

A bomb on the site of the embassy

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A bomb on the site of the future Embassy

Workers excavating on the site of the future Swiss Embassy in 21 Bryanston Square, struck on an unexploded 1000 lb. German bomb. 21 Bryanston Square had been the residence of the Swiss plenipotentiary before the war. On the outbreak of war, personnel moved in the building and occupied the second and third floors. The unearthed bomb had been dropped in one of the last and fiercest manned air-raids of the war, in March 1944, during which the residence was seriously damaged. Speculations were made at the time as to whether the ferocity of the attack and its concentration on Bryanston Square, whose buildings were nearly all damaged, was not due to the presence of General Bradwell's headquarters there and to the many G.I.s' lodged in the area. Incendiary-bombs struck the residence, but they produced practically less damage than the hoses of the intervening firemen, who gutted and soused every wall of the building. This did not stop it from being used. Its valiant personnel improvised as best it could, avoiding the gaping right-of-way of an incendiary-bomb on an office floor, assembling shreds of furniture scattered about and clinging to umbrellas as a protection from the dribble that percolated from the ceilings for weeks. Fortunately, the Georgian building was sturdily built and its interior could be restored and serve as a Legation, and later an Embassy, until 1965. It was under the neighbouring private house that the bomb was discovered. This house had been seriously damaged by fire in the same air-raid, an explanation to why the bomb managed to cross right through it and be buried so deeply.

THE EIGHTEENTH INTERNATIONAL STOKE MANDEVILLE GAMES FOR THE PARALYSED

This contest deserves to be considered as an "Anglo-Swiss Event" because of the presence of a strong Swiss team of 24. It brought together some 330 participants from 25 countries of Europe, Africa, America and Asia between 28th July and 2nd August. Most of the competitors were paraplegics, with paralysed lower limbs and trunk, some of them tetraplegics, who have not even full use of their arms. The majority of them had been incapacitated by spine injuries in road accidents, a few, less numerous, suffered from diseases of the nervous system.

The Stoke Mandeville Games are yearly events, substituted every olympic year by Olympiads for the paralysed and disabled organised in the city where the actual Olympic Games are held. Last year, these Olympiads could not take place in Mexico City because

of its excessive altitude. They were held instead in Israel.

The number of sporting disciplines practised by the disabled is surprising. On the afternoon when I went to Stoke Mandeville, they were competing in the track events (racing in the chair), table tennis, basketball, archery and the pentathlon. I met a proud compatriot who had just won a gold medal in table tennis! Other disciplines include swimming, fencing, dart throwing, javelin and weight lifting.

Swiss competitors had entered individually for the modest cost of 300 francs. They had not been selected, contrary with what happens for the Olympiads, except in basketball, where a selection out of the three paraplegic Swiss teams had been picked.

Stoke Mandeville, a well-known centre for the paralysed and disabled, has for them a brand new basketball stadium, a modern and heated swimming pool, a refectory, bowling and other amenities. These new premises were visited by the Queen on Saturday 28th July, closing day of the games.

I chatted with a 26 year-old paraplegic from Fribourg, victim of a crash at 21, and learnt how important and beneficent the exercise of sport could be to people in his condition. Indeed, after 17 months of hospital and rehabilitation, 3 years of a special watch-making school for paraplegics in Biel (by a quirk of fate he had originally planned to study occupational therapy), his first ambition, now that he had a job in a watch factory, was to start a basketball and archery team for the twenty odd paraplegics in his area. He told me that events such as the Stoke Mandeville games were of great importance because, in spurring competition among the disabled, they were giving them a chance to surpass themselves and achieve something of which they could be proud. The efforts already made by the Swiss Federation of Disabled should be relentlessly pursued, because it still meant a great deal of energy and will-power on the part of a disabled to start practising sport.

Hearing this, one can only say that public money was never better spent than on the new Stoke Mandeville Stadium for the disabled.

(P.M.B.)

THE "SWISS OBSERVER" 30 YEARS AGO

All copies of the "Swiss Observer" are bound in a strong volume at the end of every year, and the first two pages of the 5th August issue 1939 are missing from that particular book. We don't know what news there was; and as the rest of the number was taken up by Kyburg's Notes and Gleanings, there is nothing of importance to report.

On 12th August, we read that the concessions made to foreign motorists

was to continue, and a reduction of 20cts on a litre of petrol was granted. During the first nine weeks of the Swiss National Exhibition in Zurich, over 4 million visitors had registered.

A long and enthusiastic report by M.S. described the Swiss National Day Celebration at St. Pancras Town Hall, which had been organised in spite of pessimistic warnings that "the Colony" would not be present on account of summer holidays. Over 2000 had turned up, and the police had to send away a large number.

The Assembly of the Swiss Abroad of 1939 was held at the "Landi" in Zurich; it was briefly mentioned in the issue of 19th August. A serious accident on the Simplon line had killed six and injured fourteen people. The Swiss Federal Council had decreed that all Swiss households had to lay in food supplies in order to be prepared in any emergency. An article from the "Times" described Switzerland as a "fortress of liberty". There was also a report on the National Day Celebration in Manchester.

The last issue in August 1939 recorded 7 million visitors to the Swiss National Exhibition, the "Landi". There were lengthy notes on Prof. Karl Burckhardt who had suddenly come into the limelight in connection with the Danzig dispute. An English writer, Hilda Hughes, had an article on the "Pitresque Ticinesi" printed in that issue, and there was a reprint in French from the "Tribune de Genève" on the Swiss returned from abroad, or rather repatriated.

P. B. HABERSTICH 70

It is with great pleasure that we announce the 70th birthday of Mr. P. B. Haberstich, of "Magnolia Cottage", Mill Lane, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire.

He was born in Basle on 9th September 1899. After his schooling (finishing at the "Obere Realschule"), he started an apprenticeship with the firm of Imobersteg & Co. in 1916.

Mr. Haberstich did his military service (*Rekrutenschule*) at Airolo and left for London early September 1920.

For eight years he worked with the transport firm of "European and General Express" until the company merged with LEP Transport.

On 1st May 1931, Paul B. Haberstich and the late Paul A. Moehr founded Acme Transport Co. Ltd. At the beginning of September 1939, Mr. Haberstich was called up for military service in Switzerland, but returned after two months.

After the untimely death of his partner on 7th August 1955, Mr. Haberstich carried on alone for five years. In 1960, Messrs. Goth & Co. Ltd of Basle took a financial interest in the company, and he retired on 1st April 1966, remaining a Director for life.