

Swiss National Day celebration in Bournemouth

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With all the artists joining the *Corale* on the stage, the scene was set for the President, Mr. Fred Streit, to give his customary speech, words of welcome to the official guests, of appreciation to the hosts and thanks to all the artists, helpers and financial supporters without whom the celebration could not have been organised. Particular mention should be made to those who assisted in bringing over from Switzerland the two yodel artists, the Swiss National Tourist Office and the Anglo-Continental School of English in Bournemouth and above all Mr. A. Schmid of the Norfolk Court Hotel who offered the two sisters hospitality.

And then came the National Anthem. This is always a rather uncomfortable moment when one has to sing more than one verse of this none too easy song, not yet familiar enough to be sung without embarrassment, and, this time, accompanied on the organ with no conception of the right speed and harmony. How much "Rufst Du, mein Vaterland" is still ingrained was shown at one o'clock in the morning when a much smaller audience sang the old words to the tune of "God save the Queen" with a lot more conviction. Let us hope that "Trittst im Morgenrot daher" will remain the *temporary* Anthem, soon to be replaced by an easier permanent Swiss hymn.

Nevertheless, the celebration could be termed completely successful even before the evening was out. Dancing to Harry Vardon's energetic band began, and during the interval, the Giess Sisters once more delighted the audience with their yodelling.

Official guests, organisers, supporters and helpers were entertained in the Mayoral Suite at the Town Hall. The unanimous opinion amongst the "experts" was that Mr. Streit and his untiring assistants could be congratulated on the unqualified success of the 675th anniversary celebration, organised and, apart from a modest admission charge, financed entirely by the permanently resident Colony with no help from Switzerland.

The verdict of some Swiss visitors from home, who are much concerned with the wellbeing of their compatriots abroad, was very favourable. They considered remarkable that even such a "popular" event should be opened by a prayer and the reading of the Swiss Pact. The standard of performance they felt was quite high, but they could not help being surprised that the language mainly used was English and expressed curiosity why so many non-Swiss artists should take part. Once they realised that this was in a way a compliment to our hostess country, they were satisfied. However well integrated we may be in British community life, at heart we are still attached to our homeland, and we affirm our fidelity once again in this year dedicated to us Swiss abroad, the "Year of Fifth Switzerland".

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SWISS NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATION IN BOURNEMOUTH

The Anglo-Continental School of English in Bournemouth is a flourishing concern founded and run by two enterprising young Swiss, F. Schillig from Central Switzerland and G. S. Scheller from Zurich. At the moment there are some 2,500 students at the school, many of them on special holiday courses. As there are several hundred Swiss amongst them (the usual quota is about 40%), and as there is no Swiss Club in Bournemouth, it seems a natural thing to do for ACSE, as the school is known, to take matters in hand and organise the Swiss National Day Celebration. This they have done for several years, and on more than one occasion their *Bundesfeier* took place on a boat moored somewhere outside Bournemouth harbour. That was before the big school hall and restaurant was built, inaugurated in 1965. This is now a most suitable and very pleasant venue for any social gathering. It has a fair-sized stage with effective lighting installations, ample room for 500 people to sit at small tables and leaving enough room for dancing. Well-equipped kitchens and pantries are adjacent. In day time its windows forming an almost continuous glass wall give onto neatly tended gardens, and at night, yards and yards of drawn curtains help to provide a pleasant and friendly atmosphere.

Normally, ACSE celebrate the Swiss National Day on 1st August. This year, they organised it for Sunday, last day of July, which enabled the Swiss Ambassador to attend. This was much appreciated not only by management, staff and students of the school, but by many of Bournemouth's prominent citizens headed by His Worship the Mayor and the Mayoress. A number of Swiss residents from Bournemouth were invited, and an invitation was also extended to the Editor of the "Swiss Observer".

Bournemouth was in a dreary mood when the visitors arrived. Hotels and guest houses, though, were full, and the "No vacancies" sign was up everywhere as I walked through parts of the residential quarters on my way to Wimborne Road. No need to ask for the school — the large number of cars with mainly Swiss number plates was a sure indicator. Nearer numbers 29 to 35, certainty grew as a large Swiss flag boldly beckoned welcome. None too soon could we shelter in the friendly hall from the blustery wind and penetrating rain. The top-hatted ushers and the girls in *Vaudois* costumes could have been in action and evidence anywhere, so could the Swiss flags, and bunting and posters might have been put up in honour of Switzerland in any given place, but what reminded us so convincingly that we were on mainly Swiss ground was the babble of Swiss voices and the genuine Swiss *Ländlermusik* (recorded) which entertained the gathering before the guests of honour arrived. I suddenly woke with a jolt from the trance caused by a swinging polka tune, when I discovered that my own cherished cantonal flag, the red staff of Baselland had been put right at the end of all the Swiss flags tied across the stage in order (nearly) of their entry into the Confederation. We *Landschäftler* joined the Swiss Confederates as early as 1501, and thus we belong in the middle, please note, right next to our "half-brother" Baselstadt.

The programme opened with a rousing old favourite amongst marches, "Old Comrades" played well on the accordion by Mr. Max Schwarz, a modest young Swiss wearing an Alpine herdsman's jacket.

Mr. F. Schillig, Principal Director of ACSE, welcomed guests, staff and students, and he was followed by a creditable performance by two members of the Bournemouth Girl Accordionists. Only 13 years of age and very shy and engaging, Miss Jennifer Stublely and Miss Christine Koumides paid tribute to our country by playing "Jungfrau" and "Edelweiss".

The ACSE Choir has quite a reputation. Having had the pleasure of hearing them in London on a First of August, I knew what to expect, and I was not disappointed. Their rendering of "Wir sind die jungen Schweizer" does credit to the young girls and boys and their conductor Mr. Alan Williams. His name, dinner jacket and carnation may be English, but his grasp of the patriotic feelings underlying the brisk words and stirring rhythm was completely Helvetic. We hear a lot of the young generation, also in Switzerland, which is not complimentary. But I could not help reflecting that behind their often rude and conceited attitudes there must still be some of the grand stuff which made the nation what it is. "Mein Blut ist jung, stark meine Hand, und Dein mein Herz, o Vaterland" could neither have been sung with such conviction nor listened to with an almost tangible acceptance of its meaning. Equally surprising was the thundering applause accorded later in the programme to the reading of the message to the Swiss abroad by Federal President Schaffner.

"Die jungen Schweizer" created the right background for Monsieur de Fischer's patriotic address. He dwelt on the differences between the two countries as they strike a young Swiss student here for the first time, the comparisons he must make between the two types of democracy, the parliamentary one in this country, the direct one at home. The Ambassador went back into history to show that already centuries ago, Swiss soldiers, business men and scholars had settled on this island, whilst it was the British who introduced mountaineering and winter sports to Switzerland.

How well the Ambassador's interesting reflections were received was shown by the short reply by the Mayor of Bournemouth. He also expressed pleasure at having so many Swiss students in his town — "foreign students add a quarter of a million pounds a year to Bournemouth's economy", he stated.

The next number brought two expert yodellers from the Aargau, the young Giess Sisters, to the stage. In the becoming Sunday costume of the Fricktal, they entertained the party with first-class yodels accompanied on the accordion by Mr. Schwarz. They were not only sound musicians, but enhanced their performance by pleasing deportment.

A young Swiss in an historic costume read the Swiss Pact (in German). Though the young man did his best, his costume was of too much silk and velvet, his voice too urban and the piece of paper from which he was reading definitely contemporary twentieth century. But this slight and unimportant shortcoming was only a trifle in an otherwise extremely well-organised evening's entertainment, all performances of which were of a high standard.

The Choir sang two more songs, in English and Italian, having already delighted the audience with the favourite "Là-haut sur la Montagne". Mr. G. S. Scheller, Director of the school and the prime organiser of the celebration, said a few words of thanks and stressed the unique character of the event, i.e. a Swiss celebration on English soil and in front of an international audience.

The official part of the evening ended by the singing

of the Swiss National Anthem, its temporary nature being somewhat pushed aside by the Choir leading with resolution.

The second part of the evening consisted of dancing and two periods of entertainment compered by a clever young voice artist Hanspeter Kissling from Berne, who kept his audience in fits of laughter, especially with his superb imitation of a *Bundesfeier* in a Swiss village. The accordionists performed once again, this time accompanying a young dancer Miss Janet Crawley. The Giess Sisters regaled us with a few more yodelling songs enthusiastically received, and two British accordionists appeared as "Wandering Minstrels". New in the programme was the Swiss Guitar Group, five girl and eight boy singers, two with guitars, who sang popular songs and negro spirituals, performances of a surprisingly high standard.

During the interval, the official guests had a chance of seeing some of the other rooms imaginatively decorated by the students. Generous refreshments were served in a room hung with Swiss posters, flags and a picture of General Guisan. Flowers, paper napkins, curtains and candles were in the red and white national colours. Red and white were the wines, too, *Dôle* and *Johannisberg*, and Swiss were the *cervelats* which made up part of the refreshments.

The atmosphere never lagged throughout the evening, and ACSE may be congratulated on an excellent celebration. The remarkable thing is that all was done by the students themselves. A committee under the chairmanship of the indefatigable Mr. Scheller set to work, and they designed posters, made decorations and bunting, acted as scene shifters and cloakroom attendants, and it was they who prepared and served refreshments. A complete success — only one in a long series of the ACSE organisation.

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