

Swiss hostel for girls

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SWISS HOSTEL FOR GIRLS.

The 2nd Annual Meeting of the Company was held at 9 Belsize Grove on 15th April under the chairmanship of Madame M. Daeniker.

The Assembly approved and passed the balance sheet and accounts for the year ended 31st December 1957, as well as a report from the Council of Management giving an informative picture of the first eleven months' actual training of the Hostel.

The Assembly also elected Mr. J. P. Christen, Joint Managing Director of Sandoz Products Limited, and Mr. W. Meier members of the Council of Management. Mr. Christen is to act as honorary treasurer in place of Mr. P. Bohny, who, unfortunately, had to return to Switzerland some time ago, and Mr. Meier succeeds Mr. G. Keller, who regrets that he cannot serve on the Council any longer.

The Warden of the Hostel, Miss R. Preiswerk, had prepared for the occasion a detailed report on the activity of the Hostel during the year 1957. We have much pleasure in reproducing below some extracts which should prove of particular interest to all members of the Colony concerned with the welfare of Swiss girls in this big city.

"After one year's running with a total number of 1,530 guests and 17,134 overnight stays, nobody will contest the need for a Swiss Hostel. Even before the official opening we had a few guests and from April 1st until December 20th we had a full house. Thanks to the widespread publicity through papers and radio, the Swiss Hostel for Girls is known almost in every village of our country.

"Our guests were mostly young girls between 18 and 24 years, but throughout the year we had also a few elderly ladies. In fact our house was sometimes all in one: nursery, hospital, boarding-house, and even mental home. We would not fulfil the purpose of the Hostel if we only welcomed the privileged girls and not those in need and distress.

"The large majority, namely 1,435 girls, were Swiss, the remaining 95 other nationals. As long as room is available, we like to have a few foreigners, especially if they are English speaking. It helps our Swiss girls to get a wider outlook.

"Judging that girls under 18 years are too young to lead an independent life in London, we do not accept them and advise their parents to send them either to a boarding school or a convent. The only exceptions we made concerned girls who were already in this country and who might have come into difficulties in another place.

"Frequently we are believed to be an agency. The calls and visits from ladies looking for a Swiss girl are numerous and if we dealt with them it would mean another full-time job.

"Apart from offering our guests pleasant accommodation and good food we try to interest them in cultural matters. Here are some of the lectures and functions organized during the year:

13th April, Mr. E. Cottet: Film on the Fête des Vignerons; 5th May, Rev. Reverdin with group of the Jeunesse: 'Mixed Marriages'; 16th October, Mrs. M. Meier: 'Education in England'; 11th November, Mr. Th. Haller: 'Randbemerkungen über die Engländer' with films; 20th November, Mrs. V. Alexander: 'The

National Trust' with colour slides; 22nd November, Mr. R. Durgnat: 'The Church of England'.

"Besides these functions our girls were always invited to attend the lectures held by the Nouvelle Société Helvétique at our Hostel and on several occasions they did so.

"During Advent we had carol-singing every Sunday evening under the excellent leadership of a girl of our staff.

"A dance was held every first Saturday in the month to which the girls were allowed to invite their boy friends. It has become a tradition and young men from the College of the Swiss Mercantile Society, the Swiss Bank, and the Churches come in regularly. Unfortunately the girls are always in a majority. They would especially like to meet more English boys.

"The two ping-pong tables in the Games Room, generously offered by the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, are highly appreciated and very much in use.

"In addition to the functions organized by the Hostel we had the pleasure of serving as a regular meeting-place to the Nouvelle Société Helvétique and to have a few extra parties for invited guests including two recitals given by a young Swiss pianist."

F.A.

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