

Society and social scene

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SOCIETY AND SOCIAL SCENE

THE centenary issue of the London Swiss Philatelic Society's Bulletin is a fitting opportunity to delve into the past and to record some of the outstanding events in the society's history.

The "London Swiss" actually evolved from the philatelic group of the Swiss Mercantile Society which used to meet at Swiss House, 35 Fitzroy Square, London, in pre-war years for swapping stamps.

Unfortunately after the outbreak of hostilities an increasing number of members were evacuated to country places and were, therefore, no longer able to attend the stamp evenings.

Then, on the initiative of Mr Paul F. Boehringer, the founder of the Swiss Observer, it was decided to form a Philatelic Society, open to all members of the Swiss colony in Great Britain.

The inaugural meeting was held on February 20, 1943, with Mr Boehringer as president, and was attended by 22 members.

Philatelists celebrate a centenary issue

Of those, alas, only four are still with us.

Philately being an international hobby, English members were from the beginning invited to join and many have done so and taken a very active part in the society's functions ever since.

Although the name London Swiss Philatelic Society is today hardly all-embracing regarding the membership, it was nevertheless decided to retain it for sentimental reasons.

The society went from strength to strength, with the membership soon numbering more than 60. On January 29, 1944, the first Monthly Bulletin was edited and publication has continued without interruption to this day.

The main activities at monthly meetings were centred on displays of numerous countries and different periods by members and prominent visitors, which stimulated interest in those attending. The exchange of stamps was fostered by packet circulation, affording members an opportunity of offering stamps for sale and conversely enabling them to fill gaps in their albums.

Periodic auctions proved generally popular producing keen bidding and often lucrative to members and the society alike.

A cup competition introduced in the early years has produced some outstanding displays, although the participation by members has not

always come up to expectations, a malaise prevalent in many other societies as well.

The social side was not neglected either. For several years an annual luncheon was arranged and later changed to a more formal dinner, with an auction for charities and a raffle for club funds.

It might be invidious to enumerate the members who have rendered sterling services to the society, both Swiss and English. Suffice it to say that their efforts have generally been well appreciated and have helped to promote the society's progress and philately in general, and to foster good fellowship among the members. Long may it continue.

W. Burren

SWISS ORGANISATIONS IN THE UK

LONDON

Cercle Genevois: Mrs S. Allan, 64 Woodland Drive, Watford WD1 3BZ (Tel: 0923 21704).

City Swiss Club: Mr L.A. Simon, c/o Swiss Bank Corporation, 99 Gresham Street, London EC2P 2BR (Tel: 01-606 4000).

Committee of Swiss Catholics in London (Benevolent Society): Mr E.J. Frey.

London Swiss Philatelic Society: Mr D. Paschoud, 6 Broomhouse Road, London SW6.

Nouvelle Société Helvétique (London Group): Mrs M. Meier, 53 Priory Road, London NW6 3NE (Tel: 01-624 5360).

Swiss Mercantile Society: Mr W. Burren, c/o SMS, 34/35 Fitzroy Square, London W1P 6BP (Tel: 01-636 2892).

Swiss Benevolent Society: Mrs A.R. Sharp, c/o Swiss Benevolent Society, 31 Conway Street, London W1P 5HL (Tel: 01-387 2173).

Swiss Economic Council: Mr Amstad, c/o Swiss Bank Corporation, 99 Gresham Street, London EC2P 2BR (Tel: 01-606 4000).

Swiss Rifle Association: Mr M. Bucherer, 88 Vernon Drive, Stanmore, Middx.

Swiss Youth Club of the Swiss Churches in London: Rev. U. Steiner, 3 Womersley Road, London N8 9AE (Tel: 01-340 6018).

Unione Ticinese: Mr Pietro Jacomelli, 30 The Quadrant, Richmond, Surrey (Tel: 01-940 0648).

College of the Swiss Mercantile Society: Mr W. Burren, 34/35 Fitzroy Square, London W.1.

Swiss Hostel for Girls: 9 Belsize Grove, London NW3 4UX (Tel: 01-722 6856).

Swiss Welfare Office for young people: Mrs M. Lyster (social worker), 31 Conway Street, London W1P 5HL (Tel: 01-387 3608).

OUTSIDE LONDON

Bournemouth Swiss Club: Mr R. Muller, 31 Dingle Road, Bournemouth BH5 2DP.

Guernsey Swiss Club: Mr R. Furrer, "Blanches Pierres", Grande Rue, St. Martins, Guernsey, C.I.

Jersey Swiss Club: Mr F. Galitch, "Troika", 15a Claremont Avenue, Bagatelle, St. Saviour, Jersey, C.I.

South West Schwyzclub: Mrs Ruth Cole, 34 Dillons Road, Creech St. Michael, near Taunton, Somerset.

Southern Area Swiss Club: Mrs A.M. Doy, 8 James Way, Camberley, Surrey.

Dunfermline Swiss Club: Mrs F. Adams-Keller, 10 Old Kirk Place, Dunfermline, Fife, KY12 7ST.

Edinburgh Swiss Club: Mrs Claire McKay, 7 Comiston Drive, Edinburgh EH10 5QR.

Liverpool Swiss Club: Mrs G. Stierle, 18 Saltburn Road, Wallasey, L45 8LU (Tel: 051-638 9420).

Manchester Swiss Club: Mr P.X. Neher, 80 Seal Road, Bramhall, Cheshire (Tel: 061-439 7635).

Yorkshire Swiss Club: Mrs R. Leathley, 1 Smithy Lane, Tingley WF3 1QQ (Tel: 0532-522207).

Swiss Benevolent Fund for Scotland: Mrs Ruth Bowes, 4 Vivian Avenue, Milngavie, Glasgow G62 6DW (Tel: 041-956 1380).

Liverpool Swiss Relief Society: Mrs M.H. Mellon, 9 Weelesley Road, Wallasey, Merseyside, L44 5UR (Tel: 051-638 1746).

Manchester Swiss Relief Society: Mr P.A. Senn, Cloud Park Farm, Dial Lane, Congleton, Cheshire CW12 1AA (Tel: 02602-2407).

West of Scotland Swiss Club: Mrs K. Gilmour, 23 Victoria Park Drive South, Glasgow G14 9RJ (Tel: 041-959 3989).

Eglise Suisse/Schweizer Kirche: 79 Endell Street, London WC2H 9AJ. Protestant Minister (German speaking): Rev. U. Steiner, 1 Womersley Road, London N8 9AE (Tel: 01-340 9740). Protestant Minister (French speaking): Rev. F. Ornamstein, 7 Park View Road, London N3 2TB (Tel: 01-346 5281).

Swiss Catholic Mission: John Southworth Centre, 48 Great Peter Street, London SW1P 2HA. Catholic Minister: Rev. Paul Bossard, John Southworth Centre (Tel: 01-222 2895).

Swiss YMCA: 3 Womersley Road, London N8 9AE (Tel: 01-340 6018).

SOCIETY AND SOCIAL SCENE

Committee of Swiss Catholics in London

THE annual general meeting of the Committee of Swiss Catholics in London was held on June 12 in the Chapel of St. John of the Swiss Catholic Mission at 48 Great Peter Street, London SW1.

Mr Emil Frey as chairman conducted the meeting very efficiently and the usual agenda were dealt with without much delay. A special "thank you" was given to Mr M. Schneebeli, a trustee for many years who has returned to Switzerland, to Mrs Schaerer, going with her husband to Buenos Aires and to M R. Rodé from the Swiss Embassy who is being transferred to Los Angeles. All wished them well and expressed the hope of keeping in contact.

Mr E. Frey was then nominated as trustee together with Mr G. Bartholdi who remained in his office.

The treasurer's report, audited by Mr Sidney Stray, was unanimously accepted and it was decided to donate £1,500 to the coming repairs of the chaplain's residence and its approach as defined in the conditions of the lease.

The chaplain reported on his work and on the present situation in regard to his residence and his pastoral duties.

As far as the existence and the home of the Swiss Catholic Mission and its Chaplain is concerned, patience and consistent work has proved to bring its return. On October 8, 1979 the Council of Diocesan Affairs had decided to keep the premises of 48 Great Peter Street open for youth work. A new management committee

was constituted, one of its members to be the Swiss Chaplain or another nominated representative of the Swiss Catholic Mission.

Fr Paul Bossard was asked to continue his work as caretaker and clerk of works of the John Southworth Centre in exchange for free accommodation. There will be a lot of repair and renovation to be done, but he expressed the hope that in a year's time the place will show a marked improvement and be more inviting.

Memories of happy past

St Ann's Church in Abbey Orchard Street has finally been demolished with all its happy memories of the past. A last effort to save the lovely coloured windows failed, since they were fixed in concrete and cracked when it was chipped away.

The new chapel has proved to be the greatest blessing. The diocesan authorities did not want to deprive the Swiss a second time of their place of worship and the chaplain could not thank them too much for that. Of course, they would have been very generous and helpful, as in 1972 when St. Ann's Church was sold, but it would have been heartbreaking to look for new accommodation again

after all this hard work.

The chapel, as small as it is, has its own radiance and is in daily use. During the week an average of 20 people from the nearby offices attend lunch hour mass at 1pm regularly. It serves the Swiss youth for Sunday service. Protestants and Catholics alike. And the meditation service on Saturday evenings from 5pm to 7pm enjoys an increasing interest.

An average of 10 to 12 people, a very mixed group and an increasing number of Swiss of all ages, have found a deeper introduction into the life of prayer and a deeper understanding of the Christian faith.

There are many among them who have been in contact with eastern meditative practices and have discovered that the Christian tradition has a lot to offer in this respect, if only somebody takes the trouble of finding out.

The chaplain had also been invited to conduct several seminars in the bishop's conference centre in Almondsbury, in Stanstead-hall, in the Bhavan (Indian Cultural Centre) and in the diocesan seminary for priests in Chelsea (Allan Hall). He regards this as a valid contribution towards the problems of our times and enables him to use his experience of missionary life and his training in comparative religion at a time when people of the West begin to discover the relevance of religion anew, but are so often misled by syncretistic and unchristian theories.

He is aware that this is some sort of pioneer work which, for the time being, will not show big success, but is an important contribution in order to stem and redirect our materialistic outlook.

Youth Club activities go on as usual. Numbers seem to increase slightly thanks to a very active committee and his Protestant colleague the Rev. Urs Steiner with his assistant Miss Barbara Schwarz.

There is however grave

concern on his part as far as the religious interest of our young people is concerned. Attendance at the ecumenical services had dropped to a disappointing degree. One reason is certainly the critical attitude and the prejudice against any kind of institution, especially the Church.

Young people have come to London to find freedom and independence and do not stay long enough to find out for themselves that the Churches do want to give them a hand in just that.

As far as the ecumenical services are concerned the chaplain has asked himself time and again whether the ministers have gone ahead too quickly and have lost touch with the feeling of the people, who cannot see the serious work that has to be done constantly to keep them alive.

They have become "institutions" too, and this is dangerous. For this reason it had been decided mutually to suspend ecumenical services for the time being and let things grow at a slower speed.

Ecumenical setback

The ecumenical cooperation as far as religious services are concerned has therefore suffered a setback, which need not be a disadvantage. Differences of approach to the Christian outlook do exist among the different denominations and they must not be overlooked but respected. Both Catholics and Protestants must stick to their own identity and loyalty to their respective communities and authorities. Only then can they enrich each other.

The difficult situation and the uncertainty about the situation of the John Southworth Centre over the last two years, when no improvement to the building was possible, has also been a great strain. Protestants and Catholics have invested a considerable sum of money for

COLLEGE SECRETARY

Required by Educational Establishment in Central London.

Applicants should preferably be Swiss Nationals and be available for the Autumn Term.

Write in the first instance for an interview, stating experience and qualifications to:

**Box No. A1, Swiss Observer
Europa House, 68 Chester Road, Hazel Grove,
Stockport, Cheshire SK7 5NY**

THE Swiss Club of the South West held their summer meeting at Bristol Zoo, chosen so that members could bring along their families. Although a wet day they enjoyed exploring the zoo and admiring the beautiful flowerbeds for which it is famous.

The opportunity was taken to sell "First of August" badges, and with little difficulty. They were snapped up, as everyone praised the quality, design and colouring of this year's issue. They are well worth buying and make an excellent Swiss badge for any occasion.

In the afternoon the group went to Mrs Ida Pike's home, where a first class buffet was awaiting. It was a complete surprise and most welcome. There was a chance to chat, to exchange experiences and to get to know each other a little bit better.

Our next meeting will be on January 18 in my home in Taunton.

Ruth V. Cole

★★★

"VALAIS Chante", one of Switzerland's best known groups of folk singers, gave a concert at the Swiss Church on June 26 organised by the NSH in conjunction with the Swiss Mercantile Society and the Swiss National Tourist Office.

The group of 20 singers in



Damp but not dispirited at Bristol Zoo

costumes of Evolène in the Val d'Hérens sang with grace and charm and most efficiently and were enthusiastically applauded by the large audience.

As president Mrs Mariann Meier introduced the choir and also expressed a welcome in French to the visitors.

The Embassy was represented by Cultural Counsellor Jean-Jacques Indermühle and Mrs Indermühle, Consul and

Mrs Julius Keller and others.

★★★

THE newly-formed Swiss Club of Northern Ireland is hoping to join the Swiss Club Dublin for the "First of August" celebrations.

The club was formed following a buffet dinner at the Europa Hotel, Belfast, attended by more than 40 compatriots, including the Consul-General, Mr Urs

Karli.

Officers elected were: Mr J. Zünd (president), Mrs M. Kirkpatrick (vice-president), Mrs Y. Robinson (secretary), Mr B. Rüegg (treasurer), Mr Hans Egli and Mrs R. Stevenson (committee).

Swiss living in Northern Ireland who wish to join the club should contact Mrs Robinson at 14 The Crescent, Erinvale, Belfast 10.

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the new chapel, and both feared that it could have been in vain. This fear is removed now, and we can look forward to a constructive and practical co-operation which is not based on theological speculations as matters should be in an ideal situation, but on the real facts of life.

For the first time in 13 years the chaplain could conduct a First Communion class in Walton on Thames. Swiss families can experience difficulties, especially when their children attend state schools. Instruction for Holy Communion and for Confirmation can become a problem. But it can be overcome.

On some days the chaplain visited them and on some days they visited him and before Christmas, on the fourth Sunday of Advent, there was a First Communion Service in the

chapel of the Swiss Catholic Mission. The chaplain hopes that this small example can repeat itself with other families.

A Bazaar for all the Swiss Churches will be held on Saturday November 1, at Westminster Central Hall — as two years ago, and the chaplain hopes that it will be well supported by his community. This is also the wish of the committee.

The Chaplain expressed his sincere thanks to the chairman and the committee for the support he had received, and especially to Mr Bruno Frei, who devoted hours and hours of his free time to look after the bar of the John Southworth Centre, and thanks to his work, kept the Centre going and out of debt.

He also thanked the Apostolic Delegate, Cardinal Hume, and the Diocesan authorities, the Swiss Ambassador and his staff

and the Ministers and members of the Consistoire of the Eglise Suisse for their help and co-operation.

After the meeting the committee members enjoyed themselves in the chaplain's resi-

dence at a wine and cheese party and helped the chaplain with various ideas and suggestions, which often prove more constructive than committee discussions.

Fr. Paul Bossard

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THE SWISS are a nation of linguists. They have to be, to communicate with each other. After all, where else in the world can you find a country of six million people — that's well below the population of London — speaking no less than four national languages?

Most Swiss (about 67 per cent) speak German as their mother tongue. Nearly 20 per cent speak French, 12 per cent Italian and less than one per cent Romanche.

And so many Swiss have acquired an extensive knowledge of English that this has almost become the country's fifth language, especially in such international sectors as travel and tourism.

All this in itself is impressive enough. But what really amazes the English-speaking visitor to this country is the apparent ease with which many multi-lingual Swiss — and not only highly educated citizens — switch from one language to another.

A recent survey revealed that some 70 per cent of the entire Swiss population can speak a second language in addition to their mother tongue. The most accomplished linguists are usu-

The land of many tongues

ally to be found among the German-Swiss where, according to the survey, no less than 15 per cent of the population know German, French, Italian and English.

Switzerland's national TV network operates three language channels — German, French and Italian — and many Swiss will tune in to any or all of them during a single evening's viewing. And it's much the same story when they listen to radio or read the nation's newspapers.

Such linguistic diversity in such a small country would, one might think, weaken national unity and conscience. But in Switzerland the contrary is true.

"The Swiss have understood", French poet and author Paul Valéry once wrote, "that diversity is wealth".

German, French and Italian are the nation's official languages, which means that a Swiss citizen may use any of the three in his dealings with the federal

authorities. All three languages also enjoy equal status in Swiss parliamentary proceedings.

But the German spoken by the Swiss bears little or no relation to the "high German" spoken across the border in Germany. For while the German-Swiss reads and writes in "high German" he actually converses in one of the virtually dozens of Swiss German dialects.

According to the humorist George Milkes, in his best-selling "Switzerland for Beginners": "However deep your affection for the Swiss, neither charity nor bias can go so far as to persuade you that their language — Schwitzerdeutsch — is melodious and soothing to the ear. Its guttural sounds recall Dutch; its distorted German reminds you of broken Yiddish; and the general effect reminds you of gargling during a bad attack of tonsillitis".

French is the predominant

language of western Switzerland — which borders on France — while Italian is the language of the Ticino region, southern Switzerland's palm-tree paradise along the frontier with Italy.

Which brings us to the minority language, Romanche. Forty years ago the Swiss nation voted overwhelmingly to raise Romanche (which is derived from Latin) to the status of Switzerland's fourth national language.

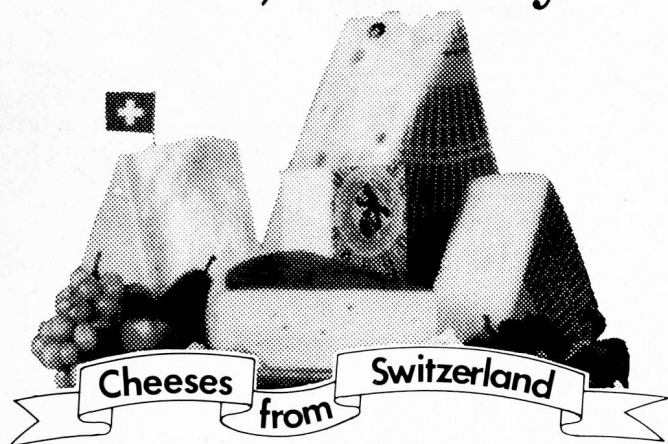
Considering the comparatively few Swiss who could speak the language even then — about 50,000 or one per cent of the population — this was indeed a tribute to the remarkable tolerance of the Swiss people.

Sadly, Romanche is now a dying language struggling for survival. Even in its home region, the alpine canton of the Grisons, it has become a minority language, spoken by less than a quarter of the population.

But the Romanche League cultural organisation is fighting to keep the language alive.

Colin Farmer

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