

Zeitschrift: Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad
Herausgeber: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad
Band: 17 (1990)
Heft: 1

Anhang: Local news : Great Britain

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Local News - Great Britain THE GREEN PAGES

Who Cares ?

Perhaps I should begin this editorial with a warning to those of a nervous constitution who may be offended by the comments that follow. But I should add that one does not have to be an anarchist to criticise the establishment. 'The establishment' to which I refer in this case relates not to government but to the multifarious bodies that allegedly represent you and I. Listed on this page are numerous clubs and societies to whom we, as Swiss citizens temporarily or permanently domiciled in the UK, are invited to refer. Many local Swiss clubs have a thriving membership. These tend to be the more liberal organisations who expect little from members other than a modest financial contribution. They meet only to enjoy each others company, to exchange gossip and to indulge in social gatherings.

It seems that the less well attended clubs are often those run on more serious lines. So much time is spent on the semantics of organisation that there is little time left for leisurely pursuits. I reflect here not simply a personal bias but opinions of numerous club members I have met over the last 18 months.

It is no surprise to me that my colleague Mariann Meier writes, in this issue - Page VIII, of a lack of interest shown by Swiss citizens in the UK in joining clubs and societies. What good is an appeal for an injection of youth when it is in the nature of the Swiss to deify their elders and to pay little heed to the 'younger generation'. I am 31 years old and often treated like some kind of adolescent heretic merely because I am not afraid to challenge officialdom.

'Who or what', I am often asked, is FOSSUK ? The Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK is a body formed to regulate Swiss organisations here and to pass on the views of members to the authorities in Berne. Two 'Commissioners of the Swiss Abroad', Berni Simon and Joe Broggin, lobby government officials on our behalf. Hands up if you already knew this.

I tackled Joe Broggin at a recent FOSSUK meeting hosted by outgoing FOSSUK President Dr Duttweiler at Credit Suisse. Despite my non-aggressive intentions Joe shifted uncomfortably in his chair as I asked him such questions as: Who funds the trips he makes to Switzerland 'on our behalf' ? What does he actually achieve on these visits ? How do those who have no interest in joining a Swiss club have any influence in matters that affect them ?

I did not leave the meeting satisfied that those less privileged than I who were not invited to attend this sumptuous luncheon had any influence at all. I hope new President Jeff Long will take up my offer to professionally publicise FOSSUK's activities and to make it **truly** representative of public opinion. He is a genuine, strong-minded Yorkshireman who may yet change the thinking of those who fear change.

There are many dedicated staff at the Swiss Embassy and Consulates who are **very** helpful when approached for any manner of advice or assistance. Such is the aura of unapproachable elitism, however, that only the vociferous few ever dare seek their help. Remember, **these people are our representatives**. They don't charge. They don't bite. They do listen. If they do not fulfill their obligation just let me know !

Best regards, Nick Miller

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Local News - Great Britain THE GREEN PAGES

Published quarterly as a supplement to
THE SWISS REVIEW
by MGB PUBLICATIONS
86 Camberwell Road London SE5 0EG
Tel: 01-701 6662 Fax: 01-701 2299

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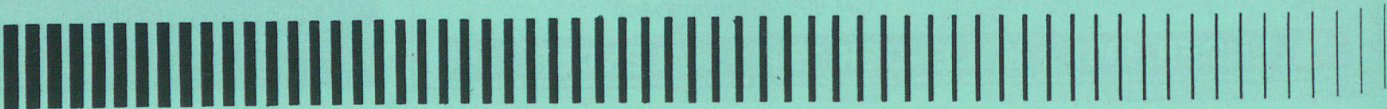
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Opening LETTERS

Mr Ambassador ... my apology.

Since publication of my interview with **Franz Muheim**, recently appointed Swiss Ambassador to the UK, I have received a letter he sent me which asks me to explain why I had not sent him a copy of the abridged text prior to printing, commenting that ...

'Some of the changes alter the meaning of what I said. I refer in particular to the paragraph concerning the training of military observers, who will not be put at the disposal of peace-keeping operations in Namibia (where we already have a medical team) but, as I stated, initially in the Middle East. Also, it is certain that Switzerland will never contemplate joining NATO; the word "presently", which you added, therefore gives a completely wrong impression.'

I sincerely apologise if our use of 'editorial licence' caused any concern to the Ambassador or, thereby, to our readers. We could happily fill 16 or 20 'green pages' with an unedited version of such an interview (and numerous other features) but are prevented, despite an overflow of keen advertisers, in so doing by constraints placed upon us by the publishers of the white pages and, in fact, by the Swiss Embassy in London! Similar constraints unfortunately, in this case, allowed us no time so send a proof copy to the Ambassador who was, at that time, on a trip to Switzerland. Despite our perpetual rush to provide 'topical' information we still find that most readers receive their copies of the Review up to ONE MONTH LATE. Who we blame, I'm afraid, I know not.

Having such little space again prevents me from, as promised, answering your 'Advice Line' queries in this issue. However, enquiries from Roger Mistely of Hemel Hempstead, Marta Walters of Bury-St. Edmunds, Paul Mondelli of Neasden, Mark Baker of Tooting, and Michael Weitener at Heriot-Watt University, concerning a wide range of issues will be dealt with individually and touched on in brief in the next issue. Copies of the full 'answers' from the Embassy or other sources will then be available upon request.

I will just follow up on one Advice Line query posed in the last issue. Several members of the Tyne-and-Wear Swiss Club were eager to know if any airline plans to run a direct service

from Newcastle airport to any Swiss destination. On investigation I published a response from Swissair but reported that **Dan-Air** completely ignored my correspondence. Having read his name in print, a mildly enraged **Crawford Rix**, Dan-Air's Commercial Manager, contacted me by 'phone. I now have their official reply...

DASS (Dan-Air Scheduled Services) believes in investigating fully any new route opportunities and, consequently, operations to Switzerland from Newcastle Airport are always a future possibility.'

... in other words, Nelly ... 'No!' The communication, which arrived some FIVE MONTHS late, also boasted that Dan-Air's new 'Class Elite' business service has just been launched on the Gatwick-Zurich route and that Dan-Air is one of Europe's fastest growing airlines etc. Well, they would say that, wouldn't they? Crawford Rix, it must be said, is NOT such a bad chap but his mail room needs attention!

Margrit Lyster of the **Swiss Welfare Office** writes to complain about John Chapman's article concerning the SWO in issue no. 89/3 ...

'The article gives the totally misleading impression of being based on an interview with me which it certainly was not - I have never spoken to you nor Mr. Chapman. I strongly object to being misquoted - particularly when the information is false, irrelevant to our work or in no way sympathetic to our objectives.'

I must confess to asking John to construct the article as if it were in interview format as I, perhaps wrongly, felt this would be more interesting to the reader. In fact ALL the information given was taken from the SWO's own Annual Report so it is ludicrous to suggest that any part was falsified. The article was far from unsympathetic and has since received praise and a good deal of interest from other readers. The Swiss Welfare Office has, for many years, received FREE advertising and editorial from the green pages. Many organisations might have at least thanked us for that.

Trudy Ferbrache of the Guernsey Swiss Club writes to say that she ... *'looks forward in anticipation to the next Swiss Review to see if our club has its first ever mention!'* ...

Well, there it is, Trudy, but I suggest you get in touch with me soon and perhaps I can visit you for a future edition of my 'Tour de Suisse'?

By the way, **Mrs H. Phillips** of Dorset, I WAS only jesting when I asked, in issue 89/4, why we were not invited to your father's 100th birthday celebrations (much as it would have been lovely to attend). And your 'first enquiry' to me, regarding your father's subscription, would have been sent to my predecessor.

Phew!! Not even any space for the many complimentary letters. I'm just too honest!

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John Chapman ARTS

Limitations of space caused us to miss out our Arts column in the last issue, much to the chagrine of many of our readers. So, hereunder, the venerable John Chapman attempts to redress the omission ...

Sculpture

The Swiss Arts Council **Pro Helvetia** is supporting an exhibition of sculptures using sound, light and motion appropriately entitled **'Time and Motion'**. Initiated by the Laing Art Gallery in Newcastle, it features works by Swiss artists **Peter Fischli** and **David Weiss**. The exhibition continues its tour as follows ...

February 17th to March 31st 1990

City Arts Centre, Edinburgh

April 9th to May 5th

The Minories Art Gallery, Colchester

Music

Swiss pianist **Corina Gieré** and violinist **Oliver Lewis** embark on a short tour in April starting by the seaside ...

Sunday 1st April 8pm

De la Warr Pavilion Bexhill-on-Sea Sussex

Thursday 5th April 8pm

Winter Gardens, Fort Cres.

Sunday 8th April 8pm

Central Library, Sutton, Surrey

One week later, the **Carmina Quartet** spend a classical weekend at the **Wigmore Hall** in London. Saturday night (14th April) features a mixture of the works of Mendelssohn and

Schumann with **Mitsuko Uchida** at the piano. On Sunday at 11.30am the quartet offer us an appetising 'Beethoven Morning'.

Gottfried Keller

The Institute of Germanic Studies (IGS) has organised a Symposium on the life and works of the celebrated Swiss-German writer **Gottfried Keller** on **March 29th/30th**. As a prelude, Professor M.W. Swales of the IGS is to give a talk on Keller's career in the Swiss Embassy Lecture Room on March 28th at 7pm, with readings by a young Swiss actress.

A Bout de Godard

World-renowned French film director **Jean-Luc Godard's** mould-breaking 1960 movie **'A bout de Souffle'** continues its revival at the **Institut Français**, 17 Queensbury Place, London SW7 on Monday March 5th. This oft cynically comic yet disturbing adventure shocked Europe with its frank story of a wayward young man, a brilliant first lead performance by **Jean-Paul Belmondo**, on the run from the police. His reluctant companion is stylishly played by **Jean Seberg**. Not to be confused with the unimpressive 1983 US remake **'Breathless'** (starring Richard Gere).

Mummenschantz

London's **Sadlers Wells Theatre** plays host to world famous mime group **Mummenschantz** on **April 20th** (Friday) and **April 21st**.

Visual Arts

Artist **Rudolf Calonder** is to participate in **Coventry Polytechnic's 'Prints with a Point'** exhibition from **April 23rd** until **May 19th**.

Further information about any of the events mentioned in this article can be obtained from the Cultural Section of the Swiss Embassy. Telephone 01-723 0701 ext 241/248.

Joseph Buehler TRAVEL 1

One in five skiers choose Swiss slopes

Switzerland is soaring in popularity with British skiers. A new survey gives it an impressive 20 per cent of the British market.

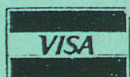
According to figures published by the Swiss National Tourist Office more than 130,000 of the 650,000 Brits who ski each year head for the Swiss slopes. Our findings disprove earlier reports, based solely on package holidays put together by tour operators, which give Switzerland a market share of just six to eight per cent (on a par with Andorra).

Previous surveys do not appear to have taken into account the vast number of sophisticated skiers who choose Switzerland as an up-market, quality destination and who, for whatever reason, book their holidays independently without the help of a travel agent. Others haven't included the large proportion of skiers who prefer to stay in self-catering accommodation such as chalets and apartments.

Our survey reveals that the top Swiss resorts for the British are Verbier, Champéry, Zermatt, Wengen, and Villars. The popularity of such resorts seems likely to continue as tour operators report that bookings for this winter are well up on last year. In fact, in response to demand, tour operators have added an additional 15 resorts to their programmes.

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SNT0 Profile TRAVEL 2

The Swiss National Tourist Office recently published a report to its many clients and friends in the travel industry, to the media and to other organisations with an interest in Switzerland. The brochure introduces Joseph Buehler, the Director for UK and Ireland and my colleague at the Review, and his key personnel at the SNT0. Here, Joe presents a potted resumé of its contents.

The SNT0 Team

The past year or so has been a period of great change at the SNT0 in London, a time both challenging and stimulating in which we have been taking a fresh look at the UK market and adapting our office structure to meet the demands of the next decade. Our reorganisation is now complete, and we are able to move into the 1990s - and even the next century - confident of continuing to provide the quality of service you expect of us.

Before I joined the SNT0 I spent 12 years in the travel industry, both in Switzerland and Japan. In 1976 I was recruited to open the

SNT0's Tokyo office - a market that now provides booming business for Switzerland. After leaving Japan I spent four years as Director of the Toronto office and in April 1988 I took up my present position.

My Deputy Director here in London, **Fritz Lauber**, has overall responsibility for the Sales Department. He, too, spent many of his 28 years in the travel industry working with tour operators in Tokyo. He and his team sell the Swiss Travel System to Britain and Ireland and issue all rail and air tickets.

Head of Sales Promotion is **Rico Signore** who provides the vital link between the UK travel trade and the Swiss tourism organisations. His department works to increase retailers' awareness of Switzerland and its appeal as a value-for-money holiday destination. He also organises congress and incentive groups and exhibitions here and in Switzerland.

Heidi Reisz takes charge of keeping the media informed of all promotional and tourist topics, both by personal contact and by sending out regular press releases. Her Media Relations Department arranges visits to Switzerland by journalists, authors and TV and radio crews and also runs the photo library.

Head of Information and Special Projects, handling all phone and postal enquiries, is **Albin Breitenmoser** who's library of information covers almost every aspect of Switzerland as a holiday destination.

Meanwhile, the man responsible for ensuring that everything in the office runs smoothly is Head of Administration **Frank Blum**. He handles not only personnel and customer relations but is also responsible for financial and commercial accounting AND still finds time to control the film and video library, mailroom, storage and stationery. Quite an achievement.

I would finally like to thank you all for your past support of the SNT0 and look forward to providing all the co-operation and assistance you require in the future. I hope that you are able to call in and visit us when you are in the West End. **The SNT0 team is at your service!**



Cordially yours, Joseph Buehler

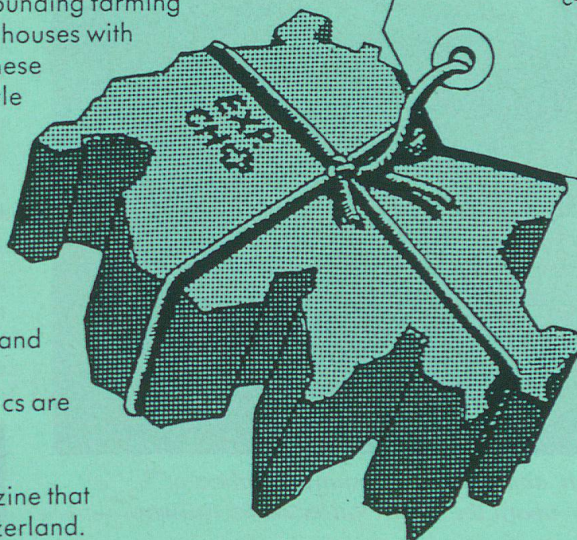
Joseph Buehler is the Director of the Swiss National Tourist Office in London. For further information on subjects discussed in any of our travel features please telephone: 01-734 1921.

Switzerland by post

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In future months, we'll visit Delémont, Switzerland's newest cantonal capital. The streets of olde Berne with their many arcades and picturesque fountains ... and the Lötschberg, featuring the well-known railway line and the not-so-well known mountain pass. These and many other fascinating topics are all discussed in forthcoming issues of SCHWEIZ SUISSE SVIZZERA SVIZRA SWITZERLAND. An illuminating magazine that captures the many splendours of Switzerland.



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Nick Miller's TOUR DE SUISSE

If ever you're travelling to the Midlands just remember one vital thing ... never ask Eric Westacott how long it will take to get there ...

Brief Encounter with the Midlands Swiss Club

On 29th October 1989 at 7am (an unearthly hour on any day let alone on a Sunday) I set off from a girlfriend's house in Great Yarmouth bound for the West Midlands. My rendezvous was to be at 10.50am on the platform of Kidderminster Station where I, and numerous members of the Midlands Swiss Society, were to board the famous **Severn Valley Railway**.

Armed with map book and sandwiches I followed the 'infallible' computer-printed route guide sent to me by **Eric Westacott**, supremo of the Midlands Swiss Club. The guide told me exactly where to get off ... motorways and A and B roads ... and how long each stage of the journey should take. Little did I realise that the over-zealous computer was basing its predictions on my driving at about 140 miles an hour!

In almost classic cinematic style I roared into the forecourt of Kidderminster Station, alighted from my chariot, and ran as fast as my legs could carry me onto the platform ... just as the delightful steam engine pulled out.



In fact in the time it took Eric the Tank Engine to wind its way across hill and dale and river-bank to its destination I had sallied forth North-Westerly, stopped for a leisurely breakfast, read the papers and STILL arrived in Bridgenorth before the train. But neither the speed of the train nor the likelihood of needing rail transport between Kidderminster and Bridgenorth is the reason for using this route.

As I climbed aboard for the return journey (having enjoyed ANOTHER breakfast with my new friends) I realised what it was that drew so many hundreds of thousands of tourists each year to this most unusual attraction. You do not need to be duffle-coat clad and carrying a note pad to enthuse about this particular train. To be thrust back in time to an era when we DID depend upon steam rail was fascinating. Antiquated brass heater handles and advertisements for Players cigarettes and Quibell's sheep dips lend extra authenticity to the dream. The centrepiece, however, must be the magnificent American-style bar that occupies the full length of the first carriage.



Eric Westacott, indicated far left, and some of the many members of the Midlands Swiss Club prepare to board the Severn Valley steam railway.

The Midlands Swiss Society is one of the fastest growing in the UK and perhaps one of the most adventurous. Eric and co. plan an action packed 1990 to include sailing and shooting trips alongside the more usual fondue and barbecue parties. And hot on the heels of our steam rail journey skirting the West Midlands Safari Park they will soon be taking members on a shopping trip to Harrods where one can probably find an even bigger safari park in the handbag and coat departments.

Also innovative is the idea of the club to employ a company to produce a logo/identity for a series of direct mail advertisements due to hit Birmingham and its satellites very soon. New members are actively sought and can contact Eric during his very long office hours at Allied Dunbar on 021-631 4050. Members and applicants are to be given a questionnaire asking them to list the type of events they would like to participate in and small or large factions within the club may then so indulge.

I met many interesting co-travellers on my day trip. Amongst them Anton and Lynne Habermacher who restore my faith in the stereotypical images of the Swiss. He wants to buy a second-hand alpine horn and attend an alphorn school. She has friends back home who are in a yodelling group and would dearly love to tour the UK in 1991. If you think you can help either dream come true please call the Habermachers on 021-458 5535.

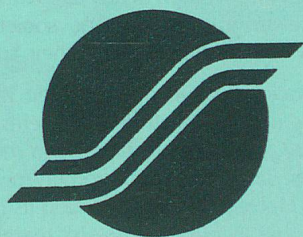
John O'Brien, who takes charge of marketing and promotion for the club, is a programme director with the local ITV station Central. He and his Swiss wife Ursula are active and highly valued members. John and Christine Wilkinson, by contrast, are connected to their Swiss friends via John's job as head of the UK division of Swiss company Camille Bauer. A nice afternoon was spent by us weary travellers in the Wilkinson's home but not a cup of tea or biscuit in sight !!

Amongst Eric's other able deputies I was fortunate enough to meet Erica Bartrum, the club's secretary, and Julius Phillips, their equivalent to the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

I was asked numerous questions by the members as I flitted from carriage to carriage, like a cheery ticket inspector. Most, concerning dual-nationality, tax, pension, and military service issues will be dealt with by our **Advice Line** team in the fullness of time.

I thoroughly enjoyed my trip on this, the affordable alternative to the Orient Express, despite the turbulent start to my day. Kidderminster to Bridgenorth can hardly be compared with Venice to Simplon ... but then I suppose I'm no Hercule Poirot !!

**Next stop:
Miller meets Miller
at the Surrey Swiss Club.**



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A Wish for 1990

Would you kindly consider it ?

The number of Swiss compatriots living in the UK may not have gone down over the decades, specially since there are many more dual nationals as a result of the new nationality laws. The structure of the community, though, has changed. There are definitely more young students, stagiaires and 'au pair' girls than 30 or 40 years ago, but the average age of Swiss residents in this country has gone up. What is missing is the broad middle strata of professionals, industrialists, commercial employees, bankers etc who used to settle here for life. These have been replaced by the ever larger group of 'Kontraktausland-schweizer' - Swiss who are sent abroad by their companies for a certain number of years and who return when their contract ends.

In one way or another, Swiss communities abroad have undergone a change. When the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK (FOSSUK) was founded as Presidents Assembly in 1949, there were many more societies and clubs in Britain than today.

There was a time when there were so many members willing to serve on councils and committees that one had not only to elect but first to select suitable candidates among so many who were offering themselves for office. Things have changed. Nowadays, many groups have great difficulties in finding enough members willing to serve, even if membership and attendance at functions are satisfactory.

Why is this so ? Of course, it is the right of every compatriot to remain unattached to any groupings. But again and again we come across men and women of any age who would really like to join a club or society, but somehow haven't found one in their area.

Several societies have opened their ranks to non-Swiss nationals with Swiss interests. The City Swiss Club began to have such members and, at the same time also women members. The New Helvetic Society changed its rules so as to be able to elect non-Swiss members to the Council. In fact, the President of FOSSUK is a non-Swiss though of Swiss ancestry.

My appeal today is to the many compatriots, specially the younger ones, to join and to help run a Swiss organisation. As one who has been active in the Swiss community for over 50 years, I know how worthwhile voluntary work is. Many think, in their modesty, that they are not suitable. But how do they know until they have tried ? I refuse to believe that our compatriots in general have become selfish and content to accept worthwhile activities offered to them, but not prepared to help those many compatriots who have been doing devoted work for years in order to keep the clubs going. Many groups provide companionship for lonely and often homesick people. This alone is worth supporting.

A new decade has started. Let us ask ourselves what we can do, so that they will prosper and be able to play an important part. More especially in 1991, the 700th anniversary of the Swiss confederation. FOSSUK and the Swiss Embassy and Consulates are working on special celebration programmes. A splendid opportunity now to come forward.

Addresses of FOSSUK and the Embassy and Clubs, Societies etc can be found on Page I.

Mariann Meier is a former editor of Swiss Observer and author of 'The Young Traveller in Switzerland' published by Phoenix House

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