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MANCHESTER SWISS CLUB'S 110th BIRTHDAY BANQUET

Three special guests attended last month's annual banquet of the Manchester Swiss Club, which is now 110 years old.

From the Swiss Embassy in London came the First Secretary, Mr. Marcel Vogelbacher, who was paying his first visit to Manchester, and from Switzerland came Mr. Marcel Nicole, head of the Geneva Tourist Office.

The third guest was Major E. Nicholson, President of the Manchester Rifle Club and a good friend of many members of the Swiss colony in Manchester.

As debonair Dr. H. B. Knuchel, President of Manchester Swiss Club, said during the banquet, one of the year's highlights for the Rifle Club had been a visit to Switzerland. The ten-man team had been royally received, first by L'Arquebuse de Genève and later by La Société de tir de Lausanne.

Mr. Nicole also referred to the visit and announced that on behalf of Geneva he would like to offer a competitive trophy to the Rifle Club. This will probably take the form of a typical Genevese pewter *channe*.

Two other rifle-shooting trophies changed hands that evening. Mrs. Knuchel presented the Swiss Club Challenge Cup to Mr. John Schweiwiller, who had gained 362 points out of a possible 400. (Incidentally, the runner-up, Dr. H. R. Bolliger, was only one point behind.)

The Swissair Challenge Cup, which 12 months ago had been presented to the club by Mr. A. E. Weber, Northern Manager of Swissair, was won by — Mr. A. E. Weber! After receiving the trophy from Mrs. Knuchel he promptly revealed that to save any further embarrassment he was having the rules changed so that in the future the cup could not be awarded to an employee of Swissair.

Despite his blushes, "Oggy" Weber certainly deserved the award, for his unhandicapped score of 99.389, the highest of the year, proved the excellent quality of his marksmanship.

Dr. Knuchel said that during 1960 three people had been elected honorary life members of the club — Miss Alice Rietmann, who has long played a leading part in club activities; the popular Swiss Consul in Manchester, Mr. Charles E. Rosset; and a former president of the club, Mr. Max Lichtensteiger.

He also mentioned the creation of a new class of membership for those who had been in the club for more than forty years. There were now five of these veteran members, although only one — Mr. Karl Messmer — was able to attend the banquet.

For me, the surprise of the evening came when Dr. Knuchel asked for all those who had been present at Manchester Swiss Club's centenary banquet to stand.

I jumped to my feet, expecting to be in the majority. But when I looked round I realised how few of us there were who had been in the same room on that historic occasion a decade ago when we heard voices of Switzerland — among them those of the President of the Confederation and beloved Alice Briod — come to us through the loudspeakers, thanks to the combined efforts of the Swiss Broadcasting Service and the BBC.

Where were they all now, those old friends we knew in 1950? Some had returned to Switzerland, or moved on to some other part of the world where they would

still be taking an active part in the work of other Swiss societies.

But the passage of time had also been taking its toll, and there were many others who, though still living in the Manchester area, were getting on in years and felt unable to stand up to the excitement of the annual banquet and ball.

D.M.

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