

Vitznau is home for a former royal employee

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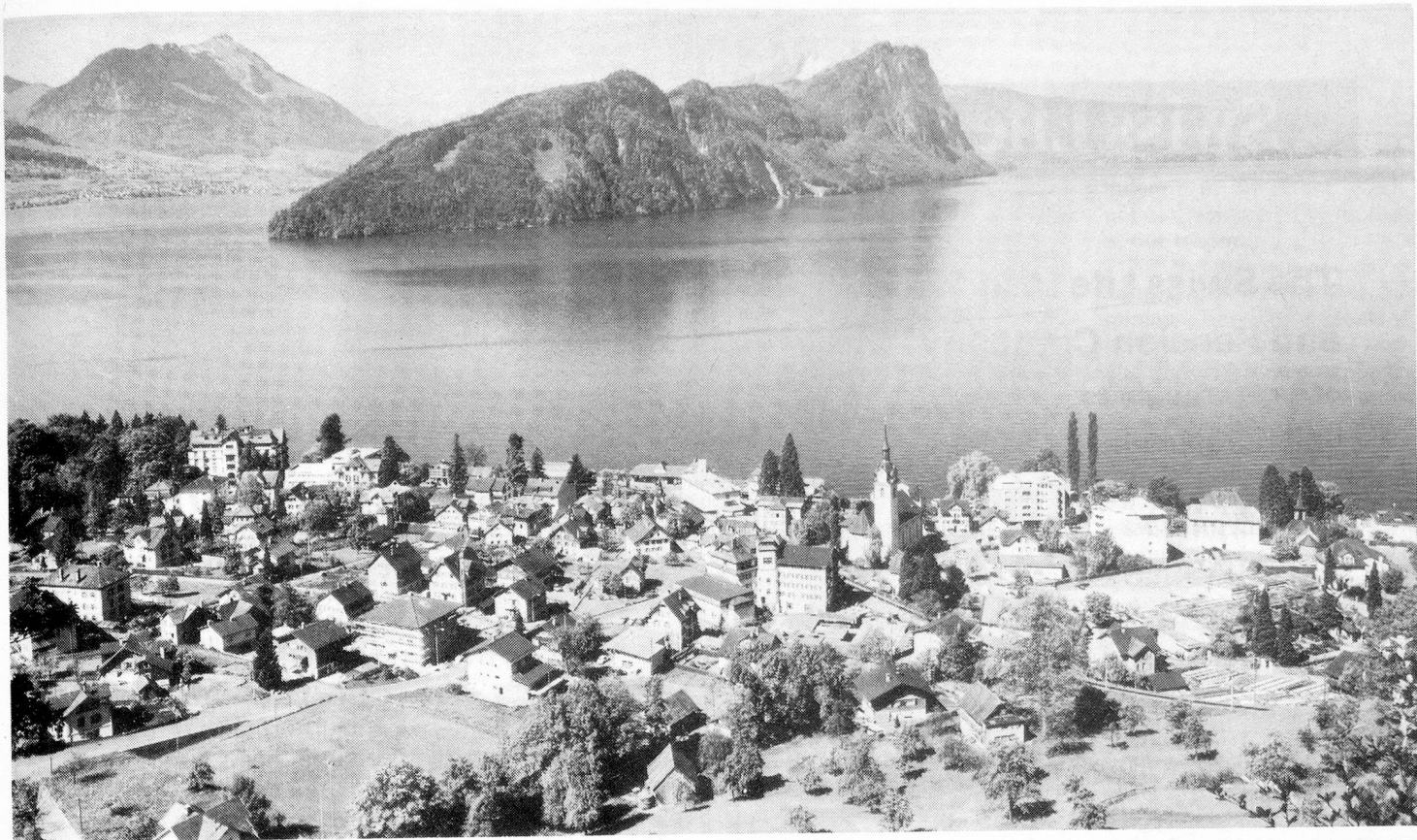
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Vitznau on Lake Lucerne, world-famous for the railway to the top of the Rigi mountain

Vitznau is home for a former royal employee

BRITISH expatriates were out in force to greet the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh during the recent state visit to Switzerland. Among them was a former employee of the Queen, Tom Robinson, now a permanent resident of Vitznau, a village on the shores of Lake Lucerne.

Before his retirement in 1961 he served King George VI, and subsequently the Queen as a manager of the crown lands in the East Riding of Yorkshire. Born in Cumberland in 1899, the young Tom worked with horses from an early age. His family specialised in the breeding and breaking of horses, many of which were selected for the cavalry and for the Royal Horse Guards in London.

He became a manager of the Crown Lands in 1949. He recalled his most memorable experience during the years he worked for the Crown.

"It was July 1952, when Great Britain had had a new Queen for just one month", he said. "Together with about 20 other Crown employees and their wives, my wife and I were guests of the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh in the royal marquee at the Royal Agricultural Show.

"I shall never forget this first encounter with the young, radiant Queen. She combined a graciousness and innate royal-

ness with a delightfully appealing human touch, and although I was to be invited to many other similar occasions in the years to come, it was this first meeting that remains most clearly in my memory to this day".

After his retirement in 1961, Tom Robinson and his wife decided to settle in Switzerland after a holiday with their son, who had lived and worked there for some years.

Said Tom: "I love this district. I love the lake and the mountains, I feel accepted by the

people, and I feel at home. The climate suits me perfectly, and the Rigi mountain is a wonderful place for walking, skiing, and enjoying the sunshine.

"Every time I take the Vitznau-Rigi railway up onto the mountain, I feel as if I am entering another world where everything is fresh and radiant".

Tom is following a royal precedent in his love of Central Switzerland and the Rigi mountain. In 1868, before the construction of the Vitznau-Rigi railway, Queen Victoria visited

the Rigi on foot and horseback and wrote enthusiastically in her diary:

"Reached (Rigi Staffel) at half past one, and in a shady place sat down on the grass to rest and have our well-earned luncheon. It had cleared very much and the splendid Alps of the Bernese Oberland were seen to great advantage. There are quantities of beautiful blue gentians growing on the top, and all the way up and down.

"We remained here about three quarters of an hour and looked down on Rigi Klösterli. Mounted our ponies again and rode in another half an hour to the Rigi Kulm, where there is a very large hotel where people stay the night, in order to see the sun rise.

"We did not get off, but remained at the top for about ten minutes gazing at the splendid view. We saw an immense way all over the flat land and the Lakes of Lucerne, Zug, etc., on the one side and on the other, all the finest, highest mountains of the Bernese Alps, with their snowy peaks."

Maureen Oberli



Mr Tom Robinson, a retired manager of the crown lands who has made his home in Vitznau