

Swiss Club Manchester

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dance at our summer shooting sessions. We need new blood! We need *young* people! I'm thinking of lads like Armin Loetscher. I don't know what we would do without him. The Embassy should set the example. I remember the days when Paravicini, Colonel Koch and other Legation people never missed a week-end at the range. I remember when Colonel Frei brought his crack marksmen-friends from Ohnsingen and how we thrashed them! Even not so long ago we had Ambassador Daeniker and Colonel Frei. We don't see the Embassy as much anymore. Marksmanship is our *national* sport and the Swiss Rifle Association has always been the central society (leaving out the City Swiss Club, which is an entirely different outfit, of which I am also a member), and we should keep it going and find new young people.

— *How did the Swiss Rifle Association get started?*

— It was founded thanks to the initiative of O. E. Boehringer, the founder of the Swiss Observer, and G. E. De Brunner. Boehringer did splendid work for the Colony throughout his life. I don't remember exactly how it all began. I've got plenty of Swiss Rifle Association files tucked away upstairs, and I could find them for you if you are interested. But right now, you've caught me unprepared. I know that it took steps which were very little short of an Act of Parliament to get the authorisation of creating a Swiss Rifle Association. It wasn't a legal sin to start a foreign rifle association in those days, and we're still the only authorised foreign rifle association in this country.

Our conversation was resumed in a neighbouring pub. Mr. Schmid reminisced on old memories—the 7th Anniversary Dinner at the First Avenue Hotel, the Union Helvetia Club, the pre-war Gastronomic exhibitions at Olympia; and on old friends—G. E. De Brunner, O. E. Boehringer, G. Brunschweiler, H. Senn, A. Bon, Alfred and Arnold Schmid and many others, until closing time put a temporary stop to his fascinating account.

(PMB)

CHRISTMAS TIME IN MANCHESTER

It speaks well for the strength and continuity of a Club when year after year socials and functions alternate and follow each other in an orderly and consecutive manner, and although some of them may seem to be almost a carbon copy of a previous event, they are always well supported and enjoyed by members and friends alike; proof enough how our community is anxious to maintain and strengthen the close and friendly contacts with each other,

an effort both necessary and worthwhile. How much more so, when we grown-ups can look forward to a Christmas Party where we are the guests (the paying guests) of the young and very young, who are always accompanied by their proud fathers and worrying mothers, and perhaps by some family friends and au-pair girls.

As in the past we once again assembled in the Midland Hotel, Manchester, to be welcomed by our President and Mrs. Simon with their young family. We were also honoured by the presence of our Consul and Madame Born, and by our Vice-Consul Mr. Zellweger who will soon be leaving us to take up his new post in Italy. We then took seats in the "Rotunda" around nicely decorated tables, the youngsters outnumbering us quite considerably. For the next hour we more than did justice to the rich array of sandwiches, jellies, cakes, trifles, ice-creams and other such delights, helped along by cups of tea "ad voluntakus". Here once again the elderly were encouraged and stimulated by the example of the children. After our President had given us his official welcome, crackers were handed around, resulting in sporadic and seemingly never-ending bangs of varying intensity according to the skill or luck of those who handled them. This is a game always very much appreciated on such occasions.

Looking around I thought that it would not have done any harm if a few more of the older generation could have been with us to join in this care-free and innocent merry-making, so necessary in time of stress and worry. Let us hope that some of them will keep a place in their agenda for next year. This would perhaps give a wider scope to such an occasion, extending friendship and fellowship to the older members, who are getting on in years and like to be remembered.

Soon the time arrived when everyone armed with his individual chair started off on the long "trek" towards the small ballroom which has witnessed so many functions and parties of our Club. There a lovely Christmas Tree awaited us in all its shining glory, a spectrum of colours, its brilliance reflecting in the young and fresh eyes of the children. One youngster courageously installed himself at the piano, accompanied by his own brand of somewhat unorthodox and very personal music, the many Christmas carols which we always like to sing or to hear, such as "Stille Nacht" or "O Tannenbaum", and many, many others. All this must have dispelled any apprehension left within the minds of the children, and their impatience and expectation arising from the abundance of parcels of different shapes and sizes, laid out under the tree awaiting the arrival of Father Christmas.

And then . . . "bang! bang! . . . and there he was. Father Christmas himself with his traditional attire of red and white, his flowing white beard

(looking even whiter than usual), and his heavy footwear so well suited to withstand the inclemencies of the season, to provide him with some protection on his wanderings. It was wonderful to see how even the very young stood up for him, regaling him and ourselves with their singing, their declamations, some just whispering and even silently appealing to him, knowing or hoping that he would understand them, which surely enough he did as only Father Christmas can do. Everyone as well as the young listeners received his gifts of sweets and fruits accompanied by some word of encouragement. We felt sorry and sad when the time came for him to leave us, to continue on his never-ending and arduous journey. It was goodbye coupled with the hope that we shall meet him again next year.

Then followed the sharing of the Christmas presents, led by our President and his wife, assisted by some ladies of the Committee. As in the past a great responsibility and worry, but as usual they acquitted themselves very well. Our thanks go to them and all the supporters for the gifts provided by many members and friends. The youngsters had the floor all to themselves by now and all the time to enjoy their presents, just a foretaste of what was expected in a few days time when Christmas Day was upon us.

Too soon the afternoon came to an end, everyone—young and old alike—having had a happy and enjoyable time. As our party gradually dispersed regretful goodbye's could be heard here and there, all of us glad at heart to have been there and firmly resolved to meet again next year to contribute in every possible way to ensure the continued success of such a festive get-together.

(E. Berner)



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