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SWITZERLAND GREETSS WALES

On October 29th, Cardiff, youngest capital in Europe, witnessed a real festival of friendship between Wales and Switzerland. Friendship is amply justified: the two countries have a lot in common. Both are small, both have a characteristic beauty of their own, both are pervaded by an atmosphere of friendliness and hospitality. And, from now on, Wales can claim a new distinction as the most unusual ski-ing country on earth. . .

There has always been a keen interest among the Welsh in the greatest winter sport of all, but interest alone is not enough. Snow is also necessary. Since Wales normally doesn't get more than a few days of true "white winter" a year, the future of local ski enthusiasts looked somewhat bleak. But where there's a will there's a way. The famous sand dunes, in some places 300 feet high, that line the coast of Wales, especially Merthyr Mawr, were recently declared suitable substitutes for snow.

Sand ski-ing, an unusual sport that can be practised all the year round, soon gained many enthusiastic supporters in both North and South Wales. The North Wales Ski Club came into existence early this year, following a suggestion by the North Wales representative of the Central Council for Physical Recreation. Equipment, however, proved a

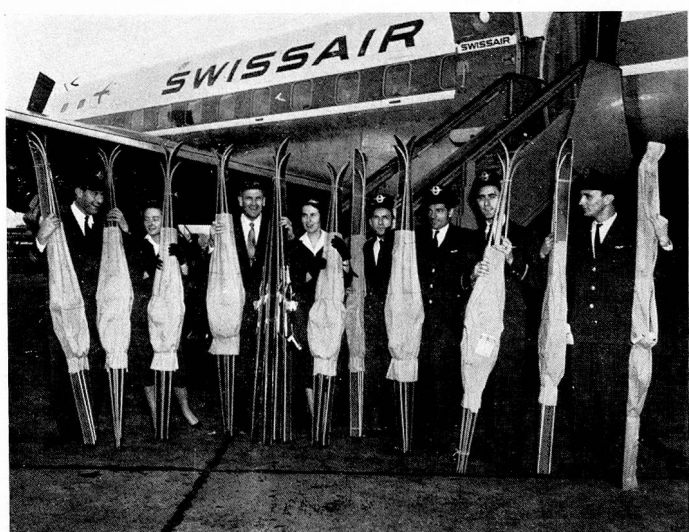


costly problem. So the club secretary took the initiative of writing to the President of the Swiss Ski Federation, asking for a gift of twenty pairs of used skis for the use of club members.

The Swiss Ski Federation was unable to help; it is constitutionally bound to pass on used skis to needy Swiss children in the Alpine villages. But the Swiss National Tourist Office and local and regional Tourist Boards stepped in and offered 20 pairs of brand new skis to the Welsh club.

The offer was enthusiastically accepted. The Welsh Tourist and Holidays Board decided to arrange a festive reception in honour of the skis — and the Swiss visitors who were invited to Cardiff to witness the event. The Lord Mayor of Cardiff, Alderman D. T. Williams, extended his patronage to the function. H.E. the Swiss Minister to the Court of St. James, M. Armin Daeniker, agreed to head the Swiss delegation.

The twenty pairs of skis arrived in a Swissair plane at London Airport and were then taken on to Cardiff. The Swiss delegation that arrived there on October 29th consisted of M. and Mme Armin Daeniker, M. G. Michel, President of the Swiss Ski Federation, M. H. von Bidder, representative of the Swiss National Tourist Office, M. W. Zuberbuehler, representative of the Grindelwald-First Chair Lift, Dr. E. Wiget, director of Ringier Swiss Illustrated, M. W. Wyler, general manager, Swissair, United Kingdom and Ireland, M. and Mme H. Ernst, General Manager, Swiss National Tourist Office, London, Mr. and Mrs. A. Kunz, Publicity Manager, Swiss National Tourist Office, London, Miss Madeleine Moser and Miss Brigitte Buchli, Swiss National Tourist Office, London, and Mr. Singleton, Swissair, Birmingham. Three lady members of the delegation wore Swiss national costume.



The twenty pairs of skis make a triumphal landing in a Swissair plane at London Airport.



Swiss and Welsh national costumes make a charming picture outside Cardiff station.

A warm reception was given to the delegation at Cardiff station; three young girls in Welsh costume added colour to the scene.

In the afternoon, the Lord Mayor of Cardiff gave a tea party at City Hall in honour of the Swiss Minister. At 7.15 p.m., the festive meeting, "Wales Greets Switzerland", began in the Assembly Hall.

A distinguished audience of a thousand guests watched the presentation of the skis. The handsome gift, worth £250, was presented by M. G. Michel,



M. Michel hands over the skis to the President of the Welsh Tourist and Holidays Board.

president of the Swiss Ski Federation, to Alderman Huw T. Edwards, chairman of the Welsh Tourist Board. Exchanges of goodwill were made by the Lord Mayor of Cardiff and the Swiss Minister.

Following Alderman Edwards's formal acceptance of the gift, the skis were handed over to Mr. Glyn Daniels, chairman of the Welsh Committee of the Central Council of Physical Recreation, which is

sponsoring the new sport in Wales. Next, they were handed over to two instructors of the Council and to the High Sheriff of Glamorgan — all staunch supporters of sand skiing in Wales.

No Welsh function would be complete without music — a party of girls from a Welsh school in Cardiff sang penillion to the accompaniment of a genuine Welsh harp. A famous male choir also made a glorious contribution.



M. Michel conveys the greetings of Berne in the shape of a wooden bear to the Lord Mayor of Cardiff.

The Swiss reciprocated the treat with a film show, giving the audience a true-to-life glimpse of their country's many natural beauties. Later, characteristic presents were exchanged. The Lord Mayor of Cardiff, first citizen of Europe's youngest capital, was given a wooden bear — suitable greeting from Berne, ancient capital city of Switzerland. He, in turn, presented the Swiss Ambassador with a beautifully carved traditional Welsh "loving spoon", an



Welsh schoolgirls in ancient costumes give a good sample of excellent choral singing.

affectionate token of the friendship between the two countries.

The evening ended on a note of informal friendliness. Autographs and addresses were exchanged, Welsh hosts and Swiss guests had plenty to chat about. In the background, the gleaming skis stood guard — promising links between Swiss snow and Welsh sand.



A carved loving spoon is presented to the Swiss Minister by the Lord Mayor of Cardiff.

The following day the Swiss delegation paid a visit to the old-world village of Merthyr Mawr which, it is hoped, will become the centre of sand ski-ing. They then attended a civic reception in Bridgend, where Mr. Lyn Howell of the Welsh Tourist and Holidays Board, and Councillor T. S. Norton, J.P., chairman of Bridgend Urban Council, made speeches.

In his reply, the Swiss Minister expressed the hope that one day Merthyr Mawr will grow into an internationally famous resort.



In an atmosphere of informal friendliness autographs and addresses are exchanged.



The Swiss Minister and Mme Daeniker admire the Bridgend pottery presented to them.

The Minister and his wife were presented with attractive pottery plates and vases, made at Ewenny Pottery. Each member of the Swiss delegation received a pottery beer mug as a souvenir. The party then left for a tour of the imposing Margam Steel Works and later travelled to Swansea.

In Swansea, they were greeted by the Mayor of Swansea, Councillor H. Libby, J.P., affectionately known in Swiss circles as "Mr. Teapot", owing to his unflagging devotion to tea — to the exclusion of all other beverages.



Two Swiss girls in colourful costumes give flowers to Mrs. Libby, Mayoress of Swansea.

A civic reception and dinner concluded the visit. The next morning the Swiss delegation returned to London.

At the end of the brief but crowded programme, both the Swiss and Welsh participants could feel that the twenty pairs of skis and the immense goodwill and friendliness that accompanied their presentation have forged yet another strong link between the two countries.