

# From the editor's workshop

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## FROM THE EDITOR'S WORKSHOP

### A Visit to the Swiss in Scotland

One of the duties of the Editor of the "Swiss Observer" is to foster relations with the Swiss community. Seeing that the bulk of the 12,000 Swiss in the British Isles and the largest part of the approximately 4,000 temporary Swiss live in and around London, it is natural to concentrate on Swiss activities in the metropolis. Having been brought up, however, in a country where minorities are accorded special rights, I am naturally inclined towards this attitude. For minorities they are, the Swiss groups in the Provinces, with the possible exception of Manchester, and even more so in Scotland. Compared with the many thousands of our compatriots living in and around London, the three hundred North of the Border are indeed a small group. Yet they play a very important part in the "presence" of Switzerland in the British Isles. If time and money allowed it, an annual visit to all the Swiss groups in Great Britain would be essential in my opinion. As things are, I can only visit one or two. But even that little is of inestimable value.

Perhaps it is not quite right to put the report on my visit to Scotland under the above heading, for as things turned out, it was one round of pleasure and no work. All I had to do was to get myself on the train at Kings Cross London one fine October morning, and after that I was received, dispatched and delivered from one friendly house and group of compatriots to another. The hospitality shown to me was second to none, and I shall never forget the warm and friendly welcome I received everywhere.

On my arrival in Edinburgh, I was met by Mr. B. Frick, the Swiss Consular Agent, and his wife. In lovely evening sunshine we drove over the new Forth Road Bridge, the gateway to Dunfermline and Fife. For over 800 years, the ferry-boats have plied over the Firth of Forth waterway, and now the largest suspension bridge in Europe enables fast motor traffic to cross the water in a fraction of the time needed previously.

After a quiet chat with the Frick family in their hospitable house in

#### Dunfermline,

I was taken to a Dinner arranged in my honour by the Swiss Club of Dunfermline at the canteen of the Castleblair Silk Mills. The President, Mr. Schoenenberger, was in the chair and welcomed the thirty members and friends. The Dunfermline Club is still thriving. It has just under twenty active men members and over a score of passive members, amongst them wives and daughters. Most of the members work with the two Dunfermline Silk Mills. Amongst those present were old members of 70 and even 85, as well as youngsters who had only just arrived in Scotland.

The hall was gaily decorated for the occasion with heather and Swiss flags. The time-honoured words by Burns preceded dinner:

"Some hae meat and canna eat,  
And some wad eat that want it.  
But we hae meat and we can eat,  
And sae the Lord be thankit."

The meal included genuine haggis and Scotch trifle, but the atmosphere was very Swiss, and it was of the problems of the Swiss community in London that I was able to tell my friends, of the many societies and organisations, of the "Swiss Observer", the Swiss Centre and the new Federation of Swiss Societies. The variety of questions proved the interest the Dunfermline Swiss take in the

affairs of their fellow-countrymen and women down South. That concluded a happy gathering, and we were loath to leave the friendly hall for the chilly night outside where the foghorns from the River Forth could be heard for miles.

The next morning I was able to take a look at the City under Mrs. Frick's able guidance. Dunfermline is a Royal Burgh, ancient capital of Scotland and resting place of Kings. Robert the Bruce was buried in the Abbey. Next door to the fine church are the ruins of the Royal Palace, enough of them to testify to the once vast size and importance of the edifice. Then we went to look over the beautifully laid-out park of the Pittencrieff Glen, the Music Pavilion and the Double Bridge. I was shown the Carnegie Birthplace and Museum, for it was in Dunfermline that Andrew Carnegie was born who became world famous as one of the greatest of American industrialists and one of the illustrious philanthropists. There was no time to visit the Rosyth Dockyards or some of the other places of interest. But I had seen enough to take with me a lasting impression of the hometown of the biggest Swiss community in Scotland. Next I was driven

#### Edinburgh,

the capital of Scotland. Its Castle and its Princes Street, the High Kirk of St. Giles and the Royal Palace of Holyrood House are too well known to have to be described again. I was lucky to spend two days with the President of the Edinburgh Swiss Club, Mrs. Suzanne Henderson, who gave me generous hospitality in her attractive Fairmilehead bungalow. Whilst strong gales blew around the house, we sat over coffee and talked about the problems of the young Swiss temporarily in Great Britain. For the Edinburgh Club consists mainly of young people as I could see for myself when I attended their get-together in Mr. O. Hartmann's Boutique in the Royal Mile. This enterprising young man not only started his small modern shop with its continental flavour and coffee corner amongst teak and glass, furnishing fabrics and pottery, but he was also responsible for founding the Edinburgh Swiss Club five years ago.

This time it was in "Schwyzerdütsch" that I told of the life in the London Swiss Colony, and we drank coffee and sang homely tunes accompanied on Mr. Hartmann's accordion. There are more women than men members in the Club, quite a number married to Scotsmen. It is young yet, but given time and the continued devoted help by the older members, the Edinburgh Club will no doubt grow in strength and purpose.

I was free the following morning to do some leisurely shopping, and how I enjoyed myself — for once I was not tied by the clock, but roamed and sauntered and did not care about rain and stormy wind. In fact, the latter was so strong that we had to drive *slowly* across the Forth Bridge on our way North in the afternoon.

For it was again from Dunfermline that I was being driven to my next port of call,

#### Balloch.

For the remainder of the week I was the guest of Mr. E. Hofstetter in his large and comfortable bungalow at Drymen. To be exact, it is on the Buchanan Castle Estate, a few yards away from the now damaged Buchanan Castle, the home of the Duke of Montrose. His ancestors' portraits now hang on the walls of the stately Golf Club House, a few steps away on the other side of the Hofstetter home. Wind and rain beat about the house, but in front