

**Zeitschrift:** The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK

**Herausgeber:** Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom

**Band:** - (1936)

**Heft:** 741

**Artikel:** The Swiss Olympia

**Autor:** [s.n.]

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-688711>

#### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

#### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

#### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

**Download PDF:** 07.01.2026

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

**VAUD.**

Dr. Albert Naef-Delapierre, since 1914 Professor of archaeology at the University of Lausanne, has been shot at, and killed by his wife. Mme. Naef is at present under supervision at the Asylum of Cery.

Professor Naef was born in 1862 in Lausanne. He studied archaeology at the University in Stuttgart and at the "Ecole Nationale des Beaux Arts" in Paris. In 1897 he was appointed archaeologist of the castle of Chillon, and two years later, the cantonal government entrusted him with archaeological studies in the canton of Vaud. Dr. Naef was a *doctor honoris causa* of the Universities of Zurich and Geneva.

\* \* \*

Dr. Alfred Renaud, a well-known authority on cancer diseases, and a surgeon at the cantonal hospital in Lausanne, has died at the age of 64.

**GLARUS.**

Through the death of M. Philipp Mercier, States Councillor, which occurred in Berne on the 16th inst., at the age of 64, the canton of Glarus loses one of its most distinguished sons.

M. Mercier was born in 1872 in Glarus. From 1896-1908 he was a member and later on President of the Communal Council of Glarus.

The deceased was for 30 years President of the Superior Court of the canton of Glarus. He started his political career in 1896 as a member of the "Landrat" over which he presided in 1905. In 1907 he was elected a member of Parliament (States-Council), and ten years later he presided over the 2nd Chamber.

For two years (1918-1920) he held the post of Swiss Minister in Berlin. In the army he reached the rank of a Brigade-commander, during the Frontier-occupation he was chief of staff of the 2nd, and later on of the first Army-Corps.

**GRISONS.**

The Cresta Run at St. Moritz, has been closed out of respect for King George.

**FRIBOURG.**

Two members of the cantonal government, namely M. Victor Buchs, chief of the Public Works Dept., and M. Marcel Vonderweid, head of the Cantonal Military Dept., have intimated, that they wish to relinquish their posts at an early date, for reasons of health.

**ST. GALLEN.**

M. Edwin Ruckstuhl, a member of the cantonal government, has resigned from his office for reasons of health, he is 69 years of age. M. Ruckstuhl served his canton for over 40 years, first as a judge and since 1906 as a member of its government.

**PERSONAL.**

We extend our best wishes for a speedy recovery to Pasteur Hoffmann-de Visme of the Eglise Suisse, who is laid up with an acute attack of neuritis.

**NOUVELLE SOCIETE HELVETIQUE**  
**London Group.**

The Council of the N.S.H. begs to refer all Members to the announcements in this issue of the MEMORIAL SERVICE which will be held at the Eglise Suisse in Endell Street on Sunday, 26th January, at 11 o'clock a.m., and hopes that every Member will attend.



**To SWITZERLAND in**  
**— 3 HOURS BY AIR —**  
**LUXURIOUS TWIN-ENGINED**  
**— DOUGLAS AIR LINER —**

*Smooth and comfortable*

**LONDON-BASLE OR ZURICH**  
**£13. 16.0 RETURN**

**SWISSAIR**

Booking by any travel agent or Imperial Airways (General agents of Swissair) or Swiss Federal Railways, 11b, Regent Street, S.W.1.

**PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS AT THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE LONDON GROUP OF THE NOUVELLE SOCIETE HELVETIQUE.**

January 17th, 1936.

It is again my privilege to address to you from the chair a short survey of the activities of our London Group during the past year. Without immodesty I may say that we have every right to take a legitimate pride in the work achieved. Our activities have increased all round; more meetings, the innovation of the super-discussions at the Foyer, special meetings to honour our visitors Dr. Lätt and Miss Briod, three film-shows instead of two, and a number of other functions have allowed us to extend our usefulness in a good many directions.

In chronological order, these functions were:—

January 16th. Annual General Meeting at Swiss House.

February 15th. Dinner in honour of Mlle. Briod at the Foyer.

February 17th. Film-show at King George's Hall, with an address by Mlle. Briod.

March 20th. Monthly meeting at Swiss House, the Rev. Hoffmann-de Visme on "A Journey to Naples."

April 26th. Souper at the Foyer, Mr. de Jenner speaking on the "Kriseninitiative."

May 17th. Monthly meeting at Swiss House, Mr. J. Belaïeff on the "Karakorum Expedition 1934."

June 21st. Souper at the Foyer, Mr. Céresole speaking on "Swiss Traffic Problems."

June 23rd. Dinner at the Foyer, in honour of Dr. Lätt, with the Swiss Minister in the chair.

September 18th. Monthly meeting at Swiss House. Report on the Journée des Suisses à l'Etranger at Baden by Mr. Suter.

October 18th. Souper at the Foyer, Dr. Egli speaking on "Swiss Democracy in the European Crisis."

November 20th. Monthly meeting at Swiss House, Mr. Christian Kunzle speaking on his work at Davos.

November 30th. Film-show at King George's Hall with addresses by Messrs. Mittelholzer and Tschiffeli.

Our Group also took an active part in a Mittelholzer Film-show in March which was jointly undertaken by the Swiss Mercantile Society, the City Swiss Club and ourselves; similarly, together with the Swiss Orchestral Society, in a Concert-Lecture at Conway Hall in November, when we heard Mme. Zublin-Spiller, die "Soldatenmutter." On the occasion of the King's Jubilee the Group organised an address of congratulations on behalf of the Swiss Colony in London which was handed to the Secretary of State for presentation to His Majesty the King.

Our activities on the secretarial side have consequently also grown heavier, of which a much larger correspondence and more frequent visits to Switzerland are the proof. I have again had the pleasure of representing the Group at the annual meeting of the Swiss Abroad held at Baden in August, on which occasion I have met again some of the outstanding workers in our movement. These contacts are of the greatest possible value to us and supply fresh inspiration; there is no doubt that this function which this year for the first time has been arranged independently has proved to be a very wise and effective piece of propaganda for our cause.

We have sold this year over 420 Calendars, and up to date about 125 copies of the new Nouvelle Société Helvétique book "Mon Pays," "Unsere Schweizer Heimat." The good work is going on and we finally hope to supply every Swiss family in England with a copy. While speaking of the secretarial work, I would not omit to pay a very sincere tribute to Mme. Clara Müller for her thoughtful, obliging and untiring assistance in all these matters. I would further express here the thanks of the Group to Mr. Stauffer and the "Swiss Observer" for the useful and able preparation and publication of our reports and advertisements. We are also indebted to a number of associations and institutions, both here and on the Continent, for their publications and printed matter sent to us in the course of the year.

I am proud to report to you that our relations with the Minister and the Legation remain the happiest possible; our sincere thanks are due to them both, and we express them here with deep satisfaction. The Minister is always ready to collaborate in our activities and to assist us whenever we ask for his guidance. We may be assured, therefore, that he is in sympathy with our aims and that our efforts merit his appreciation. The Group has been participating in the obligations and festivities of the Colony and your President has been invited to a number of annual banquets of our sister societies.

There is one particularly bright indication that our labours are not in vain, I am speaking of the accretion of eight new members in the course of the year. With the inclusion of two new Legation members, four losses through death, repatriation and naturalisation, this brings the total membership of 125 at the beginning of 1935 to 131 at this date. It is a tremendous satisfaction to me that we are again able to attract new blood which will, in time, guarantee the continuance of the movement in London. As you know, I have always held the conviction that, if a few of us could hold together the nucleus of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique in England during the years of reaction, the movement would grow again by its own impetus in times to come. If, therefore, these new members are a proof that the lean years have passed, we may look into the future confidently.

I think I may say with justification that, in the year just passed, we have again done our best according to our ability and condition. If this "best" has been insufficient and clumsy, we must make up our minds to gain by the experience again, but we must beware of external influences warping our purpose and guiding our feet into a narrow groove. We are elated to-day by the first definite signs of recovery and we believe that the coming year will accentuate this tendency still further. We are still true to our old principles:— *Service in the cause of True Patriotism, the Welfare of the Swiss Abroad and the Welfare of Switzerland.* In this belief we shall carry on and look to the future of the London Group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique with calm assurance.

**THE SWISS OLYMPIA.**

By PAUL DE VALLIÈRE.

In the 14th and 15th centuries the Swiss Confederacy — or "Corps helvétique," as the Confederation of Cantons was called in France — was surrounded by enemies. Training in the art of war was a necessity of life. The military institutions of the Confederacy formed its foundation and its scaffolding; the physical education of the people was under the constant attention of the authorities. The spirit of Olympia, which had lapsed into oblivion for 2,000 years, and which in the Middle Ages was only practised by the knights and nobles, came to life again in the whole of Switzerland. Thus it came to pass that the small democratic communities in town and country reached back across the centuries to ancient Greece and revived the cult of physical strength, self-sacrifice and the scorn of death in the service of the common weal.

How is it possible that the Swiss never mention this splendid athletic tradition of theirs? Thirty years ago, when the Olympic Games were re-introduced, the official speakers jumped straight from Greece and Rome to the German gymnasts of the 19th century, never alluding, even by a single word, to the nation that had really revived the spirit of Olympia. The Swiss themselves, too, remained silent and forebore to mention the part their ancestors had played in the history of athletics. Seldom has there been such ingratitude, and it must be atoned for to-day.

On what lines did the old Confederates carry out their scheme of national physical culture? — Boys from eight to sixteen years of age were compelled to practise gymnastic exercises under the control of the district councils, the bailiwicks, governors and guilds; they had to go in for sprinting and long-distance running, putting the weight, shooting with the cross-bow, swimming, fencing, riding and other trials of skill. The magistrate and other leading men of the community personally supervised the training, which was carried out under the charge of veterans. At the age of sixteen those found fit for the task were allowed to go to war with the army as baggage-boys. Alien children who had regularly attended the exercises were given citizenship. Between the ages of sixteen and eighteen the cadets learned to wield the eighteen-foot spear, the halberd and the sword, and were subjected to the regular discipline of the troops. "Hornussen" (hornets) and other ball-games were introduced to add variety to the drill. Sprinting was endowed with special importance. The foot-soldiers had to practise keeping pace with galloping horses. In the Battle of Murten the "children of lost lives" seized the reins of mounted enemies and pulled the passing riders from their saddles. Practice with the cross-bow and gun made the eye keen, the body agile and the will strong. Even in those times the Swiss were excellent and enthusiastic marksmen, just as they are to-day.

At the age of eighteen, when he had been trained in the use of arms, the young man was enrolled in the army, received a helmet and coat of armour, and had a white cross sewn on to his doublet. His boyhood's dream was realised. But his training still continued until he was twenty-four. A master-at-arms taught him how to use the sabre, the Swiss sword and the dagger. Re-

ports of battles took the place of dull theory; tactics were learned in the actual field. The real military school, in fact, was war itself. Youth, inspired by the deeds of its elders, acquired a dangerous taste for heroic feats and adventures. In 1477 more than a thousand children who had followed the army as far as Nancy, had to be brought home by force. In Zurich, Berne and Freiburg hundreds of youths fought pitched battles in the public squares. Energetic measures had to be taken to curb the excessive eagerness of these future defenders of the Fatherland.

In olden times Switzerland also had her sports festivals, her Olympiads — events organised on a grand scale which often coincided with the anniversary of a victory or signing of a political treaty of alliance. They opened with a religious ceremony. The populace cheered the procession, which was preceded by heralds in the colours of the Canton. The banners were attended by a guard of honour. This tradition has been preserved down to the present day in the shooting and gymnastic festivals. With a rattle of drums and a blare of pipes and trumpets, the combatants entered the lists, there to swear a solemn oath that they would observe the rules of the contest and abide by the verdict of the umpire. The programme of the Federal "Olympiad" of 1465, for instance, reads as follows: Foot race over 400 paces, endurance race over 10,000 paces. Jumping: three leaps on one foot over three standard measures of length and height. Putting the Stone: over three distances with three stones of from 45 to 67 pounds weight. Wrestling: three rounds with elimination. Riding: race over 1,000 paces, obstacle jumps. Cross-bow Shooting: free-arm, butt against shoulder, over distances of from 100 to 300 paces. — There were also fencing championships and exhibition bouts between lancers and halberdiers.

In the intervals popular ballad-singers praised the heroic deeds of the last military campaign. To the excited enthusiasm of the multitude Veit Weber struck up his famous "Murten Song":

"Sad winter-time has fled away  
And birds in the wood are singing;  
Now the wooing month is here,  
But also the time for battle.  
To arms, then, comrades bold!  
With God to victory and safe return!"

Substantial prizes were offered, consisting of richly decorated horses, bullocks and sheep, or golden rings which the soldiers wore in their ears; there were silver or gilt goblets, too, and daggers and doublets (in the colours of the Canton), weapons, suits of armour, and lance-pennants embroidered by the senators' wives. The champion marksman received a golden chain, so long that he could put it three times round his neck. Victors became exempt from taxes, tolls and soccage. The mountain-dwellers from the heart of Switzerland, their bodies tanned by the Alpine sun, were loudly cheered as they presented themselves before the umpires; the laughing, lively Appenzellers, too, with alproses in their hats, were loudly applauded, as were the tall athletes of the Grisons, the archers from Lausanne, the shepherds of Gruyère, while joyous, unending yodel songs echoed from one group to the other.

These festivals, many of which lasted a full month, ended with songs and merry feasting in which the participants swore eternal friendship. The return of the victors to their native Cantons was a veritable triumphal procession.

Such peaceful contests, which were repeated nearly every year, strengthened the bonds of Federalism, aroused a sound spirit of rivalry between the districts and Cantons, and promoted agility, daring and endurance — the best qualities a soldier can possess.

Thus the old Confederacy, with its allies and subjects (barely two million citizens in all) was in a position to train an army of 100,000 soldiers about the year 1470, put men in the field who were experienced in the art of war, and face every one of its adversaries with a superior force — the famous foot-soldiers whom Machiavelli called the "Conquerors of Kings."

S.V.Z.

Telephone: MUSEUM 2982      Telegrams: FOYSUSSIE LONDON

**FOYER SUISSE**  
12 UPPER BEDFORD PLACE  
RUSSELL SQUARE,  
LONDON, W.C.1

Quiet position in centre of London.  
Central heating and hot & cold water  
throughout.

Continental cooking.

Management:  
SCHWEIZER VERBAND VOLKSDIENST.

### ARMS OF VAUD.



Per fess argent and vert, in chief on three lines the words "Liberté et Patrie" or, fimbriated sable.

The arms of Vaud symbolize particularly *romand* into the Swiss Confederation as a separate canton in 1803. No arms existed prior to that date.

Green, a colour much in favour with the liberals, was the distinctive sign of the inhabitants during the French invasion that put an end to the rule of Berne. The insurgents had, in addition to the green cockade, a green flag and the motto: "Liberté, égalité, borrowed from the French.

Green remained popular and was readily adopted for the national emblem, and the motto, altered to *Liberté et Patrie*, incorporated into the escutcheon. In order to comply with the heraldic usage that two metals cannot come into contact but must be contrasted with a tincture, the gold letters of the motto are surrounded with a black border.

The arms of Vaud mark the entry of the  *Pays* the splendid nature and pastoral charm of this beautiful canton.

*Drink delicious Ovaltine  
at every meal—for Health!*

**NESTLÉ'S**

**MILK**

**Richest in cream**

### CITY SWISS CLUB.

Messieurs les membres sont avisés que  
**L'ASSEMBLÉE MENSUELLE**  
aura lieu mardi 4 Février au Restaurant PAGANI,  
42, Great Portland Street, W.1. et sera précédée  
d'un souper à 7h 15 précises (prix 5/-).

#### ORDRE DU JOUR:

Procès-verbal.      | Démissions.  
Admissions.      | Divers.

Pour faciliter les arrangements, les participants  
sont priés de bien vouloir s'inscrire au plus tôt  
auprès de Monsieur P. F. Boehringer, 23, Leonard  
Street, E.C.2. (Téléphone : Clerkenwell 9595).

Le Comité.

### FORTHCOMING EVENTS.

Tuesday, February 4th — City Swiss Club —  
Monthly Meeting — (preceded by dinner 7.15  
sharp) at Pagan's Restaurant, Great Port-  
land Street, W.

Saturday, February 15th, at 7 o'clock sharp —  
City Swiss Club — Dinner and Dance, at the  
Hyde Park Hotel, Knightsbridge, S.W.1.  
Provisional Date.

Saturday, February 22nd, 1936 — Annual Ban-  
quet and Ball — Swiss Mercantile Society —  
at the Trocadero Restaurant, Piccadilly, W.  
Provisional Date.

### SWISS BANK CORPORATION,

(A Company limited by Shares incorporated in Switzerland)

99, GRESHAM STREET, E.C.2.  
and 11c, REGENT STREET, S.W.1.

Capital Paid up £6,400,000  
Reserves - - £1,560,000  
Deposits - - £39,000,000

### All Descriptions of Banking and Foreign Exchange Business Transacted

Correspondents in all : :  
parts of the World. : :

### DRESS WEAR —



The Tail Suit is rapidly ousting the Dinner Suit for all dress occasions.  
We are specialists in all Dress Wear and our Head Cutter has a wonderful reputation for his smart west-end cut. No better value can be obtained.

DRESS SUITS  
FROM - 5 GNS.  
Lounge Suits from 3½ gns.  
ORDER NOW FOR XMAS

**W. PRITCHETT**

183 & 184, TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD, W.1.  
2 mins. from Swiss Mercantile School  
Telephone : MUSEUM 0482.

### Divine Services.

#### EGLISE SUISSE (1762). (Langue française).

10, ENDELL STREET, SHAFESBURY AVENUE, W.C.2.  
(Near New Oxford Street).

Dimanche 26 Janvier. 11h. — Service spécial en  
mémoire de feu Sa Majesté le Roi Georges V.  
Monsieur le Ministre C. R. Paravicini  
prendra la parole.

Liturie : M. R. Sauty, suffragant.  
Prédication : M. le pasteur C. Th. Hahn.  
6h.30 — Prédication : M. R. Sauty.

M. R. Hoffmann-de Visme reçoit à l'église, 79,  
Endell Street, W.C.2, le mercredi de 11h. à  
12h.30 et sur rendez-vous à son domicile, 102,  
Hornsey Lane, Highgate, N.6. S'adresser à  
lui (téléphone : ARChway 1798) pour tous  
renseignements concernant les instructions  
religieuses, les mariages et autres actes

### SCHWEIZERKIRCHE (Deutschsprachige Gemeinde).

St. Anne's Church, 9, Gresham Street, E.C.2.  
(near General Post Office.)

Sonntag, den 26. Januar 1936.

11 Uhr morgens.

Gedächtnisgottesdienst der Colonie aus Anlass  
des Ablebens Seiner Majestät Georgs V. in der  
Eglise Suisse in Gegenwart des Schweizerischen  
Gesandten in Grossbritannien.

Liturie : M. R. Sauty, suffragant.

Predigt : Pfarrer C. Th. Hahn.

Ansprache : Herr Minister C. R. Paravicini.

7 Uhr abends, Gottesdienst in St. Anne und  
St. Agnes, Gresham Street.

Anfragen wegen Religions-bezw. Confirmanden-  
stunden und Amtshandlungen sind erbeten  
an den Pfarrer der Gemeinde : C. Th. Hahn,  
43, Priory Road, Bedford Park, W.4 (Tele-  
phon : CHiswick 4156). Sprechstunden :  
Dienstag 12-2 Uhr in der Kirche ; Mittwoch