

Swiss Mercantile Society

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SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY'S AGM

The Society held its 89th Annual General Meeting at Swiss House on 18th March.

Among those present, the Chairman, Mr. F. O. Hausermann, welcomed Mr. J. P. Zehnder, Counsellor of Embassy, Mr. J. Keller, Commercial Attaché, Mr. Ch. Glauser, Swiss Consul and Mr. B. J. Riddle, Chartered Accountant.

Reporting on the activities of the Society during the year under review, the Chairman stated that the activities had followed traditional lines. A welcome improvement in the attendance at meetings could be noted, particularly those to which members of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique had been invited, an innovation worthy of repetition.

No less than eight members of the Society had been awarded the "Wappenscheibe" of the S.K.V. at the veterans' meeting at Zug on 21st September, a record number for London.

As usual, the main activities at Swiss House were centred on the College. The Chairman was able to announce a remarkable increase in the attendance during 1977. The number of full-time students was 623, the average monthly attendance being 234, compared with 546 and 208 respectively during the previous year.

In addition, a special course for Swissair trainees was held from July to December, comprising 25 students, divided into two classes, with two days' attendance each week, being employed practically during the rest of the time. Trainees had previously attended ordinary courses on an individual basis. This innovation had proved successful and was to be continued with certain amendments.

Moreover, preparatory day courses for the Cambridge Certificate of Proficiency in English were held from January to May (one class) and from September to November (two classes), attended by a maximum of 15 and 34 students respectively.

The diploma examinations, held nine times during the year, were taken by 383 candidates, of whom 367 were successful, compared with 329 and 320 respectively in 1976.

Only students who reached the sixth grade, after having passed the customary monthly tests, were able to sit the examinations. A high standard had to be attained to obtain the diploma, which vouched for a good working knowledge of English, from both linguistic and commercial aspects.

An upward trend was also recorded in the attendance at evening courses. The students had, however, largely been recruited from the day classes for the Cambridge First Certificate and Proficiency in English courses. There was still

a dearth of external students, owing to the difficulties of obtaining labour permits for our young compatriots, due partly to Common Market regulations and high unemployment.

The number of classes held was 18, with 296 students in 1977, compared with 15 classes and 237 students in the preceding year.

Outstanding results were obtained last year by S.M.S. students at external examinations. Of 53 candidates who received the coveted Cambridge Certificate of Proficiency, no less than six were awarded a first class pass, a remarkable achievement considering that overall only approximately one-half per cent obtained such passes, which redounded well to staff and students alike.

A record number of 202 students obtained the Cambridge First Certificate, representing nearly 90% of the candidates who sat.

For the second year in succession, students of the College were entered for the English examinations of the Royal Society of Arts. Out of nine students who entered for Stage II, seven were successful, one with distinction. In Stage III, 41 of 66 candidates were successful, two with distinction.

The College employed a full-time staff of 17 teachers, all of British nationality, the majority with academic qualifications, most well versed in languages and several with practical commercial experience.

The language laboratory, with 20 booths, continued to prove of assistance to students in all grades in practising and improving their spoken English, to the various aspects of which special attention had been paid of late.

Due to the difficulties referred to earlier in the report, it had only been possible to assist a few of the students in obtaining employment here on completion of their studies. In spite of very limited success, efforts in this direction were, nevertheless, being pursued.

Tennis practice and games were arranged in nearby Regent's Park during the summer months. As for many seasons in the past, the College football team continued to compete against English teams in the West End (London) Football League. Table tennis practice and tournaments, with students and staff participating, also formed part of the extra curricular activities.

In connection with the premises, the Chairman was pleased to put on record that thanks to a munificent donation from the First of August Committee in Switzerland, the refurnishing of Swiss House had been largely completed during the year.

Apart from the activities of the Society and the College, accommodation

had also been afforded at Swiss House to the Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate and the Royal Society of Arts for their examinations, as well as to various Swiss societies and committees.

Finally, Mr. Hausermann thanked the Swiss Ambassador and his staff for their continued support, the Swiss Federal Government for their annual subsidy, the central authorities of the S.K.V. and the Swiss Commercial Em-

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News from The Colony

OBITUARIES

ERNST GYSIN

It is with deep regret that we announce the death on 30th March of Mr. Ernst Gysin, of "Laendliheim", St. Albanvorstadt 83, Basle. He died after a short, but severe illness at the age of nearly 88 years. He had been a keen reader of the *Swiss Observer* for many years, although he never lived in Britain. He was a well-known personality and is mourned by many friends all over Switzerland, but above all by his three children, ten grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren. We express our sympathy to his family, especially to his eldest daughter, Mrs. Mariann Meier (London).

EDGAR BONVIN

We greatly regret to announce the death of Mr. Edgar Bonvin, of Chemin Grosse-Pierre 8, 1110 Morges. He died suddenly on 6th February after a short illness at the age of 61. Mr. Bonvin was a well-known personality in the London Swiss Colony. He owned the Montana Hotel in Kensington and was President of the City Swiss Club in the mid-sixties. We express our deep sympathy to Mrs. Francine Bonvin, their daughter Odette and her husband and two children, and to their son Phillipe.

MRS. MARTA DAENIKER

Just before going to Press we received advice of the death in Berne on the 27th April 1978 of Mrs. Marta Daeniker, wife of Mr. Armin Daeniker, formerly Swiss Ambassador in the U.K. We extend our deepest sympathy to Mr. Daeniker in his sad loss.

A fuller obituary will appear in our next issue.

City worker, 24, seeks flat or independent bedsitter in inner London. Replies please to M. Berthoud, Box. No. 101.