best Swiss vintage! But nobody went short, sharing all round was the motto, and it did not even matter that ants and other insects had a go, too. The minding came later!

Over the Hills and Far Away. Then came the siesta, that is for those who liked to take it easy. The more adventurous ones climbed the hillside at the back of the meadow, a walk through more woods, with a rewarding view from the top. How much hidden beauty there is in these islands!

The Climax. The few times I had previously attended the "Landsgemeinde", I had taken part in the actual ceremony. This time I sat above on a rock, musing on Swiss history so ably brought to life by Prof. Inebnit, the founder of this annual event. As he went through the catalogue of historic events which brought more and more Cantons into the Confederation from 1291 onwards and more and more of the participants at Hardcastle Crags into the "Ring", I realised how small a lifetime is and of what little consequence our own existence and whether we come from Berne or Vaud or Appenzell. Yet the solid structure of what is the Swiss Confederation has been built by men and women whose faith, idealism and often just sheer hard work has helped to put one stone after another on the walls of the building that has been strong enough to weather many a storm. So after all, what we do is of some meaning. Good fellowship, good fellowship.

That brings to mind another link, an incident which took place earlier in the day. **Two Chaps** met on their walk up to the Crags. They exchanged a few words and palled up soon enough. Imagine the Yorkshire man's surprise when the "other fellow" turned out to be the Swiss Ambassador! But even greater was Monsieur Keller's amazement when his pal pulled out the gold chain of office, for he was none other than Councillor W. Holt, Chairman of Hepton Rural Council. The tale was referred to by both gentlemen at tea later in the day as one of true integration where all barriers were down and man alone mattered.

A little boy and his Swiss Granny. Another link in my chain I see when I remember the little boy who came and sat with me while I was watching the Ceremony of the Ring, forgetting for once that I was a *Basellandschaftlerin*, even that I was a Swiss. The little chap wore a *Sennechutteli*. He proudly told me that his Swiss *Grossmuetti* had given

it to him. He speaks no Swiss, he has no idea yet of what a citizen's duties are or should be in either Helvetia or G.B.; he has never heard of European integration or of the Forum of Switzerland in London. Nor did he understand a word of what was said at the Ring either by Prof. Inebnit or by Councillor Holt. But he loved his grandmother, a symbol to him of love and good fellowship.

The next link is a musical one. **Accordion sounds.** We were welcomed at the meadow not only with a Swiss flag proudly displayed in our honour, but also by the strains of an accordion. Mr. Brian Robinson of the Hebden Bridge Band valiantly played Swiss tunes, another sign of the tremendous effort made by the Calder Civic Trust in organising the Swiss Weekend. After the Ring Ceremony was over — the Swiss had been joined by their British and other foreign friends — there was more accordion music, this time played on a real Swiss *Handörgeli* by the Swiss Vice-Consul in Edinburgh, Mr. O. Hartmann. Little encouragement was needed to tune in, and soon familiar old songs from many parts of the country sounded from all over woods and meadow.

Trek Homewards. That was done in stages, for the first part was up to the car park, still a lovely and sunny walk along the stream. The second part was less peaceful, unless one can call traffic jams peaceful. But it did not seem to matter. The Swiss had been joined by many excursionists during the afternoon, and there were dozens of cars on the road leading down to Hebden Bridge and beyond to Halifax and Manchester. But for us the day was not yet over; we had a treat in store.

No Artificial Friendship. Back to the Carlton Ballroom, where more Swiss flags and posters and rich tea tables awaited us. Mr. E. Berner, Vice-President of the Yorkshire Swiss Club, welcomed the guests. He paid tribute to the organisers who had worked so hard to make the event a success. Ambassador, Consul, Vice-Consuls, *Auslandschweizersekretariatsdirektor*, President H. Egli, Treasurer A. Kunz and Secretary V. Berti of the Federation of Swiss Societies, "S.O." Editor, and all other representatives who had come from London and Caledonia, were warmly welcomed. A special mention must be made, too, of Councillor Holt, then of Councillor J. J. Wetherhill, Chairman of Hebden Royd District Council, Rotary President Mr. G. A. Whitaker and Councillor D. E. Fletcher who had borne the brunt of the organising. The welcome was naturally also extended to the wives, not least to Madame Keller. Many were the speeches of praise and appreciation, but perhaps we let the Ambassador's address summarise the warmth of the feelings expressed. He said that what he had witnessed that day was true integration, ties of old standing, nothing artificial, no official speeches exchanged at high level, but

the getting together at the grass roots, untouched by officialdom.

Auld Lang Syne — that is the last link which needs no explanations. British and Swiss alike left the gathering happy and content, richer by a lovely experience and by new ties of friendship forged, and old ones strengthened. And our thoughts went back to those no longer with us, among them one of the initiators of this annual event, the late Mr. H. Monney. Thank you, Prof. Inebnit for your historic guidance.

* * *

The train is nearing Euston, and my daydream has to come to an end. How many links do I count — 21, strange. But is it? The "Landsgemeinde" has come of age. The chain of friendship has been duly fashioned, not only representing moments of happy togetherness of this year's event, but to be taken out next year and the year after as a token of good fellowship between two countries and two peoples.

MM

For as yet unknown reasons, the promised photos have still not arrived, so the report has to go in without them. Sorry!



FROM LONDON TO KOREA

With considerable surprise, we read in the "Times" Diary on 13th June that Dr. Hans Rudolf Böckli, for more than six years London-based political and economic correspondent of a dozen Swiss newspapers ("St. Galler Tagblatt", "Landbote," "Aargauer Tagblatt," "Vaterland" etc.), has been appointed the new Secretary-General of the Swiss team in the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission in Korea. The "Times" wrote: "*Boeckli, 44, is quite matter of fact about his transition: 'I am the right rank (Captain in the Swiss Army); I have a legal background; and I speak fluent English, he says. 'My other qualifications, I presume, were personal'.*" Dr. Böckli was a member of the London Group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, and for many years Treasurer of the Foreign Press Association in London. He leaves many friends behind, and we wish him good luck in his none too easy new job on the Armistice Demarcation line in Korea.