

"Switzerland"

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“SWITZERLAND.”

Exhibition of Swiss Planning and Building
at the Royal Institute of British Architects,
66, Portland Place, W.1.

September 19th — October 26th, 1946.

A SMALL COUNTRY ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE GREAT PROBLEMS.

No country is more closely identified with the exchange of international ideas than Switzerland. The Exhibition of Swiss Planning and Building opening at the Royal Institute of British Architects on September 19th will show how her unique situation between three great cultures has stimulated the attempt to solve universal social problems of to-day.

Apart from questions of housing and planning vital for every country, Switzerland's special problems are of great interest to everyone who has visited the High Alps, the lakes and the lovely old towns and villages of Switzerland. Three-fifths of the land is mountainous. In a country less than one-third the size of England there are only 4,000 acres of agricultural land. Yet Switzerland is still largely agricultural, though she has highly developed specialised industries. In her comparatively small cities, planning can preserve the balance between the needs of the individual and the community. The aim of Swiss planners and architects for town and country communities has been to combine the old with the new, and wild natural beauty with the works of man.

In the section showing the *Preservation of Urban and Rural Beauty*, the famous *Lake of Sils* in the Engadine is shown. Threatened by a proposal to erect great electrical power stations, all classes joined in a campaign to save this historic beauty spot. School children sold half a million chocolate coins, and by this means alone raised enough money in a fortnight to buy a 99 years' lease.

An outstanding example of private initiative is shown in the *Child Welfare and Youth Service* section. This is the *Pestalozzi Children's Hamlet*, at Trogen, Appenzell. Begun in 1945 and not yet completed, this experiment in the promotion of co-operation and understanding between the children of various nations is built on a lovely hillside. Sixteen children of both sexes, ranging in age from 3 to 15 years, will live in each house, under the care of "foster-parents." Groups of houses will be occupied by children of some one nationality, speaking their own language and keeping their national character. Each group will take part in the central organisation — an international community of children. Voluntarily financed, four hundred children will be given home-like surroundings for several years. School-children and students from Switzerland, France, Austria and Holland have volunteered to help in building it. The Swiss have had great experience during the war in dealing with tens of thousands of refugee children and their problems.

The *Police Headquarters at Basel*, in the section comprising *Community Life*, shows that a building not usually associated with beauty need not be ugly itself. This has fine murals and frescoes, and a beautiful setting beside an antique Gothic fountain. An example of pre-fabricated building as far back as 1934 is the *Barracks of the Voluntary Labour Service at Waldegg*,

Zurich. Here unemployed people worked voluntarily on land drainage, harvesting and other forms of community improvement.

In the section devoted to the *Health of the Community*, mountain and ski huts, open air baths, sports grounds, holiday houses and restaurants are included, as well as the most modern experiments in hospital buildings. *Dählhölzli*, the *Landscape Zoo at Berne*. Switzerland's little Whipsnade, is a fine example of landscape architecture, with the buildings hidden in trees and a river running through. The State-owned *Inn at Langenberg in the Sihl Forest*, with its herds of deer, shows how the Swiss are meeting the demand for week-ends in other scenery than the mountains. The *Corso Theatre* shows the successful modernisation of an old building, combining dancing, restaurant and theatre under one roof.

Lack of building materials during the war affected Switzerland badly. Steel, coal, and therefore cement and bricks, were scarce. The *Municipal Hospital at Basel*, however, the largest hospital in the country, was built entirely during the war years, a unique achievement in continental Europe. This is one of the finest modern teaching hospitals in Europe; similar buildings are planned for Zurich and Geneva. The high standard maintained throughout this building is typical of Switzerland; the Swiss appreciation of quality is inherent in the whole Exhibition.

NEWS FROM PRESTATYN.

Our small Swiss circle in North Wales has suffered a grievous loss. Marie Cheetham, née Steffen, from Bâle, has lost her life in a motoring accident in Switzerland. She left Ringway Airport, Manchester, on 26th August. On the 29th August she sent postcards to her friends saying that she had had a quick and good journey via Paris to Zurich and mentions the pleasing prospect of a motor drive to Alvanen on Saturday, 31st August. Before the cards arrived news came of the disaster.

Mrs. Cheetham will be greatly missed. She did and was willing to do many kind actions especially to the Swiss. Mrs. Cheetham was a widow and leaves a son, Captain Arthur Cheetham, who has a small son called Christopher, very dear to Grandmama's heart. He loved the shore and so did Granny, because Christopher did.

There is a land of the living; there is a land of the dead; and the bridge is love. This bridge surely exists for the memory of Marie Cheetham.

Mr. R. Schaerer has entered on his duties as Vice-Consul and "Verweser" of the Liverpool Consulate. Mme Davidson, Mrs. Macquarie and the former Consul met him at lunch recently to wish him good luck. He comes to Liverpool at a time when the gloom of the post-war period still lies heavy on the town. Commercial enterprise is lamed. The merchant venturers, the makers of trading markets every day feel frustrated. The older generation steps aside, the younger ones would like to emigrate if they could.

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We congratulate Maryse Faivre on obtaining the Higher School Certificate for English, Music and French.

E.M.