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Switzerland in the UK

3/08

Swiss 'non-doms' contemplate mass exodus to avoid Brown's tax hike

The £30,000 dilemma

Three months after the Budget bombshell to make 'non-domiciles' pay £30,000 extra tax a year for the next seven years, many hundreds of Swiss citizens living in the UK are still uncertain as to whether the Treasury's demands will force them to leave Britain and return to Switzerland.

The subject is a regular topic of conversation at Swiss club meetings, with many saying they have so far been given no indication whether they are likely to be affected.

The Treasury's own website (www.hmrc.gov.uk) does not give any help or advice, and the Swiss Embassy says it is reluctant to become involved.

The people most worried are not the multi-millionaires for whom the new regulations were originally designed. They have their own specialist tax advisers, and in any case would probably consider £30,000 a minor trifle.

But there are many others, much less well off, who are now facing a dilemma for which there is no easy solution.

Among them are Swiss who came to England many years ago to work for Swiss firms, eventually marrying British girls, settling down

here, raising families and paying UK taxes

They have since retired and their only income is their pension, paid to them in Switzerland.

One of them told *Swiss Review*: "This is a punitive tax, a major change in taxation legislation that has been introduced far too quickly.

"It's a messy piece of legislation, and the Treasury has already had to backtrack on part of it because of the outcry it caused.

"But it seems we now have only two choices: either to pay up – and that will mean £210,000 over the next seven years – or to go back to Switzerland.

"But that is a cruel dilemma, because Britain has been our home for most of our lives.

"It will mean leaving behind the lifestyle to which we have been accustomed, leaving behind our children and our grandchildren, and all our many friends.

"At the moment there seems to be no other alternative. Each of us has to look at our own situation and make a decision.

"But it's all very messy. We can't get any clear advice. I have spoken to UBS in Switzerland, and tax

advisers here, and there seems to be no single answer to how it affects us as individuals.

"It will hit a lot of very ordinary people – anyone who has an income in Switzerland of more than £1,000 a year will be caught."

Another said: "Most of my working life I've paid all my UK taxes, and now they want more.

"You see stories in the papers about the non-doms, but they are talking about millionaires who have nothing to worry about.

"The Treasury doesn't seem to know how to cope with people like me. My latest UK tax declaration form has still been filled in on the old basis, because the new rules only apply from the end of the current tax year. It contains no mention of non-doms.

"I suppose I would only have to pay my first £30,000 in January 2010. So in theory I could forget about it until then.

"Yet this is not something to put on one side. People I've talked to are like me, trying to sort through all the rumours and contemplating what to do. At the end of the day I shall probably be tempted to pack up and return to Switzerland."

Wheelchair champion



A remarkable victory in the London Marathon for wheelchair bound – and record breaker – Sandra Graf. Read about her successful race on Page 3.

VC hero honoured



Four years after being awarded Britain's highest honour a Swiss mercenary was reduced to poverty and died in misery. His sad story is on Pages 4-5.

Celebrating August 1



There's a treat in store for London Swiss when they gather for their First of August celebrations – an appearance by a star guitarist. See Page 8.

Leicester Square bells are back home for refurbishing



The famous *Glockenspiel*, for more than two decades an icon of Switzerland in the heart of London's West End, is no more.

A team of demolition experts with their heavy tackle have taken it down piece by piece, packed it into crates and returned it to Switzerland.

The 27 bells that rang out over Leicester Square are now back in their birthplace, the Rütschi Bell Foundry in Aarau for reconditioning.

Soon they will be reassembled in the form of an entirely new *Glockenspiel* that Westminster City Council has agreed should be given pride of place in the new Leicester Square.

The work of refurbishing – and in some cases completely recasting – the bells is considered so important that in September the Lord Mayor of Westminster will be paying an official visit to the foundry in Aarau to see the work in progress.

Switzerland in the UK

The magazine for Swiss living and Switzerland in the UK

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News about any forthcoming events that will be of interest to our readers should be emailed to: editor@meakin.net



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CH+UK news in brief

■ Britain's leading architect, Lord Foster, famous for designing London landmarks like the Gherkin and the new Wembley Stadium, has bought a palatial château between Rolle and Geneva. He's very critical of local planning laws and is calling for "fresh thinking". Now see: www.swissreview.co.uk/story/292

■ The wealthiest British woman, according to The Sunday Times Rich List, is married to a Swiss billionaire. She's Staffordshire born Kirsty Bertarelli, who now spends most of her time at her two homes in Gland/VD and Gstaad. See: www.swissreview.co.uk/story/295

■ The Swiss Highland Games at Lochaber will not be held this year because the organisers have been unable to raise adequate sponsorship from Switzerland and Scotland.

■ The next Swiss Golf Day will be Monday, September 15, at Pyrford Golf Club, Woking. Prizes will include three cups. Details from Jeffrey Long on 01274 588 189.

■ For 20 years Hanni Beedel has arranged an informal lunch in Ipswich for Swiss in East Anglia. Contact her on 01394 286 384.

Sandra Graf breaks wheelchair record in London Marathon

Appearing in the London Marathon for the first time, Switzerland's wheelchair wizard, Sandra Graf, from Gais in Appenzell, gave a record breaking performance, cutting the time for the women's race to 1 hour 48 minutes.

For the first five kilometres Sandra was in a procession of four women racers, along with title holder Shelly Woods (UK), Amanda McGory (USA) and four times winner Francesca Porcellato (Italy).

But then the race started in earnest, and after 15 kilometres Sandra was 21 seconds ahead of Shelly Woods with Amanda a further six seconds adrift. Then she accelerated away from the others and rapidly increased her lead to be almost four minutes ahead of the American at the end.

After the race Sandra said: "It was a slow start which I liked but at



The victorious Sandra Graf: 'After a slow start I was just happy to win'

10km I decided to go faster. After a while, I decided to go on my own because it was very windy. At the end I was just happy to win.'

And Britain's Shelly Woods put her poor result down to having a puncture early on in the race.

She said: "This made it very hard to hold on to the others and for 20 miles I couldn't change the tyre."

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:

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His email address is: editor@meakin.net.

All 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 20.

Swiss win A1GP title

"It's absolutely outstanding. We're writing pages in history books," said Max Welti, principal of the Swiss A1GP team after winning the World Cup at Brands Hatch in Kent.

And driver Neel Jani, describing it as the greatest moment of his career, said: "I can't put it into words. A1GP has been getting tougher every season, and this year we got the title."

"After going on the podium it feels fantastic. Brands Hatch gave us a fantastic atmosphere – a great place to win the title."

Jani was born in Rorschach/SG.

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THE ONLY SWISS TO WIN THE VC FINALLY GETS HIS PLACE IN HISTORY

History books are full of the exploits of valiant Swiss mercenaries who, having sold their services to the highest bidder, ferociously proved their worth on the field of battle.

But one such Swiss never made it to the halls of fame in his own country... until now.

After 129 years the heroic story of Corporal

Christian Ferdinand Schiess will go on display in the plush surroundings of the Museum of the Swiss

Abroad at the Château de Penthes in Geneva.

It is the story of a humble Swiss who wanted to better himself by becoming a Redcoat in the British Army, travelling to South Africa and finally joining a handful of soldiers facing a

ruthless army of 4,000 Zulu warriors. The ensuing battle became one of the most talked about events in the annals of the British Army.

More than 300 Zulus perished in the day and a half of fierce fighting, with the loss of only 15 Redcoats.

Of the remainder, 11 subsequently received the Victoria Cross, Britain's highest honour for valour.

And one of those recipients was Corporal Schiess.

While much has been written about the Battle of Rorke's Drift, very little is known about the Swiss mercenary himself.

He was born in Burgdorf, Canton Berne, although his place of origin was Herisau, the largest town in Appenzell. He served briefly in the French Army before sailing from Hamburg to South Africa in 1877.

There at the age of 22, he decided to give his allegiance to the British, who were then beginning their colonisation of

the African continent.

In January 1879, right at the start of the bloody Anglo-Zulu wars, he was carried into the field hospital at the army supply depot at Rorke's Drift with a bad foot infection caused by marching across the veldt wearing ill fitting army boots.

The tiny depot consisted of the hospital and a chapel that was also used to store bags of grain, boxes of biscuits and packs of ammunition. To defend the post were just 104 men.

For the Zulus, fighting to protect their land from the invaders, Rorke's Drift seemed to be an easy target.

Even so, they assembled an army of 4,000 warriors, armed with deadly assegais and leopard-skin shields.

The defenders quickly set up a barricade of overturned carts and sacks of corn, fixed bayonets and waited for the assault.

For hours, wave after wave of Zulus attacked but were felled under the withering rifle fire.

Schiess left his hospital bed, tore off his bandages and limped to the barricade just as it was about to be breached by the Zulus, bayoneting three in as many minutes.

Corporal Schiess was presented with his VC at a ceremony in South Africa in 1880, but his moment of glory was short lived. Leaving the Army, he was unable to find work and four years later was found by British sailors wandering the streets of Cape Town suffering from exposure and malnutrition.

They offered him a free passage back to England, which he gratefully accepted. But during the voyage he became ill and died, still with his VC. He was buried at sea off the coast of Angola.

It was while researching the story of the Battle of Rorke's Drift that Jeffrey Long came across the tale of Corporal Schiess and decided the story should be told in Switzerland. He contacted the National Army Museum for help and also

The brass plaque that is now on display at the Rorke's Drift Museum in Natal. The museum is on the site of the hospital where Corporal Schiess was a patient until he was stung into action at the sound of the approaching Zulu army.

proposed to the Museum of the Swiss Abroad that a special exhibition should be created, with a soldier's uniform of the period, plus a rifle and bayonet side by side with a Zulu spear.

Also on show will be a specially made replica of Corporal Schiess' VC, arranged by Jeffrey Long.

He said: "But there are still many gaps in this story. Perhaps someone, somewhere will have some record of him or his family or background. If so, I would be very grateful if they could get in touch with me."

5



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Swiss Church minister's 'one regret' on leaving London

After five years as minister at the Swiss Church in London, the Rev David Leuenberger is leaving and moving to Boston in the USA to continue his studies.

He told Swiss Review: "I look back at my time at the Swiss Church with some sentimentality. I have had a very happy and productive time here.

"I was particularly blessed with a warm welcome and continuous support of many friends and parishioners.

"There has been an enormous amount of goodwill which carried me and helped me carry on, and I thank everyone for this."

He said he would be taking with him many memories of his stay here, particularly the Sunday services which once a month included communion, which he said was one of the strengths of the church, "and something which should be copied by other churches in Switzerland."

He had really enjoyed group discussions and parish weekends away, with highlights ranging from concerts to film and football screenings, and celebrating the church's 150th anniversary.

He has been able to represent the Swiss Church with numerous Swiss clubs. "Participating in their events," he said, "was not only a privilege but also something I really enjoyed doing." But he said he would

have one regret on leaving: "It is no secret that only few people come to services and to many other functions at the Swiss Church.

"The Swiss in London are truly privileged to have their own church – with its own building in the centre of London. I would have wished for

an even greater display of solidarity from the wider Swiss community in London – something which will probably be made easier for them when the new building will be the pride of the church."

For the full story see:
www.swissreview.co.uk/story/295

Guitar star helps celebrate National Day

Swiss jazz guitarist Nicolas Meier is to perform at this year's National Day celebrations in London, which take place at the Swiss Church on August 1.

Wilfried Rimensberger, chairman of the Swiss National Day committee said: "We intend to feature Swiss artists who reflect the openness and wide cultural understanding of our country in their music.

"Nicholas Meier is one of the most versatile and successful Swiss guitarists on a global level."

The event will feature a tombola with more than 100 prizes, Mostbröckli, Bratwurst and raclette will be served, together with plenty of Swiss wine and beer. Minister Anne-Pascale Krauer Müller from the Swiss Embassy will be speaking.

Admission is £2 at the door and tickets cannot be booked in advance. • Swiss in Wales are to celebrate National Day at the Pembrokeshire home of Beat Wahren, formerly executive chef at the Swiss Centre Restaurants in London.

More details can be found at: www.swissinwales.com



Nicolas Meier: A family outing to the Montreux Jazz Festival gave him the inspiration to become a top guitarist



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