

News from the Colony

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NEWS FROM THE COLONY

PERUSING THE SECOND EDITION OF THE "GUIDE TO THE SWISS COLONY IN GT. BRITAIN AND EIRE"

A First Edition of the Guide to the Colony was published in June 1949 at the Frederick Printing Co. It had great success and the 3,000 copies printed were snapped up within a year. A Second Edition was produced under the editorship of Dr. H. Egli two years later and 4,000 copies were made available. This was the last effort at publishing a Colony Guide. Its perusal makes only too plain the differences between the Colony today and what it was 20 years ago. A Colony Guide published today would have to be deprived of the names of many Swiss societies, many Swiss businesses and many members of the Colony.

The 1951 Guide was published under the auspices of the Swiss Ambassador, Monsieur Henri de Torrenté. It begins with a page of welcome to the new arrivals in the Colony. This is followed by general advice regarding the food office and national registration, national insurance, consular duties in respect of changes of address, labour permits, domestic work conditions and savings.

Three pages of the booklet contain a list of Swiss people of trust for the benefit of young people coming to the provinces. The list of these Swiss residents is impressive, some of them living in such de-centralised counties as Shropshire, Westmorland and Warwickshire. Altogether about 60 names outside London. How many of these people are still alive today and still in a position to come to the help of young Swiss people?

Page 17 lists six Swiss doctors practising in England. The four London specialists listed all had their consulting rooms in the Harley Street area. How many of these specialists are still practising?

Certainly many of the Swiss societies listed are defunct. The "Comité de la Fete Suisse", responsible for organising vast 1st August celebrations at Central Hall, Westminster, no longer exists. "La Confrérie Vaudoise" then presided by the late Alfred Renou, and celebrating the independence of Vaud by a "Bal Romand" is no longer active. The "Cercle Genevois" now exists all but in name. The Swiss Youth Club, formed as late as 1948, with weekly informal dances at 86 Duke Street, Grosvenor Square, had a short-lived existence. Everybody knows the fate of the Swiss Club at 74 Charlotte Street. The Guide describes its "Dining

Room and Bar" rebuilt to Swiss tastes and Swiss style. The wood for the furniture and wall panelling had been supplied by the Chalet Murer Factory in Beckenried, and graciously offered by two members. It had wrought iron railings and light fittings making the place glow with a Grisons atmosphere. The ball and banqueting room could accommodate 150 people. It had a new parquet floor welcoming dancers every Saturday and Sunday night, a full size billiard table, dining and boardrooms for private parties, and bedrooms.

It was a worthy successor to the bombed Union Helvetia building. The "Swiss Accordion Club" used to rehearse there every Friday, the same with the "Swiss Male Choir", into which membership cost only 12/- a year. Another social groupment which appears to be extinct is the Swiss Ladies Social Club, Manchester. The Birmingham Swiss Club, which used to meet every third Monday of the month at 7.30 p.m. at the Midland Hotel for a game of jass and a social in Schwyz-erdütsch doesn't give much signs of life anymore. (We understand however that it is currently being revived.)

The booklet is nevertheless incomplete in its listing of Swiss societies. No mention is made of the West of Scotland Swiss Club for example, nor of Swiss activities in the West Country and Jersey. It is interesting to learn from the Guide that the Swiss Club in Dunfermline was a group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique. In 1951 it had 42 members, a library and a small Dramatic Circle. It had been founded in 1937 by a few Swiss who had ended up in Andrew Carnegie's birthplace because of the slump in the home silk industry.

The last part of the Guide has a useful index of Swiss businesses classified according to branches of activity. Thus the banks, chemical works, clothing firms, engineering and metal trades, hotels, printing works and other outfits are listed. However the list appears to be far from complete because not every firm took the trouble to answer the questionnaire that had been sent prior to the publication of the Guide.

If the new "Swiss Centre" amply referred to in our 25th June and 9th July issues and now in the course of gestation ever sees the day, then a re-edition of a Colony Guide would be the best way of reviving the indispensable interest of the resident Swiss in Britain.

SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY

About 20 members were present at the September monthly meeting, which opened the activities of the SMS after the summer break. The theme was the holiday experiences of members. But first the meeting accepted the membership to the London groups of Mr. Stephan Baumgartner, of the SMS Employment Service, and awarded honorary membership to four old-time members, Mr. Oscar Luterbacher, Mr. Alfred Mengeu, Mr. Ulrich Nekom and Mr. August Ryman, all of whom were entitled to the special jubilee glass plate. The meeting was informed of the sad passing away of three members of long standing, Mr. Edwin Enz, Mr. Edmond Gombacher and Mr. Fred Streit. For the last mentioned the attendance stood up in a minute's silence.

We were then to enjoy some of the summer experiences of four members—Mr. Grob, Mr. Bonjour, Mr. Jaccard and Mr. Hediger. Mr. Asch furthermore presented slides of the SMS summer outing to Hughendon Manor, birthplace of Benjamin Disraeli.

Mr. Grob showed us enlightening slides of the Landesmuseum in Zurich. The most salient feature of Mr. Bonjour's exposition was a series of slides on the Swiss model village at Melide, on Lake Lugano. This fascinating standing exhibition, with accurate models of the historical buildings and landmarks of Switzerland, is quite recent and Mr. Bonjour's photographic report certainly gave us the wish to make the detour to the Tessin. Mr. Jaccard showed us slides from Germany, and various parts of Switzerland. Finally, Mr. Hediger showed us

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