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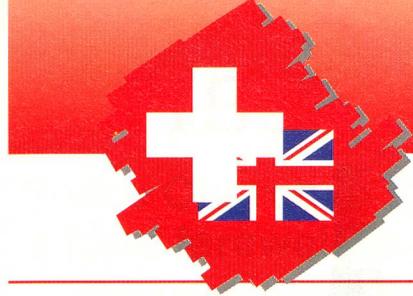
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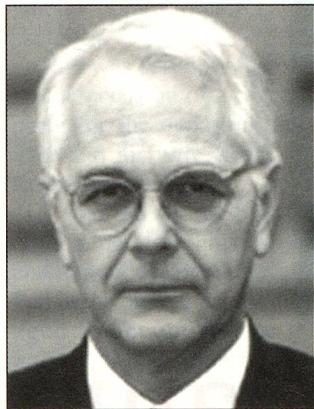
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# Switzerland in the UK



Ambassador Bruno Spinner

## Our new ambassador

London has a new Swiss Ambassador, 51 year old Bruno Spinner, who since 1992 has been Head of the Integration Office in Berne, part of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs and the Federal Department of the Economy.

He succeeds Ambassador François Nordmann, who left in November to become Ambassador at the Swiss Permanent Mission to the International Organisations in Geneva.

Ambassador Spinner is a citizen of Aegst am Albis, in Canton Zurich. A Doctor of Law and a barrister, he studied at the universities of Zurich and Geneva and joined the diplomatic service in 1976.

Two years later he was posted to the Swiss Mission to the European Communities in Brussels, and in 1982 was transferred to Ottawa, to become deputy to the Head of Mission.

He returned to Berne in 1985 as deputy head of the Public International Law Section, becoming head in 1988. He later went again to Brussels as minister and deputy to the Head of the Swiss Mission to the European Communities.

## Aggressive EasyJet forces two national airlines to downgrade

Fifty years after Swissair inaugurated direct flights between Manchester and Zurich this once lucrative route has been downgraded.

Although called Swissair Express, it is now being flown by a private airline, Flightline.

Instead of the roomy Airbus, the latest plane on the route is the more spartan British Aerospace BAE146, first produced in 1981. It can take 96 passengers, 50 fewer than the Airbus.

Regular passengers have started complaining to *Swiss Review* about reduced service, with simpler food and a limited choice of drinks.

For instance, a hot meal on the 7.40pm return flight from Zurich is now a thing of the past.

It's a similar story with British Airways, whose daily flights between Manchester and Geneva are now operated by British Regional Airways, a separate company once known as Manx Airlines.

Instead of the 108-seater Boeing 737, the plane now in service is the 49-seater Embraer 145, which is made in Brazil. A recent flight had only four passengers.

One reason why the two national carriers have switched to planes that are less expensive to run is because of the loss of passengers to the 'no frills' airline EasyJet.

It arrived in the North West exactly a year ago, with a daily flight between Liverpool and Geneva, using the 149-seater Boeing 737-300.

With its single fare starting at the ultra-low £30 –



The plane that's causing mayhem to both Swissair and British Airways: The 'no frills' EasyJet, sporting its defiant slogan

which tends to increase at weekends or when there is a heavy demand – it claims to regularly fill 80 per cent of seats.

EasyJet has a reputation for no-holds-barred aggressive marketing.

Said a spokesman: "Our success is not only due to bringing down the price but also giving a better choice than the cosy duopoly of British Airways and Swiss-

sair. In addition to the Liverpool route we have now started flying daily to Geneva from both Gatwick and Stansted, with the same cheap fare."

An aviation insider told *Swiss Review*: "It's all a question of economics. Lack of passengers is only part of the story.

"All airlines are now desperate to find a cheaper option, and one way is to hand the route over to a franchise carrier, using older planes and smaller crews."

There are similar cuts on the ground. The Swissair ticket office at Manchester Airport has been replaced by a joint Swissair-Sabena operation, and there is a possibility that the next stage will be for all group handling to be taken over by a UK staff.

And there is talk in the industry that what is happening at Manchester today might well be repeated at Heathrow tomorrow.

Looking at the more general picture, the worldwide cooperation between Swissair and Sabena is now intensifying, and there are expectations that the two companies will eventually merge.

And if that is to happen it could mean the end of Switzerland's national airline.

## Diversionary tactics

One of the problems of using smaller aircraft is that they are not usually equipped with instrument controlled automatic landing systems, which allow them to touch down in restricted visibility.

The Boeing 737 is Category A – the highest level – and can land when visibility is down to 50 feet.

The Embraer 145 is Category 2, and requires visibility of 450 feet.

This is why, when Geneva Airport is shrouded in mist or fog, planes from Manchester have to be diverted to Lyon, with passengers completing their journey by coach.

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## Swiss Church in London bids a fond farewell to its minister

The Mothers Group of the Swiss Church is at its best when it comes to performing sketches.

That was certainly the case on the occasion of a farewell party for the departing minister and his wife, Godi and Barbara Locher.

It was an event of both quiet reflection and fun and entertainment. The huge table laid in the church barely managed to accommodate the numerous participants. The smell of fondue mingled with the sound of happy chatting, and the wine contributed towards a perfect atmosphere.

The team put on a musical teaser, highlighting in a humorous way key events in the lives of both the minister and the church in the past five years. The farewell service for this popular minister was another memorable

By  
**Susanne Singh**

event, attended by a large number of people.

The reception organised by the Consistoire was a lovely opportunity to meet old friends, reminiscing over the past of the church and talking about its future.

And the future is certainly bright for the Swiss Church, which in 2004 will be celebrating 150 years of service to the Swiss community.

Life is pulsating among its different groups as it goes into the new millennium, and there is no shortage of activities to make it a bright and bustling place.

The latest addition is the Sunday evening Swiss café



The Mothers' Group performing in the Swiss Church, London

and bar, an ideal scenario popular with au pairs and young people making new friends. Here they are able to use the Internet in the newly refurbished office.

May the coming year see the strengthening of both new and existing ties among all its members, and may it bring peace and prosperity to them. May it also bring

happiness and success to the new minister, Mr André Feuz, who will take up his new assignment early in the New Year.

Finally, we wish all success to Godi in his new assignment and happiness to Barbara and the children in their new life in their native Switzerland. Both will be greatly missed.

## How escaping British soldiers found a safe haven in wartime Switzerland

Shameful revelations about the wartime action of some Swiss frontier guards in turning back refugees trying to flee from Nazi Germany have been prompting British ex-service men to recall much happier memories.

For them Switzerland proved to be a life saver.

One is John N Hatcher, who has been telling the Daily Mail how he was captured in the Western Desert and eventually found himself in a work camp for prisoners of war in northern Italy.

When Italy surrendered to the Allies in 1943 the prisoners were told they were going to be transferred to Germany.

He and two other PoWs thought differently. *He wrote:*

We set off on the run. We slept in the woods for a

while until the weather began to change for the worse and we decided to head over the Alps to Switzerland.

It was a tortuous journey, often through snow, but we eventually crossed the Swiss border only to be met by soldiers we at first thought were German.

To our relief they turned out to be Swiss.

We were given a good meal and a bed, and had to supply our details and have our photographs taken for identification purposes.

During 11 months in Switzerland, staying in various hotels, we lived under four sets of rules: British military and civil as well as Swiss military and civil law.

We were known as *évadés* and given freedom from dawn to dusk. If we wanted to stay out later we had to

get a pass from the police station.

We saw many others leave for home. I was in the third batch to travel down a corridor the Americans created when they invaded the South of France and pushed on to the Swiss border.

I arrived in England in September 1944 and was given six weeks' leave on double rations.

Going back off leave to Amersham, we were hoping we might be given a short leave at our first Christmas at home in five years, but we were told this wouldn't happen.

About 100 former PoWs went absent without leave for the festivities but most were quickly caught by the police.

My first Christmas back home was spent in jail at Chatham.

### 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 855 000; fax: 01625 855 111.

His email address is: [dmeakin@europress.co.uk](mailto: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 April, is February 11.



Sue Knight in action on a preserved steam locomotive near Mendrisio in the Ticino

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# The film-makers who are re-creating the famous Rhaetian Railway in their Hampshire garden

For husband and wife filmmakers Chris Harnett and Sue Knight, travelling on Switzerland's vast network of railways with a heavy camera on their shoulder is a labour of love.

So much so that when Chris left the BBC and Sue left ITV to set up their own TV and video production company, MITV, they decided to turn their love for Switzerland into a new career.

They knew the country well. They had spent many happy holidays in the Grisons and the Bernese Oberland, and knew every kilometer of railway track in those picturesque regions.

In the last 12 years they have produced a wide range of railway travelogues,

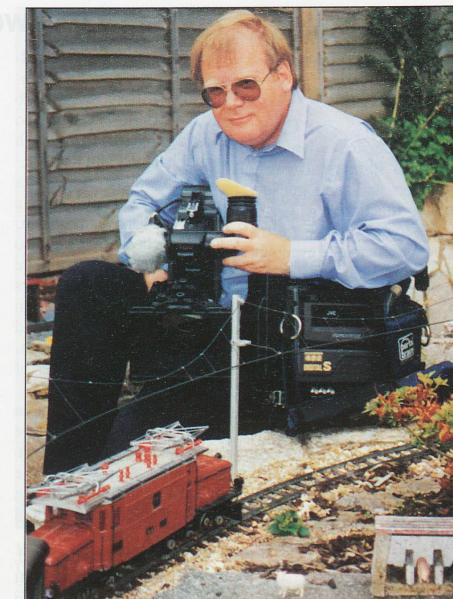
spending several months filming in all seasons.

Winter filming enables them to practise their skiing skills, and they also shoot scenes from helicopters, showing a view of Switzerland not normally available to the traveller.

"We look at this as a bonus, although all our filming trips are memorable in their own different ways", they enthuse.

Even when they are back in the UK they are still in Switzerland in spirit.

They have turned the garden of their Southampton home into a miniature Grisons, by building a replica of part of the famed Rhaetian Railway - with a track that continues to expand year after year.



Chris Harnett (right) loves shooting films of trains professionally, but it's also his hobby. Here he's filming a replica of his favourite Rhaetian Railway which he's created in the garden of his Southampton home (below)



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## Swiss club's Antiques Roadshow

Manchester Swiss Club has come up with an unusual idea to attract members and their guests to their functions.

When they have their annual Bernerplatte evening later this year they will include a Swiss Antiques Roadshow.

Said secretary Sandra Gläuser: "Members will be invited to bring along any Swiss antiques they may have in their home and they will be valued by an expert.

"We shall be doing this on October 7 and hope it will be very popular."

This is, of course, a very big year for the Manchester Club as it is celebrating the 150th anniversary of its foundation. The region will also be the venue for the FOSSUK AGM on June 3.



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## Fun and farewells at City's banquet and ball

There was both joy and sadness in the air when members of the City Swiss Club and their guests went to Claridge's for the 134th annual banquet and ball.

Joy because it was a sparkling evening, with a vibrant and happy atmosphere.

Sadness because it was also an occasion to say goodbye to three prominent members of the Swiss community in London – Ambassador and Mrs François Nordmann, and the Reverend Locher of the Swiss Church.

It was also the first time in 66 years that Marianne Meier had not been present. A lifelong supporter of the club, of which she was an honorary member, she died in February of last year.

She had met her husband, Walter Meier at this event 67 years ago, and since then had attended every single banquet and ball.

Ambassador Nordmann

drew a pertinent sketch of his work in the UK.

Switzerland, he said, had received a lot of press coverage – but not all of it the kind of publicity he would have wished for.

Rev. Locher also talked of the regrets of he and his wife on leaving London to move to a new post in Switzerland. But the charitable activities of the Swiss Church, with which he had been so closely associated, would continue.

The evening itself raised another £1,400 for the Connect service. Raffle tickets sold out within 15 minutes, helped by prizes donated by Swissair and Swiss Tourism – flights to Geneva, rail

passes and a hotel stay in Zermatt.

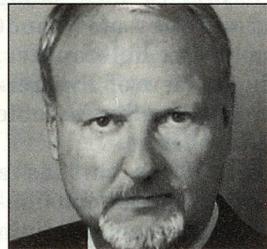
Two London based restaurateurs, Anton Mosimann and Armin Lötcher, donated vouchers for dinners, and Swiss Wines made sure the spirit was not only in the ballroom but also on the raffle table.

The gaming tables were well attended, but only the ladies' winnings counted as prizes.

The lucky lady who managed to multiply her £20,000 gambling money into more than £400,000 is to spend the day with a friend at the Sanctuary as her prize. Unless, of course, she gets hired by one of the City institutions to repeat her feat with real money.

## New consul

Twenty-six years in the Swiss diplomatic service, Consul Dirk Meyerhofer has joined the Consulate General in Manchester. His career has taken him to Oslo, Hamburg, Guatemala, Munich, Kuwait and Johannesburg.



Consul Dirk Meyerhofer

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## Santa treat for club's youngest member

The youngest member of Swiss Club Tyne Tees, Kristopher Nef, receives his present from Father Christmas when the club held its traditional Samichlaus Party at Chester-le-Street, County Durham.

The event was attended by ten children and 14 parents.



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## Charity Commission

CHY-1161C

Charity: Eglise Suisse de Londres (R234852)

Reference: HB-150074-CD (Ldn)

The Charity Commission proposes to make a Scheme to amend the trusts of this charity. A copy of the draft Scheme can be seen at the office of the Swiss Church in London, 79 Endell Street, Tuesday to Friday (call 0171 836 1418 to arrange a visit), or can be obtained by sending a stamped addressed envelope to Charity Commission, Harmsworth House, 13-15 Bouverie Street, London EC4Y 8DP, quoting the above reference.

Comments or representations can be made within one month from today.



## New drive to link two cultures

With the aim of strengthening cultural exchanges between Switzerland and the UK, Pro Helvetia and the Swiss Embassy in London have joined forces to organise a variety of cultural events to take place this year.

Under the banner of Creative Switzerland 2000: Dialogue Between Cultures, it kicks off on May 2 with the Swiss Ambassador's Award 2000 Piano Concert at the Wigmore Hall.

The award winning soloist is 21 year old Antoine Rebstein, who studied at the Conservatoire of Lausanne and is now much in demand for recitals and concerts.

The highlight of the year's events will be the opening of the new Tate Gallery at London's Bankside, which was designed by Swiss architects Herzog & de Meuron.

Their work will be featured in the gallery's opening display, being held from May 12 until the end of December, under the direction of Theodora Vischer of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Basle.

The architect of the former Bankside power station, which used to supply electricity to London, was the late Sir Giles Gilbert Scott,

one of the foremost architects of his generation.

The Swiss architects' imaginative adaptation of the original design is explored through a series of ten exhibition points in various locations in the building.

Starting with a giant model of Bankside at the entrance, visitors embark on a journey of discovery and revelation, showing unexpected vistas and perspectives and providing insights into the hidden anatomy of this historic building on the south bank of the Thames.

According to the organisers, "working with Scott's machine age aesthetic of mass, volume and surface, the architects have transformed his massive brick monolith into an exhilarating industrial cathedral."

Among other forthcoming cultural events in London is the first public presentation in the UK by the young Swiss sculptor, Urs Fischer.

Born in Zurich in 1973, he studied at the SFG Zurich and won the Eidg. Kunststipendium in 1995 and the Kiefer-Hablitzel award in 1997. The exhibition is at the ICA until February 27.

Zurich Ballet will present Mozartini at the Sadlers Wells Theatre from June 14-16.



FOSSUK president Jeffrey Long joins West of Scotland Swiss Club president Iris MacLaren as she cuts into a patriotic cake at one of the many functions organised by this energetic club. Thanks to the efforts of secretary Shula Spain the club's membership has tripled in the last three years. Events range from the bi-monthly Stammtisch at Glasgow's Café Gandolfi to an extremely popular Saturday morning children's group.

## Swiss Artists' Society proposal

A Swiss sculptor in Somerset, who has been in the UK since 1966, is keen to start a Society of Swiss Artists Abroad. She would like any readers of the *Swiss Review* with similar interests to contact her.

Annelise Vogel says the purpose of the society would be to organise exhibitions, exchange information and help to find grants and com-

missions. "It seems that Swiss musicians and other artists get well paid for performing in the UK," she said. "What about us living here? We could do with some publicity and financial assistance to market our talents."

She can be contacted by phone on 01458 834 552.

Her email address is [trelawny@tesco.net](mailto:trelawny@tesco.net).

## The City Swiss Club



The Committee of the City Swiss Club would like to thank all the sponsors of our Annual Banquet and Ball held at Claridges on 6th November 1999. This is always a very popular event with the Swiss Community and the number of people attending this year was an all time high. Needless to say, the evening was a great success and thoroughly enjoyed by all.

**Our Thanks go to:** Swissair, Switzerland Tourism, Swiss Wine Exporters' Association, F.A. Gluck Ltd, John Bull + Co, St. Moritz Restaurant, Mosimanns, the Swatch Company, UBS Private Banking, Hotel du Vin, Lessiters, For the Love of Wine, Swissca Securities Ltd, Adstock Consultancy and Lindt and Sprüngli.

The City Swiss Club was founded in 1856. The Club offers a wide-ranging programme of business and social events throughout the year. If you would like to learn more about the Club and/or receive a membership form, please contact Gill Egdell c/o Swissca Securities Limited, Camomile Court, 23 Camomile Street, London EC3A 7LL. Telephone: 0207 863 1903



## COMING EVENTS

**Edinburgh Swiss Club:** Skittle Evening with Fife Swiss Club, Sheep Heid, Duddington (February 25). Details from Ursula Ross on 0131 539 2543.

**Fife Swiss Club:** Skittle Evening with Edinburgh Swiss Club, Sheep Heid, Duddington (February 25); AGM (venue and date in April to be decided). Details from Heidi McGhie on 01383 412 635.

**Manchester Swiss Club:** Raclette Party, Wilmslow Parish Hall (March 4); AGM plus party, Wilmslow Parish Hall (April 13); Swiss National Day (July 29); Bowling & barbecue (September). Details from Sandra Glauser on 0161 456 9262.

**Midlands Swiss Society:** Visit to Droitwich Brine Baths (February 18); Swiss

Wine Tasting, Venue to be arranged (March 18). Details from Glynne Roberts on 01543 250 737.

**Southern Area Swiss Club:** AGM, Farborough Community Centre (February 11). Details from Vreni Rudkin on 01252 547 948.

**Swiss Club East Kent:** Pub lunches and country walks every four weeks. Details from Agi Smith on 01843 601 314.

**Swiss Club Tyne Tees:** Annual dinner, Sorrento Ristorante, Durham (February 12); Club meeting, Three Tuns Hotel, Durham (March 25 & April 29); AGM & lunch, Redhill Hotel, Cross-gated Moor, Durham (May 14). Details from Nelly Scott-Niederberger on 0191 519 0956.

**Torbay Swiss Club:** Coffee morning (March 2, April 6

& May 4); AGM and wine tasting (March 15); Skittles evening (April 19); Slide show (May 17). All events at Oddfellows Hall, Paignton. Details from Max Singer on 01803 842 355.

**Unione Ticinese:** Annual General Meeting, Swiss Embassy (March 25). Details from Christiane Barber on 0181 348 3751.

**West of Scotland Swiss Club:** Fondue and Raclette Party (April 1); Easter Egg Hunt, Emanuel House (April 23). Details from Shula Spain-Gayer on 0141 339 5828.

**Yorkshire Swiss Club:** AGM, Midland Hotel, Cheapside, Bradford (March 4); Bluebell time at Hardcastle Crags (May 14). Details from Carolina Brook on 0113 294 5929.

**Secretaries of Swiss societies are asked to write to the editor before February 11 with details of events planned to take place after April 5.**

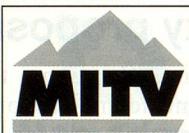
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