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Both speakers share a strong sense of humour (of a Viennese and a Basler brand) and this made their respective exposés all the more enjoyable.

(PMB)

#### SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY

The Monthly Meeting of the Society, held at Swiss House on Wednesday, 14th October, was chiefly dedicated to the veterans, no less than 10 of whom had earlier in the year received the "Wappenscheibe" of the S.K.V. for 50 years' membership of the association.

Some 25 members have obtained this coveted distinction during the last decade, seven of whom, viz Messrs. A. Baenziger, R. Chappuis, O. Grob, E. Hardmeier, G. Hediger, J. Oertli and E. Zwicky, with an aggregate membership of 374 years (an average of 54 years), were present. They were extended a cordial welcome by the Chairman, Mr. A. Jaccard, who thanked them for their long-standing and devoted support of the Society's activities.

He had a special word of welcome to the doyen of this venerable company, Mr. E. Hardmeier, who had come down from Ipswich for the occasion.

On behalf of the Central Committee, Mr. Jaccard presented the "Wappenscheibe", with a suitable commendation, to Mr. E. Zwicky, a member of the General Purposes and House Committee, who had been unable to attend the ceremony in Switzerland in June last.

A message of goodwill, signed by all present was sent to Mr. F. Streit, another veteran member, whose health prevented him from attending.

Adjourning to the ante-room, where a buffet, as well as liquid refreshments, awaited the company, the second half of the meeting was spent in lively conversation and exchange of reminiscences. Special thanks were expressed to Mr. D. Paschoud, a member of the Society, for making such excellent catering arrangements. Thus came to a close a most enjoyable and well-attended meeting.

W.B.

#### A "SWISS EVENING" AT JOHN LAING LTD.

Lady Kirby Laing, wife of the chairman of the John Laing group of companies, patroned a charity ball in the company headquarters for the benefit of the John Grooms Crippleage, Mill Hill. She was keeping up a family tradition as the Laings are a well-known Derbist family involved in many charitable organisations. The style of this particular charity function varies from year to year. Last year it took the form of a Halloween Party. This year's, as Lady Kirby Laing explained to me, was placed under the sign of Switzerland for no deeper reason than that she had spent a holiday in Switzerland and had fallen in love with the place.

In order to get this so-called "Swiss Evening" organised it was necessary to find Swiss costumes, a Swiss décor and Swiss specialities. John Laing's established contact with Mr. A. Schalch, manager of the Institute of Swiss Trade Promotion, who helpfully secured the co-operation of the Swiss Cheese Union, the Dorchester Hotel, the Swiss National Tourist Office, Hürlimann Beer and other Swiss com-

panies.

The modern refectory of Laing's Hendon headquarters were thus decorated with posters and flags supplied by the SNTU, with a "chalet" jointly owned by Hürlimann and the Swiss Cheese Union. Mr. Kaufeler, head chef of the Dorchester, had delegated two cooks to supervise the concoction of the fondues and the preparation of reuchtis and Swiss veal sausages. In fact, everything "Swiss" at this function with the exception of the colossal St. Bernard dog panting at Lady Laing's feet as she greeted her guests were supplied by Swiss personalities or Swiss firms. Their helpfulness must surely have been appreciated by the management of Laing's great contracting empire and served towards the cause of Anglo-Swiss relations.

This charity was in fact a local one. With the exception of a handful of Swiss Centre employees and one or two Laing managers, the 400 guests present were local residents supporting a local charity. We enjoyed an hour-long reception before dinner, during which we drank punch and supplied ourselves with raffle and tombola tickets. The Blue City Five were playing slow rocks to an empty dance floor but their tunes supplied an agreeable background to the reception hum. Dinner began with a highly successful fondue. Guests were pressed around the fondue pans, dipping their bread morsels with cocktail sticks ornated with a Swiss flag into the unctuous molten cheese.

This entrée was followed with other recipes from home and a prolonged dinner gave way to the raffle draw, performed by the celebrity of the



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