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# REGIONAL EDITION

## UNITED KINGDOM & IRELAND

### EDITORIAL

I have personally attended the meeting between the Swiss community and our Ambassador, which took place in January in London. I cannot but highlight the remarkable attention the Embassy has devoted to our compatriots' concerns about Brexit, demonstrated through clear and open communication by our authorities. The Ambassador involved himself with the community by sharing and explaining the strategy adopted by the Federal Council to deal with Brexit, further reassuring us about the rights of foreigners living in the UK.

■ *This is also explained well in the interview he granted to the Swiss Review in this issue. This unique attention and care given to our community abroad cannot be taken for granted. Even though the UK seems to be living a difficult political moment, and it is still not clear what will happen after Brexit, as Swiss, we have certainly not been left adrift. We can continue to trust that our institutional representatives are committed to working in our best interests.*



GIOIA PALMIERI,  
«UK & IRELAND PAGES»

### A TALK WITH THE AMBASSADOR: Brexit, what does it mean for the British and Swiss destiny in Europe?



On the 24<sup>th</sup> of January the Swiss Embassy in the UK hosted a public talk delivered by Ambassador Alexandre Fasel (AF) on the theme 'Brexit: what does it mean for the British and Swiss destiny in Europe?'. The event was organised by the New Helvetic Society in cooperation with FOSSUK (Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK) and captured the interest of a wide audience of Swiss citizens as well as those from other nations with its aim to clarify what the Swiss Government and the Embassy in particular are doing for their fellow citizens during Brexit talks and to answer to people's questions.

We met the Ambassador and shared with him the main concerns of Swiss nationals living here.

*GP: What kind of relationships are there between CH and the UK?*

AF: There are around 35,000 citizens living here who permanently promote the cultural and commercial exchanges between our two countries, and so continually deepen our enduring friendship. The official representation of Switzerland in the UK is in charge of maintaining and developing those ties on a daily basis. The starting point is that we have an extremely close economic, commercial and trade relationship with the UK. Switzerland is in the top 10 destinations for UK goods exports globally. We are the third largest non-EU export market for the UK's goods after the USA and China. Even more relevant, in the export of services, Switzerland is the fourth most important market worldwide for the UK, with more than three times the value of the services exported to China. Switzerland is the seventh largest foreign direct investor in the UK. We can also recognise how close the relationship is when we see that there are more than 150 daily scheduled flights between our countries. This shows how intertwined our economies are.

*GP: How does Switzerland deal with Brexit?*

AF: Our relationship is currently based on bilateral agreements between Switzerland and the EU and is consequently linked with the UK's membership of the EU. We are committed to putting in place a legal framework that will be ready in time to be used to replace the ties we currently enjoy with the UK whilst it is still an EU member. This must happen before the day the UK is no longer an EU member, in order to avoid legal 'gaps' that would arise once our agreements with the EU cease applying to the UK. This is what



Meeting between the Ambassador and Swiss Community in London.



the Federal Council calls the 'Mind the Gap' Strategy, which was presented and adopted back in October 2016.

Ever since the referendum, our government has been in direct conversation with the British authorities to put this strategy into place. On the 8<sup>th</sup> December 2017, the UK government and the EU reached an agreement on EU citizens' rights after Brexit. In what we call our 'Continuity Dialogue,' similar arrangements between the UK and Switzerland are under detailed discussion.

#### GP: How does this 'Continuity Dialogue' work exactly?

AF: Coordinated by the Swiss Directorate for European Affairs and the UK Department for Exiting the EU, teams from various government departments are dedicated to eight different work streams looking into the different legal arrangements we have with the EU and the UK. The common aim for each area is to ensure that the existing mutual rights and obligations in our relations with the UK will continue to apply after the UK leaves the EU and to develop these rights and obligations where necessary.

The eight different work streams are: trade, citizens' rights, financial services, aviation, land transport, the fight against fraud, education and research, and data protection. These are the fields that are affected by Britain's withdrawal and must be adapted in order to safeguard the excellent level of collaboration there is at the moment.

We have jointly defined those work streams and analysed problems and risks. For instance, we noted the need for a 'reverse planning' in order to be ready for the day of the UK's exit in time: for these new arrangements to work smoothly, we have to be 'calendar-wise,' because our respective Parliaments must also ratify our commitments.

#### GP: What is going on concerning the rights of foreign citizens?

AF: The Swiss Government has engaged in close discussions with the British authorities to ensure the protection of the acquired rights of its nationals living in the UK (and vice-versa). The UK government has announced that it intends to set up a new process to enable EU citizens to apply for the so-called 'Settled Status' – corresponding to the current right to permanent residence after having continuously and lawfully lived in the UK for five years. The UK authorities expect this new process to open before the end of 2018 and all the EU citizens wishing to remain in the UK will be asked to register. This is what is on offer for the EU citizens and it will be on offer for the Swiss citizens as well.



#### GP: How will it be implemented?

AF: The UK government has announced there will be an official registration process for citizens living here which has yet to be put into place. People who qualify for it and who have lived here for 5 years will obtain the so-called 'Settled Status' – corresponding to the right to permanent residence as it exists today. There are only a few criteria which would bar an individual from obtaining settled status: a criminal offence; a fraudulent application (e.g. if you lie in your application form about the number of years you've been living here); and the cut-off date (you have to apply in time). This March, the UK government committed itself to maintaining this approach throughout the so-called Brexit 'transition period', which is expected to last until the end of 2020. During this period Swiss citizens will enjoy their current residency rights: the ability to accrue the five years of residency needed to obtain the 'Settled Status.' The Home Office is working with us and other embassies in order to test their ideas on how this process should be designed. Home Office officials have said that the application process for Settled Status will be transparent, smooth and streamlined, short and simple, user-friendly and online based. There will be dedicated Home Office case-workers offering telephone support, face-to-face support or help in completing the online form.

The Embassy website 'Brexit FAQ' section is continually being updated:

[www.eda.admin.ch/london](http://www.eda.admin.ch/london)

### NO BILLAG: 77% of Swiss abroad voted against the initiative

About 160,000 Swiss Abroad have signed up to a voting register in order to exercise their democratic rights in their home country.

On Sunday, March 4, they demonstrated their support for Swiss public media and Switzerland's cultural diversity. Like their compatriots at home, the Swiss Abroad have strongly opposed the no-billag initiative. In the 12

cantons, in which the votes of the Swiss abroad are recorded separately, on average 77.93% voted against, while the national average was 71.6%.

The Swiss Abroad also approved by a large majority the Federal Decree on the new Financial Regulation 2021 with a yes-share of 91.81% (compared to 84.1% of the national average).

## VIDEO

The video of the Ambassador's talk has been published and is available to watch on the FOSSUK website, don't miss it!

[www.swiss-societies.co.uk](http://www.swiss-societies.co.uk)





## MEET THE AUTHOR: A Swiss writer living and writing in the UK



Barbara Kastelin is a Swiss who came to the UK at the age of 29 to marry a British diplomat. Forty-four years later her travels are over and, in

her home outside Cambridge, she writes and paints. Her latest novel, 'When snow fell', was published by Troubador in May 2017.

Barbara will be joining FOSSUK at its 2018 AGM in Belfast in May. We met her recently to discuss her experiences.

*Gioia Palmieri (GP): Tell me about your background in Switzerland, and how you came to be here.*

**Barbara Kastelin (BK):** I was born in my mother's hometown of Bern in the last year of the war, lived in Zurich until I was 12 and then moved to Geneva. My father's ancestors were also Swiss German, poor scribes who had emigrated from St Gallen to Russia. They prospered, became bankers to the Tsar and then lost it all when they were evacuated from St Petersburg by Red Cross train at the outbreak of the Russian Revolution. When I say 'all', that does not include their holiday home – a Napoleonic Schloss on the banks of the Bodensee! I have fictionalised my memories of them in my latest novel, 'When snow fell'.

Raised in a cacophony of German, French and Russian, I naturally went to work for the UN in Geneva, and later on in New York where I reported directly to Secretary-General U Thant because, as a Swiss, I was considered neutral and trustworthy. After three General Assemblies, I was exhausted. Back in Europe, my parents urged me to find a steadfast Swiss husband. I tried but it invariably ended in tears – his! When I met an Englishman who had just joined the FCO after his studies at Cambridge, he timidly asked whether I would awfully mind living in far-flung countries. He was in. We married in 1975.

*GP: What is it like, as a Swiss, to represent the UK abroad?*

**BK:** It is wonderful, helped by the fact that the Swiss are well respected, even in the furthest corner of China. We spent a lot of time in the Far East, which I loved. Being in Hong Kong through the negotiations over the colony's future was thrilling, but the position as Consul to Macao was an endearingly old-fashioned job with receptions at the Governor's Palace, oompah band, hats and gloves. Luckily, there is much in common between the Swiss and British worldviews, despite 'our' neutrality and 'their' tradition of involvement, so I was never conscious of any strain. But I always looked forward to



Mrs Kastelin with her husband.

Swiss National Day when Swissair would fly out Bündnerfleisch, Fendant and Emmentaler for the Ambassador's party. And then, in the 90's, we were posted to the UK Mission to the UN in Geneva. I was home! My family learned to ski and loved walking in the Binntal, Upper Valais, where the Hotel Ofenhorn had not changed since I stayed there as six-year-old. It was a lovely posting and my two daughters are proud to have Swiss passports. And today I heard that my granddaughters have been granted Swiss nationality too!

*GP: Why and how did you become a writer?*

**BK:** Imagination, or creativity if you like, was always central to my existence. Someone once said, 'Baba, only you can go to post a letter and have an amazing adventure.' I wrote and drew throughout my life; the language or medium of expression has never been an obstacle. When my daughters went to boarding school, 30 years ago, I settled down to write a novel set in Geneva. Publishers rejected the MS as overblown, exaggerated. A second, about expatriate life in Hong Kong, was also spurned, so I wrote a really fat book fictionalising my Russian family. My literary agent received an offer to publish, but just then we were posted and the project went onto the backburner. On return to Cambridge, the publishing world had changed with the computer, and then came the internet, desktop publishing, ebooks, etc. My agent is still at my side and two years ago



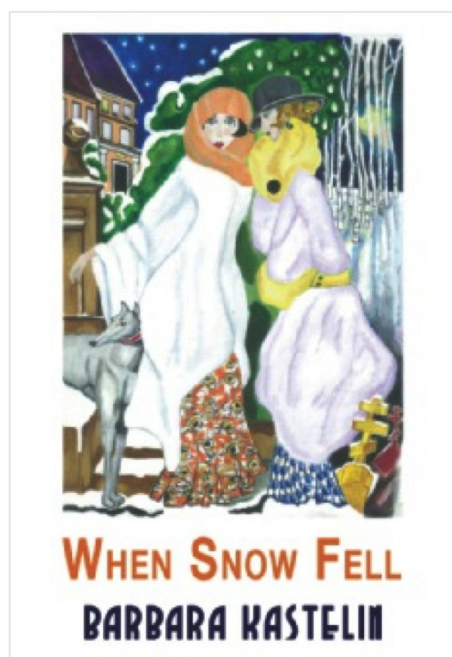
Mrs Kastelin's family in Switzerland.





‘The parrot tree’ was my first published novel. I insisted on painting the cover too, as I did for ‘When snow fell’. I hope to publish a collection of short stories this year, while the next novel ferments.

Kastelin's family  
Napoleonic Schloss on  
the banks of the  
Bodensee (CH).



Two latest novels of  
Barbara Kastelin. Both  
covers have been  
painted by the author.

### FOSSUK: Save the date for Belfast AGM

The next AGM of the Federation of Swiss Societies UK (FOSSUK) will take place in Belfast from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> of May 2018. This is the program:

#### Friday 18<sup>th</sup> May:

18.00 – 20.30 Evening with Barbara Kastelin  
in a traditional Irish Pub

#### Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> May:

10.00 – 12.30: Visit to the Titanic Museum  
and Ship SS Nomadic or

11.00 – 12.30: Visit of the city of Belfast

13.30 – 16.30: AGM and Cultural event  
with 's1rtak1'

16.30 – 18.00: Aperitif and canapés

18.00: Dinner at nearby restaurant

#### Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> May:

09.30 – 15.30: Giant Causeway tour



More info: [swiss-societies.co.uk](http://swiss-societies.co.uk)



## WARTIME: Forgotten Swiss emigrants in the UK



On the 26<sup>th</sup> of January, at Swiss Church, author Simone Müller presented her book, 'Alljährlich im Frühjahr schwärmen unsere jungen Mädchen nach England'. The Swiss author came to London to present her research on this special occasion

and the event was introduced by the Swiss Ambassador Alexandre Fasel. Suzanne Egloff, chairman of the Swiss Benevolent Society, talked about the history of the organisation and during the presentation the audience was honoured by the presence of three of the women portrayed: Annetta Diviani-Morosi, Helene Alexandrou-Neeser and Myrtha Parsons-Biedermann.

When I first started to research Swiss women who came to England in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, I had no idea that I was about to dig up a forgotten chapter of Swiss emigration history. While individual stories of grandmothers, cousins or great-aunts who left Switzerland in order to work and learn English are well remembered, the phenomenon as such – known as 'exodus of young women' in the 1950's – disappeared from the public consciousness.

It was often while talking to those women that I learned about new historical aspects of the subject myself. For example, 98-year-old Mina Rui-Oppliger who lives in Laufen (Basel) today told me that together with over 900 other women she had been repatriated by the Swiss Embassy in October 1939. As many of her generation, Mina Rui came to England because it was difficult to find a job and make a living as a housemaid in Switzerland in the 1930's.

Although most likely it was the biggest repatriation in the history of the country, the subject has not been reviewed at all. I could only reconstruct these transports and understand the huge effort necessary to organise them in wartime, when I found the original documents from the Embassy in the Federal Archives in Bern.

After the war, English was the language of the Allies and Anglo-Saxon culture became even more popular. If they had come in hundreds in the 1930's, they now came in thousands: between 5,000



Simone Müller:  
«Alljährlich im Frühjahr schwärmen unsere jungen Mädchen nach England».

11 Porträts. Limmat Verlag, Oktober 2017  
ISBN 978-3-85791-845-2 sFr. 38.–

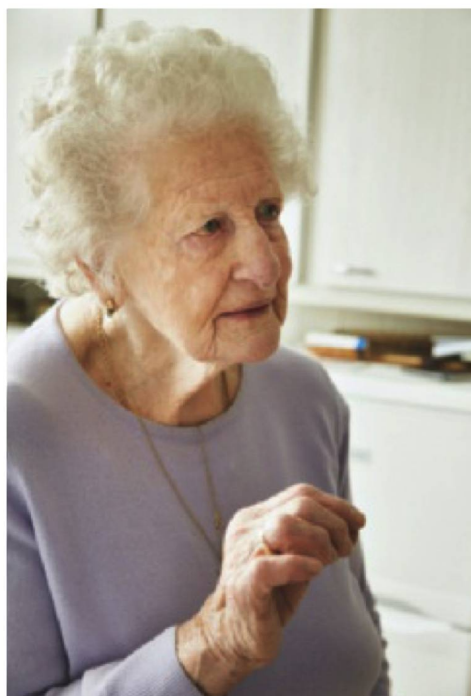
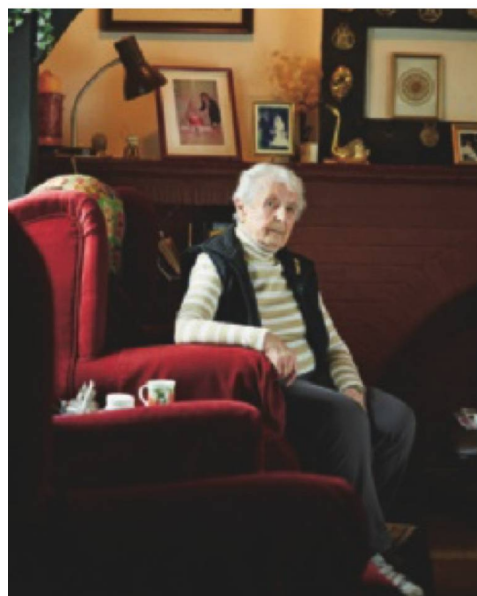
The book is available on amazon. If you would like to purchase the book, but cannot buy it online, please register your interest with Simone Müller: [simmu@bluewin.ch](mailto:simmu@bluewin.ch)

and 7,000 every year. Some went back, others – like the ones portrayed in the book – stayed for good.

The media were full of articles about the phenomenon, sometimes using poetic paraphrases like the 'Thurgauer Zeitung' in 1956: 'Every year in spring our young girls swarm to England' – the sentence turned into the title of the book. But the young women were also being warned about everything from the negative impact of grey British November days on the psyche to so called 'unwanted friendships' and pregnancies.

Although it's not that long ago, these women tell of a time we now mostly know from history books. They remember London when big parts of the city were still destroyed or what it meant to live under rationing. Every life story is unique, but many details also stand out as examples of the experiences of many and that, too, makes them so precious.

SIMONE MÜLLER



Mrs Myrtha Parsons-Biedermann; Mrs Annetta Diviani-Morosi and Mrs Helene Alexandrou-Neeser.



## SWISS BENEVOLENT SOCIETY

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Mrs Petra Kehr Cocks (Welfare Officer)

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London WC2H 9DY

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[info@swissbenevolent.org.uk](mailto:info@swissbenevolent.org.uk)  
[www.swissbenevolent.org.uk](http://www.swissbenevolent.org.uk)

## CARDIFF: Meet the author Alexandra Lavizzari



A reading and translation workshop open to all with Alexandra Lavizzari will be held on 12<sup>th</sup> April at the School of Modern Languages, Cardiff University.

The Swiss writer will introduce her novel, 'Und Harry?'. She will talk the participants through her writing process and will read various extracts in German. Participants will then have the opportunity to translate paragraphs from German into English and to discuss the outcome of their attempts with the writer. Booking information: [eventbrite.co.uk](http://eventbrite.co.uk)

The author will also host another meeting later the same evening where she will read some passages from her book. The event will be held on 12th April in Cardiff City Hall from 18.30 and is organised by the Cardiff-Stuttgart Association with the collaboration of the Consulate of Switzerland in Cardiff and the support of the South Wales Swiss Society.

Booking and further information:  
[swissinwales.org](http://swissinwales.org)



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## FOSSUK WEBSITE

You can find all the information in one place: Club info, events, ASO news, Brexit info, etc. with one click of the mouse! Go to: [www.swiss-societies.co.uk](http://www.swiss-societies.co.uk)



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## 1: Scotland

For the first time in its history, the Swiss Air Force exercise night flight training in Scotland.

In November and December, up to 10 F/A-18 Swiss fighter aircraft were deployed to Scotland's RAF base in Lossiemouth. The training is designed to complement limited training sequences already undertaken in Switzerland. A less congested airspace than over Switzerland, this sector of the North Sea provides an excellent operational environment. The Officer in Charge, LtCol A. Wicki, from the Swiss Air Force praised the training opportunities and infrastructure available in this part of the UK, though the changing weather conditions are challenging! Combat training during hours of darkness is vital to provide high-level training and capabilities to his professional fighter Pilots. Defence Attaché, Col (GS) M. Lerch and Honorary Consul General, P. Müller-McDougall visited operation 'Scot-night 2017', attending briefings and exchanged notes while also enjoying the company of our fellow Swiss Pilots, Engineering crews and RAF staff. The fighter detachment returned to Switzerland in December – in time for Christmas – and plan to be back later in 2018.

PETER MÜLLER-MCDOUGALL  
HONORARY CONSUL GENERAL EDINBURGH

## 2: Swiss Club Manchester

Despite the snowy, wintry day, around 50 members of the Swiss Club Manchester celebrated their 2018 New Year's lunch. The Swiss Honorary Consul, Mr Hans Scheiwiller, kindly provided us with a fine Swiss white wine for the aperitif. We then made our way to the Verandah Suite, where we enjoyed a fine lunch and amusing speeches from our president Dieter Senn and Hans Scheiwiller.

Future events: Friday 13<sup>th</sup> April at the Brookdale Club Bramhall: AGM for the Swiss Relief Society at 7 pm and AGM for the Swiss Club at 8pm.

JAN-CHRISTOF TELFORD

Swiss Air Force in Scotland.



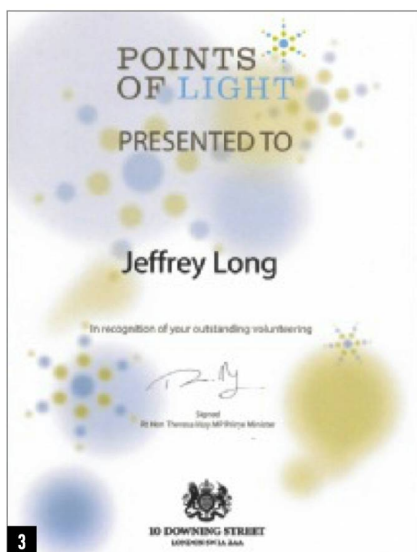
1

The New Year's Lunch in Manchester.



2

A special reward for Mr Long's fundraising trek.



3

Parent's German-speaking group in Birmingham.



5

## 3: Yorkshire

As a result of his fundraising trek (see Swiss Review, January 2018), the Yorkshire Post readers nominated Jeffrey Long for the Point of Light Award, a prize given by 10 Downing Street to outstanding UK volunteers who make a change in their community. The certificate, signed by the PM, is very special to Jeffrey. The 2017 Sternberg award, also received by Jeffrey, honours the dedication of those over the age of 70 in their work for good causes. In addition, he was also decorated with a badge by the Royal British Legion and given Life Membership and a certificate.

Jeffrey raised over £120,000, which included nearly £900 for the Royal British Legion and more than £400 for the Swiss Church in London.

MARIA ATKINSON

## 4: Southern Area Swiss Club

Anyone who is interested is invited to our next meeting on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May at 7.30pm to play skittles and share in a cup of tea or coffee with cake. The appointment is at the Jolly Farmer, Blacknest. For more information contact Berni Curtress: [berni@nbtsc.plus.com](mailto:berni@nbtsc.plus.com)

## 5: Birmingham

A young Swiss mother is starting up and organising a German-speaking group for parents, mothers/fathers and their babies/toddlers in Birmingham. The group will meet regularly for coffee and cakes in a cafe with the aim of bringing parents and children together to help enhance their kids' confidence in speaking their mother language. There will be gatherings in the park during the summer, baking gratti-männer and Christmas biscuits in the winter, and many other activities. Rebecca Krähenbühl, who is promoting the initiative and expecting her first child, explained to Swiss Review, 'I just think that there is a risk of mothers in particular becoming isolated and, although there are many English-speaking groups in and around Birmingham, there are none for German-speaking parents. As a Swiss citizen, it is important to me that my children speak German and have a constant connection to their national culture'.

Interested parents can join the Facebook group: 'German Speaking parents in Birmingham'. For further information contact:

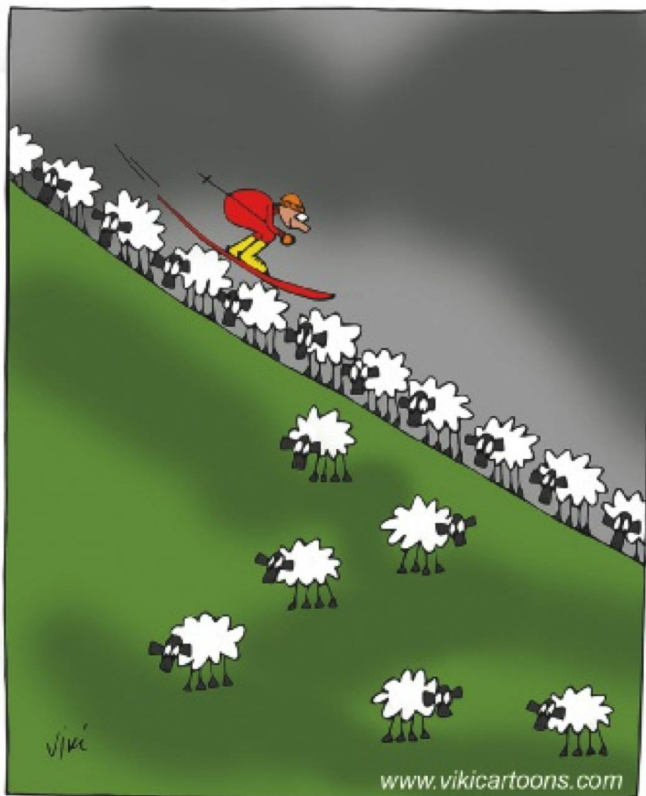
[rebecca\\_sian@hotmail.com](mailto:rebecca_sian@hotmail.com)

## 6: Swiss Club Edinburgh

The Stammtisch of the Swiss Club Edinburgh takes place every first Wednesday evening of each month throughout the year from 7.30pm onwards at Le Di-vin, 9, Randolph Place, Edinburgh. You don't need to register for these events, just show up, check our Facebook page if there is a change. More info:

[f@swissclubedinburgh](https://www.facebook.com/swissclubedinburgh) or [swissclubedinburgh.co.uk](http://swissclubedinburgh.co.uk)





**VIKI:** A cartoon for the Swiss in the UK

[www.vikicartoons.com](http://www.vikicartoons.com)  
f @Vikicartoons

**We have found ways to pursue our favourite winter sport in Britain despite the lack of snow.**

**FIONA:** The view from the top

For more of her work, visit:

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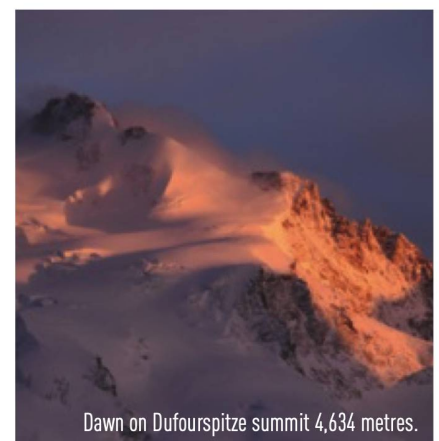


Dent Blanche Dawn.

Castor 4228 metres – the twin.



BEATRICE SCHEGEL, TRANSLATOR



Dawn on Dufourspitze summit 4,634 metres.

#### IMPRESSUM

HOW TO CONTACT THE EDITOR: Reports of Swiss society activities, news, coming events, correspondence, articles and advertising for the 'Switzerland in the UK & Ireland' section of the Swiss Review, should go to the editor:

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#### Next Issues

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