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Switzerland in the UK

Swiss baker is made Freeman of the City in age-old ceremony

In a centuries-old ceremony in London's historic Guildhall, Swiss baker Sigisbert Bienz has been awarded the coveted Freedom of the City of London.

Afterwards his proud wife, Ann, said: "There are very few people from abroad who receive this distinction, and Sigisbert is probably one of the first Swiss citizens to be honoured in this way."

The Freedom ceremony dates back to the 11th century, long before the freedom-loving men of Uri,

Schwyz and Unterwalden met to swear their oath on the Rütli – an event that led to the birth of the Swiss nation.

Apart from the Coronation itself, it is the UK's oldest non-religious ceremony.

The distinction has gone to Mr Bienz in recognition of his contribution to the bakers' and confectioners' organisations in Great Britain over the last 35 years, particularly in the London and South East region for which he was president for many years and is still the chief treasurer.

In a letter to the editor, Mrs Bienz writes:

"As ardent readers of the *Swiss Review* we would like to let you know how very much we agree with your editorial on the impact of the bad publicity that has befallen our homeland in the last few months, especially the programme on television regarding the plight of the Jewish refugees during the last war.

"We are naturally not in a

position to know how much of it was true, but the media of today is very good at making mountains out of molehills.

"Also the art of communication is so advanced today that news, whether good or bad, is beamed into homes in all corners of the world in no time at all and the media exploit that situation.

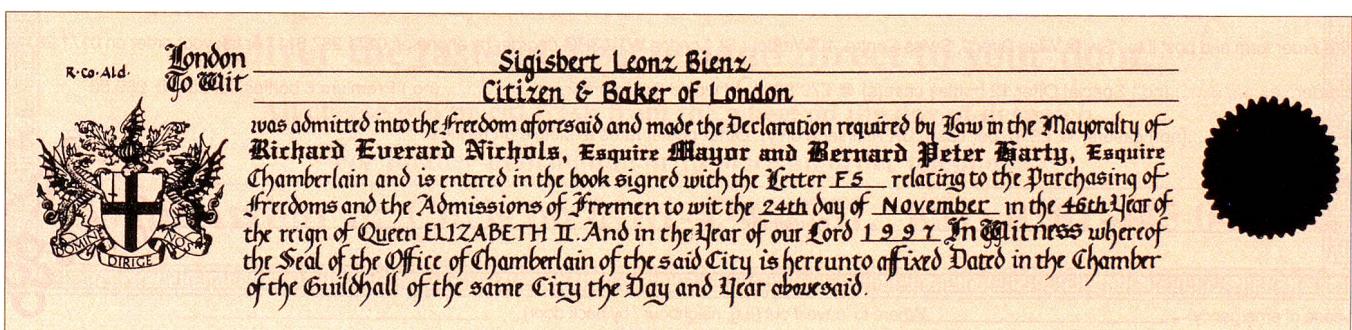
"Recently the Swiss chocolate industry did not do themselves any favours when adverse publicity followed the case in the High Court against Cadburys chocolate.

"The verdict may have gone in the Swiss chocolate industries' favour, but the public's sympathy was undoubtedly with Cadburys – in fact so much so that in some Sunday newspapers recently it was said that Swiss chocolate is disgusting, a comment we just cannot agree with but nevertheless is damaging to the good name of Switzerland."

However, referring to her husband's award, she adds: "As you can see, in spite of certain adversities lately connected with Switzerland, in a small way the Swiss compatriots abroad still try to do their best for the good name of the country they love."



Baker Sigisbert Bienz being presented with the certificate (shown below) proclaiming him to be a Freeman of the City of London by the Chamberlain, Bernard Harty, at the Guildhall ceremony.



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Meeting point: More readers want to make contact with other UK Swiss

The suggestion made in the 1/98 issue of the Swiss Review that these columns could be used to enable readers to meet other Swiss people in their part of the country – especially areas where there is no established Swiss club – met with an enthusiastic response.

The idea came from Heidi Rosenthal of Southampton, who said: "I know my daughter would love to meet other Auslandschweizers."

Mrs Josie Ford of Wickham, Hampshire, now writes:

"Further to the article by Heidi Rosenthal concerning Swiss clubs for Swiss residents here in England, I am pleased to announce that after contacting Heidi a small group of us met at her home in Southampton.

"After introductions we sat down to what was a very enjoyable meal. The rest of

the evening was spent in a very friendly atmosphere discussing various issues.

"Should any reader wish to join us, details can be obtained by phoning Heidi on 01703 772114 or myself on 01329 833460."

From Brighton Mgali Earle-Zumsteg writes:

"I have lived in Brighton 11 years and have NEVER met a Swiss citizen! So, here are my coordinates:

"Magali Earle-Zumsteg, 8a Beaconsfield Villas, Brighton SN1 6HD. Tel: 01273 554736."

Karen Forman of Mansfield writes:

"I am urgently looking for other Swiss parents with small children for regular meetings to practise our Schwizerdütsch.

"My address is Elmmtree Farm, Stony Houghton,

Mansfeld, Notts NG19 8TR.
Tel/fax: 01623 810 253."

Other readers who would like to hear from Swiss in their area are:

Susanne Scudmore-Aboottspoon, 2 Buckingham Road, Edgicott, Bucks HP18 0TP (tel: 01296 770427).

Katrin Olafsson and Claudio Buranello, 4a Millers Lane, Stanway, Colchester, Essex CO3 5PS (tel: home 01206 545860; work 01268 270 456).

Edinburgh club's new president

Simona Stirling has been elected the new president of the Edinburgh Swiss Club, and Marie-Florence McDonald vice president.

Ursula Ross has become club secretary and Trudi Bott remains as treasurer.

How to contact the editor

Reports of Swiss society activities and coming events, and articles and correspondence for the 'Switzerland in the UK' section of the Swiss Review, should go to the editor, Derek Meakin, at Europa House, Adlington Park, Macclesfield SK10 4NP. Tel: 01625 855000; fax: 01625 855128.

His email address is: dmeakin@europress.co.uk.

Enquiries regarding advertising should go to Jeffrey Long, 30 Finsbury Drive, Bradford BD2 1QA. Tel/fax: 01274 588 189.

● The 'Switzerland in the UK' supplement appears four times a year. The deadline for the next issue containing UK news, to be distributed in October, is August 26.

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OBITUARIES

Willi Renz dies at 99

Willi Renz, a prominent member of the Swiss community in London who played an important part in the revival of the New Helvetic Society after the war, died in Switzerland on February 27, shortly after celebrating his 99th birthday.

He was a former president of the NHS, and was later made an honorary member.

After his retirement as a banker he and his wife Claire spent their last years in the Appenzell. It was after his wife's death shortly before Christmas that his health began to deteriorate.

Friends who still remember his impressive personality and his sense of humour, and above all his commitment to the Swiss community, will treasure his memory.

It was a privilege to have known Claire and Willi Renz, and our deep sympathy goes to their daughter and family. MM

Hanny Cir

Hanny Cir, formerly Von Gunton, who came to Britain from Sigriswil in the Bernese Oberland, died in January aged 82.

Her daughter, Mrs Delia Hales, who lives in Galmpton, Devon, writes:

Unable to return to Switzerland during the last war fate beckoned as it did for many and she married abroad.

But she kept close ties with her homeland, including a nostalgic grand tour in early summer 1996, mainly by rail, covering resorts where she once worked and famous places she had always wanted to visit.

From Geneva, Leysin and Interlaken, it was on to Brigue and Lugano, passing through the Lötschberg tunnel her father helped to build.

Then through the Gotthard tunnel to William Tell country, and the Rigi, Rütli

and that special piece of land by the lake near Brunnen, dedicated to the Swiss Abroad and open for anyone to enjoy.

Next it was via Zurich to Schaffhausen and the spectacular Rhine Falls. And to finish the holiday with our 50 per cent reduction travel card, who could resist a once and for all trip up to the Jungfraujoch?

Over the years mother looked forward to her regular magazines, newsletters and, more recently, the *Swiss Review*. She kept them for years...memories for her kept alive.

Yorkshire Swiss Club has reported the sad deaths of four of their older members – Mrs Lilian Baumann, who was 83 and a former secretary of the club, Marguerite Richterich, who was 88, Maurice Gledhill and Ruth Leathley.

Bianca Hartmann

A popular member of Manchester Swiss Club, Blanca Hartmann from St Gall has died at the age of 72. She came to live in England ten years ago to be near her daughter, Cornelia.

At the age of two she fell ill with a severe attack of polio, but she survived to lead a very active life. Then a tragic accident, coupled with cancer, changed her life dramatically and confined her to her bed for more than a year.

But she never complained, and was always more concerned about the well-being of others.

Said fellow Swiss club member Sheila Salden: "She was a truly inspiring person who made you feel better when you had visited her."

She is survived by her

husband Ernst, two children and two grandchildren.

Marcel Gret

The Southern Area Swiss Club has lost a great and tireless character. Marcel Gret joined the club in July 1979 and was president for nine years from February 1985.

He was a charming gentleman, fiercely Swiss, keeping us in order, reminding us constantly of our "Swissness" and our ties, duties and commitments to the homeland.

He first came to England with his English wife, Marie-Louise, in 1952 and worked in London and then Fleet as a mechanical engineer.

When he heard of our local Swiss Club he came along and supported us faithfully, then guided and lead us through the nine years of his presidency.

He had hobbies besides the Swiss Club, but they, too, were somehow connected to his Vaudois roots.

There was his wine making and membership of the wine circle. If he had been in Switzerland I am sure he would have ended up owning a vineyard.

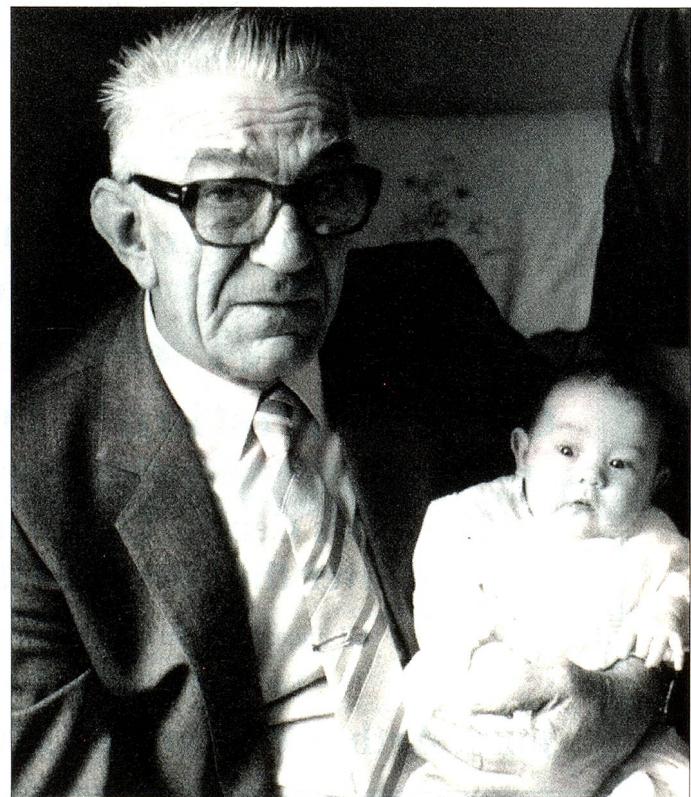
There was his brilliant Swiss stamp collection, and his membership of the Philatelic Society in Fleet. He gave many interesting talks on his stamps, mainly based on Swiss collections.

As he was a charming person he brought the club new members and helped us entertain them.

When Marie-Louise died in the summer of 1995 Marcel himself became frail and his death must have been what he was wishing for. Although his daughter and family were always so close at hand he had tired and his time came suddenly on February 9.

We shall miss him greatly and the Swiss Club will be a lot poorer without him.

Vreni Rudkin



Marcel Gret, pictured with his youngest grand-daughter at her christening in 1990



UK delegates report on discussions at the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad's spring council meeting in Berne

Three UK delegates – Rose-Marie Breitenstein, Joe Broggini and Margrit Lyster – attended the meeting of the Council of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad held at the Egghölzli Conference Centre in Berne on March 21.

It was chaired by the president of the OSA, Jean-Jacques Cevey, who announced his intention to retire from the post this autumn, when he reaches the age of 70.

In his report to delegates he gave an update of the position of three of the main subjects that have been of much focus at previous meetings.

● Voluntary old age and disability insurance scheme: The revision of the AHV/IV is being further considered by the Federal Council. The Service of the Swiss Abroad at the Department of Foreign Affairs had been involved in patient, able and hard negotiations on behalf of the OSA. There will be a public hearing before the proposed reform is debated in parliament.

● Sickness insurance: There has been no adequate

solution for the Swiss Abroad who still receive unsatisfactory offers from sickness insurance companies. Elisabeth Nassar, director of the Solidarity Fund for the Swiss Abroad, is continuing her interventions to negotiate adequate terms.

● Swiss schools abroad: The financial prospects had further deteriorated following considerable cuts to federal subsidies. The result could be that some of these institutions, although an important pillar of Swiss presence overseas, might face closure.

Other subjects discussed by the council included:

● Friends of the OSA: The president, Walter Häfliger, announced that 53 new life members had joined the Friends, but said the appeal for membership would continue. The draw for the six prizes offered in *Swiss Review* 5/97 was made.

● Youth section: An informative video was shown about exchange visits, camps and other activities of the Youth section of the Swiss Abroad. Called Back to the Roots, it is available on loan or by purchase from the Secretariat.

● Future of Swiss

societies: The final working group report on the future of Swiss societies was accepted and will now be published. It will be available for distribution to Swiss societies worldwide in September. FOSSUK and umbrella organisations in other countries will be asked to appoint a person to liaise with individual societies.

● Acceptance of new societies by OSA: A new Article 9 was agreed to the guidelines for acceptance of Swiss societies and groups by OSA. This includes a new

category of associate membership. Its purpose is to grant membership to organisations which fulfil the conditions of Article 8 but have fewer than 50 per cent of members with Swiss nationality.

● 1999 Congress of the Swiss Abroad: Next year's congress will be held in Lausanne from August 5 to 8. This slightly earlier date is to coincide with the Fête des Vignerons in Vevey. The subject for the congress will be educational and vocational training.



Pictured in action at the ever-popular annual fondue evening of the Midlands Swiss Society: Past president David and Ingrid Tracey, with Beat Müller and his son.



The 133rd City Swiss Club Banquet & Ball

The committee invites all members, Swiss people and friends of Switzerland to:

**The 133rd Banquet & Ball to be held in
The Ballroom at Claridge's on Saturday, 14 November 1998**

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A new Consul-General for Manchester

Manchester has a new Swiss Consul General. He is Mr Max Inholder, who comes from Sennwald in Canton St Gall.

He entered the service of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs in 1960, and his long career has taken him to posts all over

the world – Brussels, Paris, New York, Havana, Buenos Aires, Hong Kong and Moscow.

In 1988 he was promoted Consul General and became head of the consulate general in Vancouver.

From 1992 until he moved to Manchester on April 30

he has been head of the Swiss Embassy in La Paz, Bolivia.

Mr Inholder and his wife Sylvia have one son, Christoph.

Manchester's previous Swiss Consul General, Mr Ernst Keller, and his wife are now in Saudi Arabia.

COMING EVENTS

Yorkshire Swiss Club: National Day Cruise on the Leeds-Liverpool Canal (*August 1*); Walk in Yorkshire (*September 20*); Luncheon at Steeton Hall Hotel, Steeton (October). Details from Anne Vanal on 0113 226 1975.

Edinburgh Swiss Club: National Day celebrations with the Fife Swiss Club (*August 1*); Edinburgh Open Day (*end of September*). Details from Simona Stirling on 0131 447 8571.

Southern Are Swiss Club:

National Day celebration, Seale (*August 1*); Röschi evening, The Golden Pot, Eversley Cross, Hampshire (*October 8*); Christmas party, Community Centre, Farnborough (*November 27*). Details from Vreni Rudkin on 01252 547 948.

Manchester Swiss club: National Day celebrations, Woodford Community Centre (*August 1*); Bowling & Barbecue, Prestbury (*September 6*); Bernerplatte, Wilmslow Parish Hall (*October 3*). Details from

Mariann Reutter on 01260 273 681.

Torbay Swiss Club: Outing on the moors (*July 15*); National Day at Lupton Park (*August 1*); Coffee morning, Oddfellows Hall (*September 3*); Musical evening, Oddfellows Hall (*September 16*). Details from Max Singer on 01803 842 355.

● *Secretaries of Swiss societies are asked to write to the editor before September 1 with details of events planned to take place after December 1.*

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50th birthday of the Anglo-Swiss Society

The Golden Jubilee of the Anglo-Swiss Society was celebrated on February 24. An illustrious company of some 80 members and friends met at the beautiful Great Hall of St Bartholomew's Hospital in the City of London.

The society's president, the Earl of Limerick, and members of the committee, received the guests. After dinner and the loyal toasts, the Swiss Ambassador, M. François Nordmann, addressed the gathering as patron of the society.

M. Pierre Keller, formerly vice president of the International Committee of the Red Cross, proposed the toast to the society.

Lord Limerick responded and proposed the health of the guests. He gave a short picture of the society's past and present, and paid tribute to Col. Townend, who was present, and to Mrs Ginette Cobb, long-time devoted honorary secretary, and then

introduced her successor, former Ambassador Bruggmann.

Lord Limerick expressed gratitude to the ever supporting Swiss Embassy. He mentioned one of the early members, Mariann Meier, who, after the death of her husband in 1961, was elected onto the committee in his place.

The response to the president's toast to the guests was given by Mr George Band, president of the British Mountaineering Council and former president of the Alpine Club.

This brought to an end a most enjoyable evening, an event worthy of the impressive history of the society's first 50 years.

Thanks are due to Lord Limerick and his committee and the organisers of the jubilee dinner.

May it also have given new impetus for a equally successful future.

Mariann Meier

It was before the war that Minister Paravicini and leaders of the main Swiss societies in London – the New Helvetic Society, City Swiss Club and the Swiss Mercantile Society – first discussed the idea of an Anglo-Swiss organisation.

But war came, and plans were shelved. Then on December 3, 1947, Colonel Stuart Townend convened a meeting at the Dorchester Hotel, attended by 80 people, representing clubs and societies interested in Switzerland.

An executive committee was formed, and on February 24, 1948, the creation of the society was confirmed.

The inaugural dinner was held on February 17, 1949. The presidents of the three Swiss societies and their wives were guests of the new Anglo-Swiss Society.

Two of these presidents,

Dr Hans Egli (NSH) and Walter Meier (SMS) were invited to join the otherwise all British committee.

Soon the society had 600 members, mostly British, but there was a large number of Swiss, too. The success was helped greatly by the dynamic efforts of Col. Townend and, of course, by the valuable support of the Swiss Legation – later to become the Swiss embassy.

In March, 1959, the society was reconstituted.

Its success continued, and many memorable events were organised – concerts, lectures and balls – notably the wonderful Coronation Ball in 1953.

Today membership is not quite as high, and not as many functions are being organised. But it is still an organisation which flourishes with its object of promoting Anglo-Swiss relations.

How it began



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Elisabeth Upton, a Swiss citizen living in Alvechurch near Birmingham, has written her second Swiss guide book, this time on the canton of Vaud.

Following the successful format of her first book, on Zermatt, it is another treasure trove rich in anecdotes, histories, legends, local geography, a sprinkling of snow science, recipes and illustrations.

Aileen Foletti reviews the latest guide book by Elisabeth Upton-Eichenberger

The wealth of information compiles into a generous, hospitable journey through this Alpine region. A treat for the sedentary reader as well as the active traveller.

The stunning front cover illustration, a glimpse of 13th

A new view of Vaud

century Chillon Castle as if caught by camera through a gap in the clouds, was painted especially for the publication by a well known Swiss artist, Pietro Sarto.

Chillon is painted against a backdrop of moody mountains

and scudding clouds, brooding and awesome in electric blue-grey.

The illustration is set at a steep angle, which gives the viewer the sensation of flying over Lac Léman, rushing towards the fortifications. It is totally atmospheric.

Is this how Byron saw the castle in the summer of 1816 which inspired him to pen The Prisoner of Chillon?

I sense a lot of hard work went into producing Vaud. Just gathering the information must have been a momentous task, but to arrange it into an enjoyable, highly readable guide book takes skill.

Vaud, which received a

good review in the Geneva press last year, is a credit to its author and a real pleasure to read.

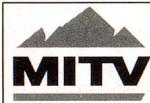
• *Vaud can be purchased for Frs. 24. – in Switzerland, or direct from Elisabeth Upton-Eichenberger at The Old Church, Rowney Green, Alvechurch, nr Birmingham B48 7QG.*

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