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Switzerland in the UK

Foot-and-mouth fears stop Swiss in the UK visiting their homeland

As international concern grew about the continuing spread of Britain's disastrous foot-and-mouth epidemic, the Swiss government ordered the country to be ring-fenced to protect Swiss cattle from the crippling disease.

The Federal Veterinary Office immediately swung into action, putting a complete ban on the importation of animals, foodstuffs and anything else that could carry the infection.

Travellers from Britain arriving at Swiss airports found containers waiting for them with instructions to throw away any meats, cheeses or other milk products that had been bought in the UK.

They were also faced with posters telling them it was strictly forbidden to import any food of animal origin. Swiss

returning home after a holiday in the UK were also instructed not to go anywhere near a Swiss farm, or visit a Swiss zoo, for a period of at least seven days after their return.

Many Swiss living in the UK were so worried about being unwitting carriers of the disease that they cancelled plans to spend Easter with relatives in the homeland – particularly those for whom it would have meant travelling into rural areas.

One who lives in the Midlands and who cancelled his flight for this reason told Swiss Review: "It was a hard decision to take, as my family were really looking forward to this visit."

"But really it was the only sensible thing to do. Although our home in the UK is not near

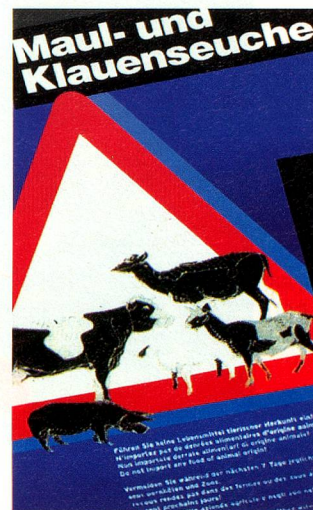
any of the outbreaks we just felt we couldn't take any risks.

"We were going to stay in an alpine village where the local economy is entirely dependent on cattle. Had we gone there from the UK we would have been ostracised."

"And – heaven forbid! – should there have been an outbreak anywhere in that area their accusing fingers would be pointing at us."

"We would never be able to visit that region ever again."

"Of course had we planned to go to one of the Swiss holiday resorts we wouldn't have worried. But Swiss farmers are paranoid about foot-and-mouth. They remember what happened in 1965-6 and don't want to experience anything like that again."



■ Welcome to Switzerland! This sombre warning from the Federal Veterinary Office greets you on your arrival.

Big increase in referenda support from UK voters

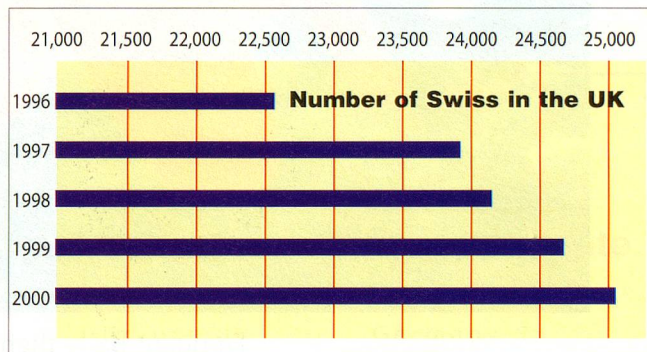
The number of Swiss citizens moving to the UK and settling down here is on the increase year by year, according to official figures showing the number registered in the consular districts of London and Manchester.

In five years the total has grown by 2,500 – from 22,543 at the end of 1996 to 25,043 at the end of last year.

During the same period the number of UK-based Swiss citizens who have registered

to vote in federal elections and referenda has increased from 1,580 (14.7 per cent of all Swiss in the UK) to 3,070 (16.18 per cent).

More have been applying for registration following the appeal made in the Swiss Review by Georg Stucky, president of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad, who back in 1992 was the prime mover in a campaign to grant the right to a postal vote at federal level to all Swiss living



overseas. If you come from the cantons of Basel-Land, Berne, Geneva, Schwytz, Solothurn, Jura or the Ticino you will also be able to vote by post in cantonal elections.

Mr Stucky is determined to see a substantial increase in the total of Swiss Abroad registered as electors, which currently stands at just over 70,000.

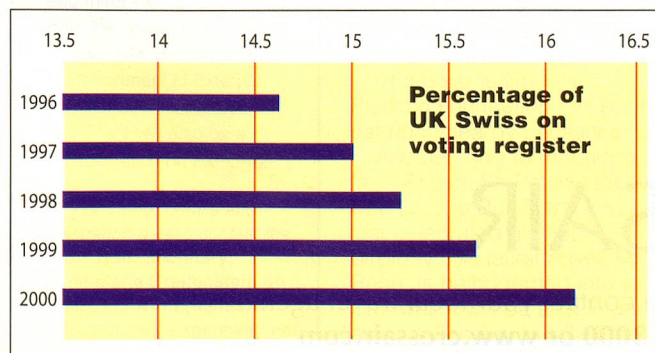
But that is only around 16 per cent of the more than half a million Swiss people now living abroad.

Says the OSA president: "Every vote counts, and you must give our country the benefit of the experience you

have gained outside our borders." If all those eligible to vote registered to do so they would make the Fifth Switzerland the country's fourth-largest "canton" – and could have a decisive voice in political decision making.

Although the vote is only available to Swiss overseas by post, it is expected that instant voting may soon be possible over the Internet.

This is currently being studied by a Parliamentary working party. More details of how to vote are available from the Swiss Embassy on 0207 616 6000 or the Consulate General in Manchester on 0161 236 2933.



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Letters to the editor

A 'lovely surprise' for a 90 year old

Dear Editor

I am writing on behalf of my father, Mr André Sottas. In 1932 he left Bulle in Switzerland, where he worked for Nestlé, to come to England and show his English counterpart how to make dragees properly.

Nestlé was, and still is,

based in Hayes, Middlesex, where he met and married my mother, a local girl, in 1937. I was born a year later.

My father returned to Switzerland to see his mother and family. While he was there the war broke out and he went straight into the army. We did not see him again until 1946.

My father wanted us to go and live in Switzerland but my mother could not settle as she missed her parents and brothers.

So Dad asked for a transfer back to England, and was employed for over 35 years as a supervisor in the Easter egg department at Nestlé. He was then made redundant and worked for another food company until his retirement.

My parents have been married 64 years this year. They now live on the Wirral near my sister and her family.

Unfortunately Dad has just gone into a nursing home as he is coming up to his 90th birthday, and my mother is 89 and very frail and cannot look after him any more.

He constantly talks about his homeland and getting the Swiss Review, which is read to him by my husband when we go up to see them both.

I am writing this letter hoping you may be able to publish his story and we could read it out to him. It would be a lovely surprise for the 90th birthday.

— Elizabeth D Spree,
Dunstable

Where did the money come from?

Dear Editor

I have been greatly interested to read your article 'Can Swiss know-how restore confidence in Britain's ailing railways?' There are a number of points that I would like to raise.

Britain's railways are in their present condition largely because of decades of under-investment, and on the surface, investment from Switzerland is welcome.

That the Swiss railways are sufficiently profitable to enable this investment, despite the difficulties of operating a small rail network in a mountainous country, is a testament to the efficiency of Swiss finance.

Investment money is cheap in Switzerland, largely because Swiss banks are somewhat relaxed about the sources of money placed with them for safekeeping.

I enjoy my regular visits to Switzerland, and in general find the people to be friendly and

proud of their prosperity.

However, very few ever question how this prosperity is achieved in a small country with few natural resources, preferring to turn a blind eye to the activities of the banks. I fear that this will not be the case in the UK.

An efficient railway network will be welcomed, and I am sure that Swiss knowledge will help, but I am also sure that the British are more interested than the Swiss in the sources of Swiss money.

One final comment. I found your statement regarding UK rail fares to be highly misleading. Open returns between Manchester and London are generally cheaper than the £150 quoted.

Showing only one possible fare and not giving details of the discounts available cannot in any way provide a meaningful comparison. Indeed, airlines provide cheaper tickets! —
Peter S. Gates (by email)

FOSSUK AGM

Will be held on the afternoon of Saturday, June 9, at the Swiss Embassy, London, by kind permission of the Ambassador

All Swiss are welcome to attend and meet the representative from the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad and the Department of External Affairs in Berne. There will also be a presentation on EXPO-02.

For further details and registration please contact the Hon. Secretary, Rose-Marie Breitenstein on 0207 727 4113 (tel/fax) or email: fossuk@ukgateway.net

Picasso's daughter Paloma leaves London for Vaud

The latest celebrity to quit the UK and head for Switzerland is Paloma Picasso, daughter of the celebrated Spanish painter.

Along with her family she has left London to take up permanent residence in the canton of Vaud.

At the same time the Picasso Foundation has been set up in nearby Lausanne.

Another long term emigré from Britain, Sir Peter Ustinov, who lives at Bursins/VD, has just celebrated his 80th birthday. His latest novel, Mr René, is being turned into a film, which will be shot in and around Geneva. but Sir Peter won't be appearing in it.



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@swissinfo.org.

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 July, is May 18.

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It's competition time again! Switzerland could be yours for a week

Are you between 15 and 25? Then this could be your chance to win a week's stay in Switzerland, participating in a Training Experience Workshop organised by FOSSUK, the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK, and sponsored by the UK PAGES of the SWISS REVIEW.

■ What springs to mind when you think of Switzerland? Hopefully not only chocolates and cuckoo clocks, Swiss Army knives, the Matterhorn or Roeschti! If you are interested in getting to know Switzerland better, why not take advantage of one of the exciting youth programmes offered by the youth section of the Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad in Berne, called The Workshop. This is a unique opportunity for young Swiss Abroad, interested in working or studying in Switzerland. It will take place from August 13 to 19 2001 in Lucerne and Davos.

■ The programme includes discussions, visiting Swiss companies, preparing topics for debate, as well as many other surprises ending in Davos actively participating in the Congress for the Swiss Abroad. The winners will be staying with a Swiss host family arranged by Swiss Ping Pong, Stapferhaus Lenzburg. What a wonderful opportunity to make new friends, experience Swiss family life, sample Swiss delicacies, as well as picking up a bit of Swiss dialect! You can find more information on the Secretariat's website — www.aso.ch

■ Switzerland in the UK, the UK section of the Swiss Review, is offering three lucky winners the chance to go to Switzerland. The offer includes the cost of the Workshop, the stay in a host family, the Congress (the cost of which would normally be SFR 620.00) and the travel.

How to enter:

Answer the five questions below, complete the form and post to arrive not later than June 15, 2001. The winners who fulfil the conditions outlined by the Youth Service of the Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad will be notified by June 20.

These are the questions for you to answer:

1. Where will the Workshop take place?
2. What is the name of the organisation, arranging stays in host families?
3. Who is organising the competition in the UK?
4. Who is the sponsor of the competition?
5. Where can you find all the information on the youth programmes?

Your answers:

1. 2.
3. 4.
5.

Name: Date of Birth:

Address:

Tel: Fax:

E-Mail address:

Are you a member of a Swiss society? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If 'yes' which one?

If 'no' are you interested in joining one? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Post to: Margrit Lyster, Swiss Review Competition,
83 Marylebone High Street, London W1U 4QW

To arrive not later than June 15, 2001



Retired chocolate-maker from Kent is secret star of new cinema blockbuster

"We'd like you to make ten chocolate statues of the goddess Venus," retired chocolate maker Walter Bienz was told when he went to Shepperton Studios to act as technical adviser on a film in which chocolate in all its forms was to play a principal role. "They should be 30 inches tall. And naked, of course."

Then, almost as an afterthought: "We also need a tray of chocolate nipples."

And that was how Lucerne-born Walter Bienz, now living in Tunbridge Wells, came to be an essential member of the team working on *Chocolat*, which is now on general release all round the world and an Academy Award nominee.

Walter trained as a confectioner in Vevey. He first came to Britain, along with his brother, in 1957 and worked as a pastrycook at the Lyons Corner House in the Strand. But his big wish was to have his own hotel, and returned to Switzerland to take a course in hotel management. His life changed yet again when his brother bought a bakery in Tunbridge Wells and Walter came back to help him. It was there that he met his wife, Angela, at an 18 Plus club.

Walter retired three years ago, and decided to spend more time at his favourite hobby, bee-keeping. But the lure of chocolate is irresistible, and when he got the call from Shepperton Studios there was just no holding him back.

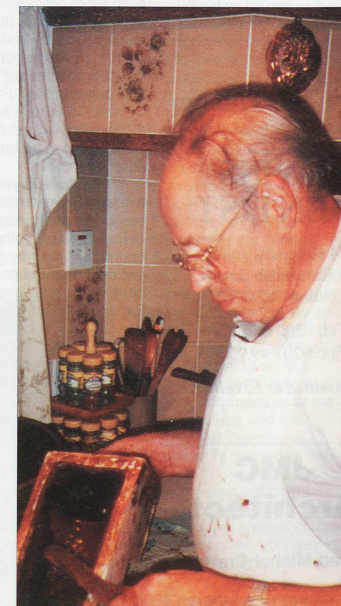
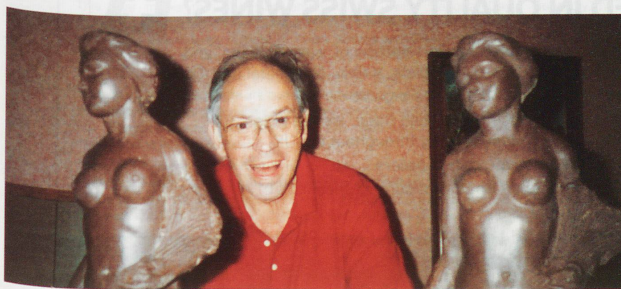
■ TOP LEFT: Academy Award winner Juliette Binoche with some of Walter Bienz' sensual chocolate nipples that are a central feature of the film and which she uses to tempt the Comte de Reynaud, the pompous nobleman played by Alfred Molina, who is her mortal enemy — and cannot stand chocolate.

■ TOP RIGHT: Walter Bienz at work in his kitchen, preparing one of the moulds he has made for the film. "There are at least 50 different types of chocolate," he says. "Making it is a real art."

■ BOTTOM LEFT: Walter with his English wife, Angela, helping him decorate chocolate in his former bakery in Tunbridge Wells.

■ BELOW: Two of the 30 inch high Venus statues that Walter was asked to make out of chocolate. He says: "Chocolate has power. It is certainly an aphrodisiac and can bring emotions to the fore. After all, everyone goes a little mad for chocolate."

■ BOTTOM: RIGHT: Brush in hand, Walter lovingly puts the finishing touches to a Venus. Film producer Leslie Holleran says: "Walter gave us all a sense of how sensual the experience of chocolate can be. He quite literally swoons for the subject and is philosophical about it. You come away from talking with him thinking chocolate can change your life. You feel that popping this magical candy into your mouth is going to set you free."





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Worries about Alpine warming are growing

Following the story in the last Swiss Review that British scientists had found that some of the most popular alpine skiing resorts are coming under increasing pressures from landslides, rockfalls and floods, comes a new UN report warning of even more drastic consequences for the Swiss tourism industry and hydro-electric power supplies.

Issued by the authoritative Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, it says that global warming will hit Switzerland more than most other countries.

In less than 30 years the average Swiss temperature has increased by one per cent, whereas in other countries it rose by only 0.6 per cent over the entire century. Rainfall levels in Switzerland have risen by 12 per cent, compared to a global average of between five and 10 per cent.

Ski resorts are already feeling the effect of lack of snow, with the snowline rising from around 1,200m to 1,800m.

Within 50 to 100 years the average Swiss temperature could rise by three to four degrees, with rainfall increasing by ten per cent in winter and decreasing by as much in summer.

French speaking cantons will be the hardest hit, especially the arc between the Plateau and the Alps, with alpine meadows dry and parched, and glaciers completely disappearing – and a big increase in respiratory illnesses.

Nature lovers are being

told: "When you walk in the alps, take a good look at the mountains with their eternal snows and forests of conifers. In the future your grandchildren will be lucky if they see anything like that."

Switzerland is already taking urgent steps to combat greenhouse gas emissions. A top man in the Swiss environment agency, Beat Nobs, said: "We've got our carbon dioxide law in place which will require the economy to reduce emissions by ten per cent by 2010."

And the Swiss government is actively supporting the Kyoto Protocol on protecting the environment – the international agreement US President George Bush refuses to endorse.

● In March Switzerland experienced the wettest month since records began in 1864 – with only six days when there was no rain.

Appeal from 'lonely Swiss' gets results

A number of readers have contacted the Swiss Review following an appeal from two "lonely Swiss" in Hertfordshire and Northamptonshire, who say they would love to hear from fellow nationals living in their part of the UK.

Their letters have been passed on, and hopefully they will be able to meet.

Jeffrey Long, president of FOSSUK, is very keen that readers who do not yet have a Swiss club in their area should be able to make contact with each other.

More Swiss clubs could well be the result, to add to the 30 clubs shown in a map of the UK in our last issue. The Swiss Review would be happy to help people get together in this way.

Any readers who would like to look into this possibility are asked to contact Jeffrey Long at 30 Finsbury Drive, Bradford BD2 1QA, or phone him on 01274 588 189.

Swiss calls as cheap as in UK

It is now as cheap to phone Switzerland as it is to call someone in the UK, according to the tariff issued by GoTalk, a newcomer to the international telecoms scene.

The company is owned by the Pully/VD based Sandoz Family Foundation, which was set up in 1964 by Edouard Marcel Sandoz, son of the founder of Sandoz SA, to promote a spirit of entrepreneurship in various spheres of activity.

GoTalk is part of a backbone network linking 11 countries. Its wholesale hub in London is now within reach of

310 million Europeans, with its vast size allowing it to keep call prices low.

Phoning Switzerland from the UK at any time of the day or night costs 3p a minute compared to BT's 29p. And calls within the UK also cost 3p, while BT charges 4p for local calls and 8p for national calls.

A number of the top people in GoTalk have joined from BT. Chief executive Alan Lowe spent 33 years with BT, most recently as senior vice president of BT's Worldwide Networks and Technology division.



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Is the Swiss Colony in the UK a dying breed?

The last few decades have been catastrophic for the Swiss community in Great Britain. Increasing Swiss prosperity and the difficulty of getting work permits has confined immigration to a select few super-skilled individuals or to those more ordinary mortals who marry British subjects.

Long-established Anglo-Swiss families, some of whose ancestors created the first Swiss society in London in 1705, have lost their Swiss identity and almost all connection with Switzerland.

Meanwhile modern technology has dissolved the distance between Britain and Switzerland.

Zurich or Geneva are easier and cheaper to reach than many parts of Great Britain.

Email and television mean

**A clarion call to every Swiss in Britain from
PETER BARBER, a member of the New Helvetic
Society and the Unione Ticinese**

that even if physically outside Switzerland, any Swiss resident in Britain can in most important respects be as much in Switzerland as a resident of St Gallen.

Perhaps it is not surprising that even the most homesick and politically interested of Swiss spouses seems uninterested in anything the Swiss clubs in this country can offer.

The sad condition of the Swiss Centre in Leicester Square seems to symbolise the state of the Swiss colony in this country.

It may soon be a mere memory – like the earliest

church for the Swiss community which occupied the same site 250 years ago.

Almost all of the long-established Swiss clubs in the United Kingdom are suffering as a result.

Yet the future is not necessarily all gloom and doom. London, a great city unrivalled by any in Switzerland, still remains a magnet for many young Swiss.

As a result of the Bilateral Accords between Switzerland and the European Union work permits for those Swiss will become a thing of the past.

Modern technology can be

a boon for societies wanting quicker and more direct links with Switzerland.

And the store of information and knowledge held within the societies can provide a unique resource, be it for the newly-arrived wanting to familiarise themselves with Great Britain, for those Swiss who want to enjoy themselves in familiar surroundings, or for those long resident here who want to take advantage of their recently-won political rights within Switzerland.

The New Helvetic Society will be hosting a round-table discussion on the future of the Swiss colony in this country at the Swiss Embassy at 7.30pm on Friday, June 8.

Participants from the Embassy and the Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom will give short presentations on the present state of the Swiss colony and of the Swiss societies.

A short-term Swiss resident and a member of an old Anglo-Swiss family who is a longstanding member of the colony will then add their perspectives before discussion is opened to the floor.

The meeting will be followed by a reception.

You will find it worth coming along and having your say in the presence of people who will listen to you.

We are especially interested in hearing the views of Swiss who are not members of any Swiss society.

There will be a charge of £5 per person towards costs, payable by all except for members of the New Helvetic Society.



■ Peter Barber wants more Swiss to take part in club activities, like this recent raclette party

1st of August Celebrations - Quo Vadis?

This year marks the 10th Anniversary of the Swiss National Day Celebrations in London in their current format. However, this year may well be the last time a large number of Swiss Abroad and their families will celebrate in Golders Green. The reasons? They are twofold:

Firstly, it is becoming more difficult to enthuse people into joining the organising committee. There are currently about ten people responsible for setting up an event that regularly attracts between 700 – 800 visitors every year. They all sacrifice their spare time and often contribute their own money and resources to make it all happen.

A few faithful helpers are involved on the day but even fewer help clearing up afterwards. Sadly, it is mainly the organising committee members who, after a busy Saturday get up early on Sunday morning to clear out the rubbish, fold the tables and benches and pick the cigarette buds off the grass.

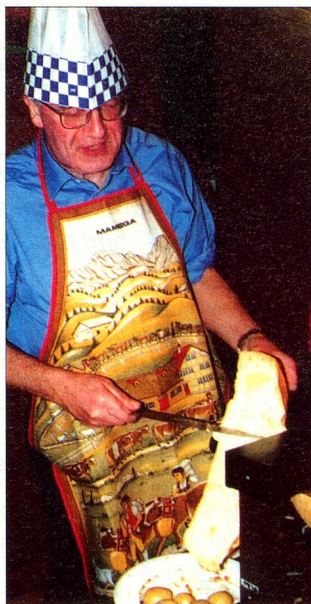
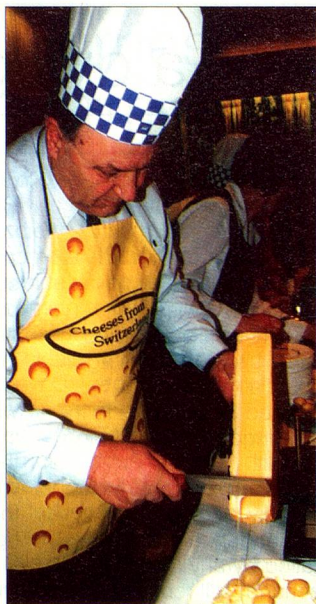
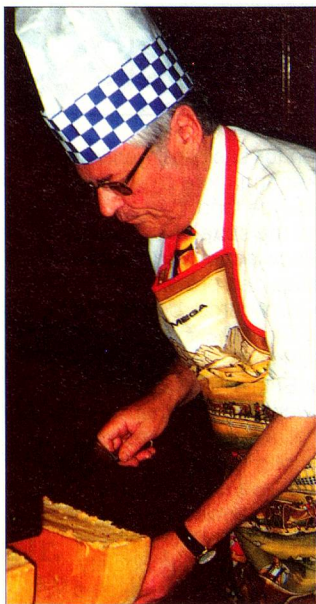
Secondly, the event has been on the edge of financial abyss for some time. The 1st of August Celebrations are funded by Sponsorship money (20%), Tombola ticket sales (35%) and Entry fees (45%). Offsetting this is the cost of hiring the marquee (65%), the school grounds (20%) and paying for the entertainment (15%).

Looking at the above figures it is fairly obvious that if attendance figures fall or sponsorship money and tombola prizes get fewer, the event will plunge into a financial hole. It is thanks to the hard work of the committee and a handful of other enthusiasts and the fact that the weather has been on our side that the coffers are not completely empty.

The sign of the times is clear: Like a big multi-national company, the 1st of August Celebrations will only survive if the workforce is reliable and the balance sheet looks healthy.

First of August Celebrations 2001 on 14th July 2001 in Golders Green, London NW11

firstaug@which.net



It's hot work –
but no lack
of volunteers

■ When Manchester Swiss Club holds its annual raclette evening there is never a shortage of volunteers from club members keen to wield the scraping knives. Among willing recruits taking on the task at the last club event – which attracted a record 91 guests – were Edgar Themans, John Farrell and David Fisher.

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Today's on-off-on Torbay Club has a busy agenda

Just over half a century ago five Swiss women met in a small café in Torquay and decided to start a Swiss club. At first it thrived, but in 1956 lack of members and premises forced it to close.

Eight years later it was revived, its membership

steadily increased, and following the election of Max Singer as chairman – a position he still holds today – the Torbay Swiss Club went from success to success.

With more than 40 members the club has an active social calendar, with

raclette evenings, wine and cheese tastings and coach outings to local beauty spots, with the National Day celebration in August being the highlight of the year.

Swiss in the Torbay area can find out more from Max Singer on 01803 842 355.

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