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REGIONAL EDITION

UNITED KINGDOM & IRELAND

Editorial

Happy New Year to all our readers! Looking ahead to the coming year, I think that we are all holding our breath in view of the Brexit negotiations, but on a positive note, we can proudly confirm that the Swiss authorities are working very hard to safeguard the interests of our nationals working in the UK.

■ *Also flying the flag for Switzerland are our UK OSA-delegates who are trying to maintain and build upon the tight relationships we have with our homeland by proposing to introduce representatives of the Swiss living abroad into our parliament. They need our support! Above all, the most encouraging message for*

all of us is the active community life enjoyed by so many Swiss in the UK and in Ireland. I am sure you will take pleasure in reading how many people are involved in the varied cultural and social activities that keep the community united. Finally, I have the duty of reminding you all that on the 4th of March we are called to vote for the initiative 'No Billag'. The OSA committee has clearly spoken out against it by recognising the utmost importance of our Swiss Broadcasting Corporation for our nationals abroad!



GIOIA PALMIERI,
«UK & IRELAND PAGES»

Politics: Can Swiss nationals be represented in the Federal Assembly?



During the last OSA (Organisation of the Swiss Abroad) meeting Vincent Croset – one of the newly elected delegate living in the UK – has proposed launching an initiative in order to allow the Swiss National councils to have representatives of the Swiss abroad.

Thanks to the support of Loredana Guetg-Wyatt (UK), Daniel Plumet (France), Stéphanie Leu (France) and Constantin Kokkinos (Greece), a 'discussion group' has been formed with the common aim of understanding how to realise this objective.

'We have discussed three main aspects so far: the first one is what would be the advantages and disadvantages of having a better representation of the Swiss abroad in the parliament, and why we need it' explained Mr Croset. 'The second important issue is how it would happen in practice (how many representatives, who would elect them, how does the Constitution need to be changed, etc), and the last is how to construct a strategy for making this acceptable to the parliament and the Swiss people'.

In particular, the initiative could stumble at the Council of States, because those Swiss nationals living abroad cannot literally represent a canton at the moment. The proposal could not consider the possibility of the creation of a '27th canton', which would need to be a geographical entity, with a local government.

The new 'representatives' could easily join the lower house but it would unbalance the power of the upper house giving rise to several legal issues and problems linked to the changing of the constitution and the electoral law. This is one of the main reasons why the motion presented by Mario Fehr (SPZH) and a parliamentary initiative submitted by Carlo Sommaruga (SP-GE) were rejected by the Council of States in 2007.

'Of course, having National Councillors representing the Swiss abroad would be a big constitutional change but in many countries, citizens from abroad can be represented in the parliament, so they have a real voice! About 10% of Swiss citizens live abroad, and they need to be represented by people who know of their situation and concerns, which are often different from those of people living in Switzerland. Representation would also help Swiss expats to keep ties with the political life of their country of origin. Things always take time to change in Switzerland, so we will have to be patient. But I am confident that this will eventually happen'.

The Swiss National Council in Bern.



SAVE THE DATE: May 2018, FOSSUK AGM in Belfast

For the first time in its history, the 2018 FOSSUK AGM & Culture weekend is being held in Belfast. The new Ambassador to the UK, Alexandre Fasel, and all four Consul Generals will be join the event and the Swiss Embassy have already confirmed sponsorship of the traditional pre-dinner reception on Saturday evening. This is a rare opportunity to meet compatriots from all corners of the UK and forge new connections. At the FOSSUK AGM, many relevant topics are discussed and our members are updated on issues such as the

implications of Brexit for the Swiss living in the UK, OSA's work on the extremely sensitive issues of e-Voting as well as pushing parliament to bring into law, the right of every Swiss national living abroad to have a bank account with a recognised Swiss bank. We are currently working hard on updating the FOSSUK constitution, primarily to cater for the now five UK Delegates (four until this year) and there will be many other important issues that need voting on.

LOREDANA GUETG-WYATT, FOSSUK PRESIDENT



More info: swiss-societies.co.uk

Northern Ireland: 'Brexit brings uncertainty to local and foreign citizens'



Franziska Hewitt has been the Honorary Consul for Northern Ireland since 2011. She lives in Belfast with her husband and works as a psychotherapist for children and families with mental health issues. She attends, with passion, to the needs of the small, but united Swiss diaspora living in

the country. We have spoken to her about our compatriots' lives in this special moment for Northern Ireland.

How many Swiss people are living in Northern Ireland and what kind of professions are they engaged in?

There are 184 registered Swiss citizens resident in Northern Ireland (NI), working in a variety of jobs. We have, for example, a train manager, a health food shop owner, an accountant, a church minister, an electrical engineer and a tour guide. There are others who work in the textile industry. There are also some retired people and of course children. Some family members are 3rd generation immigrants.

Some moved here for work, others for family reasons or because they liked the quality of life. The Swiss I have met in NI are modest, kind and caring people. They seem to appreciate and blend in very well with the down-to-earth, helpful, humorous nature of the local people who, in turn, appreciate us for our reputation of being caring, reliable, neutral and hard workers.

Northern Ireland is a country that has suffered very much during the ages. What are the most important changes happening now?

At the moment we do not have a local government because the two most prominent and politically opposite parties have not yet been able to find a joint way forward. At the same time Brexit lies ahead. This situation brings uncertainty for businesses, public services and the movement of people. Many people are concerned about the economy getting weaker post-Brexit, the reintroduction of border controls and negative effects on the peace process.

In your understanding, what kind of concerns do Swiss people in NI have concerning the Brexit negotiations?

Northern Ireland is the only part of the UK with a land border with the EU, namely with the Republic of Ireland. In recent years the border has become less visible, and this has impacted on travel between the north and south for all kinds of reasons – trade, tourism, education and even medicine. This has been a contributing factor to the progress of the Northern Irish peace process.

In my view the prospect of Brexit brings uncertainty to local and foreign citizens in the province. Swiss people have expressed concerns in relation to business, the economy and prosperity. They worry that public services may be under increased pressure. They want to know what Brexit will mean for the movement of people.

The Swiss Embassy is closely following the developments around Brexit and is working hard alongside the competent Swiss authorities to conduct a dialogue with the UK government to safeguard the rights and obligations of the members of the Swiss community in the UK.



More info: belfast@honrep.ch

Swiss community living in the NI.

Embassy News: Brexit – Ensuring continuity in the Swiss-UK relationship

The UK's departure from the European Union will have a considerable impact not only on the UK itself, but also on third countries such as Switzerland in general, and the Swiss community living in the UK in particular. The Embassy is closely following developments around Brexit, and in implementing the Swiss government's 'Mind the Gap' strategy aims to safeguard the existing mutual rights and obligations between Switzerland and the UK after the UK's withdrawal from the EU, and to strengthen the bilateral relationship in all common areas of interest.

Switzerland and the UK enjoy a strong relationship, which is evident from the impressive economic footprint the two countries share. This close relationship that unites us is rooted in Switzerland's many bilateral agreements with the European Union and the UK's membership of the EU. Once the UK leaves the EU, this framework disappears from our bilateral relations. It is the

Embassy's task to help establish a replacement regime that will be effective on the day the UK leaves the EU. Since the Brexit referendum, the Embassy has been in constant contact with the UK government, and has helped the competent Swiss authorities to conduct and coordinate a dedicated dialogue to ensure continuity in all areas of our bilateral relationship – ranging from trade, transport, migration and education to research, data protection, financial services and the fight against fraud. These discussions also encompass the question of citizens' rights: the Swiss government has engaged in a close dialogue with the British authorities to ensure continuity and the protection of acquired rights of Swiss nationals living in the UK (and vice-versa) under the bilateral Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons. On 11 December the UK Prime Minister wrote an open letter to EU, EEA and Swiss citizens living in the UK. In the letter, Theresa May pointed out that the UK is working closely with Switzerland to ensure



that Swiss citizens living in the UK will also benefit from the arrangements between the UK and the EU. According to these arrangements, a new immigration system will be introduced under which all EU citizens will have to register for so-called 'settled status', which will presumably also apply to Swiss citizens living in the UK.

The Embassy is intensively working not only to avoid a 'cliff edge' in our strong economic relations, but also to safeguard the 'acquired rights' of the members of the Swiss community in the UK. For more information visit: [www.eda.admin.ch/london->FAQ Brexit](http://www.eda.admin.ch/london->FAQ-Brexit)

9th February: Literally Swiss

A literary cabaret of bold new writing from and about Switzerland. An All-Star Swiss-UK evening of readings, music, food and wine. Hosted by Rosie Goldsmith, Journalist & Presenter, Sounds Right Director, European Literature Network International Literature Consultant Chair, EBRD Literature Prize Supported by the Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia, the Embassy of Switzerland London and the European Literature Network.



More: www.tabernaclew11.com/whats-on

At The Tabernacle, London.

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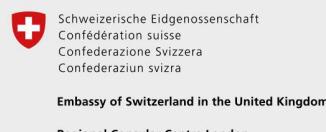
PASSPORTS AND IDENTITY CARDS

Information for Swiss nationals resident in IRELAND and NORTHERN IRELAND

The Regional Consular Centre in London (RCC) wishes to inform you that a staff member will visit Dublin with the mobile biometric station during the following dates:

16.04. – 20.04.2018

24.09. – 28.09.2018



Since the introduction of the biometric passport it has been necessary for applicants to attend in person. The mobile biometric passport station permits biometric data to be recorded for the issuing of identity documents (passports and/or identity cards) in Dublin.

Please contact the RCC to book an appointment, tel. +44 (0)20 7616 6000 (option 2), or rcclondon@eda.admin.ch

French: La Fête et la Semaine de la Francophonie

Every year around the 20th of March, French language lovers around the world are invited to celebrate the most romantic of Romance languages and culture. Switzerland joins the francophone countries represented to celebrate, 'La Semaine de la Francophonie'.

More info: www.francophonie.org

Unione Ticinese: The Swiss-Italian 'stuccatori' who made the British mansions great

Plasterworkers, or *stuccatori*, from villages on the southern shores of Lake Lugano were perhaps the first distinctively Ticinese group to make their mark in England. Between about 1720 and 1760, they were responsible for the flamboyant plasterwork in numerous British and Irish stately homes and the more subdued plasterwork in churches, notably St Martin's-in-Fields, which looks out onto Trafalgar Square.

On Tuesday 26 September a group of 18 members of the Unione Ticinese, with friends, were lucky enough to be given an in-depth tour of Ditchley Park in Oxfordshire. It contains some outstanding work by the *stuccatori* but is normally closed to the public. The house stands in the midst of handsome and abundant parkland set in rolling countryside, well populated with cattle. The house was built for a grandson of Charles II in the early 1720s but the splendour one might expect is hidden within the walls. From the outside it looks the paradigm of a medium-sized but elegant English country house with an understated central block connected to smaller buildings on either side by short, curving colonnades.

The tour was expertly led by Mike Montagu, the bursar of the Ditchley Park Foundation, which uses the house mainly for high-powered conferences on current affairs. Mike has a deep knowledge of the house, and his love and enthusiasm were evident. The most notable aspect of the house for most visitors is its association with Winston

Churchill. During the darkest days of the Second World War, he and his cabinet repeatedly used the house to transact business and to relax a little, at weekends.

Of particular interest to us, however, was the work of the *stuccatori* and in particular the contrast between the grand front hall and the saloon into which it leads. The hall was designed and its execution tightly controlled by James Gibbs (the architect of St Martin-in-the-Fields) and William Kent, the dominant figure in British interior design at the time. All the decorative and spatial elements, and particularly the large allegorical figures and busts adorning the hall, are strictly disciplined to create a harmonious, balanced whole. By contrast, in the saloon, the plasterwork runs riot. It seems that the *stuccatori* led by Giuseppe Artari, together with the young Francesco Vassalli and Francesco Serena persuaded their patron to give them free rein. The results are exuberant, energetic... and just a little out of control! Our guide suggested that some of the heads were actual portraits – possibly of the *stuccatori*'s wives or mothers. Delicately-moulded drops of breast milk could be observed on the body of Ceres, the principal figure in the central roof roundel, while the faces of other figures suggested ecstasy – reminding us that when not in England, the *stuccatori* were busy creating erotic figures for the walls and ceilings of the palaces of German prince-bishops.

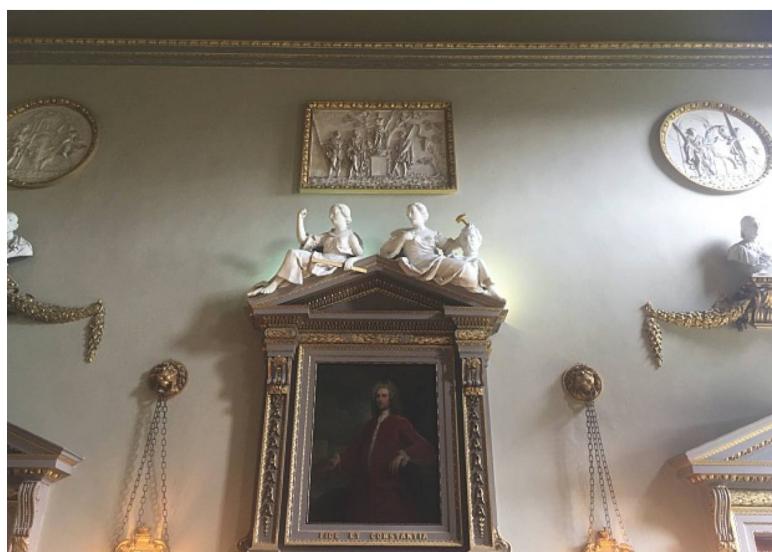


There were, of course, many other rooms with fine paintings and furniture, not to mention the library which now serves as the conference room. We were also taken upstairs to see the bedrooms, used for visitors attending the conferences. Among them were the spacious bedrooms, with fourposter beds, occupied by Churchill and his wife.

Finally, we had tea and biscuits in one of the rooms, before having the opportunity to step outside to enjoy the grounds in the warm, slightly misty, autumn sunshine.

PETER BARBER

More info: www.utl.org.uk



New Helvetic Society: The tradition of L'Escalade in London

One of the most important events in the Genevan calendar is *L'Escalade*, commemorating the fateful event of December 1602 when the Duke of Savoy, Charles Emmanuel, attempted to take Geneva by surprise but suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of its citizens.

For over one hundred years, Genevans and friends have commemorated *L'Escalade* in London. December 2017 was no exception as 40 people gathered at the Embassy of Switzerland with our guests of honour, Mr and Mrs Voeffrey, both from Geneva. François Voeffrey is the Minister and Deputy Head of Mission at the Embassy.

Following a delicious three-course meal including the traditional vegetable soup and this year, Longeole, a local delicacy, guests sung

the *cé qué lainô*, the Genevan Hymn, lead by Gabriel Courvoisier, an opera singer also from Geneva. Last but not least, the event ended with the traditional smashing of the chocolate *marmite* (cauldron) filled with marzipan vegetables. Daniel Guenin smashed it to smithereens while reciting *Ainsi périront les ennemis de la République* (Thus perish the enemies of the Republic). This refers to how Catherine Cheynel, better known as *Mère Royaume*, poured boiling hot vegetable soup on soldiers scaling the walls of the city.

DANIEL PEDROLETTI

Events organised by the New Helvetic Society are open to all. For further information visit:

www.newhelveticsociety.org.uk

[f @NewHelveticSociety](https://www.facebook.com/NewHelveticSociety)



Swiss Club Yorkshire: Jeffrey Long's Fundraising Trek went Viral

On October 24th, Jeffrey, 86 years old and a Yorkshire Swiss Club member, set off along the Thames footpath from the London Eye to walk a mile for each year of his life to raise £1000 for the Royal British Legion. Among the well-wishers for the journey were the Swiss Ambassador in London, the Vicar of Bingley, the Lord Major of Bradford and the Chief Commoner.

Maria Atkinson (Yorkshire Swiss Club) and Stephen Cooper (Support our Paras) walked the first few miles with Jeffrey. The former paratrooper, who has received an MBE for his fund-raising efforts, walked in combat gear once he was out of central London. Despite sore feet due to chemotherapy, he reached the end of his journey in Caversham. 'My base was in Weybridge, Surrey and it took me up to two and half hours to get to and from the Thames each day. This has been the toughest I have done so far. I've really

had to push myself.' Jeffrey received an MBE for his previous fund-raising efforts.

During his challenge, Jeffrey boarded a train at Windsor railway station on his way to the starting point of his river walk, when he met Paula Modeste, a NHS manageress, who asked why he was wearing full combat gear. After hearing about his plans and the £80 he had raised so far, she took a selfie and posted it to her Twitter and Facebook pages: 'I have generous friends'. Jason Manford, Comedian and TV presenter, shared Paula Modeste's Facebook post which went viral. Jeffrey has raised over £75000 with his sponsored walk thanks to the BBC.

About £146 have been raised for the Royal British Legion and £1,395 for Support our Paras. Congratulations Jeffrey!

MARIA ATKINSON

Find out more: [f @yorkshireswiss](https://www.facebook.com/yorkshireswiss)



OSA: No to the 'No Billag' initiative

At the meeting in Bern on 3 November 2017, the OSA Board decided on a recommendation to reject the 'No Billag' initiative.

To maintain a close relationship with Switzerland and to act as our country's ambassadors worldwide, Swiss expats must have access to quality information around the world. The obligation of the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation (SRG) to provide information is essential for our compatriots abroad to exercise their political rights. The public service provided by the SRG gives Switzerland a voice in the media – above all via the platform swissinfo.ch – that can be heard by the whole world, thereby promoting and enhancing the image of Switzerland internationally. In addition, our cultural diversity and its appeal beyond Switzerland's borders are very important to the Swiss Abroad.



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London: Festa di San Nicolao

At the beginning of December, the Unione Ticinese held a traditional Festa di San Nicolao for five lucky children and their families. It was a lovely and cosy event with lots of toys and activities held in a nursery near Mornington Crescent.

The young guests were treated to an extra special appearance by San Nicolao, who gave out some fantastic gifts before continuing on his journey to meet all the other children on his 2017 list!

Finally, everyone enjoyed a buffet with plenty of good food and treats. The Unione Ticinese would very much like to thank Emilie Martinoni Hogenboom for organising the party.

FOSSUK WEBSITE

You can find all the information at one place, Club info, events, ASO news can now all be found in one place with the click of a mouse! Go to:

www.swiss-societies.co.uk



The World's Finest
Swiss Alpine Cheese.



Alpages.co.uk



1: Swiss Club Ireland

The Swiss Club Ireland held their very well attended Annual General Meeting and dinner at the residence of the Swiss Ambassador on 30th November, 2017. It was also the occasion for the book launch of 'Auf den Gipfeln der höchsten Liebe. On the Summits of the Highest Love', by Enzo Farinella. In the book, readers are able to walk in the footsteps of Irish Monks in Switzerland and throughout Europe. On Sunday, 14th January, at 11.00am, the club has organised a guided walking tour of Dublin followed by a luncheon. On Saturday, 3rd February, the annual Fondue Evening will be held in Dublin. Further details on all upcoming events can be found on the website: www.swissclubireland.ie.

2: Swiss Club Yorkshire

Young and older members of the Yorkshire Swiss Club enjoyed the lovely food and great company at their Christmas Dinner in York. The children helped to draw the raffle prizes and were rewarded with gifts from Samichlaus. A wonderful start to the festive Season for all. Discover more about our gathering and other events on Facebook @yorkshireswiss

MARIA ATKINSON

3: Swiss Club Manchester

Samichlaus

A great success enjoyed by all! To the sound of the bell here is Santa coming with his big book, bringing joy and individual attention to fourteen pairs of mesmerized eyes under the charm of silent adults too. Everyone loved this Santa, who, best of all, was fluent in all Swiss languages. What a Santa! Please Santa come again next year!

Morning Coffee

On 30th November, we revisited our old tradition in a new style with the first coffee morning of the season at the Plaza in Stockport. The meeting, in a comfortable public place, meant that no work was involved for any of our

Christmas
Dinner
in York.



2

Samichlaus in
Manchester.



3

First coffee
morning of
the season.



3

Secret
Santa with
a twist.



4

The youngest
member of
the Southern
Region
Swiss Club.



5

Southern
Region's
Christmas
dinner.



5

The Jones'
family from
Colwyn Bay.



6

members. Just sitting down, ordering a drink and enjoying catching up on the news with all present. Well attended, we'll do it again in the New Year!

Future event

Don't forget the Raclette Lunch Party on Sunday 18th March. More information available on our FB page @swissclubmanchester

PRESIDENT DIETER SENN AND THE COMMITTEE

4: Swiss Club Edinburgh

At the seasonally decorated Saughton-hall Community Center, 26 adults and 5 children came together for our Christmas Party. Everybody brought their delicious homemade food to the buffet, with contributions including mulled wine, Giffers-Tee, Zopf, biscuits, cake and much more. The children got a visit from Santa and for the adults there was 'Secret Santa with a twist', (we can only say that swapping gifts was allowed!). The afternoon passed in the blink of an eye and sadly it was soon time to say goodbye. Another wonderful celebration over.

SANDRA DUFING

5: Southern Region Swiss Club

At the Chäs Event on the 8th October at the Darby Green Centre, we had our usual fabulous spread! Forty-three adults and four children attended, the youngest member being just a few weeks old. The beautiful table decorations, made by Ruth, were welcome contributions to our raffle. Our last event was our January lunch organised at the Frensham Pond Hotel on Sunday the 28th.

BERNI CURTRESS

6: North Wales Swiss Club

This year, we had a smaller than usual North Wales Swiss Club cheese-melting gathering in December in Penrallt Church, upper Bangor. We would like to wish all our members a very happy and healthy 2018. Find out more: swissinwales.org FB: Swiss in Wales.

BEATRICE SCHLEGEL



Pics: The view from the top

These amazing pictures belong to Fiona Bunn, a British-Swiss Alpine landscape photographer, committed to raising awareness of the human impact on glacier landscapes.

'My alpine photography highlights both the ageless grandeur of the Alps, yet also its innate vulnerability to humankind's impact,' says Fiona on her work as Fi Photos.

Her photographs are inspired by her childhood visits and explorations of Swiss mountains as well as her interest in arts and graphic design. Fiona's photographs have been exhibited at the Menier Gallery and Brick Lane Gallery in London, as well as part of the Milan Expo.



For more of her work, visit:
www.fiphotos.org
 [@FiAlpinePhotos](#)
 [@alpineclick](#)
 [@FiAlpinePhotos](#)



Cartoons: Humour, joy and beauty

Viki Metzler is a Swiss-British painter, illustrator and cartoonist.

'Hence my style is very cartoony. In my twenties I moved from Zurich, where I grew up, to London to do a postgraduate in Character Animation at Central Saint Martins. I moved in Wales in 2012. The last couple of months I have been busy illustrating posters for TATA STEEL's Trostre plant in Llanelli. Right now I'm working on two painting commissions and I can't wait to get cracking on drawing more cartoons and



illustrate a story I have in mind. I would like to transmit humour, joy and beauty with my work. If I can achieve that, it would be wonderful. With the cartoons I can point out issues, visualise a thought, make people think... its a good tool for creating awareness, which is important to me and something I would like to do much more of.

www.vikicartoons.com
f @Vikicartoons

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: **GIOIA PALMIERI**
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