

Swiss Mercantile Society

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NEWS FROM THE COLONY

PERUSING THE SECOND EDITION OF THE "GUIDE TO THE SWISS COLONY IN GT. BRITAIN AND EIRE"

A First Edition of the Guide to the Colony was published in June 1949 at the Frederick Printing Co. It had great success and the 3,000 copies printed were snapped up within a year. A Second Edition was produced under the editorship of Dr. H. Egli two years later and 4,000 copies were made available. This was the last effort at publishing a Colony Guide. Its perusal makes only too plain the differences between the Colony today and what it was 20 years ago. A Colony Guide published today would have to be deprived of the names of many Swiss societies, many Swiss businesses and many members of the Colony.

The 1951 Guide was published under the auspices of the Swiss Ambassador, Monsieur Henri de Torrenté. It begins with a page of welcome to the new arrivals in the Colony. This is followed by general advice regarding the food office and national registration, national insurance, consular duties in respect of changes of address, labour permits, domestic work conditions and savings.

Three pages of the booklet contain a list of Swiss people of trust for the benefit of young people coming to the provinces. The list of these Swiss residents is impressive, some of them living in such de-centralised counties as Shropshire, Westmorland and Warwickshire. Altogether about 60 names outside London. How many of these people are still alive today and still in a position to come to the help of young Swiss people?

Page 17 lists six Swiss doctors practising in England. The four London specialists listed all had their consulting rooms in the Harley Street area. How many of these specialists are still practising?

Certainly many of the Swiss societies listed are defunct. The "Comité de la Fete Suisse", responsible for organising vast 1st August celebrations at Central Hall, Westminster, no longer exists. "La Confrérie Vaudoise" then presided by the late Alfred Renou, and celebrating the independence of Vaud by a "Bal Romand" is no longer active. The "Cercle Genevois" now exists all but in name. The Swiss Youth Club, formed as late as 1948, with weekly informal dances at 86 Duke Street, Grosvenor Square, had a short-lived existence. Everybody knows the fate of the Swiss Club at 74 Charlotte Street. The Guide describes its "Dining

Room and Bar" rebuilt to Swiss tastes and Swiss style. The wood for the furniture and wall panelling had been supplied by the Chalet Murer Factory in Beckenried, and graciously offered by two members. It had wrought iron railings and light fittings making the place glow with a Grisons atmosphere. The ball and banqueting room could accommodate 150 people. It had a new parquet floor welcoming dancers every Saturday and Sunday night, a full size billiard table, dining and boardrooms for private parties, and bedrooms.

It was a worthy successor to the bombed Union Helvetia building. The "Swiss Accordion Club" used to rehearse there every Friday, the same with the "Swiss Male Choir", into which membership cost only 12/- a year. Another social groupment which appears to be extinct is the Swiss Ladies Social Club, Manchester. The Birmingham Swiss Club, which used to meet every third Monday of the month at 7.30 p.m. at the Midland Hotel for a game of jass and a social in Schwyz-erdütsch doesn't give much signs of life anymore. (We understand however that it is currently being revived.)

The booklet is nevertheless incomplete in its listing of Swiss societies. No mention is made of the West of Scotland Swiss Club for example, nor of Swiss activities in the West Country and Jersey. It is interesting to learn from the Guide that the Swiss Club in Dunfermline was a group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique. In 1951 it had 42 members, a library and a small Dramatic Circle. It had been founded in 1937 by a few Swiss who had ended up in Andrew Carnegie's birthplace because of the slump in the home silk industry.

The last part of the Guide has a useful index of Swiss businesses classified according to branches of activity. Thus the banks, chemical works, clothing firms, engineering and metal trades, hotels, printing works and other outfits are listed. However the list appears to be far from complete because not every firm took the trouble to answer the questionnaire that had been sent prior to the publication of the Guide.

If the new "Swiss Centre" amply referred to in our 25th June and 9th July issues and now in the course of gestation ever sees the day, then a re-edition of a Colony Guide would be the best way of reviving the indispensable interest of the resident Swiss in Britain.

SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY

About 20 members were present at the September monthly meeting, which opened the activities of the SMS after the summer break. The theme was the holiday experiences of members. But first the meeting accepted the membership to the London groups of Mr. Stephan Baumgartner, of the SMS Employment Service, and awarded honorary membership to four old-time members, Mr. Oscar Luterbacher, Mr. Alfred Mengeu, Mr. Ulrich Nekom and Mr. August Ryman, all of whom were entitled to the special jubilee glass plate. The meeting was informed of the sad passing away of three members of long standing, Mr. Edwin Enz, Mr. Edmond Gombacher and Mr. Fred Streit. For the last mentioned the attendance stood up in a minute's silence.

We were then to enjoy some of the summer experiences of four members—Mr. Grob, Mr. Bonjour, Mr. Jaccard and Mr. Hediger. Mr. Asch furthermore presented slides of the SMS summer outing to Hughendon Manor, birthplace of Benjamin Disraeli.

Mr. Grob showed us enlightening slides of the Landesmuseum in Zurich. The most salient feature of Mr. Bonjour's exposition was a series of slides on the Swiss model village at Melide, on Lake Lugano. This fascinating standing exhibition, with accurate models of the historical buildings and landmarks of Switzerland, is quite recent and Mr. Bonjour's photographic report certainly gave us the wish to make the detour to the Tessin. Mr. Jaccard showed us slides from Germany, and various parts of Switzerland. Finally, Mr. Hediger showed us

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a film of his recent holiday to Sardinia.

The get-together in the boardroom that ensued was well attended and lasted up to 10 o'clock.

(PMB)

CHANGES IN THE SWISS PRESS

A reception was held in the Fleet Street office of the Ringier Group (*Schweizer Illustrierte* and *Blick*) at the beginning of the month to welcome Mrs. Theresa Mumenthaler, who takes over from Mrs. Walter Gunthard (formerly Miss Madeleine Eidam) next month. Mr. Walter Gunthard leaves his job as economic correspondent of the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* to become one of the four financial editors at the newspaper's head office. Madeleine will engage in freelance journalism. Both deeply regret having to leave this fascinating capital, however Walter Gunthard looks forward to his new job which is a promotion for him and which will give him the opportunity to travel more extensively. We wish them every success and every happiness.

Blick has a new correspondent in London. He is Mr. Joseph Wirth, holder of the Swiss 5,000-metre track record. When he is not busy writing animated track reports for his readers he trains with the British champion Dave

Bedford. The successor to Mr. Gunthard will be Mr. Roland Wattenweiler.

NEWCOMERS AT THE SWISS CHURCH

The French-speaking Swiss parish welcomed its new suffragan pastor in mid-August. He is Mr. Denys Muller from Neuchatel. He is married and has a young boy. His predecessor, Jean Daniel Hostettler, has left back for Lausanne. His original plan to carry out biblical work in Africa had to be temporarily postponed and he will settle down in a parish in Vaud. We should like to welcome Mr. and Mrs. Muller most heartily among us in London.

CHANGES AT THE CONSULATE

The Swiss Rifle Association, the Schweizerbund, the Swiss Church and the Embassy were all sorry to lose Mr. Charles Abegglen, Vice-Consul, and Mrs. Abegglen. Mr. Abegglen left his post as head of the Chancery at the Embassy definitely on September 8th and will be assigned to Los Angeles. He has been succeeded by Mr. Fernand Robert. The gap will be filled numerically by Mr. Werner Reutlinger, who

is expected to take up his new office in London at the end of November. We wish the Abegglen every enjoyment and a safe time in California.

CULTURAL EVENTS

October 1-8. University of Kent, Canterbury. October 18-23. Queen Mary College, London. *Exhibition of Swiss learned and scientific books and periodicals.*

Tuesday, October 5. Publication by Peter Owen Ltd., London, in collaboration with UNESCO, of *The Curly-Horned Cow*, an anthology of Swiss-Romansch poems and stories translated from the Ladin and Surselvan dialects and edited by Reto R. Bezzola.

Wednesday, October 6. Purcell Room, 7.30 p.m. *Frank Martin's* Ballade for flute and piano is one of the works played by Rien de Reede and Theo Bles.

Saturday, October 9. Purcell Room, 7.30 p.m. Recital by the pianist *Michael Steuder* (Mozart, Schumann, Chopin, Ravel, Liszt).

(Note: *Michael Steuder*, a prodigy barely 20 years old, has received considerable publicity in Switzerland and is currently hailed as the country's most gifted rising pianist).

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SWISS 1st AUGUST CELEBRATION IN THE ISLE OF WIGHT

Life in a small island must surely bring people together. On 1st August, Mr. Walter Zuber managed to gather all his compatriots on the Isle of Wight in his home for a glorious 1st August evening (picture above). The Swiss colony has smaller means over here than in London, and a Swiss band was naturally out of the question. But with the aid of a tape-recorder and plenty of recordings from back home they managed to have a great patriotic evening which lasted out well up to midnight. An example of Swiss vitality to all the Swiss residents of the UK!