

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: - (1969)
Heft: 1566

Artikel: The world's oldest organ
Autor: Eguster, Lee
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-691224>

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: 05.04.2026

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

THE WORLD'S OLDEST ORGAN

Lee Eugster writes on Valère (Valais)

"It is certainly a unique experience to sit in one's home in America and listen to the tones of an organ which came into being in 1390" wrote an organist who lives on the Pacific Coast.

I had seen this organ in the Cathedral of Valère overlooking Sion in the Valais. Later I learnt that Mr. Maurice Wenger, curator of the Museum of Valère, made two recordings, which can be ordered at his address: Musée de Valère, 1950 Sion, Valais, Switzerland. A small record with music composed between the 9th and 18th centuries costs 10 Swiss francs. A large one, which has on its backside music played on the organ of the church of Vouvry, costs 29 francs.

These records, supplied in solid light-weight folders which also contain the organ's history and technical details translated into several languages, make unusual and highly appreciated gifts for music lovers. By declaring them at the P.O. as "commercial gramophone records", they can be mailed as "small package" with a green customs label instead of "phonoposte" at a much higher rate.

The Cathedral of Valère, dedicated to Saint Catherine of Alexandria who, after Saint Théodule, is the second patron saint of the Valais, was started in the Romanesque style in the 12th century, while part of its inside was finished in the Gothic style in the 13th century.

The organ, installed in 1390 in the so-called Burgundy style, shows the characteristics of Gothic altars with wide-open wings (triptych). The casing of the pipes is adorned with slightly gilded tracery in purest Gothic style. Today, the instrument rests on a swallow-nest corbel high on the rear wall of the central nave.

According to the archives of the Cathedral Chapter, a certain Peter Maggenberg painted in 1437 the wings of the triptych. They are historically and artistically as precious as the instrument itself. The "Annonciation" on the outer side of the wing doors resembles works by Fra Angelico. Inside the left door is shown the spiritual "Marriage of Saint Catherine" to the Bishopric of Sion. On the right side, we admire the resurrected Christ appearing to Mary-Magdalen.

In 1718, Mathias Carlen (1691-1749) from Reckingen in the Upper Valais, who was the founder of a famous dynasty of organ builders, partly enlarged the instrument of Valère.

The organ was restored in 1954, but utmost care was taken not to alter its sound or technical structure. Therefore, we can still enjoy this small organ's great variety of colour and splendour of tone. With only eight stops, it is capable of filling the big church with its beautiful music. And thanks to the two gramophone records, music lovers the world over can now admire tunes played on an instrument built nearly six centuries ago.

By courtesy of "Treize Etoiles".

SWISS SPECIALITIES

SAUSAGES — CHEESE — CHOCOLATES
HERO CONSERVES — BISCUITS — ROCO CONSERVES

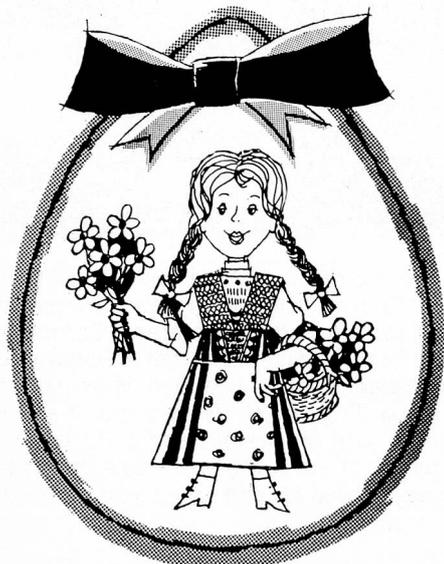
go to

BARTHOLDI'S

at 4 Charlotte Street, London W1

Telephone MUS (636) 3762/3

ALSO FIRST CLASS MEAT



Swiss Centre Restaurants wish you A Happy Easter

**Remember there are only seven
shopping days to Easter**

To celebrate Easter choose your Easter gifts from a magnificent display of chocolates — confectionery — cakes and childrens novelties which are now obtainable from the Swiss Centre Gourmet Corner. As all our home-made confectionery is freshly prepared from pure ingredients of fresh cream and butter we were unable to offer our Easter confectionery at an earlier date.

Our wide range of surprises includes:

- Filled Chocolate Eggs
- Chocolate Easter Bunnies
- Easter Gateaux
- Easter Cakes
- Easter Hampers
- Easter Gifts of Wines and Cigars

and many other novelties made from delicious sweets, chocolates and marzipan.

SWISS CENTRE GOURMET CORNER

2 NEW COVENTRY STREET
LONDON, W.1