

Zeitschrift: Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad
Herausgeber: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad
Band: 36 (2009)
Heft: 1

Anhang: Switzerland in the UK

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Switzerland in the UK

1/09

U-turn for the Glockenspiel

The ongoing saga of the famous Swiss Glockenspiel in Leicester Square, in London's West End, has taken on a new dimension.

It was in 1985, to mark the 400th anniversary of the City of Westminster, that the original Glockenspiel was presented by Switzerland Tourism, on behalf of the people of Switzerland and Leichtenstein.

It was taken down last year following the demolition of the Swiss Centre, and transported back to Switzerland to be completely refurbished before being re-erected in its new location.

Intensive negotiations between City planners and Switzerland Tourism have now resulted in a new agreement that the Glockenspiel should become a fully integrated feature in the new £18.5 million revamp of the entire Leicester Square area – one of London's major tourist attractions.

As a result it is now being

redesigned so that it can be seen from both sides, and there will be many new features.

One major change is that it will reflect its new home as well as its Swiss origins.

One side will depict the Canton of Appenzell across which pass an animated procession of 23 colourful figures representing the traditional ascent of farmers and their herd of cows as they make their way to their alpine pastures.

The same procession will then traverse the other side, which will be a scene of Westminster showing its typical historical landmarks.

The astronomical clock, seen from both sides, will show the signs of the Zodiac, together with the days of the week, the date and the phases of the moon.

Alongside the clock will be four hand-carved wooden figures representing famous residents of Westminster – Queen Victoria, the

Lord Mayor, Sherlock Holmes and Charles Chaplin.

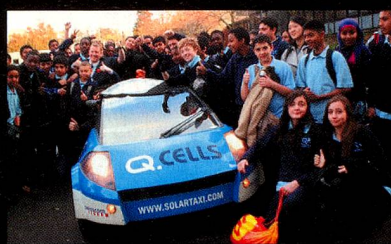
The figures on the Swiss side will be dressed in the national costumes of the four linguistic regions of Switzerland.

The new Glockenspiel will form the top of an arch spanning Swiss Court – the former New Coventry Street – which was renamed by the City Council to celebrate the 700th anniversary of the Swiss Confederation in 1991.

The procession will now be positioned at a height of 3.5 metres, which will enable visitors to Leicester Square – which attracts up to 250,000 sightseers a day – to fully appreciate from close range the detailed, intricate craftsmanship that has gone into the carving and decorating of the figures.

When the new Glockenspiel is completed it will go on display in Aarau for eight weeks prior to being taken to London, where it is expected to be switched on by December.

Solar taxi visits London



Pupils get to inspect a car of the future, when a Swiss taxi powered by nothing more than sunshine stops in the UK as part of a world tour. See Page 3.

Lord Mayor turns bellringer



Westminster's Lord Mayor tries her hand at bell ringing while visiting Leicester Square's famous Glockenspiel under repair in Aarau. See Pages 4-5.

Swiss export green cuisine



A new range of vegetarian meals is brought to Britain by a highly successful team of Swiss restaurateurs. Meet them on Page 7.

Switzerland in the UK

The magazine for Swiss living and Switzerland in the UK

Switzerland in the UK has its own Internet site, continually bringing you up to the minute news of the latest events as well as major stories from the most recent issues and links to other interesting sites in both the UK and Switzerland. To access it go to: www.swissreview.co.uk

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



London-trained sculptor's five metre high memorial to tragic altar boy

He trained in the West End studios of Garrards the crown jewellers, making tiny intricate pieces of jewellery to adorn the shoulders of some of the world's richest women.

But his latest work is on a much bigger scale – a giant, five metre high bronze statue that is to be erected in the catacombs of Rome.

Bernhard Lang, now a well known jeweller and goldsmith in Basle, was asked to create the figure as a memorial to one of the earliest Christian martyrs, St Tarcisus, a teenage altar boy in Rome who lost his life serving his faith.

The story goes that he so impressed church leaders of the third century with his courage that he was entrusted to take the Eucharist in secret to Christians in prison awaiting martyrdom.

Caught by a pagan mob, he was stoned when he said he preferred death to letting them have what he was carrying.

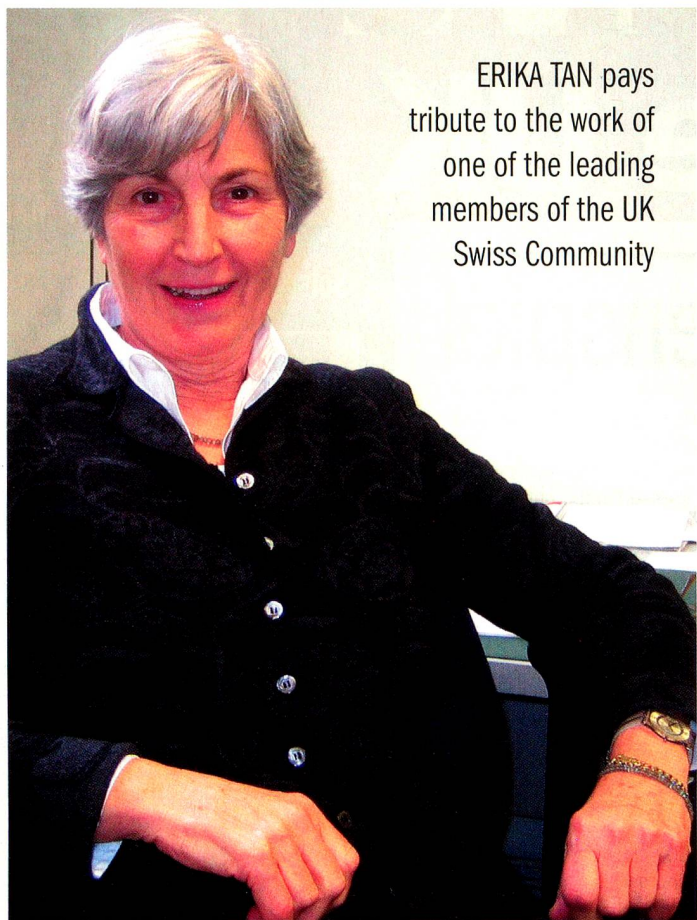
He was buried in the catacombs of St Calixtus in Rome, and it is there that the statue will have its final resting place following going on show in Einsiedeln and St Gallen.

The statue cost a total of Sfr. 100,000 to make, and it was cast over a period of eight months at the Rüetschi bell foundry in Aarau, which was also the birthplace of the Leicester Square Glockenspiel.

Bernhard Lang started his apprenticeship as a goldsmith at his father's jewellery shop in Basle in 1988.

In 1994 he joined Garrards, the world's oldest jewellery house, before returning to Basle, and he opened his own company there five years ago.

Margrit Lyster is stepping down after three decades



ERIKA TAN pays tribute to the work of one of the leading members of the UK Swiss Community

An era is coming to an end at the Swiss Benevolent Society with the retirement of the Welfare Officer, Margrit Lyster.

Margrit's career as a social worker in England started in 1979 with holiday replacements at the Welfare Office for Swiss Girls in Great Britain – later the Swiss Welfare Office for Young People – as well as the Swiss Benevolent Society. In October 1977 she became the social worker for the Welfare Office, situated at 31 Conway Street in the building belonging to the Swiss Benevolent Society.

The offices were on the ground floor where, after the closure of the Swiss Hostel for Girls in Belsize Park, the top two floors were made available for the use as a hostel for young people.

The comfortable rooms were a safe haven for many young girls who were encountering difficulties at their place of work or study.

I am sure there are many young people in Switzerland today who are grateful for Margrit's help and valuable advice when they needed it.

Some of the problems she had to deal with on a day to day basis were legal and immigration problems including accidents, assaults, shoplifting, burglaries, rapes and police and coroners' investigations, translating at police interviews and in court.

Her work included help with health

problems including pregnancies as well as mental and physical illnesses.

After the merger of the Swiss Welfare Office and the Swiss Benevolent Society, Margrit became the social worker.

This changed her work from looking mainly after young people to also include caring for the elderly.

Her activities ranged from helping with applications for benefits, to tackling domestic problems, financial difficulties and debts.

She had to deal with drug related issues, family and marital problems like divorce, bereavement and child abuse as well as repatriations to Switzerland.

Margrit has also always been very interested in all matters relating to Swiss citizens abroad and, in particular, she has represented the UK Swiss community as a delegate to the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad for many years. She has also offered her help at the 1st of August Committee, New Helvetic Society and FOSSUK.

The Swiss community in the UK is most indebted to Margrit for her many years of dedicated and tireless work in support of her compatriots in their times of need.

We wish Margrit a most happy retirement from the Swiss Benevolent Society and much pleasure from her many other pursuits.

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organic. Just pick your favourites from our food boat to create your very own personal plate. Then choose one of our superb wines, cocktails or freshly-squeezed fruit juices. And lastly, weigh your plate as you only pay for what you pick – simple. So, whether you fancy a dinner with friends, a lunch with your family or just a little treat in style, tibits is the natural choice.

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CH+UK news in brief

■ At 77, Jeffrey Long has taken part in one of his toughest endurance tests yet. Last year Jeffrey, a former president of FOSSUK, raised more than £5,500 walking 1,000km from London to Lausanne. Now he's braved 'The Whole Hog' – a 12km race consisting of 40 extreme obstacles like wading through ice cold water and scrambling through a sea of mud. The event raised £200 for the Royal British Legion.

■ South Wales Swiss Society, now celebrating its tenth anniversary, has been given a boost by receiving a £4,500 grant from Awards for All Wales, part of the National Lottery. The money has helped them hire coaches to take people to events and to run their web site (www.swissinwales.org). Similar grants are available for societies in the rest of the UK (www.awardsforall.org.uk).

■ Despite the falling value of the Swiss franc over the last few months, meaning a soaring increase in the cost of Swiss exports to the UK, Swiss companies are hoping to open new markets at the International Food Event at London's ExCel Centre in March. The Swiss Business Hub, based at the Swiss Embassy, is organising a Swiss Pavilion at the four-day event.



Swiss solar taxi visits London

First tested on gruelling alpine passes, the revolutionary Swiss Taxi, powered only by sunshine, has visited London as part of its final stages of a 30,000 mile world tour.

And, with the greenest possible credentials, it didn't have to pay the congestion charge during its five day stay in the capital.

While here it was driven to Quinton Kynaston School on Marlborough Hill, North West London, where it was enthusiastically inspected by dozens of pupils who wanted to see for themselves what a car of the future looked like (pictured above).

The futuristic car was developed by researchers at the universities of Lucerne and Northwestern Switzerland, coordinated by the Federal Institute of

Technology in Zurich and built by apprentices at Schindler.

Electricity from solar cells enables it to drive as much as 62 miles a day at speeds up to 56mph.

Following its London visit it continued its global tour to end up in Poznan, Poland, where it was the star attraction at the United Nations Climate Change conference.

Its Swiss driver, teacher and traveller Louis Palmer, says it's whole point is to focus world attention on the future possibilities of solar power.

"Admittedly, as a regular citizen I cannot change the world," he said.

"But I can demonstrate just how dire the global climate situation has become and how many sophisticated solutions to lower the greenhouse gases already exist."

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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Jeffrey Long
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Bellisima!

Leicester Square's Glockenspiel, now recovering after many months of intensive care in Aarau, gets an official visit from a group of civic dignitaries led by the Lord Mayor of Westminster

After 23 years being subjected to the ravages of London's atmospheric pollution – yet always managing to ring out loud and clear above the continuous cacophony of London traffic – the 27 bells that form the centrepiece of the famous Glockenspiel in Leicester Square have been enjoying a long convalescence in their birthplace, Aarau.

It was to this historic Swiss town that the Lord Mayor of Westminster, accompanied by a phalanx of other city dignitaries, travelled 465 miles to see them being pampered by the skilled craftsmen who first brought them to life.

The Lord Mayor, Cllr Louise Hyams, may have been in some memorable hotspots during her political career but surely nothing compared to facing a fiery furnace when she was ushered into the casting room of Switzerland's oldest bell foundry, the Glockengiesserei H. Rüetschi in medieval Aarau.

In that supercharged

atmosphere, wearing the heavy, floorlength robes of office, with her black and gold feathered tricorn perched precariously on her head, and with her weighty gold chain of office draped over her shoulders, she watched with incredulity as, through a shower of sparks, asbestos-clad and goggled workers delicately manoeuvred towards her a bucket of molten bronze, bubbling at a temperature of 1,060 degrees, and then poured it into a waiting mould.

Alongside her, also dressed as if they were attending a State Banquet, were the Chief Whip of the Council, Cllr Robert Davis, richly attired in his mink-collared crimson gown, and former Council Leader Sir Simon Milton, now deputy to London Mayor Boris Johnson.

There were also two former Lord Mayors, Cllrs Alexander Nicoli and Angela Hooper, together with her sister, former Government minister and now Deputy Speaker of the House of Lords, Baroness Hooper. And in attendance was the Lord Mayor's official macebearer.

There was plenty for them to

see, apart from the re-casting and refurbishing of the bells, for the Glockenspiel is much more than a musical instrument.

Awaiting their inspection were the 23 hand carved animated figures that form part of the Alpauzug – the procession of farmers and animals up to the high Alpine pastures.

Inside each is a complex collection of cogwheels and pulleys that come to life as the figures move along their 15 meter circular track.

The civic party was amused to recognise that one of the figures was of someone they all know well, although the 'cheesemaker' himself is now almost a quarter of a century older than when he was originally carved.

Albert Kunz, who for many years had been director of Switzerland Tourism in London, was the man mainly responsible for the building of the Swiss Centre in Leicester Square and the subsequent incorporation of the Glockenspiel

as a permanent symbol of Switzerland's close links with the City of Westminster.

With him on this occasion was his successor in London, Evelyn Lafone, Urs Eberhard, vice president of Switzerland Tourism in Zurich, and Gregor Koncilia, UK manager for SWISS International Airlines.

During an official lunch at the historic Haus zum Schlossgarten the Stadtmann of Aarau, Dr Marcel Guigard, admired the Lord Mayor's gold chain and brooch which he was told had been worn by a Swiss citizen, Ticino-born Sir John Gatti, when he held that office in 1911. He then presented her with a mounted bronze bell, specially made for the occasion at the foundry.

Thanking him for the gift, the Lord Mayor said: "It will come in very useful. I can assure you I will ring it at Council meetings to keep the members quiet."

Cllr Hyams, who had recently spent three weeks touring



How the front page of the local Aarau newspaper told the story

Switzerland – in fact, all the councillors are regular visitors – added: "We have an important mission to fulfil, and that is to see the return to London of our wonderful Glockenspiel after it has been restored here in Aarau.

"We are making a special place for it in Leicester Square, where it will again be a great visitor attraction for London."

One of the proudest people to greet the delegation was the director of the bell foundry, Rene

Spielmann, who told the Lord Mayor that since the Glockenspiel was first erected in 1985, the foundry had sent technicians to London twice a year to carry out maintenance.

And as the Westminster party left, the carillon bells in Aarau's 13th century Obertorturm – the highest city tower in Switzerland – played a respectful God Save the Queen, followed by a resounding It's a Long Way to Tipperary...



Casting under way in Switzerland's oldest foundry, the Glockengiesserei in Aarau



A royal fanfare from the town hall balcony greeting dignitaries from the UK



The Lord Mayor with Sir Simon Milton, Deputy Mayor of London in charge of policy and planning



Cllr Angela Hooper helps to decorate one of the figures in the procession



Demonstrating the mechanics of an animated cow: Cllr Robert Davis



Seeing double: Albert Kunz meets his younger self – making cheese



How's this for sound? The Lord Mayor tests one of the refurbished bells

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Winning a competition set London's newest restaurateurs on the road to success with novel green cuisine

The decision to open a group of upmarket restaurants in London in the middle of a recession is not one to be taken lightly.

But that was the challenge cheerfully accepted by a team of Swiss restaurateurs who were sure their unique concept of a fast food service of vegetarian dishes would find favour with Londoners.

They'd already proved the success of the idea in Switzerland with the opening of four Tibits restaurants – in Zurich (2000), Winterthur (2002), Berne (2003) and Basle (2007).

The thought of moving to London actually goes back more than four years and set in train a lengthy process before they were satisfied they were making the right decision, ranging from finding suitable sites and negotiating with suppliers to recruiting the 50 personnel they needed to man each restaurant.

In this they received valuable help from the Swiss Business Hub at the Swiss Embassy in London, who put them in touch with local specialists.

Eventually the first UK Tibits opened recently in Heddon Street, off Regent Street, and was quickly followed by a second in the Westfield Centre in West London.

The heart of each restaurant is its "food boat", an oval-shaped buffet displaying more than 30 salads and hot food dishes. Diners chose what they prefer, and then it is weighed and paid for by the gram.

The idea first took root ten years ago when Daniel, Christian and Reto Frei drew up a tentative business plan for a new kind of vegetarian restaurant and submitted it to a competition jointly organised by the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology and McKinsey Consulting.

They picked up two awards, and

the publicity they received was seen by Rolf and Marielle Hilti, the owners of Europe's oldest vegetarian restaurant in Zurich.

The five decided to join forces – and Tibits was launched. Their first Swiss restaurants have enjoyed considerable success. In fact a survey of diners showed that 90 per cent of them were non-vegetarians.

Said Reto Frei: "We are very excited and confident Londoners will embrace our fresh and stylist approach to vegetarian cuisine."



The team behind the two restaurants that are bringing a new dining experience to London: Daniel Frei (left) with Rolf Hilti and Daniel's brothers, Christian and Reto

Advice on old-age insurance for Swiss in the UK

A reader in Newport-on-Tay in Scotland has asked *Swiss Review* for clarification on the current state of the voluntary Swiss insurance scheme. *She writes:*

“There have been numerous changes since I joined the scheme nearly 30 years ago and I am approaching the age when I will hopefully benefit from my contributions.

The article in a recent *Swiss Review* was most informative. However, like all the other information I have seen it does not explain how this coming together of the Swiss and the UK system actually works.

Will I receive a Swiss and a UK pension or will all my contributions be thrown into one pot and the AHV contributions treated like additional/voluntary contributions to the UK's national insurance scheme?

I would be most grateful for information on this topic. I'm sure I'm not the only one who is wondering how this all works.”

The Swiss Compensation Office

in Geneva has sent this explanation:

“When a person who worked in more than one State reaches retirement age, they receive a partial pension from each of these States.

“They must furthermore have the minimum insurance period of each State, condition for which insurance periods in other countries are taken into account, if necessary.

“In order to be entitled to Swiss OASI benefits, some contributions must have been paid in Switzerland for at least one year and the other conditions must be met.

“In the Swiss/EU borderline territory, pensions can be paid in any country of residence. In most cases, Swiss pensions are also paid in third party States.”

In a further note they also add:

“When a contracting State requires a minimal insurance period of a few years to allow the entitlement to old-age and disability pensions, the Swiss OASI contribution periods are taken into account as if the

person had been insured in the other State.

“This procedure allows Swiss nationals who have only worked a few years in the State in question to also benefit from foreign pensions.

“Likewise, the nationals of partner States receive Swiss OASI pensions when they meet the conditions to be granted them, notably the Swiss minimal contribution period set to one year. The pension is calculated in function of the contribution duration in each State.

“A person insured in Switzerland and in a partner State receives a part pension from both these States.

“The conventions ensure the payment of foreign pensions in the partner State and often in a third party State also.”

• Further information can also be found on the web site of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad. Go to:

<http://www.aso.ch/en/consultation/living-abroad/social-insurance/oasidi/payments-of-pensions>

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LETTERS

Keeping an eye on the £ v CHF

I welcome your decision to show the latest exchange rate between the pound and the Swiss franc on the home page of the Swiss Review web site.

I look at it frequently and am fascinated by the ever-changing value of the once mighty pound. Well done! – P. Fisher, Leicester

• To see the latest rate go to: www.swissreview.co.uk

Thank you for cheering me up

My grandmother was Swiss (from Weggis) but lived in England for most of her life. She moved here when she was in her mid 30's, though the Swiss influence was always very prominent in my life.

Sadly, she passed away at the beginning of last year, aged 81.

Getting Swiss Review through my door always cheers me up. I love reading about the country where I hope to live one day.

I always find the articles so informative. So thanks Swiss Review for making me smile when I need it! – Jess Devese (by email)

Now 730 Britons want to die with Dignitas

The ongoing debate about euthanasia, which has recently seen numerous emotive headlines in British newspapers and on TV, has resulted in a record number of Britons who say they want to end their lives sipping a lethal cocktail at the Dignitas clinic in Zurich.

More than 730 have already formally registered with Dignitas and paid the fee – the largest number from any country after Switzerland and Germany.

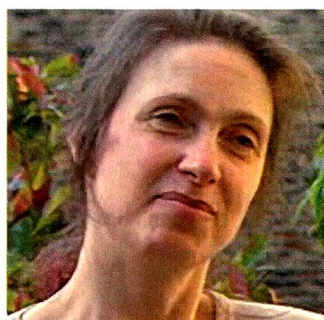
All they have to do now is to arrange a date with Dignitas and book their travel to Zurich.

So far more than 100 UK citizens have taken their one-way journey with the help of relatives or friends.

And although those helping them face a criminal prosecution back home, with the prospect of a 14 year prison sentence, no one has yet appeared in court.

In Scotland the debate is being led by one of the most popular Scottish MPs, Margot MacDonald, who is herself suffering from Parkinson's disease.

She says current laws are criminalising those who agree with the right to die with dignity, and wants doctors to be allowed to



Debbie Purdy: High Court plea failed

help terminally ill patients end their life.

She said: "As someone with a degenerative condition this debate is not a theory for me.

"The possibility of having the worst form of the disease at the end of life has made me think about unpleasant things.

"I feel strongly that, in the event of losing my dignity or being faced with a painful or protracted death, I should have the right to curtail my own, and my family's suffering."

But a fellow Scot, Prime Minister Gordon Brown, profoundly disagrees.

At Prime Minister's Questions, he said that while he thought the issue was a matter of conscience,

he personally had always opposed legislation for assisted deaths.

Later he said: "It's not for us to create legislation that would put pressure on people to feel they had to offer themselves because they were causing trouble to a relative or anything else."

One of the leading proponents for a change in the law is Lib Dem MP Evan Harris, a hospital doctor.

He told fellow MPs that "at least" 16 British citizens a year travelled to Dignitas to end their lives.

"The Home office has identified about four cases of so-called mercy killings each year. That is probably only a small fraction of the real number of such cases, which often never reach the courts."

One recent high profile case was that of Debbie Purdy, a multiple sclerosis sufferer who went to the High Court to clarify whether her husband would be prosecuted for helping her travel to Zurich.

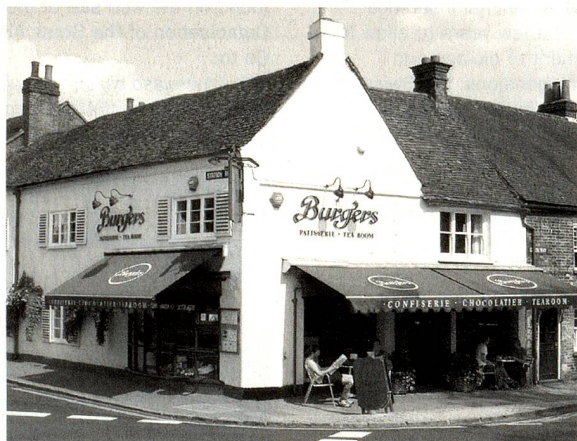
But her plea was turned down, on the grounds that only Parliament could change the law.

She is now going to take her case to the House of Lords.

She said: "It's outrageous that people don't know where they stand within the law."



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