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Switzerland in the UK

After the
Dunblane
massacre...

Swiss Rifle Association is facing an uncertain future



As it used to be in the early years of this century – this historic poster is on display at the National Railway Museum in York.

Ski holidays over 30% up

EARLY and heavy winter snowfalls, and a sharp rise in the number of Swiss francs to the £, have combined to put the smiles back on the faces of UK tour operator specialising in winter sports holidays in Switzerland.

Heidi Reiz of Switzerland Tourism told *Swiss Review*: "Some operators are telling us that bookings are up by more than 30 per cent, so things are certainly looking

up. Of course, plenty of snow has also helped a lot. There has not been snow like this for years."

Switzerland Tourism is planning to split its activities into two different bodies.

The intention is to set up a Swiss Travel Centre, to operate as a fully fledged travel agent where visitors can book holidays and travel. Switzerland Tourism will then become purely a marketing organisation.

THE Swiss Rifle Association – one of the oldest and most active Swiss societies in the UK – may have to radically change as a result of legislation going through Parliament in the aftermath of the Dunblane massacre.

Following an earlier ban in the wake of the Hungerford killings in 1987 the association had to send back to Switzerland its prized self-loading Swiss Army rifles.

Now the same may have to happen to its pistols.

Public outcry

Association secretary Urs Schaerer has every reason to feel bitter about the way politicians have reacted to the public outcry for a complete ban on handguns.

Instead, when *Swiss Review* spoke to him he sounded sad but not downhearted.

"Whatever happens it won't be the end of the association," he promised. "But we might end up having to re-name it the Swiss Social and Jass Club!"

Meetings, held eight or nine times a year at Bisley Army Camp near Woking, Surrey, are only open to Swiss.

"This is laid down in our rules and regulations," said Mr Schaerer. "It's also one of the reason we were given Home Office approval.

"We are the only foreign shooting club in the UK and are not allowed to tout for British members."

Apart from the shooting the 60-strong association also holds a number of special events during the year when

they enjoy fondue, risotto, bratwurst and cervelat.

The association's records go back to 1923, but Mr Schaerer thinks its history goes back much further.

"It was formed to promote the sport of shooting, and to keep up the Swiss tradition," he said.

Shooting is the biggest individual sport in Switzerland, much bigger than skiing, ice hockey or football.

The last big international get-together, held at Thun in July 1995, attracted 85,000 shooters, including some from places like Los Angeles, Vancouver and Johannesburg.

A dozen attended from the UK.

The association's future, like that of shooting clubs all over the country, is now in the hands of the politicians.

Election issue

November's emotion-charged House of Commons debate resulted in a partial ban on handguns, but many MPs vowed to make an all-out ban an election issue.

Mr Schaerer is convinced that would only drive weapons underground.

"Two-thirds of all handguns are not registered," he said. "They are on the black market.

"I can go down the Old Kent Road today, slap down £200 and pick up a pistol. Legislation won't stop that.

"Why don't they ban cars because they can kill people? Or frozen lakes because you can drown in them? It's a crazy situation."



Swiss tour operator gets top accolade

The Hertfordshire-based Swiss Travel Service is Britain's best tour operator.

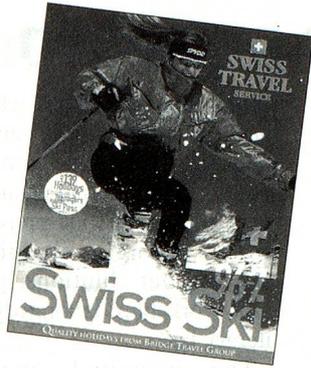
That is the accolade that has been awarded the small company by the prestigious Consumer Association magazine *Holiday Which?*

The magazine surveyed more than 50 tour operators and asked over 11,500 readers: "Would you recommend this company to a friend?"

High Street giants Air-tours, First Choice and Inspirations came bottom.

Top by a long margin was the Swiss Travel Service.

The company's Claire Phillpotts said: "We are delighted by the recognition our customers have given us. We aim to reflect the quality of service provided by Swiss hotels. Last year six out of 10 of all our guests had travelled with us at least once before,



many of them on several occasions. This loyalty is the best possible endorsement, and we welcome surveys such as *Holiday Which?* which highlight the benefits of booking with smaller, specialist tour firms."

She said the company's bookings have increased dramatically following the end of spiralling exchange rates, which have hampered tourism from the UK during the past five years.

"Favourable exchange rates have enabled us to resist the traditional price increases. Our winter programme is up 36 per cent on the previous year, and we predict our summer programme will follow suit."

'Dear' wines fighting back

SWISS WINES, which have long had a reputation among Swiss in the UK as being hard to find and dear to buy, are about to make a come-back.

The Swiss Wine Exporters' Association is setting up an office in London to try and remedy the situation. Based in the Swiss Centre, Leicester Square, it is being headed by Mrs Caroline Phillips, who has moved here from the Valais.

Marketing consultant Madeleine Beck-Wagner told

Swiss Review: "The British consumer knows little about the excellent quality of Swiss wines. There is a major opportunity here.

"We intend to change lingering perceptions of the unavailability and high prices of Swiss wines by increasing exposure in UK retail outlets."

Swiss railways on video

MITV, a UK TV production company specialising in videos on Swiss railways, have added a wide range of new titles to their extensive catalogue.

These include journeys on the Bernina and Engadine lines, and an 89-minute cab ride on the spectacular journey from Chiasso to Airolo.

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Maintainer lands on the mountain

On July 4 1990 the high altitude silence on Simano near the Cima of Adula was broken by the repetitive mechanical hum of a helicopter. It was carrying, by winch, its cargo of one Maintainer unit, a small temporary dwelling for two people.

It had been assembled at an altitude of 700m and was now being flown up to its base of 2,500m.

The purpose of having this new technology alpine hut on the mountain was, and still is, to provide a refuge for shepherds who pasture their flocks in the heights during spring and summer.

In the autumn the flocks and their herders return to the valleys and lower slopes of Grumo near Torre. The Maintainer does too – to be stored during the winter for the next season.

The brainchild of architect Ian Giuliani, the Maintainer was designed as a temporary refuge and work station for hostile environments. In fact, one has just been transported to the Antarctic (for the start of the Antarctic summer) as a base station for the One Step Beyond expedition to celebrate 50 years of Unesco and the United Nations.

Ian lives and works from Henley on Thames with his wife Monica, also an architect, who comes from Lund in southern Sweden. The Giuliani's originate from Val

Blenio (Ticino) and Ian's brother has returned to run the family farm in the Alps. Ian designed some of the farm buildings and has a working interest in the place.

He is also a member of the Swiss community in Britain and has done several graphic assignments for the Unione Ticinese. He has also contributed to his local community at Henley on Thames designing the Thames Wetland Wildlife Park and many other projects including housing and agricultural projects in Ticino.

By Aileen Foletti

The Maintainer however is a really original invention and has already been used successfully in the UK, Switzerland and the U.S.

The unit was manufactured in Britain and transported overland as a flat pack to be assembled and airlifted by helicopter to its final destination on Simano which is only a rock's throw from Ticino's highest peak the Rheinwaldhorn.

Site preparations were minimal, mainly involving lighting protection, a water collection system and some containment of the base with rock to supplement stability and insulation in such a hostile environment.

The Maintainer acts as a

refuge and base from which the high alpine areas can be managed through the summer months. The internal arrangement allows for food preparation, eating, sleeping, carrying out ablutions, plus light workshop, laboratory or literary tasks.

The principal energy source is electricity produced from solar cells which power pumps, lights, a radio transmitter and various low voltage tools and domestic appliances.

Solar energy systems are available for water heating and waste water distillation. The fresh water supply is scarce. At the start of the season ample snow remains, and this is collected via melting tanks and piped via pre and final filters to portable water storage tanks.

In the mid and late season, rainwater from flash storms is collected via upper panels and filtered as for snow.

Cooking is by means of a purpose developed energy saving enclosed cooker. Butane gas is used as no local fuel is available.

To date the unit is performing well and has experienced besides strong sunlight, some short storms and high winds. It has already served as a refuge for an injured climber who rested overnight prior to being airlifted to hospital.

● *Ian Giuliani can be contacted on 01491 572 601.*

FOSSUK president Jeffrey Long's dedication to promoting Swiss-Anglo relations apparently knows no bounds. But participating in a Swiss army training course might seem – even for him – beyond the call of duty.

But that's just what he did for one week last October in the invitation of Gottfried Locher, minister at London Swiss Church and command of infantry company 'Füs K 1/29'.

On October 14, 'private' Long reported for unofficial duty at Wasen in Emmenthal to pick up his kit along with 123 infantrymen at the start of their three-week training course.

Although his participation was largely observational, Jeffrey handled a 'Panzerfaust' anti-tank ballistic missile launcher and



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In great-great-great-granddad's army boots

'Sturmgewehr' assault rifle and took part in night-time target practice. He traded the comfort of a local inn for the shared charms of a community bunker at Vugelles in Canton Vaud where the company moved on for manoeuvres.

But he says he relished the accommodation as well as the company.

In fact, listening to Jeffrey read from the day-to-day diary he kept it's clear he loved every minute of his sojourn among the troops and that beneath that deceptively laid-

the Swiss military to confront future challenges.

"I was very impressed with the dedication of the officers who worked late into the early morning hours devising training which they then put into effect during the day," he said.

Jeffrey's observation that "discipline instilled in the use of arms during service hours extends to a sense of responsibility of their use at home", helps explain why a nation that has so many weapons in circulation nevertheless has such a low crime rate.

All in all it appears both the

By Elena Grimaud Ineichen

back exterior lies the gung-ho heart of a military man.

Unsurprisingly, army life runs in his blood.

His great-great-great grandfather commanded Canton Schaffhausen's military detachment and his grandfather served as a civilian with the West Yorkshire regiment in World War I.

Jeffrey himself saw active duty in Malaysia as part of the Royal Army Ordinance Corps and served part-time with the Parachute Regiment from 1952 to 1957.

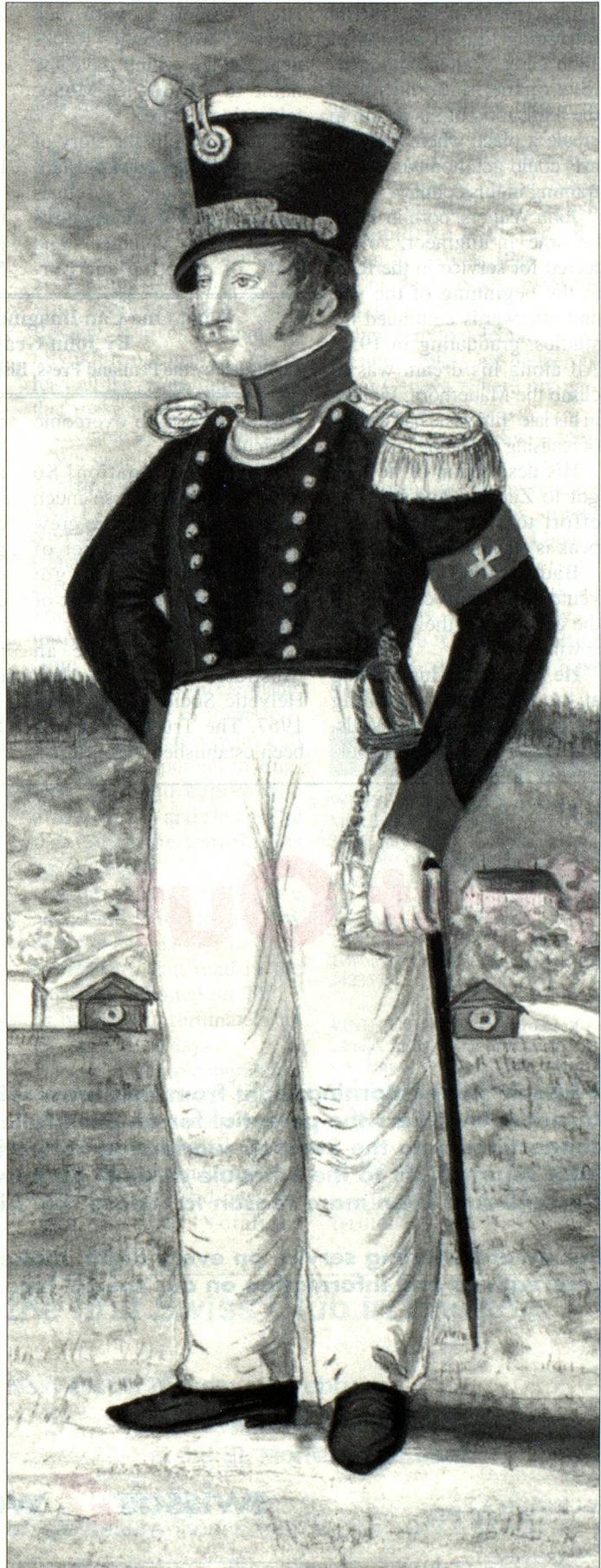
Based on his experience, the Swiss officers requested he brief them on British army recruitment procedures and Phase I training of new recruits and they exchanged ideas on how best to structure

Anglos and the Swiss took away something worthwhile from the interaction.

"I would have stayed the whole three weeks if I could have; it was better than a holiday. It was great," Jeffrey exclaims unreservedly.

He loved it so much that he is going back for more next year, this time courtesy of Major General Alfred Roulier, Commander of the Army Training Centre for Senior Staff Officers, who issued an invitation at a Swiss Embassy reception for Defense Minister Adolf Ogi, in London last year.

Given his unabashed enthusiasm, the only question then left to answer is not whether Jeffrey is ready for the army but whether the army is ready for Jeffrey.



Jeffrey Long (above left) following in the footsteps of his great-great-great-grandfather (right) – and putting in a spot of target practice while on manoeuvres in Canton Vaud (above)



The Matterhorn magic that inspired UK climbing centre

"WHAT One Can Imagine, That One Can Do" is the intriguing title of a book of John Gray Walters about his love of the Matterhorn and the realisation of his dream to create a place where enthusiasts could get mountaineering training in this country.

John Walters, born in 1920, became an engineer, volunteered for service in the RAF at the beginning of the war and afterwards continued his studies, graduating in 1952. All along his dream was to climb the Matterhorn. Finally, in his late 'fifties, he had chance of realising this ambition.

His description of how he got to Zermatt and his first effort to climb the mighty peak is enchanting in itself.

Bad weather sadly prevented him from completing the ascent, but the seed was sown.

He had started his training at the Sandstone Climbing Club near Tunbridge Wells, and it was in this neighbour-

hood that he found the right site, a wilderness with rock faces. It was Bowles Rocks near Eridge which gave the name to the Bowles Mountaineering Centre.

The book tells the story of the first eight years of establishing the centre, a fascinating account of tremendous hard work by volunteers and staff, of devotion and pur-

What One Can Imagine, Then One Can Do

By John Gray Walters

Published by the Pentland Press, Bishop Auckland, Durham at £6.95

poseful efforts to overcome difficulties.

What determination! So many setbacks, but so much success, and the Centre grew and with it the number of men and women who got valuable tuition in the art of rock climbing.

John Walters gave an illustrated talk to the New Helvetic Society in October 1967. The Trust which had been established was a thriv-

ing concern by then, and a chapel had been added to other buildings. It was dedicated in April, 1965.

The author says: "My pen draws back to the sheer glory of what was being created." He went on writing about "ever bigger events", among them the arrival of a special gift, a statue of the Virgin Mary, donated by the people

of Zermatt. Links with this "Matterhorn Town" had always been very close.

Today the Bowles Outdoor Centre caters for groups, schools and individuals in several sports, from canoeing and swimming to rock-scaling and skiing. The phone number for anyone interested is 01892-665665.

John Walters calls Chapter 10 of the book "I Leave the Stage". His dream has come

true. The centre, thanks to so many, is "a charity of substance and future promise."

Great personal and financial sacrifice have left him with deep faith - "a simple and very grateful man."

Mariann Meier

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More memories of the Gattis

I was interested to read the article about the famous Gatti family and their achievements in Victorian London in your recent edition (No. 5/96).

However your article missed out the important point that it is still possible to visit the original Gatti ice cream factory which is now the home of the London Canal Museum.

It lies on the side of the Regent's Canal on Battlebridge wharf, just behind the Waterside Inn on York Road, just five minutes walk from King's Cross station.

Here in the London Canal Museum there is a splendid display on the history of Britain's canals and a shop full of colourful canal craft.

Even more important for us Anglo-Swiss, there is an excellent display about the Gattis, their ice cream and their ice import business.

Great chunks of ice were hewn from the glacier of Norway and loaded on barges, to be transported by sea and canal to the Gattis' ice warehouse in King's Cross.

Here it was stored in deep pits for use not only in the making of ice cream but also for selling to other traders who needed ice, such as fish mongers and butchers.

The Gattis continued their ice business well into the 1950s and much of their warehouse has survived on Battlebridge Wharf. Even in

the summer it feels rather chilly here and it is still possible to peer down into their deep and eery ice storage pits.

The London Museum of Canal Life is open from 10am to 5pm daily all the year round, except Mondays and public holidays. Entrance is just £2 (£1 concessions).

It is good to see that the Gattis are at last getting the recognition which they deserve both at home in the Ticino and in Britain, with an entry in the Dictionary of National Biography.

– **Cathy Mercer, Normanby Road, Dollis Hill, London.**

'We were there too!'

Fife Swiss Club were very disappointed to see that we were not mentioned in respect of the Swiss National Day celebrations.

We actually hosted a very successful evening at Pittenweem in Fife to which the Edinburgh Swiss Club and West of Scotland Swiss Club were invited. We had a barbecue and guests brought salads and cakes.

Afterwards we joined Pittenweem in their torchlight procession, the Swiss with lamps which meant we even met some Swiss holidaymakers. The procession culminated in a firework display.

A wonderful evening was

had by all who came and the organisers were completely exhausted.

– **Heidi McGhie, president, Fife Swiss Club.**

Hysterical reporters

First I would like to thank you very much for sending me your well reported Swiss Review. It gives me and my husband much pleasure to read all the interesting articles that make us think and agree or disagree as the case may be.

We were especially wholeheartedly glad to read the "Nazi Gold" piece. I was a Swiss national who was a teenager brought up in Cairo, Egypt, during the war and knew very little of all the intrigues with the gold taken from the unfortunate Jewish people, and others, in Germany.

The disgrace of those hysterical youngsters who call themselves reporters in England, and their editors who allow those articles to be printed in the tabloids, is beyond belief.

When my friends here asked me if it was true my reply was: "Don't believe everything you read in the papers or reported on TV" – as happens unfortunately all too often these days.

I would like to congratulate Mr Jonathon Charles of the BBC for putting things right.

Let me also thank Swiss Radio International for all the cassettes they send out concerning the Votations

Fédérales. It does help us, the Swiss abroad, to hear the different points of view on so many varied subjects.

By the way, I'm glad we were wise not to enter into the EEC. No one seems to agree on anything there, so please let well alone.

May I also just mention that on every 1st August since I married my English husband we have proudly flown the Swiss flag in our garden, had a Swiss meal for lunch and maybe go out somewhere to celebrate in the evening, unless we happen to be in Geneva, where my parents used to live.

As there is not a Swiss society here in the sunny south east of England we enjoy reading about the other clubs around the UK. We did go to London for the 700th anniversary where we met Mr Ogi and had a lovely day with the family.

– **Denise Gray, Cooden Beach, Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex.**

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COMING EVENTS

Tyne Tees Swiss Club: Annual dinner, Three Tuns Hotel, Durham (*February 22*); Club meeting, Three Tuns Hotel, Durham (*March 29 and April 26*); AGM, Three Tuns Hotel, Durham (*May 17*); Raclette party, Whitehill Hall, Chester-Le-Street (*June 29*). Details from Mrs Nelly Scott-Niederberger on 0191-5190956.

Edinburgh Swiss Club: Fondue party, 10 Frogston Road West, Edinburgh (*March 17*) - details from Suzanne Henderson on 013-445 1125; Evening of Swiss cinema at 23 Midmar Gardens, Edinburgh (*April 28*) - details from Simona Stirling on 0131-447 8571.

Manchester Swiss Club: Fondue & raclette evening at Wilmslow Parish Hall (*March 8*); AGM at Wilmslow Parish Hall (*April 17*). Details from Mrs Marianne Reutter on 01260 273 681.

It's election time again

THE forthcoming general election may be dominating the headlines in Britain, but in Swiss society circles thoughts are turning to the imminent election for delegates to the Council for the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad.

The council, which plays a leading role in formulating policy affecting Swiss citizens throughout the world, consists of 150 members who are elected every four years. FOSSUK is responsible for organising the election of three delegates and three deputy delegates to represent the UK.

Any reader of the *Swiss Review* who would like to be considered as a candidate should contact their local Swiss society or call the president of FOSSUK, Jeffrey Long, on 01274 588189. Nominations must be received by March 14.

Mr Long has recently visited the Torbay, South West and Bristol Swiss Clubs, and met Swiss from South Wales who want to form a club in their area.

● This year's FOSSUK AGM will be held at the Swiss Embassy, London, on Saturday, June 7.



Jeffrey Long with Yorkshire TV's weather girl during his visit to the Swiss Railway Society exhibition at Mirfield.



The FOSSUK president visiting Britol Swiss Club meets members Reg and Elsa Huntley - both 80 years old this year.

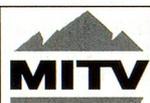
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