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Switzerland in the UK

4/09



OWZAT! Playing cricket at 4,500ft – on the Jungfraujoch

The English village green has always been the traditional home of cricket. But in a brave – some would say foolhardy – experiment this quintessentially English game has now been exported to the eternal snows of the Jungfraujoch.

There, at a height of 4,500ft, it had visitors to the Roof of Europe rubbing their eyes in disbelief as former international stars of English and Indian cricket demonstrated their prowess in the most

exotic location imaginable. The bizarre encounter had been organised by the Jungfrau Railways, with the sponsorship of Swiss International Air Lines. It lasted 45 minutes, with legendary players batting and bowling on a 70m x 100m artificial pitch carefully laid out over the snow.

Among those taking part were Geoff Howarth, Chris Broad, Alvin Kallicharran, Neal Radford, John Emburey and Collis Llewellyn King.



'Slippy wicket' has a new meaning for Indian cricketer and coach Sandeep Patil

Swiss music on UK tour



Two members of the Gémeaux Quartet, which took the Swiss Ambassador's Award Concert to four major cities. See the story on Page 3.

Swiss Army in Edinburgh



Swiss Army bandsmen were in spectacular form at the Edinburgh Military Tattoo before a worldwide TV audience. See them in action on Pages 4-5.

Bruno Spinner remembered



Swiss Ambassador Alexis Lautenberg writes a moving tribute to his predecessor Bruno Spinner (above) following his death in Rome. See Page 8.



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

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Ambassador's Award Concerts bring new Swiss musical talents to the UK

Fresh from a hectic whistle-stop tour of Switzerland and Germany, an acclaimed group of young musicians from Basle have been touring the UK in the latest round of the Swiss Ambassador's Award Concerts.

Their opening concert was at the Wigmore Hall in London. On the next three days they played in the magnificent surroundings of Manchester Cathedral, St Cecilia's Hall in Edinburgh and they ended their tour at the Reardon Smith Theatre in Cardiff.

Such a hectic lifestyle has become quite normal for the Gémeaux Quartett, which was formed in 2003 by students at the Basle Academy of Music. This year alone they have already given 39 concerts in many parts of Europe.

The ensemble consists of two violinists, Anne Schoenholtz and Manuel Oswald, together with Sylvia Zucker on the viola and Uli Witteler on the violoncello.

Their program included works by Joseph Haydn, Leos Janácek and Geneva born Nicolas Bolens, former president of the



The Gémeaux four: Anne Schoenholtz, Manuel Oswald, Sylvia Zucker, Uli Witteler

Association of Swiss Musicians.

Their UK tour has been part-funded by the Swiss Cultural Fund in Britain, an organisation based

at the Swiss Embassy in London which aims to provide a platform in Britain for talented performers from Switzerland.

Jeffrey's long-distance poppy umbrellas raise £500 for the Royal British Legion

The giant poppy umbrella Jeffrey Long used to protect him from gales on his epic 1,000km walk from London to Lausanne in 2007 is still raising money for charity.

In a ceremony at RAF Air Command at High Wickham, he handed over a cheque for £500 to the Royal British Legion.

And he's still selling them, at £10 for the standard version, plus £4.50 postage, and a telescopic one for £7, plus £2.50 postage.

He'll have them with him when he organises the second of this year's Swiss Golf Days on Friday, October 23 at Highgate golf club in north London.

Golfers will be competing for the Marchesi and Vollmond cups.

The course, on the north side of Hampstead Heath, was once an area of farmland owned by the Church Commissioners. Even earlier it was the hunting preserve of the Bishop of London.

Taking part in the event costs £50, which includes coffee and bacon rolls on arrival, green fees, and a two course dinner. Non golfers can attend just the dinner for £20.

Further details can be obtained from Jeffrey Long on 01274 560 780.



Standing in front of a Hurricane fighter, Jeffrey Long hands over a £500 cheque to Group Captain Sandy Davie, OBE

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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Tel/fax: 01274 588 189.
• The Swiss Review, with its 'Switzerland in the UK' supplement, is published four times a year - in February, April, August and October. The deadline for the next issue, to be published in January, is December 7.

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Army and alphorn go on parade at Edinburgh Tattoo

As a spectacular showcase for the celebrated Central Band of the Swiss Army, the esplanade of Edinburgh Castle could hardly be bettered.

Towering over the city of Edinburgh, built centuries ago on a giant volcanic rock, the castle is easily one of the most visited places in the United Kingdom. And every year The Edinburgh Military Tattoo helps to display its glories to the rest of the world.

More than 217,000 visitors flock to see the event live. And it attracts a worldwide television audience of more than 100 million.

This year the Scottish flavour was supplied by pipe bands from five elite Scottish regiments, but the Tattoo always makes the point of opening its doors to bandsmen from other parts of the world.

The red-uniformed Central Band of the Swiss Army is a well known sight at major musical festivals around the globe, but an appearance in Edinburgh is considered a highlight of its extensive programme of concerts.

Heading the contingent was Captain Max Schenk, the band's musical director, along with Captain Aldo Werlem, the company commander and leader of the drummers, and Staff Adjutant Philipp Rütsche, drum major and choreographer of the show.

With them for the occasion

was Colonel Daniel Bader, the Defence Attaché at the Swiss Embassy in London.

But it was the dynamic performance of the group of civilian drummers that travelled with the Army Band that galvanised the Tattoo and

brought ecstatic applause and rapturous cheers from the crowd.

In a perfectly disciplined and well honed performance they gave a thrilling display of teamwork, using illuminated drumsticks and conjuring up

tongues of flame from the drums strapped to their shoulders.

Calling themselves the Top Secret Drum Corps, its 25 members have been selected from all parts of Switzerland. They all have full time day jobs, in factories, the civil service and

banking. But they willingly give up their free time to practise nearly every day of the year. And that intense dedication shows in their slick performance.

Their base is Basle, the drumming capital of Switzerland which is said to have more than 3,000 active drummers among its citizens.

Drumming, in fact, is a way of life in Basle, and it comes to the fore in city's famous annual carnival – the Fasnacht – and the other traditional festivals that owe their origin to the city's guilds.

But strange as it may seem the Top Secret's brand of distinctive drumming has only recently become acceptable to the people of Basle.

They only broke the ice four years ago when the group played a prank that caused furious headlines. They decided to poke some harmless fun at the stringent rules of the Basle carnival, which decreed that foreigners were not to be allowed to march in the processions.

They said they'd invited a band from Dubai to join them on the march, and held a press conference at which some of them appeared in Arab costumes – to the fury of traditionalists. When the stunt was revealed they failed to be amused.

It was Top Secret's outstanding

success at a previous Edinburgh Tattoo that finally healed the wounds. And even resulted in Basle finally deciding to hold its own annual Military Tattoo.

Drumming in Basle goes back to the traditional drumming skills that date from the Middle Ages, but Top Secret broke ranks by drastically increasing the tempo.

Marching tunes can be rather sombre, but the newcomers introduced a much more playful style. Juggling drumsticks, playing through a hail of fire and duelling among themselves has taken drumming into an entirely new dimension.

Many many generations ago the forebears of the members of the Top Secret Drum Corps would most likely have been among the highly paid Swiss mercenaries who would sell their fighting skills to the highest bidder.

Their fame spread rapidly, and over the centuries they were in great demand by many countries far away from Switzerland. Joining a foreign army was banned by Swiss law in the 19th century, but as recently as 1880 a Swiss mercenary won the Victoria Cross after fighting in the Anglo-Zulu war.

The Top Secret team may still be wearing 18th century uniforms, but now it is drumsticks, not muskets, that has brought them universal fame.



...and a final flourish as the band marches off



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You're never too young...

Four year old Ella Salden (left) was the youngest competitor to take part in Manchester Swiss Club's annual bowling and barbecue event. Like all this year's activities organised by this very successful club, the bowling competition attracted record entries. Little Ella put on a brave performance but didn't get beyond the second round. The winner was her grandmother, Sheila Salden (right), seen below receiving the silver trophy from club president Julie Baker.



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Swiss Benevolent Society introduces the new Welfare Officer

The Swiss Benevolent Society wishes to introduce Petra Kehr Cocks, its new Welfare Officer who took up her assignment in January this year.



Petra was born and educated in Lausanne. She first came to England to study English in 1992 where she met her husband Bruce.

After a short spell in Italy they both returned to the UK in 1995 and have now settled in Orpington. They have two boys aged 8 and 10.

Over the years Petra has increasingly felt that she would like to add an additional meaningful challenge to her life. She attended counselling courses and got actively involved in her boys' school whilst working part-time for her husband's company. Petra states that her work with the Swiss Benevolent Society has now completed the full sense of purpose she was seeking.

Many of you were worried that, due to the reduced working hours of Petra, the Society would start to neglect its most important priority; counselling, caring and visiting clients who are in need of support. The Trustees would like to assure everyone that this is far from the case. Looking after the needy remains the Society's and Petra's top priority. The Trustees are hoping to achieve the savings in working hours by streamlining its administration and by assuming more responsibilities themselves.

If you wish to support the Swiss Benevolent Society either through a donation or volunteering or if you know someone who needs support, please get in touch with Petra:

SBS, 79 Endell Street, London WC2H 9DY
Email: info@swissbenevolent.org.uk
Website: www.swissbenevolent.org.uk

Renovated church to reopen in November

Its massive, £2.2 million project is almost complete. On the weekend of November 14-15, the Swiss church in London will open its doors to show its delighted congregation exactly what has been achieved.

The celebrations start on the afternoon of Saturday, November 14, with a programme of music from a brass quintet, an alphorn and the new and impressive 676 pipe organ, together with a slideshow and a film.

Demand for tickets has been so great that the programme will be repeated in the evening.

The official opening will be the following day after morning service and will be followed by a reception, attended by Swiss Ambassador Alexis Lautenberg, Swiss architects Emanuel Christ and Christoph Ganterbein, as well as the donors and patrons whose generosity has helped make the ten year renovation possible.

Swiss writer Regi Claire wins battle with cancer

After many months fighting a vicious cancer, Swiss author Regi Claire has told fans she has now conquered the disease.

The news has delighted members of the Swiss Club Edinburgh, where she is an active participant in club events.

Now that she has put her illness behind her, Regi has returned to her busy schedule.

With a number of books to her credit, and a stream of short



Regi Claire out walking near Edinburgh with her dog Leila Picture: Rahel Egli

stories, she also finds time to pass on her literary skills to other writers.

She particularly enjoys giving readings at the prestigious Edinburgh International Book Festival, and is in great demand as a tutor in creative writing at the National Library of Scotland.

Her love for her adopted country goes back to long before she settled in Edinburgh in 1993, when she married poet and novelist Ron Butlin, the city's 'poet laureate'.

Her first experience of Scotland came when she won an exchange scholarship to the University of Aberdeen.

Born and brought up in the canton of Thurgau, in a little village near Lake Constance, her enthusiasm for writing first became apparent when she went to Zurich University to study English and German language and literature.

Then, after her spell in Aberdeen, she returned to Zurich University where she became a Ph.D student and research fellow.

But her subsequent success as a writer seemed to be about to be curtailed when she received a late diagnosis of bowel cancer.

The bombshell was dropped just after she had completed her

latest book, ironically called *Fighting It*.

Another irony is that one of the 16 stories in the book, written before she knew she had cancer, was about a woman with cancer.

In retrospect, would she have changed the story in light of her own experience? She told an interviewer: "I wouldn't need to change a word of it. In a strange way my imagination had evoked that situation without me ever knowing it."

• *Fighting It*, by Regi Claire, is published by Two Ravens Press, priced £9.99.

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Two new faces at the Swiss Embassy

The staff at the Swiss Embassy in London has been strengthened by the arrival of two new diplomats in senior positions: Urs Schmid, Deputy Head of Mission, and Fabrice Filliez, Head of the Economic Section.

Minister Schmid, from Suhr (Aargau), is responsible for coordinating all the Embassy's many activities. He started his career with the Federal Department of Justice in 1987 and two years later joined the United Nations in Mexico working with refugees. He became a diplomat in 1991, was made Head of the Chemical Weapons Desk and moved to The Hague as Swiss

representative on the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

Fabrice Filliez, is from Bagnoles (Valais) and is a specialist in European Law. He, too, started in the Department of Justice in 1990 and seven years later became Legal Officer in the Directorate for Public International Law. He later joined the Swiss team negotiating with the EU on the Schengen Agreement and the war on fraud.

He has written extensively on matters concerning Switzerland and the European Union, particularly on European integration and its effect on Swiss laws.



Urs Schmid (left) and Fabrice Filliez: top jobs at the Embassy

Bruno Spinner: 'We are mourning a brilliant diplomat'

The Swiss community in London has been saddened by the sudden death in Rome of Bruno Spinner, who was Swiss Ambassador in the UK before swapping jobs with the then ambassador to Italy, Alexis Lautenberg.

Ambassador Spinner came to London with his wife Madelon in the autumn of 2000, and during his four and a half years stay here played a prominent role in supporting Swiss activities in the capital. When he left to take up his post in Rome, he told Swiss Review: "My wife and I are leaving London with a sense of sadness but in the knowledge that thanks

to the common ground between the British and the Swiss an intensive network of relations exists and flourishes."

Among the many community activities Ambassador Spinner was involved in was the renovation of the Swiss Church. It was thanks to his help that Federal Councillor Pascal Couchepin became a patron and took a great interest in the project.

In a tribute to his former colleague Ambassador Lautenberg said: "Bruno was my immediate predecessor in London (as well as my successor in Rome). During

his stay in the UK he had a strong impact both from a professional and a social point of view.

"At the professional level Bruno developed an intensive public diplomacy profile covering a variety of areas in which Switzerland stands out.

"But also at the social level Bruno and Madeline showed an outstanding ability to network in general, and be close to the Swiss Community in particular. In this context Bruno has been personally engaged in the renovation of the Swiss Church.

"All those who have been in touch with him will remember his

openness and very extroverted attitude. Beyond the visible surface Bruno was a thoughtful and interested traveller in life. His deep and genuine interest in and commitment to European affairs was striking. More generally there was a moral dimension to his value system from which one could only learn.

"We are mourning a brilliant diplomat and a vivid personality who has left us far too early.

"All his former friends in the UK will keep him in the best of memories while expressing to Madeline and their two sons all of our heartfelt condolences."



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