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3 | **The Exchange:**  
Cellists chat about  
self discipline

4 | **Swiss Clubs: Boules,**  
bonhomie and a  
traditional flutter

7 | **Swiss Youth Award:**  
Lifesaving in  
Lucerne

Main Feature

## SWISSCOMMUNITY.ORG: A HIT WITH EXPATS

Click! Edi in America is looking for a running partner to take part in the Jungfrau marathon 2012... Alex in Paraguay still hasn't found his raclette dish... Simone is looking for bridge players in Ibiza.

Swiss Review asked a few users about their experiences:



SwissCommunity.org has given me the opportunity to meet and communicate with

some amazing people worldwide and from all walks of life. I met a Particle Physicist who works for CERN based in Geneva and teaches at the University of Edinburgh. After many interesting conversations we arranged to meet earlier this year in Geneva and he spent a day showing me through CERN, which absolutely blew me away.

Roland Isler



I like to use different ways to connect with the Swiss community here in the UK.

As minister of the Swiss church in London, I even see it as part of my job to do that. I tend not to use it for my private life, as I would rather use Facebook or email people. For work, it has turned out to be a useful tool to promote church events. I think it is quite user-friendly. I also like that I'm being informed when someone new joins the platform. So far it has always been people I didn't know.

Rev. Nathalie Dürmüller



I am born and bred in Ticino. Swisscommunity.org is sadly only in German and

French, despite the political reality that Switzerland without its Italian speaking region is NOT Switzerland. Like many other Ticinesi, I feel let down by the Swiss administrators. However, despite this it is truly a high-quality platform and provides an invaluable service to all those who regularly want to make use of it.

Joe Broggini

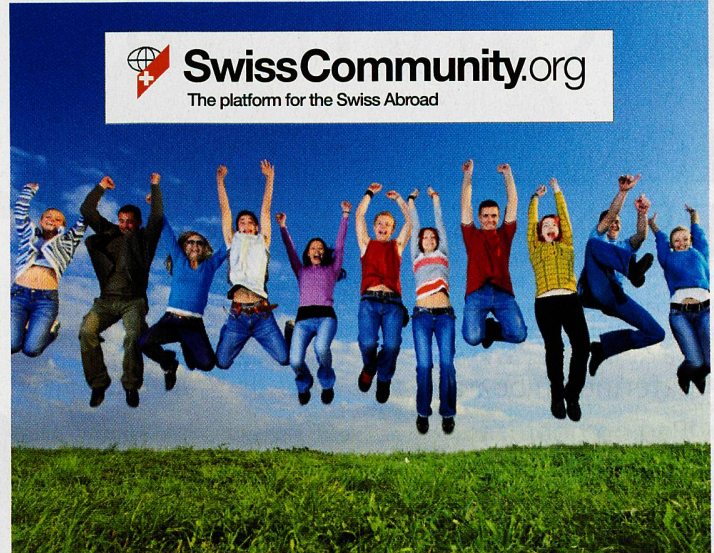
Switzerland's global community has had an open door policy for the past fifteen months and thousands have signed up to share their experiences and thoughts on the SwissCommunity.org social network site.

Click! Swiss club of Victoria (Melbourne) has a movie night coming up... Aachen Swiss Club celebrates its 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary!

The online venture is the brainchild of Ariane Rustichelli, Head of Communications & Marketing at the Organisation of Swiss Abroad (OSA).

"The 'My Network' tab is especially popular, as is the section 'About'," she told the Swiss Review, "But we have to be more engaged to help members in their daily life, perhaps with a 'Good Tips' section."

Two-thirds of the network's 9,000 members are actively involved and there are reportedly about 700 visitors



per day. An online magazine was launched in the summer. In an age of the internet and social networking, Swiss Community.org seems to be

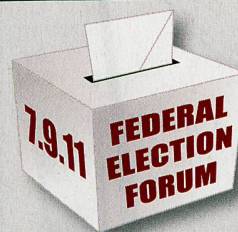
an ideal means to keep the Swiss population abroad in contact with each other and to strengthen ties with Switzerland.

Forum

### Direct Democracy and the Swiss Abroad

London's Swiss clubs joined forces recently to invite a high-profile panel of Swiss political representatives from three of Switzerland's major parties to take part in the London Forum. The aim of the evening was to prepare Swiss voters to make their electoral decisions by letting them hear the policies being put forward by some of the major parties in the interest of Switzerland's global community.

Doris Fiala, representing the FDP was keen to stress her party's global approach and described how her party was keen to expand e-voting and e-government and increase the number of honorary consuls. Walter Suter, President of the International Section of the Swiss Socialist Party described how his party had always taken seriously the views of the expat community, so much so there were internal proposals to create an additional two seats in the Senate specifically for the Swiss abroad to give them a proper voice in parliament. Nicolas Szita who



spoke for the Swiss People's Party described how his party was not as enthusiastic about rushing into e-voting and e-government mainly due to the issues of privacy and the risks of cyber attacks. When asked directly about his party's policy on immigration, Szita supported more measures of control and said that any policies relating to integration and assimilation should be considered more carefully in future.

An estimated 700,000 Swiss live abroad, almost one-tenth of the resident population, and they have always been seen as an important element in the electorate. More than 80 people representing the Swiss abroad stood in the elections.

Editorial

### Dear Readers,



Welcome to our latest and last issue of the year, which looks back at some of the highlights of the past twelve months for Swiss clubs around the country. Anyone concerned about the decline of the Swiss club in the UK will be pleasantly reassured to see the variety and number of events organised regularly for expats.

Continuing on a celebratory note, Swiss elders of society are treated to champagne and sandwiches and one of the youngest members of the Swiss community sleeps through his first National Day festivities. In other news, acclaimed cellist Lionel Cottet, this year's winner of the Swiss Ambassador's Award, describes the moment he almost gave up music, a group of young lifeguards from Bournemouth are put through their paces in Lucerne and we hear from the honorary consul who dreams about piping in the New Year in the Scottish Highlands.

Andrew Littlejohn



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Music student interviews award-winning cellist Lionel Cottet

# THE EXCHANGE

Acclaimed Swiss cellist Lionel Cottet impressed UK audiences recently during his concert tour to mark winning this year's Swiss Ambassador's Award.

The Geneva-born musician who studies at the Juilliard School of Music in New York has won many prestigious awards and performed with several distinguished orchestras.

Cellist Polly Virr has just started her music studies at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester. Earlier this summer she toured Switzerland with the renowned Junior Trinity Symphony Orchestra.

Polly Virr in concert



Swiss Review brought the two young musicians together to chat about the importance of self-discipline, dead composers and the beauty of the cello.

**Lionel:** Most of all it's the physical aspect that drew me to the cello. It's very tactile and you have real contact with your instrument. I also used to play the piano, but I never felt I could connect properly with it. The cello feels very much an extension of me. What about you?

**Polly:** For me it was its deep, mellow tone. When I heard it in a concert at the age of six, I knew it was the instrument for me! I also play the piano a little, which has been a really valuable skill, and I enjoy singing in 4-part choirs. Do you draw on any cellists for inspiration when performing?

“

**The cello feels very much an extension of me.**

**Lionel:** I remember going through a Truls Mørk period as a teenager. He is a fantastic Norwegian musician. At the time, I thought he had an amazing sound: intense and beautiful. It affected me very deeply.

**Polly:** Jacqueline Du Pre has inspired me to feel passionately about the works I play and Rostropovich's story is truly inspiring when you consider his sheer determination to become a really great cellist.

**Lionel:** It's funny, but I hardly listen to cello recordings any more. I am sure Mørk's sound is still in my head, but I prefer to focus on my own interpretation of a piece.

**Polly:** Do you enjoy playing contemporary chamber music? I have only had a small amount of experience, but I really enjoyed it because you discover new and creative ways of approaching the cello and reading scores, which I find fascinating.

**Lionel:** For me it is definitely having the chance to talk to the composer.

Award-winning cellist Lionel Cottet



There are always all sorts of questions about why certain choices were made writing the score. You can only dream about that when you play Schumann or Beethoven. I can't count the number of times I have thought, "oh if only I could call him and ask, 'why?'"

**Polly:** Working with composers also brings an entirely new viewpoint to the music and a different way of working. Now for my last question, what advice can you offer somebody like me who is passionate about the cello?

**Lionel:** That's very difficult for me to say as a young cellist myself. But I suppose I am now aware of how important self-discipline is. I remember once when I was about 16 travelling on a train to an audition in the Swiss capital, Berne. There was a lot going on at school at the time with exams and normal teenage issues, and I really questioned whether I wanted to continue with my music. That was a time I seriously doubted myself. Thankfully the audition went well and I never had these thoughts again.

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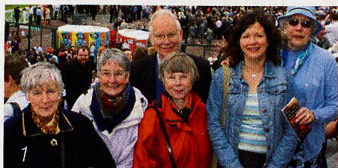


Swiss Clubs in the UK

## CLUB NEWS · CLUB NEWS · CLUB NEWS · CLUB NEWS ·

Whether you are in Inverness or Torbay, Cardiff or Durham the Swiss Club is for many an important element of their identity and as you will see over the next couple of pages, it keeps communities together. To mark this issue being the last in 2011, the Swiss Review asked club members to send photos of events that highlighted the best moments of the past twelve months.

Anyone concerned about the decline of the Swiss club in the UK will be pleasantly reassured to see the variety and number of events organized regularly for the expat community. As the editorial team was inundated with photos from Manchester Swiss Club we decided to appoint them, "Club of the Year". And as you will see it is a well-earned award.



### Manchester Swiss Club Club of the year 2011

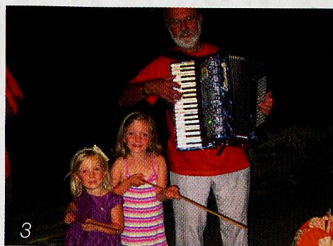
1 – Manchester Swiss Club members enjoy a flutter at the Chester Races.

2 – Friends and family gathered in Prestbury recently for their annual Boules and Barbecue event.

3 – More than 70 friends and family gathered at the Brookdale club, Cheshire on a warm and gloriously sunny day to celebrate Swiss National Day, which was also the first major event for Juerg Bentele as president of the Swiss Club. After dusk children carried their lit lampions and some members sang traditional songs accompanied by the club's accordion player.



3a – Swiss National Day: Young Daniel may be sleeping through the celebrations, but could this young boy already be dreaming about being a future president of the Manchester Swiss Club. (Daniel's grandfather, Dieter Salden, had also been President at one time.)



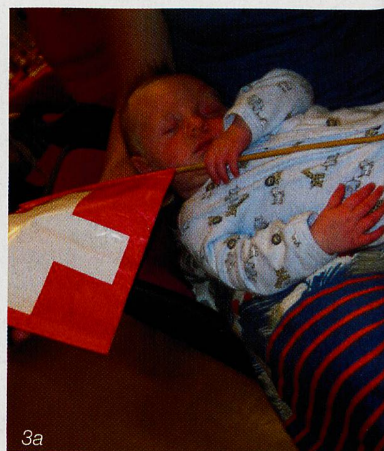
### Diary dates:

Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> December 2011  
Samichlaus Tea Party.

Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2012  
New Year's Lunch.

Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> March 2012  
Raclette Party.

For more information:  
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Swiss Clubs in the UK

# CLUB NEWS · CLUB NEWS · CLUB NEWS · CLUB NEWS ·



## Llangollen Swiss Club

Wales' newest club was launched on the 1st August to mark Swiss National Day. Swiss hotelier Markus Imfeld who runs the Glyn Valley Hotel in Llangollen served up a delicious afternoon tea with home baked Swiss cakes.

North Wales now benefits from two Swiss Clubs (Caernarfon and Llangollen). Both are keen to welcome any new members and Llangollen, which is near the English border, also looks forward to linking up with expats in the Wrexham and Cheshire areas.



Please contact Beatrice Schlegel or Ruth Thomas Lehmann (Honorary Consul) via the Swiss in Wales website ([www.swissinwales.org](http://www.swissinwales.org))

## Diary date:

Fondue evening at the beginning of December at the Glyn Valley Hotel, Llangollen.

## New Helvetic Society

This London-based club organizes a wide range of events. It is best known for its jazz evenings, classical concerts, film shows and visits to museums. Here the New Helvetic Society celebrates Swiss National Day with live music from La Marjolaine Chorale Fribourgeoise de Genève

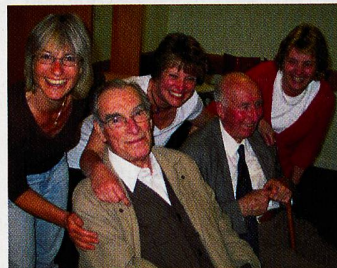


Earlier this year, members enjoyed a rousing performance from the aptly named Eclectica! as they performed their imaginative and colourful repertoire of jazz, folk, world and classical styles.



## Southern Area Swiss Club

An evening to celebrate young and old at the Southern Area Swiss Club - the two gents are very loyal, long-term English members of The Club - friends of our late Club president



Skittles in the local pub! A perfect way to spend an evening in late summer.



## Torbay Swiss Club

One of Torbay Swiss Club's monthly gatherings. The more mobile went for a walk along the River Exe to the canal basin and back, before rejoining the rest for a delicious and well-deserved Sunday lunch at the Mill on the Exe.



## Diary date:

If you are interested in joining us, contact Geoff on 01626 778469.

## Swiss Club News

Many thanks for all your contributions to these pages.

The UK pages of the Swiss Review are published four times a year - in January, April, June and October - so there are plenty of opportunities for your club to feature in these pages. Suggested story ideas, photos and news item are always welcome.

(See page 8 for contact details)

Snapshot

## Fossuk AGM

The Swiss expat community and delegates from Berne could not have had a more picturesque setting for the Fossuk AGM. But the beauty of the ancient city of

York in the north of England and the wealth of sightseeing opportunities enjoyed by the delegates and attending dignitaries did not distract them from the business at hand.

Freddie Wyser concluded the official part of the meeting surprising everybody present by tending his resignation as President. Margrit Lyster was elected as his successor.

During the afternoon strong words were voiced against the foreign ministry's restructuring policy and the need to consolidate the network of Swiss embassies.



Fossuk President Margrit Lyster



Fossuk Committee members open proceedings



Dinner in the medieval Bedern Hall



Swiss Benevolent Society

## SWISS SENIORS TREATED TO AFTERNOON TEA AT THE EMBASSY

A pioneering event took place over the summer at the Swiss embassy in central London. The Swiss Benevolent Society hosted an afternoon tea party for older Swiss compatriots who celebrated their 80<sup>th</sup>, 85<sup>th</sup> and 90<sup>th</sup> birthdays this year.

Twenty birthday guests, accompanied by a friend or partner, sat down to delicious cucumber and salmon finger sandwiches, plates laden with delightful petit fours, champagne and pots of tea and coffee.

Ambassador Anton Thalmann welcomed the roomful of guests and Alan Martin, president of the Swiss Benevolent Society (SBS), described

how Swiss nationals could benefit from their services.

"There is the possibility of financial support for those struggling with debts or expenses they can't meet," he said, "We also have a visiting service for those feeling sick or lonely, and our welfare officer, Petra Kehr Cocks, offers advice and support two days a week." Unfortunately, due to logistical reasons the SBS has to restrict its help to the south-east of England.

### Changing opinions

Interestingly, many attending the party were unaware of the breadth of services offered by the charity.

"I just thought it was for people really



*Older members of Swiss community celebrate*

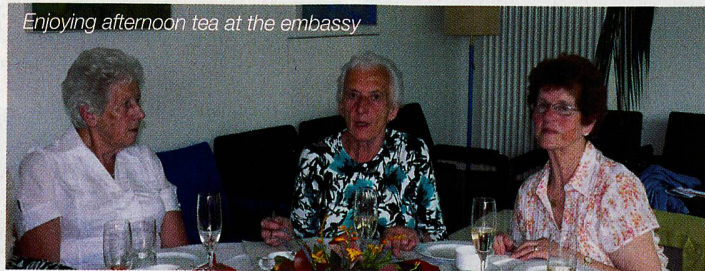
badly off," said one guest. Another remarked, she did not think the society was "for people with their own home and who could manage with the pension they have."

Marie Claire Murad, who was celebrating her 50th year in the UK, spoke warmly of the care and support two of her elderly friends had received from SBS volunteers. The work of the society had obviously left an impression.

"If my daughter no longer lived locally," she told fellow guests, "and my husband was no longer with me, then I would contact them as well."

After an amusing and lively quiz, the elderly group set off home in the late afternoon sun, more informed about the work of the Swiss Benevolent Society and obviously content their special birthday year had been marked in this way.

*Enjoying afternoon tea at the embassy*



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### SBS donate

For more information about how you can help us, or if you know any Swiss citizen in the UK who could benefit from our services go to:

[swissbenevolent.org.uk](http://swissbenevolent.org.uk)



Would you like to make a donation online? Go to: [justgiving.com/swissbenevolent](http://justgiving.com/swissbenevolent)

Sport

### Swiss Golf Day

Batchworth Park Golf Club in Rickmansworth was the venue for the bi-annual Swiss golf championship. The condition of the 18-hole course was excellent and prizes were in abundance, including ones for the

"longest drive" and "nearest the pin".

For more information and details of future golf events, contact Jeffrey Long: 01274 560 780



*Players and cup winners relax and show off their trophies at the recent Swiss Golf Day*



Swiss Youth Award

## BRITS PUT THROUGH THEIR PACES IN LUCERNE

The Swiss Embassy's first ever award for a social inclusion project in the UK (Swiss Award) and which saw Lee Park win £2000 for his "Life's a Beach" project in Bournemouth, culminated recently in a challenging river lifesaving training course in Lucerne for Lee and three of his young trainee lifeguards. Here, Lee gives his account of the intensive one-day course on the River Reuss in Buchrain.

**0930:** Spent the first couple of hours this morning in the classroom covering the theory section of the course. We learned how to plan an activity safely in the local river and how changes in the weather can affect plans. It was strange being back in the classroom.

**1300:** Changed into our wet suits and headed down to the river. Instructors are really cool. Patrick (Schuermann) was telling us the best places to enter and exit a river, when two guys in a rowing boat appeared, obviously very distressed and caught up in a strong current. Patrick jumped in and showed the rowers how to get out of the water safely. It was brilliant to experience a rescue first hand.



**1400:** After this incident we went down to another section of the river where the current was even stronger and started working on our lasso technique. We started off on land throwing large foam cubes to each other. This was to focus the eye and understand the importance of precision throwing.

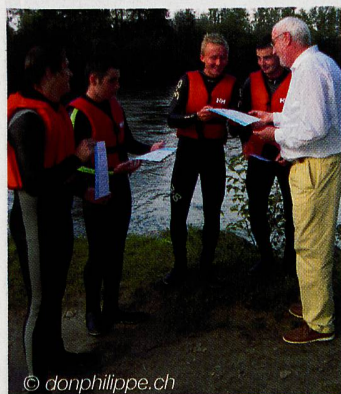
**1445:** Moved on to actual lasso ropes. We had to gauge how heavy the rope was and then swing the lasso three times before throwing it into the river. We used our left hand to guide or steer the rope through the water and back to the river bank.

**1520:** We started practicing with a group of lifesaving volunteers who were now floating down the river. It was tense but exhilarating trying to lasso the guys bobbing about in the water. Really tricky at first, but soon got the hang of it and safely pulled them to the shore.

**1700:** The rest of the day was spent practicing correct entry and exit points along the river.

**1830:** Awards ceremony! Amazing what we have achieved in one day. It's been a truly inspirational experience.

To see the young men in action go to: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/sport1/hi/diving/14991137.stm>



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### 250 years Swiss Church

## Celebrate 250 years Swiss Church in London

London's Swiss church celebrates its 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary next year. The original place of worship for expatriates was founded by French-speaking Swiss Protestants in 1762. The current building on Endell Street in Covent Garden was first opened in 1855 and has been the spiritual home of Swiss ex-pats in London ever since.

### London 2012

4<sup>th</sup> August, 11.00 am

Ecumenical Service at Southwark Cathedral (near House of Switzerland – London 2012).

To reserve tickets and for more information, contact: [info@swisschurchlondon.org.uk](mailto:info@swisschurchlondon.org.uk)

Festivities open with a concert on the 26<sup>th</sup> January. Swiss mezzo-soprano Judith Schmid who has performed at the Zurich opera and Swiss pianist Patrick Leresche will perform the UK premier of "Rosenblätter" by the acclaimed Swiss composer David Philip Hefti. Entrance is free, but donations are welcome.

### Additional anniversary dates for your diary 2012:

#### Celebration weekend

19<sup>th</sup> May, 6.30 pm

Fundraising Event at the Swiss Embassy to mark the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary

20<sup>th</sup> May, 11.00 am

Festive Service at the Swiss Church



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Five minutes with...

**PETER MUELLER-MCDOUGALL**

Many Swiss expats living in Scotland were saddened earlier this year to see the Edinburgh consulate downgraded to an "honorary" position after only four years, especially as the two nations had seemingly developed such a strong dialogue.

Peter Mueller-McDougall was subsequently appointed as Honorary Consul General. Zurich-born Mueller is an engineer and was Trade and Investment Attache at the British Embassy in Berne prior to his Edinburgh posting.

He told Swiss Review about his plans for Scotland, piping in the New Year and getting his dream job.

**Peter Mueller-McDougall:** From the moment I set foot in the Scottish Highlands and Islands, almost thirty years ago now, I was deeply impressed by the natural beauty and friendly people. That great affinity with Scotland has stayed with me ever since. I even remember telling a colleague from the Swiss Embassy in London a few years ago while enjoying the view from the Bellevue terrace in Berne that my dream job would be to become the Honorary Consul in Edinburgh...

**Swiss Review:** Why do you think you were chosen for the post?

**PMM:** I worked with many Scottish companies through the British Embassy in Berne, and had contacts with various sectors; such as aviation, space, nuclear and renewable power, as well as in defence. I believe this experience combined with my wife's Scottish ancestry and our shared enthusiasm for Scottish culture were the deciding factors.

“

**That great affinity with Scotland has stayed with me.**

**SR:** How do you plan to continue developing the strong Swiss-Scottish ties?

**PMM:** Several cultural events are planned over the coming months. I am also in touch with a number of Swiss companies in the energy sector and will be introducing them to Scottish contacts. I'm optimistic other events such as industry fairs and official invitations will pave the way for future collaboration and convince the expat community that the Swiss-

Scottish friendship will continue to thrive in spite of the "downgrade" to an Honorary Consulate.

**SR:** Are there any achievements from your time in Berne of which you are most proud?

**PMM:** I am particularly proud of having been instrumental in Britain's and Switzerland's largest infrastructure companies securing tunneling contracts valued at more than a quarter billion pounds. On a personal note, there was one unforgettable moment where HRH Prince Andrew presented me with an "outstanding achievement" award at St. James's Palace in London.

**SR:** I understand you play the bagpipes with passion. How did a Swiss man from Zurich end up playing Scotland's national instrument?

**PMM:** Passion, as you say, and a soft spot for all things Scottish – as put by a former work colleague.

**SR:** Where would you most like to play the bagpipes while in Scotland? And why?



*Peter Mueller-McDougall performing in the traditional family tartan*

**PMM:** I would love to pipe in the New Year again at a quiet seaside hotel in Tighnabruich overlooking the Kyles of Bute to mark the beginning of a great New Year...

**Impressum****How to contact the editor**

Reports of Swiss society activities, news, coming events, correspondence, articles and advertising for the 'Switzerland in the UK' section of the Swiss Review, should go to the editor:

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The Swiss Review, with its 'Switzerland in the UK' supplement, is published five times a year (four with the UK supplement) – in January, April, June, August and October. The deadline for the next UK issue is the 9<sup>th</sup> December. The date of publication is the 25<sup>th</sup> January 2012.

**And finally...**

+++**Swiss Review** would like to take this opportunity to welcome Consul General Margrit Ledermann-Prestofelippo to her new post at the Embassy of Switzerland in London. Mrs Ledermann-Prestofelippo comes to London from Washington, where she spent four years as Head of the Consular and Administrative Section.

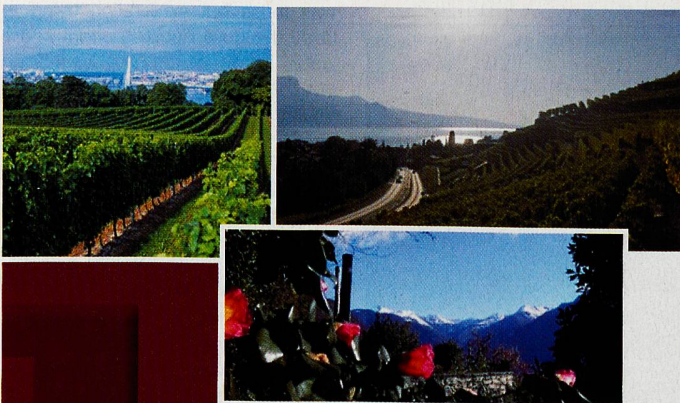
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