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# Switzerland in the UK & Ireland

03  
13

2 150 years  
Swiss  
Grand Tour

5 Swiss pilots  
show off  
their skills

7 Böög forecasts  
miserable  
summer

History

## THE UNTOLD STORY TOLD

Simone Müller is a Swiss journalist with strong connections to England. Last fall she started to research the little known chapter of Swiss emigration during, and in the years directly after, the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. During these years, thousands of young Swiss women left their homeland to make the arduous trip to the UK for work and to learn English. Here Simone gives Swiss Review readers an insight into her remarkable journey of discovery.

In the 1940s and 50s, as many as 6000 young Swiss women travelled to the UK every year. After 1945, the enthusiasm for the countries that freed Europe from Hitler's terror regime, as well as the language spoken there, was huge.

**Do you have a similar story, or do you know of someone with a similar experience? Simone would like to hear from you, especially if it relates to women who arrived in the UK before 1939.**

Contact  
Email: [simmu@bluewin.ch](mailto:simmu@bluewin.ch)  
Tel: +41 31 351 14 22

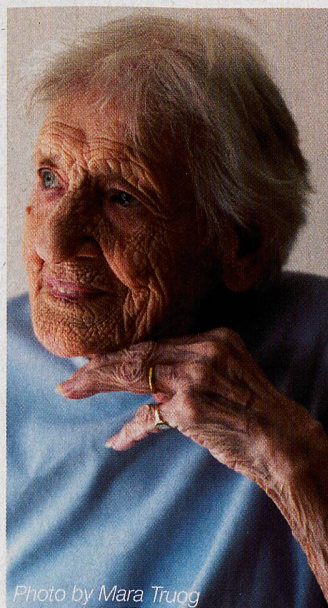


Photo by Mara Truog

But apart from work as a domestic help, there were few opportunities for women. British middle class families, who had always taken local domestic service for granted, could no longer afford it after the war. This newly-arrived, young group of women from the Continent, and in particular

Switzerland, were an easy target for cheap labour. Live-in au-pairs received £1 pocket money per week.

Most women returned to Switzerland, but a significant number stayed. Sadly, their life stories often mirror aspects of world history, which are not considered a relevant part of Swiss history. For example, many women married men from the former British colonies, like India, Cyprus or Mauritius. Or they were wed to Polish men, who came to England while the exiled Polish government was based in the UK. Their lives also mirror a chapter of women's history that would be unacceptable today. Until 1952 a Swiss woman who married a foreign national automatically lost her Swiss citizenship, for example.

Many women came from rural backgrounds in Switzerland, some had difficult childhoods – like 99-year-old Claire Parkes who after her parents' early death grew up in a children's home and started working when she was 15. She had many different employments in Switzerland and some very bad experiences; she was forced to chop wood throughout the winter wearing only light clothing,

she was not fed properly, and was badly beaten up by her employer. In 1949 Claire came to England where, among many other places, she once kept house – being paid £3 per week – for an English aristocrat who wined and dined the Queen's sister, Princess Margaret. Most women have worked very hard throughout their lives, but have to live with little money today, getting much smaller pensions than women who did similar work in Switzerland.

For many women, returning to Switzerland has never been an issue, as their children and grandchildren have grown up in the UK. However, Claire Parkes decided differently. Months away from her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, and after more than 60 years in England, Claire left her home in Sturry, Kent and is now enjoying the final chapter of her life in a tiny village in the Bernese region of Emmental.

Simone Müller

Business

### How Switzerland came to be successful

**Why does Switzerland continue to be so successful, despite a languishing world economy?**

That was the question put recently at London's Swiss Embassy, as business leaders gathered for a Swiss-UK Dialogue, supported by the British-Swiss Chamber of Commerce UK.

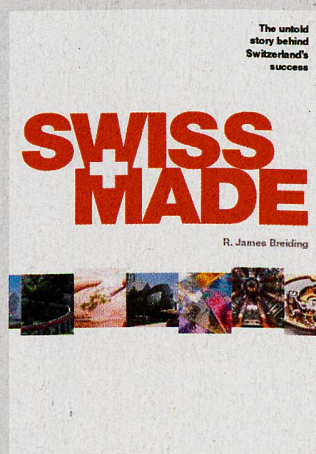
The evening's guest of honour and speaker was financier James Breiding who was in London for the UK launch of his book 'Swiss Made – The Untold Story Behind Switzerland's Success'.

This timely publication appears as uncertainty continues to rein on the global markets. Yet, against this backdrop, Switzerland's economy remains healthy.

'Swiss Made' describes the journey in which Switzerland's position on the international stage was achieved not with the weight of power and size but through innovation, a passion to perform and quality. Breiden believes ability and performance are what count, not background and position.

«(Switzerland) is a place where achievement is revered, but not paraded, probably owing to Calvinist and Zwingli traditions and mountain life.» he said, «Nescafé has practically become synonymous with instant coffee and Swatch stores have set up shop in most cities. But more often, the Swiss successes take place in the shadows, achievements are concealed from the general public.»

Swiss Made chronicles the fascinating pathway that helped make Switzer-



land prosperous spanning some 300 years and across 14 sectors, including manufacturing, banking and pharmaceuticals.

Editorial

### Dear Readers,



2013 is a special year for Swiss-British relations, as it was 150 years ago that the first tour party departed from London on a mammoth journey via Paris to Geneva and Mont Blanc. Included are a couple of original excerpts from Miss Jemima Morrell's journal, one of the Victorian ladies on that inaugural trip.

This edition is packed with fascinating personal stories. You'll be introduced to Claire Parkes who first arrived in England in 1949 and who, at the age of 99, recently returned to her homeland after more than sixty years in England.

Swiss artist Aia Leu, who lives in a small, mountain farm in south-west Ireland, takes us on a romantic and mystical journey into her childhood. And in our new feature, "Meet the Presidents", Geoff Rose gives us an insight into the history and workings of Torbay Swiss Club.

Andrew Littlejohn



Travel

# THE FIRST GRAND TOUR TO SWITZERLAND

This year marks the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first grand tour from the UK to Switzerland.

In the summer of 1863, 62 excited ladies and gentlemen gathered at London Bridge Station at the start of the UK's very first tour to Switzerland. The trip had been arranged by tourism pioneer Thomas Cook and is regarded by many as the birth of modern tourism, which nowadays involves millions taking their holidays abroad.

The Cook party arrived first in Geneva and then moved to more mountainous parts of the country by diligence and on foot. 31-year-old Jemima Morrell from Yorkshire was one of several Victorian ladies who jumped at the chance of exploring the Alps. She and her brother, William, invited a number of like-minded friends to join them. They dubbed themselves the 'Junior United Alpine Club' – a slightly tongue-in-cheek reference to the Alpine Club of Great Britain, which had only recently been formed in 1857. Though living in Selby and never having left Britain before, Jemima was keen to witness the grandeur of the Alps. She was also charged with preparing a record of the trip for the club and possible publication.

By the 1880s, with the introduction of the Steam Engine and the flourishing activity of the travel company, Thomas Cook, Switzerland was attracting about one million visitors a year. But

**Jemima was keen to witness the grandeur of the Alps**

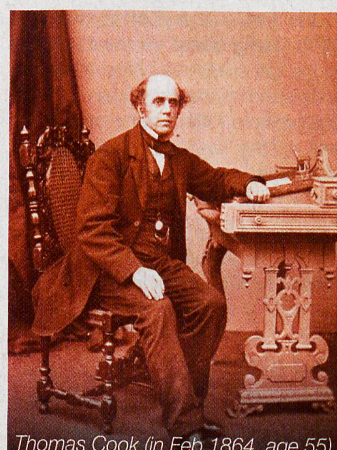
Cook had his competitors. By 1897, Henry Lunn entered the field when he organised his first trip to Chamonix, which by then was a village of 2500 inhabitants with 20 hotels. Lunn became the pioneer Travel Agent for winter sports.

## Miss Jemima's Swiss Journal

In 1947 an old tin box was found in the rubble of a blitzed warehouse in the East End of London with Miss Jemima's fascinating leather-bound personal diary, drawings and souvenirs. Known only by her first



Miss Jemima Morrell

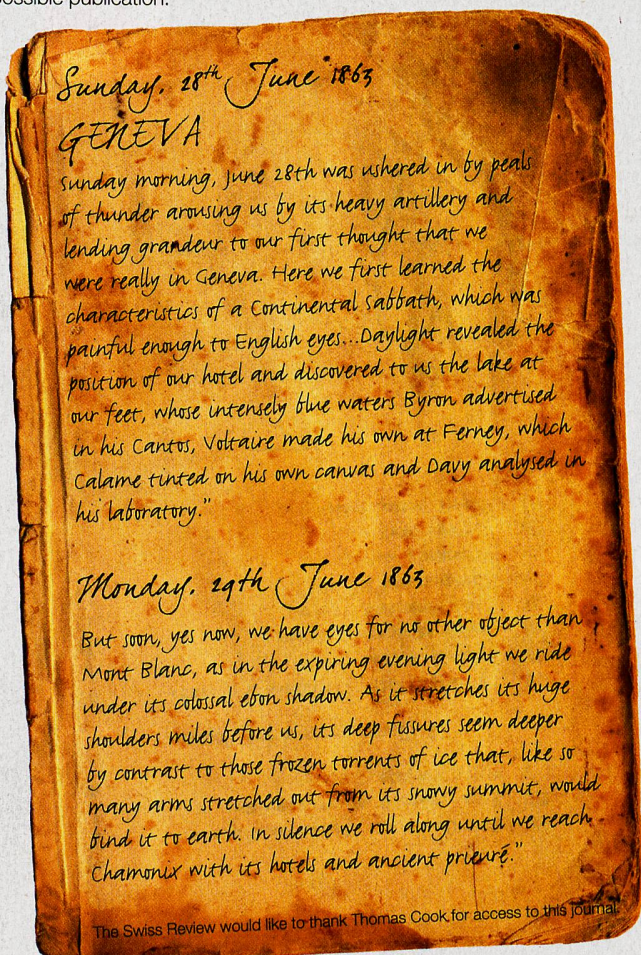


Thomas Cook (in Feb 1864, age 55)

name, the Victorian diarist was finally identified as a Miss Jemima Morrell by a descendant who bought a copy of the book when her work was finally published almost a century after she visited Switzerland. The journal of this trip survives in the Thomas Cook Archives and gives an illuminating

insight into both the nature of the forerunner to the 'package holiday' and to continental travel generally during the Victorian era.

Many thanks to the British Residents' Association in Switzerland for their contribution



The Swiss Review would like to thank Thomas Cook for access to this journal.

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Culture

## APPENZELLER MUSICIANS RETURN HOME

Earlier this year, managers at the Hoher Kasten Suspension Cable Car invited the local community of Appenzell to an aperitif with local specialities to mark the opening of the region's summer season. The musical entertainment was to be provided by musicians (Strichmusig) and dancers of the Appenzeller Society of London, who were at the start of a lengthy holiday in their native country.

The seven performers from London were very much applauded by the numerous guests, who did not mind in the least that the musicians and dancers were actually figurines from the original Glockenspiel, which stood proudly on the front of London's Swiss Centre from 1985 to 2008. After all, it was April Fools' Day!

The Glockenspiel in central London had been a gift from the people of Switzerland and Liechtenstein to the "Citizens of Westminster". It, along with the Swiss Centre, was pulled down in 2008. In November 2011 a smaller, free-standing unit once more rang out at the entrance to Leicester Square.

The City of Westminster has now offered those figures that could no longer be accommodated on the

“

**The musicians and dancers were actually figurines from the original Glockenspiel**

new Glockenspiel on long loan to the Museum of Appenzell after spending a quarter of a century in London. Curator Roland Inauen has found a perfect new permanent home for the handful of figures at the Hoher Kasten, where they are expected to entertain more than 20,000 visitors per year.

Like the new Glockenspiel in London's Soho, which is enjoyed by thousands daily, this display is another sign of the everlasting friendship between the



City of Westminster and Switzerland, and of course, in this case in particular, of Canton Appenzell.

Albert Kunz, former Director of Switzerland Tourism, London, and Initiator of the Glockenspiel

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Swiss Clubs in the UK & Ireland

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

## Embassy news



**New Ambassador arrives in July**  
Ambassador Dominik Furgler will take up his new position on 1 July. He currently serves in Cairo as the Swiss Ambassador to Egypt. Before this posting he held the positions of Deputy Director and Head of Personnel in the Directorate for Resources at the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (2005–2009), and Head of the United Nations Coordination Unit and Deputy Head of the Multilateral Affairs Division (2001–2005). Some readers may remember Dominik Furgler from the years when he was Head of the Economic and Finance Section at the Swiss Embassy in London between 1997 to 2001.



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra

Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA  
Embassy of Switzerland in the United Kingdom  
Presence Switzerland

### Summer time, holiday time: are your travel documents valid?

The Regional Consular Centre (RCC) is registering a steep increase in applications for passports due to the fact that the Passport 2003 series is coming to the end of its validity. So with the summer holidays fast approaching please ensure to book your appointment for a new passport and/or ID card in good time, if you are planning to travel abroad.

**Due to high demand, waiting times for booking appointments currently apply.**

Please arrive punctually for your appointment, or inform us in advance if you have to cancel. "No-shows" without prior warning can cause delays and impede the smooth running of the RCC's operations." <http://bit.ly/16g5fR1>  
[www.eda.admin.ch/rcclondon](http://www.eda.admin.ch/rcclondon)

## Midlands Swiss Society

27 club members attended the Midlands Swiss Society AGM and fondue evening in April. The traditional Moitié-Moitié fondue was brought by 2 members who had visited Switzerland in the week prior to the fondue. A superb evening was enjoyed by all and we are already looking forward to our next outing, which will take place on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> May at Carluccio's restaurant for lunch.



## Swiss in Wales

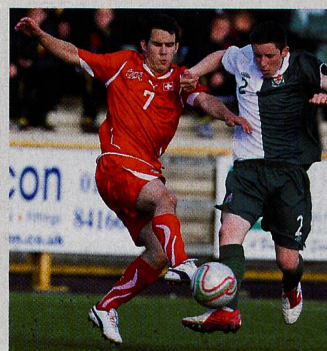
### Roadshow comes to Cardiff

A roadshow for tour operators was a huge success recently during a stop-off in Cardiff. Guests were thoroughly impressed to be welcomed into the beautiful surroundings of Cardiff Castle by the sound of the Alphorn and the art of flag swinging, before receiving first-hand information from representatives of the various Swiss tourist offices: Zurich, Lucerne, the Bernese Oberland, Valais, and the Grisons.

### Swiss victory in Wales

Wales' under-15 football team played an international friendly match with Switzerland at the end of April. The final score from Barry Town's Jenner Park in Cardiff was **Wales 0 Switzerland 1**. The only goal of the game was scored in the first half by Christian Papa from Switzerland. The Swiss teenagers were cheered on by members of Cardiff Swiss Club. It obviously helped.

*Ruth Thomas-Lehmann,  
Honorary Consul, Cardiff*



## Southern Area Swiss Club

Vreni Rudkin and Berni Curtress, Presidents past and present. Berni agreed to take the post at our AGM in early March. We gained a new Club Secretary, Karin Prier, at the same time. Both ladies had been "filling-in" since Vreni retired.

Members gathered at the Farnham House Hotel in January to welcome in the New Year and enjoy the club's annual lunch.

*John Williamson*



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What's on

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS AROUND THE UK

Royal International Air Show

### Swiss formation flyers at Air Tattoo

Held annually each July at RAF Fairford, Gloucestershire, the Royal International Air Tattoo, the world's largest military airshow, has gained the well-earned reputation as one of the UK's top outdoor family events.

Following their Air Tattoo debut in 2009 the Swiss Air Force PC-7 Team will again make their first of three appearances outside of Switzerland at the air show.

One of the two Swiss Air Force aerobatic teams, the PC-7 Team provides a total contrast to the high speed demonstration performed by the Patrouille Suisse in their Northrop F-5E Tiger II aircraft with a dynamic, elegant and precise demonstration of formation flying at its best. Flying aerobatics in close formation with propeller-driven aircraft demands the highest level of skill by the team's military pilots.



## CHF UK Swiss Cultural Events in the UK

11 May 2013 – 5 January 2014 (Bothy Gallery until 3 September 2013)

### HANS JOSEPHSOHN SCULPTURE AND DRAWINGS

This is the first major indoor and outdoor UK exhibition of sculpture and drawings by the late Zurich based artist, Hans Josephsohn (1920–2012). It follows recent and forthcoming exhibitions at Hauser & Wirth, London and Modern Art Oxford.

Venue: Yorkshire Sculpture Park, West Bretton, Wakefield WF4 4LG



17 May – 18 October 2013

### FELICE VARINI ACROSS THE BUILDINGS

Paris-based Swiss artist Felice Varini has taken the cityscape of King's Cross as his canvas for an intervention onto the façades of the heritage buildings which form part of the area's historic rail infrastructure. The monumental artwork will run the entire 542 metres of Granary Square North of Regent's Canal.

Venue: King's Cross, Granary Square, London N1C



15 May – 18 August 2013

### ALBERTO GIACOMETTI TÊTE DE FEMME (FLORA MAYO)

Alberto Giacometti's 'Tête de femme (Flora Mayo)' (c. 1927) resonates with themes of replication in the concurrent The Age of Innocence: Replicating the Ideal Portrait in the New Sculpture Movement exhibition, as well as the relationship between drawing and sculpture.

Venue: Henry Moore Institute, 74 The Headrow, Leeds LS1 3AH



### Save the date:

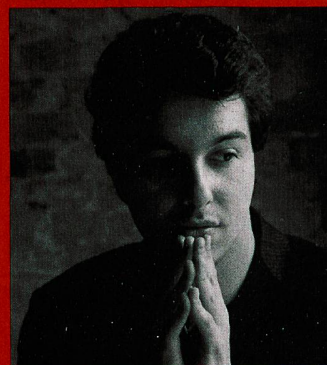
Swiss Ambassador's Award  
Concert tour with Joseph-  
Maurice Weder (\*1988), piano:

21 Oct Edinburgh (Main Council  
Chamber, City Chambers)

22 Oct London (Wigmore Hall)

23 Oct Belfast (Great Hall,  
Queens University, Belfast –  
part of the Belfast Festival)

25 Oct Cardiff (Dora Stoutzker  
Hall, Royal Welsh College of  
Music & Drama)



Tickets and more details on Swiss Cultural Fund website

([www.scfb.org.uk](http://www.scfb.org.uk)) and the Embassy's website  
([www.swissembassy.org.uk](http://www.swissembassy.org.uk) – Embassy News) from 1<sup>st</sup> July

Culture

### Tonhalle to perform at Edinburgh Festival

The rich, romantic music of Brahms is the focus for Tonhalle Orchestra's two concerts at the Edinburgh International Festival on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> August.

Joining the Edinburgh Festival Chorus for this visionary piece is the celebrated Swiss soprano Rachel Harnisch, noted for her powerful yet intimate performances.

The Zurich-based musicians will perform Brahms' beautifully melodic Violin Concerto and artistic director David Zinman concludes the festival concerts at the helm of the orchestra with one of Brahms' most magnificent creations, the German Requiem.



### Dr. Louis Guenin

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

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Feature

## MEET THE PRESIDENTS: TORBAY SWISS CLUB

Swiss Clubs are an important part of life for many Swiss living abroad. They keep communities together. Here in the Swiss Review, we enjoy the photos and commentary from AGMs, raclette and fondue evenings. But little is known about the clubs and their history. We asked club presidents to give us a brief history of their club. We begin our new feature with the President of Torbay Swiss Club, Geoff Rose.

The original Torbay Swiss Club was founded in about 1940 by Agnes Williams, Margaret White, Linda Hoare and Martha Beer and meetings were held in people's houses.

Agnes is still alive and lives in a home near her family in London, aged 99.

The modern Torbay Swiss Club was started by Catherine Owen in 1971. Catherine has since returned to Switzerland and runs a B&B in Meiringen in the Bernese Oberland.

To make money for the club Catherine held raffles and others did their bit too; Agnes knitted and sold her articles. When I was talking to Martha

(one of our older members) she told me that at that moment she had on one of Agnes' hard-wearing jumpers; now that's top Swiss quality.

“

**I was so enchanted by Switzerland and its customs**

Max, from Thurgau, was our next president and he held that post for 16 years. Max knew lots of important people in England and Switzerland and introduced them to club members. Some gatherings, including the 1<sup>st</sup> August celebrations, were held at Lupton Park, then Max's home, a grand Georgian villa set in acres of land including a beautiful and large landscaped garden.

Our next president was Charles, whose wife Therese came from Basle. Charles, a vicar and retired architect and lecturer, also leads walking

holidays all over the world and was keen to 'rotate' the presidency after two years. However, he now says that as "Geoff is doing a good job, we can stop rotating!"

I have been the President for 3 years, mainly because nobody else wants to do the job.

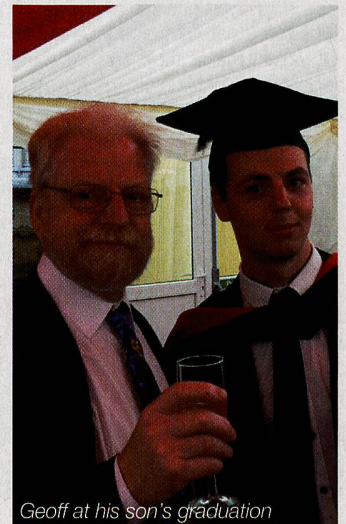
I trained as a chef and in the late 70s I managed to get a job in Switzerland on a 7-month contract. I had no idea where Switzerland was. 2 years later, I was offered a job in South Africa and it was a choice of that or staying with my Swiss girlfriend (now my wife of nearly 31 years). I was so enchanted by Switzerland and its customs I ended up staying for nine years.

My wife, Ruth, and I have been involved with the Torbay Swiss Club since 1986, when we moved back to the UK.

As president, I have tried to find interesting and varied things to do each month with mixed success: these include a water colour art course with a professional artist, an introduction to Tai Chi, guided walks, visits to the

catacombs in Exeter, garden visits, a horse-drawn canal barge trip, as well as the traditional skittles, Sunday lunches, raclette evening and 1<sup>st</sup> August celebrations. Our members range in age from 19 to 87. We welcome visitors and would love to see new members with new ideas.

Geoff Rose



Geoff at his son's graduation

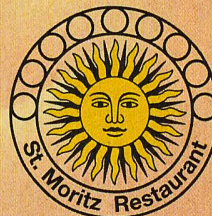


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Music

# SWISS SONG BOOK

**O Du Froehliche**

- 1 -  
O du froehliche, o du selbige  
gruendebingende Weihnachtszeit!  
Weg ging verloren,  
Christ ist geboren!  
Freue dich, o freue dich  
o Christenheit!

- 2 -  
O du froehliche, o du selbige  
gruendebingende Weihnachtszeit!  
Christ ist erschienen  
uns zu versuehen  
Freue dich, o freue dich  
o Christenheit!

- 3 -  
O du froehliche, o du selbige  
gruendebingende Weihnachtszeit!  
Himmelsche Heere  
jauchzen dir Ihre  
freue dich, o freue dich  
o Christenheit!

**Ich Bin Ein Schweizerknaeb**

- 1 -  
Ich bin ein Schweizerknaeb  
und hab die Heimat lieb! Hall, hall, ...  
Fernes den  
Freiheitsbrief uns schrieb: Der Bege  
wunderbare Pacht:  
die zeich mich an mit  
Zaubernacht. Ich bin ein  
Schweizerknaeb  
und hab die Heimat lieb! Hall, hall, ...

**Es Buurebuebl**

- 1 -  
Es Buurebuebl muh-n-i naht,  
das gheht me mir wohl  
a juhe, es Buurebuebl muh-n-i mit  
das gheht me  
mir wohl! Al fidli, fidli, fidli...

- 2 -  
stimes eine si gar huetsch und fit,  
darf keini  
Fehler ha juhe, ...

- 3 -  
Und Herrebuebl gits ja nit wo keini,  
Fehler het juhe, ...

- 4 -  
Drum bibe-n-i ledig bis i Hochtig  
ha de laht  
die Liebi erst naechte a juhe ...

- 5 -  
Da fallt mer no de Jakolo i,  
de choennt am End no ledig si ...

- 6 -  
Suesch gab-n-i uf Amerika  
und such mer diest  
en ryche Maa ...

- 7 -  
Und wenn i eine glunde ha,  
so binde-ne an es Stuehbel a -  
und wenn i eine glunde ha de blinde-  
ne aber si

**Vo Luzern Uf Weggis Zue**

- 1 -  
Vo Luzern uf Weggis zue  
Holdjeh Guggu, holdjeh Guggu  
Bruechi me weder Stuempf  
no Schueh  
Holdjeh Guggu Guggu ...  
Holdjeh ...

- 2 -  
Me cha fahre uf em See  
Holdjeh Guggu, holdjeh Guggu  
Und die schoene Fischli gott  
Holdjeh Guggu, Guggu

- 3 -  
Z Weggis fohd das chrieger-n-a  
Holdjeh Guggu, holdjeh Guggu  
Buerbe, Mieschi heissas  
Holdjeh Guggu, holdjeh Guggu

- 4 -  
Zerschit wird no es Moeschtili gnoo  
Holdjeh Guggu, holdjeh Guggu  
S Schrauke mug dem besser geh  
Holdjeh Guggu, Guggu

- 5 -  
Wo mer sind d i Rig cho  
Holdjeh Guggu, holdjeh Guggu  
Haets viel Alperenli do  
Holdjeh Guggu, Guggu

**Frères Jacques**

Frères Jacques, frères Jacques  
Dormez-vous? Dormez-vous?  
Sonnez les matras, sonnez les  
matras  
Ding ding dong, ding ding dong

**Nun Ade Du Mein Lieb  
Heimatland**

- 1 -  
Nun ade Du mein lieb Heimatland,  
lieb Heimatland ade!  
Es geht jetzt fort zum fremden  
Sund lieb Heimatland ade!  
Und so sing ich denn mit frohem Mut  
Wie man singet wenn man wandern  
muet lieb Heimatland ade!

- 2 -  
Wie du lachst mit Deines Himmels  
Blau, lieb Heimatland ade!  
Wie du gruesset mich mit Feld  
und Au, lieb Heimatland ade!  
Gott weiss zu dir weis stets mein Sinn  
Doch jetzt zur ferne ziehst mich hin,  
lieb Heimatland ade!

- 3 -  
Begleitest mich, du lieber Fluss lieb  
Heimatland ade!  
Vom moegen See am wald gen Tal  
Da gruess ich dich zum letzten mal,  
lieb Heimatland ade!

**"Jetzt Wommer  
eis Jodele..."**

The definitive Swiss Song Book  
produced for the Swiss Societies of Great Britain  
featuring 124 great songs

Published annually from 1999 in memory of  
**Heidi Miller Scherrer**  
1919 to 1999

Heidi Miller was one of the founding members of the East Surrey Swiss Club and was quite an accomplished artist – painter and potter. She put a wonderful song book together, which club members use every time they meet. They randomly choose songs

from the book. One of the members has an accordion and they all merrily sing along. The book is illustrated with

Heidi's paintings, which her son, who was a printer, created in her memory when she died.

If you would like to receive a copy of the book, please contact the club's president, Renee Boyce, directly. The cost of the Swiss song book is £2.50, including postage.

Contact  
Email: [reneeboyce1@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:reneeboyce1@yahoo.co.uk)

Blog

## The Buzz in Bern

Crime levels are rising in Switzerland and one politician has come up with a novel solution: DNA tests on asylum seekers arriving from North Africa. The motion by Christian Democrat president Christophe Darbellay – unexpectedly approved by the National Council in April – has set the proverbial cat among the pigeons.

What next, asked the Tages-Anzeiger, DNA tests for all men? The issue boils down to one of security versus freedom, the power of the state against the rights of the individual. Switzerland should be proud of its

refugee tradition, commented one reader, but anyone threatening peace and security has no place here. Judging by the number of likes, many people agree.

Uncertain financial times lead to belt tightening, and the Swiss seem to be cutting back on wine. Last year they drank 267 million litres of the stuff – six million litres less than in 2011. Most of that was imported red wine. Do Swiss reds have a bit of catching up to do on the competition?

Someone who would know is Paolo Basso, Ticino's finest, and now officially the world's best wine waiter. Basso took the crown in Japan at the end of March beating off stiff competition from around the globe.

Sun-worshippers may need to head further south than Ticino this year. Switzerland is in for a miserable summer, if an exploding snowman is to be believed. The burning of the Böögg is an annual tradition at Zurich's Sechseläuten festival. The less time it takes for the Böögg's head to explode, the better the summer will be, according to popular wisdom. Well this year it took 35 minutes! But comfort may be drawn from the Böögg's notorious unreliability. Last year it exploded after just 12 minutes and the summer was wet and unsettled. Here's hoping!

Bernese blogger

# SWISS NATIONAL DAY LONDON

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at University College London  
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Special activities for children  
And much more

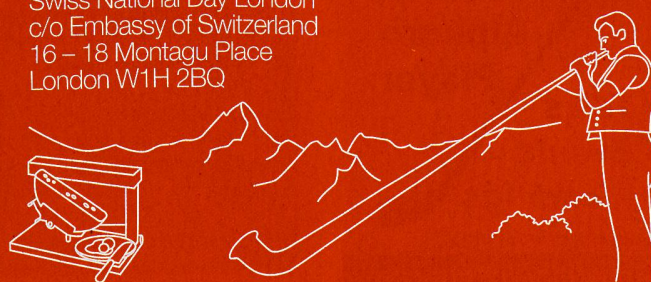


Join the Swiss community in and around London and enjoy Swiss raclette, sausages, risotto and cake with Swiss wines and beer.

Bring your family and friends or meet old friends at the bar.

For further information visit [www.swissnationalday.co.uk](http://www.swissnationalday.co.uk)

Swiss National Day London  
c/o Embassy of Switzerland  
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London W1H 2BQ





Profile

# FIRST-PERSON SINGULAR: AIA LEU

Aia Leu is a Swiss artist who lives on a small mountain farm in south-west Ireland. She is the third generation of artists in the Leu family. Recently Aia completed a major project – her book "The Art of the Leu Family" – which is a chronological journey through the whole family's art. Here she describes her nomadic life and the childhood adventures of this free-spirited and artistic family.

I was born "on the road" in 1971 on the Balearic Island, Formentera. My parents were hippies and I was their third child of four.

My father, Felix Leu, was born in Basel and started his nomadic life when, as a teenager, he moved from his grandparents home to live with his mother Eva Aeppli in Paris. Eva, the artistic pioneer of my family, had married Jean Tinguely who is famous for his delightful kinetic-machine sculptures. They were both part of the avant-garde art movement in the 50s and 60s and friends included the artists Yves Klein, Niki de Saint-Phalle and Daniel Spoerri.



My father met my mother, Loretta Buscaglia, in New York in 1965, while he was working as exhibition assistant for his stepfather Jean Tinguely. My parents were nomads and our early years were spent in Ibiza, London

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**My father tattooed western tourists, hippies, local fisherman, Hindus and Christians**

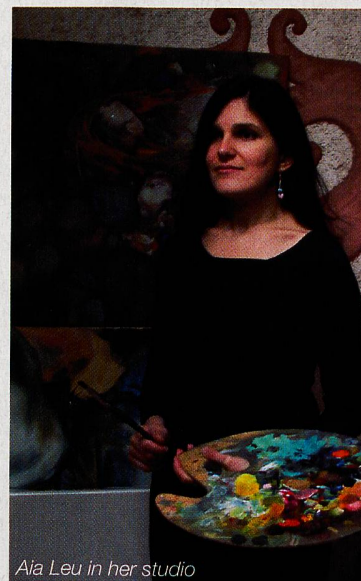
and Greece. We also lived for a while in France at my grandmother Eva's farmhouse, where I remember dressing up with my older sister Ama in the antique silk gowns she used for her sculptures. We also visited the studio, where Jean Tinguely and Niki de Saint Phalle worked, and despite being told not to, we kids had fun crawling among the Styrofoam

sculptures and watching them being painted in psychedelic colours.

My father supported us by making jewellery and as a pavement artist. In 1976, he was inspired to become a tattoo artist. This was a way to combine his artistic talents with earning a more stable income. India was perfect for this. We moved to Goa, where we rented a local house on the beach among the coconut trees. My father tattooed western tourists, hippies, local fishermen, Hindus and Christians. Life was good for us kids. We had a huge gang of friends from similar backgrounds and spent all day outside in the sun, swimming and collecting shells on the beach. The fishermen would bring in huge catches of fish and generously give us bags full. We were mostly home-schooled by my mother who had studied child-care in New York. From India, we moved to Nepal for six months. My memories are of a magical kingdom, where Ama and I went to traditional dance classes, which we loved.

Living in different countries as young children meant we picked up languages easily, and so coming back to Switzerland in 1981 and having to speak French in school was not so hard. We settled in Lausanne, where my older brother Filip learnt tattooing. He has since become world renowned for his work. Our nomadic upbringing affected us all, especially my younger brother Ajja, who now tours worldwide as a musician. Moving so often made us kids a strong unit and the four of us have stayed very close.

I travelled back to India as a young adult, where I met my English husband, Steve Allin, who is now a leading expert of hemp building. We moved to a small mountain farm in the wild mountains of Kerry. Though not



Aia Leu in her studio

as dramatic as the Alps, the colours and light there inspired me to paint landscapes, and for the last fifteen years I have been exhibiting my work. Though I still love travelling, having a permanent home to return to is lovely.

Most of my family now live in Switzerland and I always look forward to the annual family reunions, an event in the Jura mountains during which we usually continue the family tradition, started by Eva and Tinguely, of collaborating on painting or other works of art together.

## 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 Art of the Leu Family

is compiled by Aia Leu. It is richly illustrated with 152 colour and 38 black and white images.

The book also includes an introduction on the family history written by Aia Leu and a foreword by journalist Eva Suszkiewicz.

It is an interesting addition to the library of anyone intrigued by the artistic story of this unusual family.

Priced at 45 Euros, the book can be ordered from [www.seedpress.ie](http://www.seedpress.ie)

