

Swiss Landgemeinde in England

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NEWS FROM THE COLONY

SWISS LANDSGEMEINDE IN ENGLAND

The eighteenth "Landsgemeinde" of the Swiss communities in the North of England took place on 19th June 1966. Once again, the party met at Hebden Bridge in Yorkshire and set out on an hour's walk to Hardcastle Crag, a picturesque spot reminiscent of the Rütli meadow on the shores of the Lake of Lucerne.

The number of participants was not as high as in the famous "Landsgemeinden" in Switzerland, but it was indeed an event for the North of England to meet 90 of our compatriots in a countryside which deminded one of Switzerland. There were no political resolutions taken, but many a one present at least resolved to come again next year.

Everybody regretted the absence of Prof. J. Inebnit, the President of the Yorkshire Swiss Club, caused by serious illness. Among those present were seen the representative of the Swiss Ambassador, Counsellor of Embassy and Madame Feller, and also the Swiss Consul of Manchester and Madame Brunner.

Should anyone have doubted the Swiss character of the festival on their way there, they would soon have lost their doubts because right at the start we were eating delicious Swiss *Bratwürste* flown in specially and grilled a golden brown by a chef from Central Switzerland.

The Rev. M. Dietler of the Swiss Church in London officiated at the Festival Service. The sermon was based on a text from II Tim. 3, 14-17 where the Apostle Paul urges his listeners to hold on to the Holy Scriptures. Pfr. Dietler let us have a short insight into the development around the Bible during recent years and he spoke of the dynamic power of the "Book of books". From his sermon we quote: "Hold on to the Scriptures! Do it in as modern a way as you wish. Do it as critically as you wish — only hold on! You are such a mixed gathering, I won't even say: *Believe* in the Bible, but just: '*Hold on to it!*' One can read oneself into the Bible believingly, there are others who read while still doubting or turn its pages out of curiosity or tenaciously contradict it — suddenly it grips us, we cannot get free, the barb has caught us in heart, soul, in our inner disposition, in our understanding and will. The fish has been caught."

After a few important announcements, Mr. E. Berner, President of the Manchester Swiss Club, passed on to the *Nationalspiel*. For a short time, the English meadow became a map of Switzerland on which the various Cantons were geographically correctly placed. In a humorous way, Mr. Berner illustrated the history of the Swiss Confederation. At the various dates of entry into the *Bund*, members of the various Cantons streamed into the piece of meadow reserved for them. The only places unoccupied were those of the Cantons Uri, Unterwalden, Zug and Ticino, the Italian-speaking element was however represented by members of the Grisons.

Up to that point, the weather had been clement but there were signs of a change when single heavy drops of rain fell and caused us to seek shelter at Hebden Bridge where a jolly (*gemütlich* — untranslatable!) get-together had been planned. The presence of the Chairman of Hebden Rural District and of Hebden Royd Councils and their ladies was especially appreciated. There was a brisk exchange of ideas in which mainly four points were stressed:

- (a) This is the year of "Fifth Switzerland", the year which honours the 300,000 Swiss people living abroad.
- (b) It is the year of the official recognition of our moral, material and political rights and duties to be laid down in a new article of the Swiss Constitution, to be accepted by popular vote in a few months' time.
- (c) It is the Golden Jubilee of our own organisation in Berne.
- (d) It is the foundation-year of the Federation of Swiss Societies in Great Britain.

Only too soon, it was time for the last hand-shake. As people were gradually leaving, one heard all around the familiar farewell: "*Z'nächst Jahr wider, j'espère vous voir l'année prochaine*, I hope to see you again next year."

Pfr. M. Dietler.

ANDRE CHARTON †

As was announced with deep regret in the last issue, Mr. A. H. Charton of 25 Westmoreland Road, Barnes, S.W.13, died at the age of 70 on 14th May.

André Charton belonged to a very old family which had come from Lyons to Geneva in the fourteenth century. After finishing his studies at the "Collège de Genève", he came to London in 1915 and soon found employment at the Crédit Lyonnais. He served in the Swiss Army (Artillery) during the last two years of the first world war. In 1919, he returned to London, and after working in several banks, he settled as Foreign Exchange Dealer at the American Express, a very specialised occupation. After becoming redundant, he took a partnership with a French firm of provision merchants. Finally, he started on his own in 1933. A. H. Charton & Co. in Tooley Street and later in Borough High Street soon became well-known as butter, cheese and egg merchants. After the war, he was nominated official selling agent of a major French cheese *consortium*.

Mr. Charton was a very active freemason and a prominent member of the "Entente Cordiale" Lodge for forty years, and he was elected a member of the City Swiss Club in 1926.

Unfortunately, he suffered a stroke in 1962, and this obliged him to sell his beloved business. He also had to give up his social activities, and a second stroke sent him to hospital again for a long period. A few months after his return, he passed on, much respected and well known as a good Swiss who upheld high traditions of his country.

Our sincere sympathy goes to those he left behind, his widow, three married daughters and two sons.

A. Bleiker.

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