

**Zeitschrift:** Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad  
**Herausgeber:** Organisation of the Swiss Abroad  
**Band:** 40 (2013)  
**Heft:** 2

**Anhang:** Switzerland in the UK & Ireland

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Diplomatic News

## AMBASSADOR THALMANN RETIRES

As some of you will already know, my term as Ambassador will end this summer so this is the last occasion I will have to write to you in the pages of the Swiss Review.

It has been a huge honour to serve as Ambassador of Switzerland in the United Kingdom for the past three years. Samuel Johnson once said that "when a man is tired of London, he is tired of life!" I would not go that far myself (not least because I am looking forward to my retirement and new vistas back in Switzerland) but it is certainly true that my time as Ambassador in this vibrant city has been hugely interesting and enjoyable.

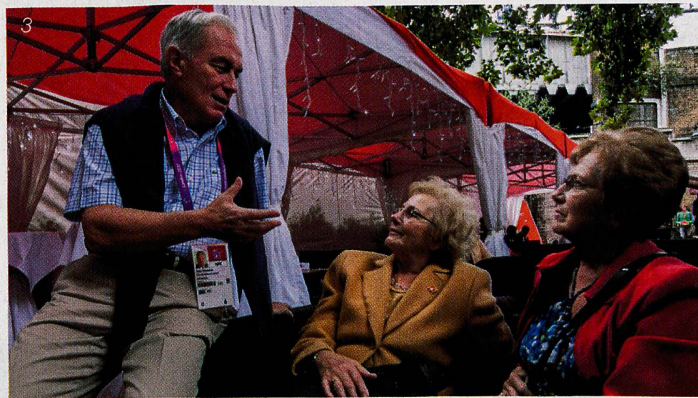
Politically, it has been fascinating to see how the UK has coped with its first coalition government since the Second World War, as well as following closely the independence debate in Scotland. Economically, both the UK and Switzerland have faced the challenge of finding new rules and

regulations to overcome the effects of the financial crisis and define their place in Europe, while safeguarding sovereignty and competitiveness.

Cultural life across the UK is of course hugely varied and my own highlights range from the pomp and ceremony of the Royal Wedding in 2011, to the sporting excellence, innovation and diversity on display at the London 2012 Olympics.

But above all, my abiding memories of the UK will feature the Swiss community across the whole country who "fly the flag" in their everyday lives and are the anchors of the enduring friendship between our two peoples.

- 1) Greeting Swiss paralympians
- 2) Outside the House of Switzerland with President of the Swiss Confederation (2012), Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf and Nicolas Bideau
- 3) Taking time out with local Swiss expats



Arts

### Giant boulders capture the imagination

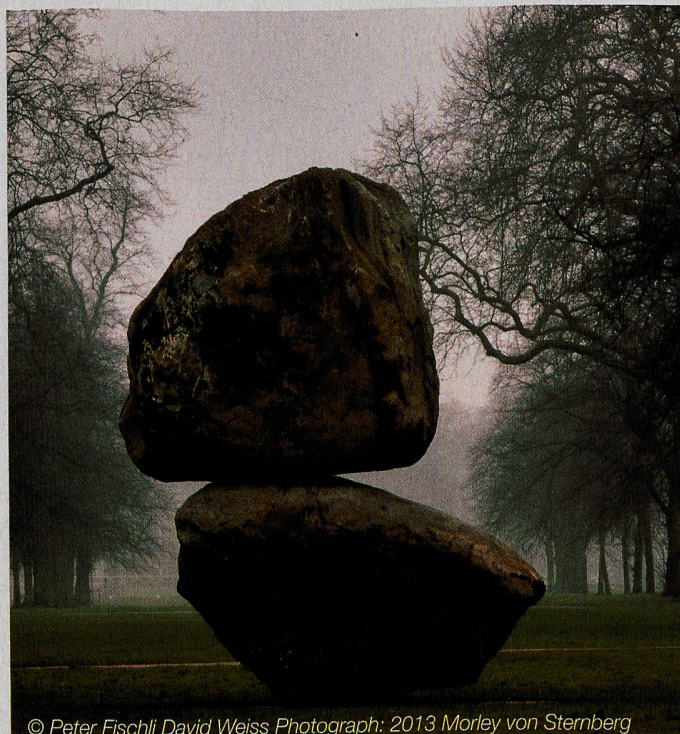
London's park-goers have been intrigued by a unique installation in Kensington Gardens recently. Standing at over five metres tall, *Rock on Top of Another Rock*, is a large-scale sculpture by the world-renowned Swiss artist duo Fischli/ Weiss.

The monumental work, which is visible from a number of viewpoints across the Royal Park, is formed of two giant glacial boulders balanced precariously on top of each other.

This is the first public sculpture by the artists to be presented in the UK and one of the last works they jointly conceived before David Weiss's untimely death last year.

The rocks were sourced in Wales and are reminiscent of the many ancient monuments found throughout the British countryside.

The installation can be viewed in Kensington Gardens until the 6<sup>th</sup> March 2014.



© Peter Fischli David Weiss Photograph: 2013 Morley von Sternberg

Editorial

### Dear Readers,



Team work is the recurring theme in this edition of the Swiss Review. In our special interview with the Ambassador's wife, Dominique Thalmann to mark the Ambassador's retirement from office and their return to Bern in the coming months, we learn how the diplomatic couple successfully fulfilled all their duties over the years by working together as a 'husband and wife' team.

Here in the Swiss Review office we have just completed the busiest edition I have ever worked on. Again it was committed team work from our designer, Marc Peter, and FOSSU president, Margrit Lyster, that has meant we can bring you the profile and photos of all fourteen candidates who have put themselves forward as prospective OSA delegates in the forthcoming election. As you will see the experience and expertise each candidate brings will make for an exciting and closely-run race.

Andrew Littlejohn

Culture

# SWISS CULTURAL FUND: ANNUAL REPORT

In the past, Swiss societies outside of London have criticised the Swiss Cultural Fund in Britain (SCFB), a charitable organisation, entirely funded by private and corporate donations, for being too London-centric. However, according to the organisation's latest annual report this trend seems to have improved, as last year Swiss artists were represented in seven cities in the UK, including Oxford, Birmingham, Liverpool and Edinburgh.

The SCFB supported 15 cultural events in 2012, which included an eclectic mix of music, visual arts, theatre, dance and design.

In March, the first major international perspective on the life and

works of legendary Swiss conductor Paul Sacher (1906–1999) was held in Cardiff. A two-day conference, hosted by Cardiff University's School of Music, focused on the world-renowned manuscript collections of the Paul Sacher Foundation in Basel, the richest repository of compositional materials in the world.

Another first for a Swiss artist in the UK took place in Oxford. Zurich-based visual artist, Judith Albert, captivated audiences at Lady Margaret Hall, as she screened her video series 'moving pictures' for the first time. The five works were described by the Fund as "transcending the moving and the still picture and themes of classical painting, with subtle references to old masters absorbed by a contemporary medium."

And for two weeks in June, Swiss architect-cum-artist Nicolas Feldmeyer stunned passers-by outside University College London with his 'Untitled (Woven Portico)'. White fabric sheets, interwoven with the existing columns of the university's portico, gave the building's façade a temporary new monumentality.



Photo: Nick Rochowski Photography

If you would like to support the Swiss Cultural Fund in Britain, you can send a donation to:

Swiss Cultural Fund in Britain  
c/o Embassy of Switzerland  
16-18 Montagu Place  
London W1H 2BQ  
www.scfb.org.uk

Part of the role of the Swiss Cultural Fund is to support young, emerging Swiss talent in the UK, and as Nicolas Feldmeyer, who graduated from the Slade School of Fine Art in London, explained, the experience has also opened doors for him.

"Not only did the SCFB make my project possible through its generous support," said Feldmeyer, "but it also gave it a seal of approval from a respected institution that allowed me to secure funds from further sponsors."

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Swiss Clubs in the UK & Ireland

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

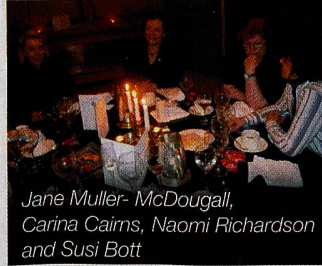
## Swiss Club Edinburgh

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of February the Swiss Club Edinburgh held its Annual Dinner at the Caledonian Hilton Waldorf Astoria Hotel.

Some 24 Members were in attendance and enjoyed a fabulous dinner preceded by a Cocktail with Swiss Champagne and Canapes.

Honorary Consul General Peter Muller-McDougall and his wife Jane graced us with their presence, as did Cécile Mackay, Visa Officer at the Swiss Embassy in London. The

evening came to a close not before the usual lengthy Swiss good-byes were said.



Jane Muller- McDougall, Carina Cairns, Naomi Richardson and Susi Bott

## Swiss Club Ireland

Our fondue evening this year, which was held at the ever-popular artisan deli, "Simply Delicious", was greatly enjoyed by our young and not so young members. A memorable night!



## Swiss Club Manchester

We had a great turnout at our recent Raclette evening – 78 people, their ages ranging from 6 months to 90 years, attended despite very dodgy weather conditions. Three Raclette "ovens"



## Midlands Swiss Society

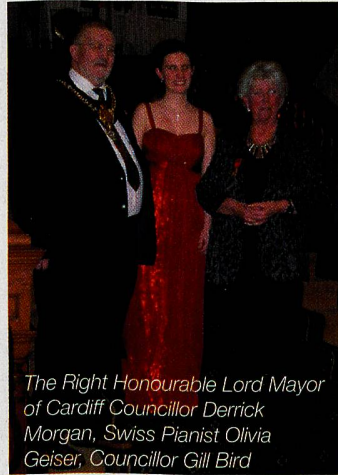
This year's AGM will be held on Friday, 19<sup>th</sup> April followed by our popular Annual Fondue Evening. Monthly meetings are held throughout the year and include a Swiss Film Evening, lunch meetings at local restaurants and members' houses, a Raclette Evening, 1<sup>st</sup> August celebrations and concert and Art Gallery visits etc. Full details from Chairman Graham Baker on 024 7641 1736 or e-mail baker-perrin@googlemail.com. New members always welcome!

were going flat-out to compliment a plate laden with the traditional potatoes (boiled in their skins) and various salads, which were once again supplied by Posh-Nosh. The cheeses had arrived at Glossop market from Cham in Switzerland filling the hall with a very authentic raclette aroma and making us think we might be in a "Taverne Valaisanne"!

## South Wales Swiss Society

The South Wales Swiss Society brought award-winning pianist Olivia Geiser from Zurich to Wales earlier this year to perform in the Mansion House in Cardiff.

These concerts, which take place in the official residence of the Lord Mayor of Cardiff, are held every year in association with and support of the German Honorary Consul in Wales and the Cardiff Stuttgart Association.



The Right Honourable Lord Mayor of Cardiff Councillor Derrick Morgan, Swiss Pianist Olivia Geiser, Councillor Gill Bird

The aim of the Mansion House Concerts, now in their fifth year, is to provide a platform in Wales for talented young Swiss, German or Austrian musicians.

## East Surrey Swiss Club

Our recent raclette evening was a bit of a funny one. We had borrowed the raclette grill from a different source this time (Armin!!) and it was faulty and kept tripping the fuse, so we ended up having to microwave the raclette (not ideal, but better than fish and chips!!). Anyway, the evening went well and as always, we had a good old sing-a-long led by Esther Moore.



Our next event will be the BBQ on the 29<sup>th</sup> June 2013. Renee Boyce

## Yorkshire Swiss Club

Members of Yorkshire Swiss Club attending their AGM in Bradford.



## Dates for 2013

Saturday, July 20<sup>th</sup>  
Fondue Party, near York

Sunday, December 8<sup>th</sup>  
Christmas Lunch, venue TBA

Enquiries to: Jennie Dransfield (secretary) 01924495929 or Evy Wardill (president) 01347848473

**We are the Swiss Benevolent Society.**

**We help Swiss citizens living in the UK who need financial or social support. Because charity begins at home.**

**You can help us in helping them.**

# SWISS BENEVOLENT SOCIETY

**For more information about us or if you know any Swiss citizen in the UK who could benefit from our services go to**

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

Elections 2013 - 2017

# OSA ELECTIONS

## Election Rules & Regulation

This year the Swiss expat community has the unique opportunity to elect the new delegates to the Council of the Swiss Abroad (CSA).

All Swiss Nationals, over the age of 18, and registered at the Swiss Embassy in the UK, ARE ELIGIBLE TO VOTE by means of the enclosed voting slip, for their choice of Candidates portrayed in this issue of the Swiss Review.

According to the FOSSUK (Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK) Bye Laws, out of the 4 delegates representing the Swiss Community in the UK:

2 delegates will be nominated by Swiss Clubs (Corporate Members of FOSSUK). In case there are more than 2 candidates nominated, the FOSSUK AGM on the 18th May 2013 will decide and the candidates with the highest number of votes will be duly elected.

2 delegates will be elected by the Swiss Community at large, by postal vote, using the enclosed voting slip. If you are a Swiss National, over 18 and registered at the Swiss Embassy in London, you are eligible to vote! The 2 candidates with the highest number of votes will be duly elected.

As you will see, there is a large number of candidates to choose from. Please exercise your democratic right and vote for the 2 candidates you wish to represent the UK in Switzerland.

It is important that you carefully consider your choice from amongst candidates deemed to have first-hand knowledge of Switzerland's political landscape and of Swiss nationals' concerns living in the UK. These delegates are elected for a four year term from 2013 - 2017 and are tasked with representing your interests vis-à-vis the authorities and the public in Switzerland.

*the increasing number of Swiss working and living abroad in the UK and elsewhere, the CSA will become even more important. Using my experience and knowledge of the current affairs of Switzerland and the UK I would like to represent the Swiss Abroad in the UK at the CSA.*

**Joëlle Nebbe-Mornod**



Place of Residence: *Idle, W Yorkshire*

Marital status: *Married*

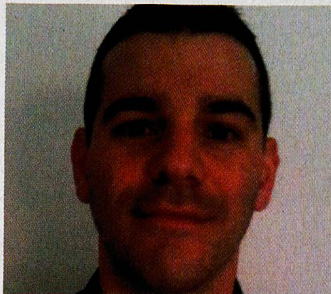
Profession: *Technology Director & Wine Importer*

Interests: *Science & Technology, Food & Wine, Hiking, Photography, Writing*

Club membership: *City Swiss Club*

*Why do you want to be a delegate? I am keen to explore how we expatriates can contribute back to Swiss society, with our external perspective. I am also concerned about how the evolution of bilateral agreements and the changes in policy - especially financial policy, but also educational and cultural policy, and more! - will affect us expatriates.*

**Marco Singarella**



Place of Residence: *Reading*

Marital status: *Married*

Profession: *IT Consultant*

Interests: *Football, Literature, Cooking (especially giving the taste of Swiss cuisine to my guests), Travelling, Painting, Politics and Technology*

Club membership: *No, but I regularly connect with expats and international clubs via Meet-up*

*Why do you want to be a delegate? I am keen to represent Swiss citizens abroad and get involved in current issues. I believe Swiss citizens abroad represent our nation's value throughout the world and I would like to be part of it and share my experiences and ideas.*

**Dr. Louis Guenin**

B.D.S., L.D.S., R.C.S. (Eng.)

**SWISS DENTIST**

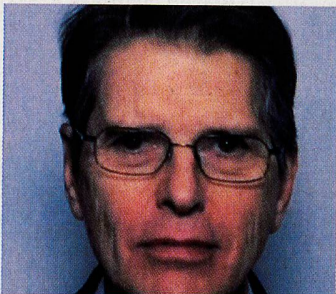
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19 Cavendish Square,  
London W1G 0PL

Tel: 020 7580 2244

Web: [www.louisguenin.com](http://www.louisguenin.com)

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**Yves J Guisan**



Place of Residence: *Gibraltar*

Marital status: *married - 4 "children" (between the age of 29 and 40!)*

Profession: *General surgeon and GP*

Interests: *History, philosophy, theology, arts and music, politics and sociology, sport in particular cycling*

Club membership: *Swiss-Gibraltar Society*

*Why do you want to be a delegate? As a former MP (National Councillor), member of the Social and Health Commission, Education, Science and Culture Commission, as well as the Security Commission (Defence), I have a good understanding of institutional and political functioning. I had a commitment in the OSA already as an MP, later on as a British*

*Delegate. Being pretty active and interested in the own interests of the Swiss abroad and their significance for Switzerland, I candidate for a mandate renewal in the CSA.*

**Franz Muheim**



Place of Residence: *Edinburgh*

Marital status: *married*

Profession: *Professor of Physics*

Interests: *hiking, bicycling and skiing (if I get the chance). I also regularly visit family (mother, siblings) who all live near St.Gallen.*

Club membership: *Edinburgh Swiss Club*

Backed by: *Edinburgh Swiss Club*

*Why do you want to be a delegate? There are many topics which are relevant for the Swiss Abroad and where the CSA can be helpful. With*

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Elections 2013 - 2017

# OSA ELECTIONS

Margrit Lyster



Place of Residence: London

Marital status: Married

Profession: Retired Social Worker with the Swiss Welfare Office from 1977 to 1996 and then, with the Swiss Benevolent Society until 2009.

Interests: Taking advantage of the rich London cultural life, travelling, walking, meeting with friends, Swiss films and many others.

Club membership: President of FOSSUK.

Backed by: Swiss Benevolent Society

Why do you want to be a delegate? I have always been very interested in all matters concerning the Swiss Abroad. My professional activities for 30 years within the UK Swiss Colony, together with my active involvement with many of the Swiss Clubs and Societies in the UK past and present make me more than familiar and sensitive to the needs of Swiss Abroad.

Gabrielle Hogan-Brun



Place of Residence: Bristol

Marital status: married, 3 grown-up offspring

Profession: Linguist, researcher, author

Interests: Current affairs, esp. migration, language and social policy; citizenship and minority rights; media and culture; languages.

Club membership: Not currently, but planned

Why do you want to be a delegate? I will use my minority policy expertise to work towards fairness in the treatment of the UK Swiss diaspora and of those wishing to return to Switzerland. I am committed to pursuing an open, culturally sensitive dialogue and shall collaborate bilaterally to ensure a coherent policy approach regarding the rights of all Swiss citizens.

Christoph Burgdorfer



Place of Residence: London

Marital status: Single

Profession: Managing Partner, coANDco (UK) Ltd

Interests: Technology, Design, Music, Photography

Club membership: City Swiss Club

Why do you want to be a delegate? I believe there is a lot the UK

and Switzerland can learn from each other. The key to gearing up the mutual exchange is modern communication technology such as the Internet and Social Media. I am passionate about new technologies and how they can be used to bring Swiss people living in the UK and Switzerland closer.

David Watkins



Place of Residence: Abergavenny

Marital status: In a relationship

Profession: Lecturer

Interests: Football, Rugby and Technology

Club membership: No

Why do you want to be a delegate? Because I would like to gain the experience and friends that would come with the role. I believe that I can relate to Swiss nationals aboard simply because my Mother is one. My job as a lecturer demonstrates that I can interact with many different types of people, both with understanding and patience. It would also make my mother very happy.

FOSSUK

## FOSSUK AGM 2013

Dear Corporate Members, dear friends, it is our pleasure to invite you to the

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2013

Saturday 18 May 2013 starting 11 am  
at the Embassy of Switzerland\*  
16-18 Montagu Place, London W1H 2BQ

Hosted by the Swiss Embassy, the gathering will be organised in two parts:

The morning meeting is set aside for the statutory part and for the Election of four Delegates representing the UK Swiss on the Council of the Swiss Abroad (CSA) for the 2013 - 2017 mandate. The opportunity will be taken to also nominate FOSSUK Committee members for the same 4 year period.

Whilst the meeting is an open event, only Member Clubs and Societies are eligible to vote.

Amongst the speakers we will be fortunate to hear the leaving Ambassador, Anton Thalmann, Gerhard Brügger, Director General from the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs and a representative from the Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad in Bern (SSA).

"Preserving the past for the future" will be the theme for the afternoon. Under the skillful guidance of historian Peter Barber, we will be able to get some valuable guidance on how and where to preserve historic documents and valuable materials from the numerous Swiss Clubs.

The AGM is scheduled to end around 5pm

Relevant information about AGM proceedings will be published on the FOSSUK website after the 10 April 2013. Please note that for security reasons at the Swiss Embassy, all participants must register beforehand with name and full address.

On behalf of FOSSUK Committee

Margrit Lyster  
www.swiss-societies.co.uk

UK: 0118 926 8598

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Elections 2013 – 2017

# OSA ELECTIONS

**Thomas Rast**



Place of Residence: *Colchester*

Marital status: *Civil Partner*

Profession: *Tour Operations Team Leader*

Interests: *Travel, Languages, Politics, Food*

Club membership: *New Helvetic Society*

Why do you want to be a delegate?  
*I have lived in the UK for 10 years and I enjoy taking an interest in Swiss, UK & World politics. I value both my Swiss & UK citizenship and would like to maintain links with my home country. I would like to use my living and working experience in both countries to contribute to the Council of Swiss Abroad.*

**Alexandre Tissot**



Place of Residence: *Binfield, Berks*

Marital status: *Married*

Profession: *Oracle Director for Europe, Middle East and Africa*

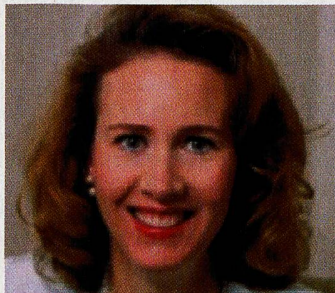
Interests: *Swiss Civic Affairs, International Politics, International Economics, Charity work*

Club membership: *Soliswiss, SwissCommunity.org*

Why do you want to be a delegate?  
*The Swiss political landscape is undergoing unprecedented change. It is important to ensure that substantive issues are communicated and understood*

*by Swiss Citizens living abroad. I also plan to retire to Switzerland, so I have a personal interest in supporting the rights of Swiss Citizens living abroad.*

**Noelle Kristin Dowd-Leitch**



Place of Residence: *London*

Marital status: *Married*

Profession: *Financial Strategist, wife, mother*

Interests: *Jogging, Pilates, Travelling, Cooking, study of Theology and Philosophy, the Arts, health and being a wife and Mummy*

Club membership: *British Swiss Chamber of Commerce*

Why do you want to be a delegate?  
*I am passionate about Switzerland, its culture and people. I would be so proud to contribute in supporting other Swiss abroad, representing them and their interests. My values, influencing skills and professional background empower me to be an effective representative and champion for Swiss people in the UK. My own international experience allows me to empathise with Swiss people abroad.*

**Beatrix Jakob**



Place of Residence: *London*

Marital status: *Single*

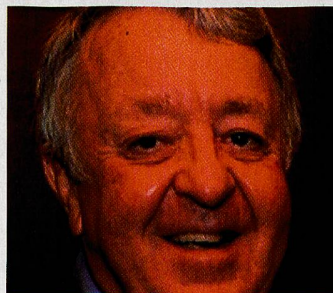
Profession: *Horologist*

Interests: *People, skiing, swimming,*

Club membership: *No*

Why do you want to be a delegate?  
*I believe it's of interest to me because of mobility, enterprise engagement and communications with all the Swiss community all over the world. Engaging in home solutions, mobile interactive, skill of achievement and I am flexible and capable of achieving many obligations in moving freely to help any Swiss living abroad like myself.*

**Walter Isler**



Place of Residence: *Sevenoaks*

Marital status: *Married*

Profession: *Chartered accountant*

Interests: *Networking, travelling, socialising*

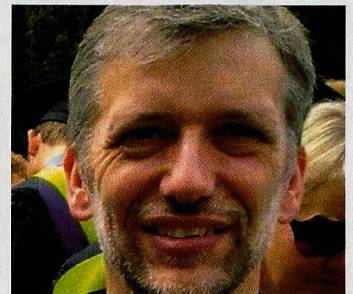
Club membership: *City Swiss Club*

Backed by: *City Swiss Club*

Why do you want to be a delegate?

- *to contribute to the Swiss Community in GB*
- *to support the Swiss abroad*
- *to foster good relationship between England and Switzerland*
- *to enjoy contacts with my home country Switzerland*

**Michael Schlaeppli**



Place of Residence: *London*

Marital status: *Married; 3 children*

Profession: *Company Director; owner of Skyline Agencies Ltd*

Interests: *Travelling, sports, cinema, classical music*

Club membership: *No*

Why do you want to be a delegate?  
*To tighten the bonds, culturally, socially and economically between Switzerland and Swiss living abroad.*

UK Delegates to the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA)

## VOTING SLIP

Candidate 1

Candidate 2

Declaration:

I, (Name and Surname)

(Capital Letters)

Date of Birth

Signed

is eligible to vote.

to be received no later than 10 May 2013 by post to:

**The Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK (FOSSUK)**  
**16-18 Montagu Place**  
**London W1H 2BQ**

Note that Copies/Printouts of this Voting Slip are acceptable, as long as they are completed and signed by hand! The voter's name on the voting slips should be the same as the registration name at the Embassy and consequently the same as on the Swiss Review address.

"Who's afraid of the big, bad bear?"

Blog

## THE BUZZ IN BERN

A Swiss blogger shares her thoughts about the main stories that have grabbed the attention of the people of Bern recently.

The outcome of the vote on the Minder initiative against 'fat cat' pay came as no surprise. But there was bemusement in Bern that Switzerland – much criticized by parts of Europe for its low rate of taxation – should suddenly be held up as an example to follow. But while Minder was being feted as a hero by some at home, business federation president Rudolf Wehrli warned that "a number of multinationals are thinking of leaving Switzerland".

After months of debate parliament finally decided to increase the price of the motorway tax disc or 'vignette'. Although the price will only rise from 2015, and then only to 100 francs, the 150 percent increase was too much for some newspaper readers to

swallow. "It takes me twice as long to get from Zurich to Bern as it did six years ago," complained one.

“  
The 150% increase  
was too much for  
some to swallow

It's tempting to suggest disaffected road users should hop on the train instead. But they are also overfull, prompting some to call for an increase in teleworking.

And who's afraid of the big, bad bear? Well plenty of people in canton Graubünden. Switzerland's one resident bear was shot straight after



© Amt für Jagd und Fischerei Graubünden (AJF)

emerging from hibernation. Admittedly M13 had been getting rather close to humans, especially to a young teenage girl in Poschiavo. But Bernese citizens

have always found a place in their hearts for bears, so as expected, there was little support in the Swiss capital for the Graubünden position.

Business

## 100 years of premium Swiss Quality

Earlier this year, V-ZUG, the Swiss market leader in household kitchen and laundry appliances, passed a major milestone, celebrating 100 years of manufacturing in the Swiss city of Zug.

This family owned company, which was a Swiss secret until as recently as 1998, continues to follow its commitment to develop and manufacture the world's most innovative appliances.

Few companies have the privilege of achieving a century of trading, and fewer still are able to do so under the continued ownership of the original founder's families.

In a recent interview, family member, Heinz M Buhofer, said much of the company's success was due to a century of strong family values.

"Today, the Zug-based industrial group is in the hands of the fifth generation of our family," he said, "which means it has always had a face and also an origin, which is really important, because this enables people to identify well with the company and its managers."

VZUG is the market leader in Switzerland, where 50% of households use their appliances and where the brand is acknowledged as the appliance of choice with a reputation for premium quality products that make consumers' lives easier.

It was only in the last 5 years that the company took its first steps into export markets, but the brand is now well established across Europe and in the UK where ever more kitchen showrooms are installing VZUG as their premium appliance partner.

## Winners!

Many thanks for all those readers who took part in our competition to win a copy of Regi Clare's

latest novel, *The Waiting*. Congratulations to our two winners from Radlet, Herts and Glastonbury, Somerset.



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Five Minutes with...

**DOMINIQUE THALMANN**

During the past three years where Ambassador Anton Thalman has served as Swiss Ambassador in the UK, his wife, Dominique, has never been far from his side. Together they have travelled from the Channel Islands and Gibraltar to Scotland and Northern Ireland warmly greeting the Swiss diaspora at concerts, exhibitions and social gatherings. Back in their London residence, the door seemed to be constantly open for business. Political dignitaries, Swiss artists and charitable organisations, to name only a few groups, have all enjoyed canapés and Swiss sparkling wine in the residence. The atmosphere was always relaxed and friendly and Mrs Thalman would make a point of welcoming all her guests personally. But what is it like to be the wife of an Ambassador? Dominique Thalman describes some of her most memorable moments here in the UK and what she will miss most about London life.

*Swiss Review:* Are there any written rules for the Ambassador's wife?

**Dominique Thalman:** Not really, because it has always been said we

don't have any official link with the government. The Foreign Ministry cannot order us to do something, there is only an expectation. I am from



**The agenda in London is quite squeezed**

an older generation. Nowadays, many of the younger spouses have their own job, they want their own career and so they are not prepared to take on too much. I know of diplomatic couples who live apart because the wife does not want to give up her job. Things have changed a lot. We used to be called "the spouses", and now we are called "the accompanying person", because we have same-sex partnerships and more and more unmarried couples. It is a sign of the times.

*SR:* You are always by your husband's side smiling and making conversation. Surely it can get quite tedious?

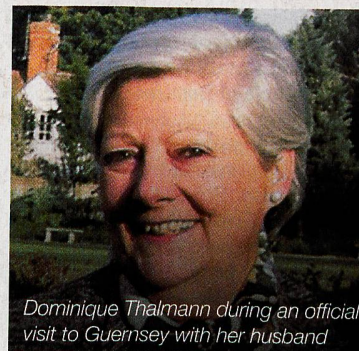
*DT:* This is teamwork. My husband does his bit and I do what I can to help. And I must tell you the truth, I have had lots of enjoyable moments. We have shared a lot. Probably one of the most recent and striking of all the events was at the House of Switzerland last summer during the Olympics. And even on top of that was the Paralympics. There we felt very proud. The whole three weeks at the House of Switzerland was great fun. There was a fantastic atmosphere, lots of Swiss from the expat community came and many flew over from Switzerland. Lots of foreigners also visited us. It was a huge success. To see first-hand, the passion and the pride of the athletes who had achieved something was a lovely experience.

*SR:* How important is it to get out of London and experience the Swiss community across the UK?

*DT:* We visited Wales and Scotland quite a few times. And we now know Manchester quite well. We have consuls there, but I must say we very often didn't have enough time. We would go there for one event and the next event would bring us back to London. The agenda in London is quite squeezed, so we never felt able to take the additional days to really explore the UK. But it was very interesting to meet all those Swiss who have established themselves outside of London. We usually connected visiting the Swiss colony with a cultural event. My husband would try to meet the local authorities earlier in the day and then we might go to a concert. We went a few times to Cardiff to hear Swiss conductor Thierry Fischer perform with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales. We even went to Swansea for a football game once!

*SR:* As well as London, you have been posted to Tokyo, Paris, Brussels and Ottawa. Do you have a favourite?

*DT:* We had a lot of "hard work"



*Dominique Thalman during an official visit to Guernsey with her husband*

postings, as I like to say. But we didn't have "hardship" postings, in the sense of being in a war zone or disaster area. There is a big place in my heart for Canada. The quality of life is outstanding. I loved the climate, the colours in autumn, the cold in winter. But Japan was our first big longer assignment abroad – we stayed there four years in the 80s – and our children were with us, so it was a fascinating discovery for everybody.

*SR:* What will you miss most about London?

*DT:* Probably the size of the city; like Paris it's a city that never sleeps. I can still walk in any direction here and I'll discover something new. We'll also miss the choice of cultural events a city like London has to offer. Last year, we visited the extraordinary David Hockney exhibition at the Royal Academy. The colours and landscapes reminded me of the work of Canadian painters.

**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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**Design**

Marc Peter – on-IDLE Ltd  
www.on-idle.com

The Swiss Review, with its 'Switzerland in the UK' supplement, is published six times a year (four with the UK supplement) in February, April, June, August, October, December.

The deadline for the next UK issue is **1<sup>st</sup> May**.

Date of publication: 5<sup>th</sup> June



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