

Zeitschrift: Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad
Herausgeber: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad
Band: 44 (2017)
Heft: 3

Anhang: Regional edition : United Kingdom & Ireland

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REGIONAL EDITION

UNITED KINGDOM & IRELAND

Editorial

I would like to take this opportunity to say my farewells, as this is my final issue as editor of the Swiss Review. Exactly six years ago I began my search for Swiss-related stories the length and breadth of the UK, and subsequently Ireland, to entertain and inform you, the Swiss expat community. I have met some wonderful people on the way, whether at embassy functions, Swiss club gatherings or simply via email exchanges.

■ *Although I am not Swiss you have always made me feel very welcome and it has been an absolute joy to serve you these past six years. A special thank you goes to my now good friend and designer Marc (@on-IDLE) who works tirelessly – and for very little money – to ensure beautifully presented pages and finally, I'd like to wish your new editor Gioia Palmieri every success for the future.*



ANDREW LITTLEJOHN,
«UK & IRELAND PAGES»

News: Does Swiss National Day London have a future?

Swiss National Day London's festivities, which have always been regarded as a celebration of Swiss culture and heritage and enjoyed by hundreds in the south-east of England, have for the first time in 6 years been cancelled. Daniel Pedroletti, the outgoing Chair of the Swiss National Day London Committee explains why.

Following the failed celebration of the Swiss National Day in 2009, the then Ambassador of Switzerland invited the presidents or representatives of all Swiss clubs and societies in and around London to explore the possibility of organising a well-planned and attractive celebration in 2010. After a constructive discussion, the foundations were laid for a brand new organisation and the rules and new name were adopted. Swiss National Day London was born.

From 2010 to 2016, we produced six successful events, each attended by over 300 people. (An exception was made during the Olympic year when the Swiss Embassy set it up.) For us, the emphasis was always on planning a programme suitable for the whole family. We did our best to cater for everybody, from toddlers right through to octogenarians. Everyone was made to feel welcome.

On one occasion, participants were given the opportunity to have a go at playing the Alphorn, which they discovered was no easy task. On two occasions we had a choir in their traditional costumes flown in from Switzerland, once from la Romandie and once from Ticino. Young and old were more than happy to sing along. We



will always be indebted to the staff of the Swiss Church in London who looked after the kids' activities. It has been particularly pleasing to see that the number of youngsters taking part has increased each year.

Our national day is a unique opportunity for Swiss citizens and friends of Switzerland to come together to celebrate our history and for our children and grandchildren to learn about their heritage.

To achieve this degree of success, you need a strong dedicated team willing to spend time and energy for the cause. Our committee members had these attributes, but we felt that it was now time to hand over to new blood with renewed energy and ideas. This is why we invited the presidents or representatives of all Swiss clubs and societies from in and around London to come together to elect a new committee according to our rules. But unlike 2009, the request was met with silence, which begs the question: If the undersigned had been the Ambassador, would the response have been more successful?

Daniel Pedroletti
Outgoing Chair
Swiss National Day London
info@swissnationalday.co.uk



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Feature: Switzerland triumphs at Crufts

Switzerland enjoyed dog history at this year's Crufts winning the Large Agility Award. It's the first time a Swiss Team has won a trophy at the world's largest dog show. Collie Cute, led by her trainer Simon Brenca, made the most eloquent sharp turns and twists, highest jumps and fastest sprints to pick up the prestigious international prize. The Swiss Review contacted the champion trainer from Bern shortly after their victory on the 'green carpet' to find out what it takes to train a winner.

Simon Brenca (SB): Training is a series of building blocks. Step by step, the dog focuses on each individual obstacle. These blocks are gradually put together in short sequences and varying difficulty levels. A dog can start taking part in competitions at 18 months. Each animal learns at its own speed and this we have to respect. It's like in school, some students learn faster than others. But most important is developing a strong relationship between dog and handler.

Swiss Review (SR): What do you look for in a dog to know it will be good performer?

SB: For me it's much more important that I choose a healthy dog. I look into the genetics, their ancestry. How did their parents perform? But in the end it's the handler that makes the dog. The handler trains the dog, pushes him and teaches him. We virtually 'form' the dog our way. I don't mean this in a negative way.

SR: What does it feel like when it is just you and your dog alone on the green carpet?

SB: Standing at the start, Cute (my dog) between my legs, I quickly go through the course in my head one last time. One last deep breath. Ready, set, the whistle blows, and we're off! From now on I just function, running through the course, Cute never for one second out of my sight. I hear the crowd somewhere off in the background. I can't allow myself to be distracted. A tiny bit of inattention can result in a mistake or even worse in a disqualification. The greatest feeling is when I cross the line, Cute jumps into my arms and I turn around to see '1st place' flashing up on the big screen. It's at that moment all the adrenaline dissipates and is replaced by emotion.



Cute on her way to victory

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The Regional Consular Centre (RCC) in London looks after Swiss nationals in the United Kingdom and Ireland, fulfilling many of the functions of a municipal administrative authority in Switzerland.

It is important that your records and contact details with the RCC are up to date so please forward any changes by post (16-18 Montagu Place, London W1H 2BQ) or e-mail (rcclondon@eda.admin.ch).

Twice a year the Embassy publishes an electronic newsletter with information of interest to Swiss nationals living in the United Kingdom. To download past issues and to subscribe to future mailings, please visit the Embassy's website: www.eda.admin.ch/london -> News -> Newsletter



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Arts: Alberto Giacometti retrospective

For four months this year (10th May – 10th September), the Tate Modern in London has been given unparalleled access to the Fondation Alberto et Annette Giacometti's collection and archive to create the first major Alberto Giacometti retrospective in the UK for more than two decades. The exhibition includes rarely seen plaster and drawings. Alongside these are more familiar bronze sculptures and oil paintings showing Giacometti's distinctive elongated figures.

Sculptor, painter, draughtsman and print-maker, Alberto Giacometti is one of the great artists of the twentieth century. To coincide with Tate Modern's *Giacometti* exhibition, the Swiss Review looks at five interesting facts about the artist and his varied career.

GIACOMETTI – 5 FACTS

- 1 Although he also worked with painting and drawing, Giacometti is most famous for his sculptures, particularly his figures.
- 2 The human head was an important motif in the artist's work. He was fascinated by the idea that one's life lies within our eyes.
- 3 Giacometti preferred to use models who he knew personally, including his brother Diego.
- 4 Giacometti's studio in Paris at 46 Rue Hippolyte was, despite his success, far from glamorous.
- 5 In 2010, Giacometti's life-sized bronze sculpture of a man sold for 140 million dollars, becoming the most expensive sculpture.



Feature: A Class Act

Dr Louis Guenin is a Swiss dentist and one of Britain's leading dentists working in Central London with his son Dr Christian Guenin as senior partner of Holford Partners dental surgery in the centre of London's prestigious Harley Street district.

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1: North Wales Swiss Club

This year's Eisteddfod, an annual Welsh festival of music and poetry, is being held on the Isle of Anglesey in August. Each town on the island has been given the task of raising funds to help cover the costs of the event. Llangaffo, a village in the south, suggested an Alphorn concert – a first for Anglesey!

Early on the 8th April, we enrolled our son Ruben to take part in a musical workshop by renowned Alphorn musician, Frances Jones. The morning began learning about the goat horn, then the cow horn, as well as various other horns, culminating in the Alphorn. Ruben managed to successfully play a few notes on all the instruments. Frances not only illustrated the fore-runners of the Alphorn but also gave the children and adults an insight into its history.

Our appetite was set for the evening concert, which began with an introduction to Switzerland and a description of how the Alphorn came about. Even the Swiss amongst us learned a thing or two! Everyone was left amazed with the rendition of Amazing Grace and the Welsh contingent truly lived up to their reputation as 'The land of song' after the entertainment ended. There was even an opportunity to play the Alphorn, which is by no means as easy as it looks, but was taken up by a number of guests.

It was a delightful and informative evening, which ended around 11pm and left us wanting more, so we hope to be able to welcome Frances at one of our North Wales Swiss Club meetings soon.

BEATRICE SCHLEGEL

2: Edinburgh Swiss Club

Every year in spring, Edinburgh Swiss Club organises a Fondue evening to bring some Swiss traditions to the Scottish capital and to satisfy some cravings for 'Swissness', developed during the winter months in Scotland.

In preparation, we use, of course, original Swiss cheese in their original Swiss caquelons with Swiss cooks

Cowbell ringer Ruben



Tucking into a comforting fondue



Evy Wardill (outgoing President) and Jennie Dransfield (Secretary)



A trip on the London Gondola



stirring, just to make sure it turns out right. With a glass or two of white wine (and maybe some Kirsch), and after having immersed pieces of tasteful bread into the melted cheese, it is no wonder some guests should become nostalgic and suddenly burst into traditional Swiss songs which rang out across Saughtonhall Community centre, the venue for this delightful event, mixed with stories from the homeland; absolutely the best cure for homesickness!

Franz Muheim: 'A recipe which you cannot beat: get a room full of Swiss, melt cheese – thanks to our ancestors who gifted us lactose tolerant genes – of course, white wine is a must (a good Viognier is an

adequate replacement for Fendant) and even add in a few wee drams of Kirsch. It was an enjoyable evening, thanks to all who attended.'

RUTH MUHEIM

3: Yorkshire Swiss Club

We are pleased to report that Maria Atkinson was asked, and accepted, to take over the presidency of Yorkshire Swiss Club at our AGM in March at the Stansfield Arms in Apperley Bridge. Outgoing President, Evy Wardill, was thanked for her hard work and commitment during her 13 years in office. Thanks were also conveyed to Jennie Dransfield who has agreed to stay on as secretary to ensure continuity. Following the President's report and acceptance of the accounts, everybody enjoyed the delicious meal and company of compatriots.

For information about forthcoming events please contact Jenny on 01924 495 929 or Maria on 01423 781 239 or marcols.atkinson@gmail.com. Maria is looking forward to meeting as many members, and especially potential new members and their families, over the coming months.

JENNIE DRANSFIELD

4: La Causerie welcomes

La Causerie was originally formed in London during the early 1930s as a sewing club for Swiss French ladies. Now, our French speaking group meets regularly on the second Tuesday of each month at the Swiss Church in Endell Street, sharing a convivial time and living up to the name of 'La Causerie'.

We organise outings, visit museums, go for walks in London's many parks and go to restaurants. Come and meet us at one of our get-togethers, where we will be happy to welcome you.

For more information, please contact Lisa Hall.

Email: lisa.moerschwil@gmail.com

Phone: 020 8894 2114.

GENEVIÈVE HIGGIN

Society: Swiss Church London proves its versatility

In amongst the hustle and bustle of London's busy theatre district in Covent Garden are the immense green doors of our beautiful Grade II-listed building.

Behind these doors sits a light-filled haven of peace and serenity where we consistently engage with the Swiss community with our Sunday Service, weddings, baptisms and community events.

But more recently, our delightful building and spacious rooms have extended far beyond the traditional use of a church proving it to be a versatile and sought after space in London's West End.

We play host to corporate and private dinners, film nights and press launches. The space can be transformed into a lively and creative rehearsal room and we pride ourselves in offering the local community free lunchtime recitals from students of the Royal Opera House. We are also becoming recognized as a venue for high-end fashion shows during London Fashion Week.

All this, and a warm welcome, is why we are such a popular space for repeat venue hire, attracting a myriad of different people with distinct events from across London and beyond.

For further details of all our events and venue-related enquiries please contact Nat: venue@swisschurchlondon.org.uk +44 7590 879 201

1. Setting the stage for London Fashion Week



2. Tables set for a Christmas dinner



3. A beautiful and elegant wedding venue (Photo by Kathryn Pike, www.klpphotography.co.uk)



4. Royal Opera House Lunchtime Recital

5. Final rehearsal for Brandenburg Choral Festival Concert



Politics: Ireland nominates its new ASO representative

François Mayor was born in Lausanne in the Canton of Vaud and has been living abroad since 1979, working for the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs and ending

his career as Consul General of Switzerland in Marseille, and then 170 miles north in Lyon.

François retired in September 2016 and moved to Dublin with his

wife. His years as an expat and his professional experiences dealing with the issues of the Swiss Abroad contributed to his nomination to represent Swiss living in Ireland.



Books: How Swiss are you?

Mastering the art of being Swiss isn't always easy, even if you are Swiss. Now to help you make it (or fake it) acclaimed author Diccon Bewes has produced an entertaining and insightful instruction manual titled *How to be Swiss*. Using satire, the author's latest book covers a myriad of topics from socialising to history, and from culture to politics.

The first step to Helvetic heaven is often the toughest: how to greet the Swiss when you meet them. Once you've passed that test, the next takes you back in time through the history every Swiss knows (or should know). Further steps will have you

living and laughing like the Swiss, seeing the world through their eyes, negotiating a political maze, and finding Swiss bliss in the simplest of things. Not forgetting the Swiss Commandments, which are revealed in their full glory.

By the end, you will have learnt how to enter a lift properly and discovered why 1908 was such a special year; you will know how to spend your Sundays and have navigated the Swiss archipelago.

Created by best-selling author Diccon Bewes and Swiss cartoonist Michael Meister, *How to be Swiss* helps you realise how Swiss you are already, or how Swiss you want to be.



Feature: Alphorns in Guatemala!

In January, eight Swiss alphorn players and our own UK star player, Frances Jones, played their Swiss mountain horns at a number of unlikely locations in Guatemala, in Central America.

It was the whim of Swiss player Werner Ruetsch, who runs a thriving coffee and cardamom plantation in Guatemala, eight months on site and four months from his other home in Grindelwald.

'I thought it would be wonderful to show the delights of Guatemala to my alphorn-playing friends', said Werner, 'and what a fabulous time we had, warm sunshine every day, playing by crater lakes, up an active volcano, in among ancient Mayan temples and in front of glistening white cathedrals'.

The musical tour party of fifteen Swiss and Frances with her husband Martin, travelled throughout Guatemala for two weeks in the care of Suizomaya, a holiday company set up by another ex-pat Swiss alphorn enthusiast, Mario Gigandet.



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CULTURE: A linguistic hospitality for different cultures

Vanni Bianconi is a Swiss poet and translator from Locarno, Switzerland who now lives in London. His poems have been translated into various languages and published in book form, magazines and anthologies.

He's the founder and artistic director of Babel Festival and of the multilingual webmagazine 'Specimen. The Babel Review of Translations'. The Swiss Review's new editor Gioia Palmieri met up with Vanni recently to discuss his latest publication and projects.

Gioia Palmieri (GP): What is *Babel* and how does it fit into the international landscape?

Vanni Bianconi (VB): *Babel* is a literary festival that focuses on translation. Translation is a fundamental practice for the diffusion of knowledge and of written pleasure. But translation can also be understood as 'linguistic hospitality', a practice that prompts you to meet foreigners in their land, in order to be able to invite them into your own home. A translator must master the structure of a foreign language, but also the particular ways it is used in different contexts and its cultural significance. Therefore, translation offers a model for other kinds of hospitality, which is particularly pressing and necessary in a multicultural and migrating world.

GP: As writer and translator what does 'multilingualism' mean to you and what is its value in a multilingual country such as Switzerland, and in the UK, where English is the main spoken language?

VB: I cannot speak about England – even if England has recently spoken quite clearly for itself. But having recently worked in London on several literary projects – a festival in London,



Vanni
Bianconi

a festival in Switzerland, which focused on non-English London-based writers, and my book *London as a Second Language* – I came to realise that the diversity we associate with this city is far from being assumed as a positive value, and the same goes for its multiplicity of languages. London is ultimately a monolingual context, where many languages are tolerated. In Switzerland, on the other hand, despite its multilingualism is growing more and more theoretical, the plurality of languages is still considered a positive asset. In most cases at least, 'multi' is more hospitable than 'mono'.

GP: Are foreign languages often, and usually, translated in the UK?

VB: Only 1.5% of published books are translated, and this is a very low percentage. Of course, English encompasses a large variety of countries and cultures, and attracts many writers from other languages too. However,

His latest book is available here
www.humboldtbooks.com

Specimen magazine
www.specimen.press

Babel Festival
www.babelfestival.com



this potential diversity is mostly tamed. The driving force is the market, for good and for bad. Most foreign writers writing in English and publishing in the UK complain that they are forced to meet the 'client's' expectations, and are therefore prompted to adapt to the British literary tradition and so on.

GP: *Specimen* is a new magazine edited thanks to *Babel*, the festival that you founded. Why this project and what is its purpose?

VB: 'Specimen. The Babel Review of Translations' is a new project that brings linguistic hospitality a few steps closer: it's a cultural webmagazine entirely typographical and multilingual, that commissions, translates and publishes texts in any language and alphabet: if culture thrives on diversity (and 'multicultural' is therefore pleonastic) this old modernist dream is finally made possible with new technologies providing rich and fertile soil for words to come.

IMPRESSUM

HOW TO CONTACT THE EDITOR: Reports of Swiss society activities, news, coming events, correspondence, articles and advertising for the 'Switzerland in the UK & Ireland' section of the Swiss Review, should go to the editor: ANDREW LITTLEJOHN
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DESIGN:
Implemented by Marc Peter – on-IDLE Ltd
www.on-idle.com

The deadline for the next UK issue is: **Monday 21st August**
Date of publication: **Thursday 21st September**

Next Issues

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