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Switzerland in the UK

'Dialogue across mountains' project is off to a flying start

It all started when the Swiss government decided that something positive had to be done right round the world to change the image of Switzerland following the disastrous publicity caused by the wartime role of Swiss banks.

It decreed that Sfr. 45 million should be spent in the next three years, principally in the US and UK. The Swiss ambassador in London, Bruno Spinner, started the ball rolling by calling for ideas that could form part of a two year festival of Anglo-Swiss events to be called Dialogue across Mountains.

So far 17 suggestions have been put forward, covering a wide variety of activities – more than half of them submitted by Swiss clubs in Scotland.

The most ambitious has come from the most northerly Swiss club of all – Inverness.

To coincide with the 2002 annual general meeting of FOSSUK, club president Carmen Rose wants to organise a highland festival, with guests coming from all parts of Switzerland and the UK.

There would be alphorn playing and other typical Swiss entertainment, as well displays of Scottish country dancing, golf, fishing and cycling.

Provisional plans include a welcoming civic reception in the city chambers, a dazzling display of Swiss mountain crystals and a visit to Fort Williams with a cablecar ride up the Aonachmor mountain and a ceremonial planting of the Swiss flag on its summit.

Schools are expected to be

actively involved, with exchange visits between Swiss and Scottish teachers. There will be a 'Hunt the alphorn' contest for 11 to 18 year olds – and a challenge to design a tartan for Switzerland.

Inverness is the gateway to countless scenic delights in the highlands, and club president Carmen Rose says: "We hope many members of Swiss clubs throughout the UK will come and stay a week. There will be so much for them to see and do."

Dr Ursula Ditchburn, who lives in Fife, is hoping to organise events with Swiss and Scottish mountain rescue organisations. This could include spectacular demonstrations by RAF Sea King helicopters.

Aberdeen Swiss Club is planning an extended geography lesson involving a school in Château d'Oex, with children in the two geographically similar locations carrying out a month long dialogue over the Internet.

And the West of Scotland Swiss Club, centred on Glasgow, wants to establish a Swiss corner in the city's Goethe Institut.

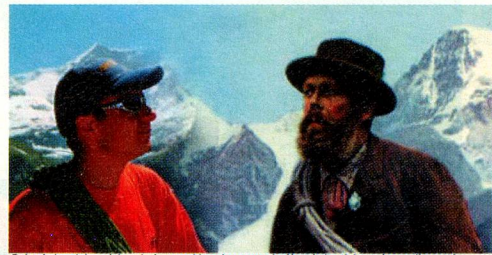
Other ideas in the pipeline include three that come from FOSSUK president Jeffrey Long.

He wants all 30 Swiss societies in the UK to provide a one metre square canvas depicting some aspect of their club's activities. These would then be joined together to create a giant banner to go on a countrywide tour.

Another suggestion is a bicycle tour from London, through France and over the Jura to Geneva, in association with the Royal British Legion, as well painting, essay and sculpture competitions.

The Internet tells the world about a great Anglo-Swiss initiative

Climbers to relive historic alpine adventure



Grindelwald guide, Johann Kaufmann, is the latest in a long line of guides in his family, beginning with his ancestor Rudolf Kaufmann [swissinfo / SRI]

For the first time, the Internet is accompanying a party of climbers as they set out to conquer alpine peaks and explore the rich history of mountaineering.

↪ [Audio / Video / Links](#)

In 19th century dress, the swissinfo group of climbers and guides plan to trace alpine exploration from its roots to the developments which allowed mountaineers to open isolated parts of the Swiss Alps to the outside world.

The expedition begins on August 26 in canton Valais. For 10 days, they will cross glaciers and mountain peaks, spending nights in mountain huts and inns where earlier alpine travellers stayed.

The early expeditions were far from humble as adventurers explored uncharted and formidable territory right in the heart of Europe. Though some were small-scale adventures, others featured dozens of porters equipped with ladders, telescopes, mutton, and champagne. One Swiss guide insisted on a fir tree, which he lugged to the top and planted. Others dragged iron flags to pound into the summit.

British at the forefront

After the first scientific explorers, came writers and painters of the Romantic age, then mountaineers, climbing for pleasure. The British marched at the forefront of this alpine exploration, and before long, tourists followed. The Alps were open to everyone.

Now, more than two centuries after the first expeditions, the swissinfo party will trek the same inspiring landscape - still, of course, dominated by 4,000-metre peaks and mighty glaciers. Over time though, man has altered the landscape.

■ The start of the great adventure: how people round the world read it on the Internet. Full story on centre pages

Chocoholics get seal of approval from scientists

There were mouthfuls of good news for the Swiss chocolate industry at this year's annual conference of the British Association for the Advancement of Science.

At their Glasgow meeting scientists were told that just half a bar of dark chocolate would be enough to protect

against DVT – the deadly blood clots that have been affecting airline passengers on long haul flights.

Their advice was simple: eat a bar of chocolate before you embark.

Tests have shown that chocolate is rich in flavonoids, the healthy blood-thinning

chemicals that are also found in red wine, fruit and tea.

A research team at King's College, London, had shown that 50mg of dark chocolate contains as many flavonoids as two glasses of wine, four and a half cups of tea, six apples, seven onions, 15 glasses of orange juice, 27

pints of beer or 28 glasses of white wine.

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Fears that Swiss clubs are dying get a resounding 'NO'

Members of Swiss clubs from many parts of Britain, but particularly those living in the London area, attended a meeting at the Swiss Embassy to discuss the future of the Swiss community in the UK.

The meeting had been called by the New Helvetic Society because of concerns that a number of clubs had seen their membership declining.

The debate was opened by Peter Barber, who recounted the history of Swiss clubs in the UK, which he said dated back to the 18th century and were thriving in the middle of the 20th century.

He said he had spoken to a number of members of the Swiss community about their reasons for not joining a club.

These ranged from coming to the UK to escape the Swiss to not feeling a close affiliation with Switzerland.

Points that came up during his discussions were that clubs were too cliquey, dominated by elderly people and out of touch with the 'real' Switzerland.

Consul Peter Himmelberger from the Swiss Embassy showed statistical evidence that the number of Swiss in the UK had been steadily growing, largely due to 'new' Swiss – dual nationals who took advantage of recent legislation to obtain a Swiss passport.

He also commented on the failure of some Swiss clubs to be more proactive.

A more positive picture was painted by Joe Brogini, who gave FOSSUK's viewpoint on

the development of Swiss clubs in the UK.

Peter Jacomelli shared his memories of the Swiss community from 1945, recalling numerous London clubs and institutions that, like the Schweizerbund, no longer exist.

When Peter Barber asked the meeting to vote on whether the Swiss colony in Britain really was a dying breed, the overwhelming majority agreed that the community was, instead, alive and kicking and had a great future.



■ Two of the speakers at the meeting: Suzannah Stack of the New Helvetic Society and Max Singer, president of Torbay Swiss Club

50 attend FOSSUK agm

Fifty people attended the annual general meeting of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK, held at the Swiss Embassy in London.

Guests included Ambassador Bruno Spinner, Ambassador Walter Thurnherr of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Dr Georg Stucky, president of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad, Susanne Wuellner of Expo.02, together with official representatives from the embassy and consulates-general in London and Manchester.

Rose-Marie Breitenstein, Joe Brogini and Margrit Lyster were re-elected as delegates to the Council of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad. The meeting voted to appoint Françoise Logan and Shula Spain as deputy delegates.

The FOSSUK committee will

now consist of Jeffrey Long (president), Margrit Lyster (vice president), Rose-Marie Breitenstein (secretary), Roland Minder (acting treasurer), Erika Richardson, Huldi Broadhurst, Anne-Marie Doherty, Françoise Logan, Daniel Pedroletti, Max Singer, Shulamit Spain-Gayer and Joe Brogini.

The meeting voted that proposals to increase membership subscriptions should be decided by a postal ballot.

An invitation from Shula Spain and Carmen Rose from the Scottish clubs to hold the next agm at Inverness was accepted. It will link with a social weekend organised as part of the 'Dialogue across Mountains' project.

Dr Stucky said he hoped more Swiss in the UK would register as voters and play an active part in Swiss political life and the decision making process.



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: derek@meakin.net.

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 February, 2002, is December 27.

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briefly

A number of Swiss artists living in the UK have formed their own club and plan a series of exhibitions where their work will be displayed. So far there are 13 members but they hope to expand into a much larger group. Any reader interested should contact the co-founder, Annelise Vogel (01458 834 552).

More readers have been writing to Swiss Review saying they would like to meet other Swiss in their area. Anyone living in Gloucester, Bodmin, Sevenoaks or Leicester who would like to contact other readers should call Jeffrey Long (01274 588 189).

Jennifer Entwistle from Stockport, Sandra Lauber from Kingston-upon-Thames and Neal O'Hare from Northern Ireland were the three young readers who won our contest for a week in Switzerland. They wrote to Swiss Review: "We're having a fantastic time here in Lucerne and Davos at the Congress for the Swiss Abroad. The programme is action packed – so far we've seen the Transport

Museum, been hiking, swimming in the lake, had a barbecue, visited universities and learnt all about educational opportunities here for young Swiss abroad. The host families we're staying with are so hospitable and it's great seeing the Swiss way of life."

Swiss living all over the Midlands are invited to a special get-together near Solihull on February 16 to find out what FOSSUK is doing on behalf of Swiss in the UK. Organised by the Midlands Swiss Club but non members will be very welcome. There to answer questions will be Consul General Ulrich Hunn and a delegate to the Congress of the Swiss Abroad. Further details from MSS president Glynn Roberts (01543 250 737).

Work has started to sponsor a Swiss Church team in next year's London Marathon. Potential runners should contact Rev André Feuz (0207 836 1418). Money is still coming in after this year's marathon, with a substantial donation from the City Swiss Club.

Epic tribute to Britain's

All over the world people sitting at their computers have been able to share in the adventures of a group of British and Swiss climbers who have been recreating a sense of what an expedition through the alps must have been like back in the golden age of mountaineering.

Swissinfo, the multilingual arm of Swiss Radio International, used all the facilities of its extensive web site to describe the progress of the ten day expedition in words and pictures as well as audio and video links.

And intermingling with the climb itself were stories that traced the history and development of mountaineering and the dramatic changes to the landscape that have occurred over the last two centuries.

The seven strong British-Swiss party, all dressed in period costume, were also able to use the wonders of electronics – to reply to messages sent to them by their worldwide audience.

The experienced British climbers and their Swiss guides and porters, some of whom were direct descendants of mountaineering pioneers, were able to share their knowledge of alpinism and local traditions.

The joint leaders were British mountaineer Les Swindin and Swiss mountain guide Johann Kaufmann, whose family has been guiding climbers since the 1880s. Les himself started

climbing in 1965 – exactly a century after British climber Edward Whymper at the head of an Anglo-Swiss team made the first ascent of the Matterhorn.

That historic event ended in tragedy. The rope broke as they were on their triumphal way down, and three Englishmen and one Swiss fell to their deaths.

The only mishap that happened to the Internet party concerned their leader. The man who has climbed all the 4,000 metre alpine peaks was the only member of the team to sustain an injury.

He fell flat on his face after slipping on an icy doormat outside a 19th century hotel.

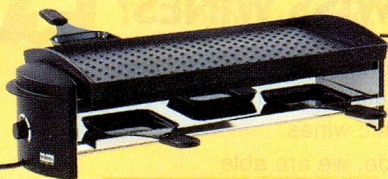
The expedition had begun at the Villa Cassel, a throwback to the Belle Epoque, which overlooks the Aletsch glacier. Europe's longest river of ice is itself threatened. More and more of it is disappearing, and the entire region is expected to shortly become a Unesco World Heritage site.

Climbing eight hours a day and spending the nights in mountain huts, the party was spared the necessity of carrying their own provisions with them. All their needs were ferried to them by regular helicopter flights.

But they insisted on using 19th century climbing gear – to see whether mountaineering had become any easier in the intervening decades. They told Swissinfo their authentic

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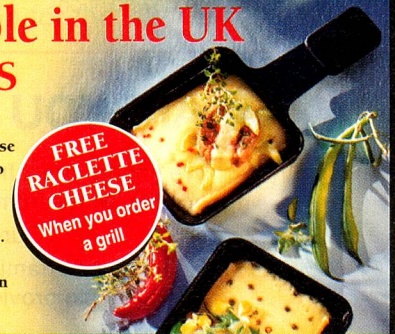


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Alpine pioneers...

Longhandled icepicks doubled as convenient walking sticks when trudging across icy glaciers, but proved cumbersome on the steep slopes of the Jungfrau.

The expedition ended when a horse drawn carriage conveyed them to a hotel that epitomises Swiss tourism in its heyday – the Victoria-Jungfrau, built during the golden age of travelling and still retaining much of the glorious atmosphere of the period. Last year it was named Switzerland's hotel of the year.

As they toasted the successful conclusion of the expedition with champagne, and with alphorns playing in the background, one of the climbers, Philip Martineau, said of the welcome: "We were treated like our 19th century aristocratic predecessors."

swissinfo – a fast-growing link with the homeland

swissinfo is the most efficient and complete means yet devised for keeping Swiss overseas in touch with home. It can be accessed at any time day or night with a staff of 185 – journalists, designers and engineers – making sure its thousands of pages of news and information are always right up to date. But this multimedia operation is much more than words. With one click of the mouse a PC user can listen to the latest radio news bulletin, or watch a video devoted to some aspect of Swiss life and activities. If you've never seen it, try it now on www.swissinfo.org.

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Wednesday August 29
Mönchsloch Hut to Berall Hut
Thursday August 30
Berall Hut to the Kleine Scheidegg
Friday August 31
Schreckhorn Hut to Lauteraar Hut
Saturday September 1
Lauteraar to Gletsstein Hut
Sunday September 2
Gletsstein Hut to Hotel Bellevue on the Kleine Scheidegg Pass
Monday September 3
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Today's Feature
Alpine "palaces" rank among world's finest hotels
When the mother of the Russian emperor arrived at the Three Kings hotel in Basel on June 4, 1857, a total of 90 horses pulled her 18-carriage entourage. It was a fitting arrival at one of Switzerland's finest hotels, in the age of hotel grandeur.
More... Audio

Meet the Alps Walk team
A select group of British climbers and Swiss guides has been assembled for the expedition. They combine a wealth of experience, knowledge of alpine history and in some cases, possess a direct link to that past.
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The City Swiss Club was founded in 1856. The Club offers a wide-ranging program 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 Julie Streader as above.

Internet voting could soon be here

Swiss living in the UK may soon be able to use the Internet to vote in federal elections and referenda.

The subject was discussed at the recent Congress of the Swiss Abroad, held in Davos, when delegates were reminded that it was the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad that in 1992 successfully campaigned for the introduction of voting rights for Swiss overseas.

Now the OSA is campaigning for the targeted use of electronic media to make it easier for Swiss everywhere to exercise their political rights.

A member of the UK delegation, Shula Spain,

supported a proposal that English should be more widely used by the OSA to encourage more young people to take an interest in matters concerning the Swiss abroad.

The next congress will be held from August 8 to 11 as part of Expo.02, when there will be a special Swiss Abroad Day "featuring traditional and avant-garde elements to surprise and intrigue visitors."

It is hoped that many Swiss from the UK will be going to Bienne, Neuchâtel and Morat for the event.

Foreign Minister Joseph Deiss gave the closing address at the congress, and

declared that he was unconditionally in favour of Switzerland joining the UN because, he said, it would help promote the interests of Swiss citizens and give the country greater credibility.

He added that, moreover, the experience of neutral states showed that it was these very countries that could contribute in a major way to peacekeeping and the upholding of human rights – an important consideration in the light of current international tensions.

The UK delegation consisted of Joe Broggini, Rose-Marie Breitenstein, Margrit Lyster, Françoise Logan and Shula Spain.

The skaters' waltz that lasted 60 years – and is still going strong

The romance started at Richmond ice rink in 1937. Arnold Gerschwiler had come to England from his native Switzerland and landed a job as a skating coach. There he was introduced to a keen social skater called Vi.

They became engaged in 1939, but then Arnold had to go back to Switzerland for military service.

He later managed to get back to Britain for a brief visit, but while he was here France fell and he was unable to return home.

Arnold and Vi married in Bowness, on the shores of lake Windermere, in August 1941, and set up home in Twickenham. And now they have celebrated their 60th

wedding anniversary.

Their working life became devoted to skating.

Arnold went on to become an international coach and divided his time between England and Switzerland, acting as senior instructor at both the Richmond and Davos ice rinks. In 1964 he was made a director of the Richmond rink, a post he maintained until his retirement.

His partnership with Vi enabled him to establish himself as one of the major players in the ice skating world, coaching many Olympic, world and European champions – as well teaching the finer points of skating to many big names from the

world of film and television.

In 1995 he was awarded the OBE for his services to British ice skating.

Since retiring Arnold and Vi have taken up playing bridge, which they thoroughly enjoy. With this, and their family of two children and four grandchildren, they find themselves extremely busy.

They frequently travel back to Switzerland to visit their family and friends. Sadly however they now find the altitude in Davos difficult to cope with and have to remain off the slopes.

At 87 years of age neither now skates – but they still maintain a huge interest in the sport that first brought them together.

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Londoners having second thoughts about August 1

Swiss living in and around London are to be given the opportunity of having their say about the future of the capital's First of August celebrations.

Anyone with views on how to liven up the festivities is invited to attend an open meeting, to be held at the Swiss Embassy in Montagu Square at 6.30pm on Thursday, November 8.

There were rumblings of discontent at this year's event – which was actually held 18 days before Swiss National Day was celebrated in Switzerland itself.

After clearing up the grounds of King Alfred school in Golders Green the following morning, members of the committee and helpers joined

in an al fresco breakfast and discussed the last ten years at Golders Green. It was felt that fresh blood and new ideas were needed to make future events more alive and exciting.

As a result the committee resigned and a new one will have to be formed.

Five hundred Swiss with their families and friends had turned up for the festivities.

There was a massive tombola, wine tasting by the City Swiss Club and mouth watering cakes provided by the Mothers' group, with dancing and a very colourful children's lantern procession.

The official part of the day included a retrospective look at past National Day events at Golders Green by Jan Brzozowski. Ambassador Bruno Spinner introduced the day's guest of honour, Peter Hess, president of the Swiss National Council, who gave his views on the political future of Switzerland within Europe.

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