

**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:** - (1971)

**Heft:** 1607

**Artikel:** 6 prominent Swiss in Britain

**Autor:** [s.n.]

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-686153>

#### **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:** 20.01.2026

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

## A NEW TEXTILE CENTRE IN ZURICH

For a long time now, plans have been mooted in Switzerland to build a Textile House, which would be a centre for the sale of textiles and ready-to-wear clothing. An important step towards the achievement of this goal was taken this year with the creation of the "Textil & Mode Center Zurich" (TMC). The 250 founder members, all firms in the textile and ready-to-wear branches (manufacturers or wholesalers), had decided to build premises covering an effective area of some 320,000 sq. ft. But the projected construction, which had nevertheless been planned on a fairly generous scale, soon proved to be too small when other firms began to apply to join the new co-operative venture. Today there are over 300 firms, divided into six different groups, which have agreed to rent over 340,000 sq. ft. for administrative offices and sales. That is why members of the group recently decided to abandon the plans originally agreed on and to build a centre at Glattbrugg (canton of Zurich). When the first stage of construction is completed about the year 1974, members will have at their disposal some 460,000 sq. ft. to which will later be added restaurants, showrooms, post office, etc.

## GROWTH OF THE SWISS CARPET INDUSTRY

The carpet industry, which during the past few years has made a number of big investments so as to modernise its machinery and develop its plant, is one of the branches of the Swiss economy with the biggest rate of growth. In fact, its output rose from about 2,000 tons in 1960 to some 6,500 tons in 1969. The figure therefore has more than trebled. Similarly, its exports have increased considerably; within the space of four years, the value of exports of machine-made carpets of all kinds has risen from S.Fr. 5 to 25 million (US \$1.2 to 5.8 million) i.e. it has increased five-fold. However, imports are still quite large: in 1969 they amounted to S.Fr. 103 million (US \$24 million) for machine-made carpets and to S.Fr. 58 million for knotted carpets. Switzerland is one of the countries with the biggest per capita consumption of carpets: with Great Britain it comes second after the USA.

## GENEVA—Important Events in 1971

March 11-21: International Motor Show.

March 27-April 3: World Ice Hockey Championships.

August 3-15: Fêtes de Genève.

September 18-October 2: International Competition for Musical Performers.

Mid-October: "Watches and Jewels" Exhibition.

October 27-November 7: Ideal Home Exhibition.

November 13-21: Official International Horse Jumping Competition.

# 6 PROMINENT SWISS IN BRITAIN

*The following short biographies of prominent Swiss in Great Britain come from the pen of Miss Madeleine Eidam, the gifted London correspondent of the Ringier group of newspapers. She personally interviewed these six personalities and produced these stories for the benefit of the "Schweizerische Illustrierte". A professional photographer accompanied her and took a series of photographs which would have fittingly completed these portraits. These pictures were unfortunately still in the hands of "Schweizerische Illustrierte" at the time of writing and readers will have to guess their content by reading the captions which we have reproduced. Madeleine Eidam is a remarkable story teller. She writes in an affective German and is loved by the hundreds of thousands of unsophisticated people who read her in "Blick" and the "Schweizerische Illustrierte". It goes without saying that the following is but a humble attempt to reproduce in an alien language her salt-of-the-earth style. Another point which we ought to mention is that while we appreciate the legitimacy of Ringier's choice of prominent figures we feel that at least a score of other worthy Swiss in England would also have deserved to have their life stories published in the "Illustrierte". However, we must appreciate the practical necessity of limiting the portrait gallery to a minimum. (Ed).*

\* \* \*

Many Swiss go abroad when they are young. They seek experience and learn what life is like. This widens their horizons. But most of them come back. A few do stay abroad however, some for professional reasons, most for personal ones. Living a new and different life is always attractive. In many cases it is fate that decides, and a young expatriate may prolong his stay abroad by another year only to find that he has definitely settled where he is. The ties with his family and friends back home gradually loosen and when he comes back for a holiday, he finds to his surprise that he has outgrown the old framework. A Swiss who had lived for many years abroad will want to come back and visit his home — a worthy feeling — only to find that he has become a stranger among his own people. But however stretched, the old ties can never be destroyed. The "Schweizerische Illustrierte" has visited Swiss nationals who have chosen Great Britain as their second home. All have two points in common: They all return to Switzerland regularly, and all unanimously emphasise that they could no longer live in Switzerland. But they remain proud of their Swiss origins. They have all distinguished themselves by their special services from the rest of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain. In their respective domains, either assisted

by their wives or their husbands, they have all helped the presence of Switzerland abroad.

## PETER BONETTI

"To play football is not a job, it's a vocation!". This must be true when one already dreams of a football at kindergarten. At seven years old he was already kicking the ball around; at fifteen he was a junior and today he has become the respected "Cat" of the London football club Chelsea. His fans have long since forgiven him for being at the goal on that sorry day in Mexico, when Germany drove England out of the World Cup with three fateful goals. He moves in every sphere outside a pitch, whether it is to publicise a new shirt or some chocolate, or whether it is to act as Honorary President of a charity function. He is certainly the most popular double-national on the Island. Both his parents are genuine Ticinese. But Peter's Italian is a little uncertain because he was born in England. He returns every year to Giornico, his village of origin. His wife and his three children love Switzerland above all things. "My only son may perhaps tread in my footsteps", prophesies the proud father. "I can't imagine a more ideal existence for a family man", he adds. "Breakfast with the children, off to training, afternoons free for the kids, and playing on week-ends. The family is naturally present on the stands". Mrs. Bonetti follows her husband at every match. She even goes with him and Chelsea abroad.

Footballers live on the support of their fans. They can only deserve it if they submit to a strict discipline, and going to bed at ten is not the drudgery of Peter Bonetti's three children only. Peter is now 29. This is an age where footballers have to begin to think about their retirement. "I will train with my son during my free time and take on seriously what has so far been a hobby. I am a partner in a wholesale business".

But football and family are the two large "f's" in the life of Peter Bonetti and will remain the motto of the Bonettis for many generations.

*(Caption of picture: Like all the Chelsea Boys, Peter carries a long mane. Picture taken during a training session in the club's training ground in Mitcham).*

## OLIVER TOBIAS

If Oliver were to write down his name completely, he would have to add "Freitag". It will then be clear to all why he has dedicated his life to the theatre. "With my heredity, one is more or less obliged!" he chuckles. His par-

ents, Maria Becker and Robert Freitag, don't need to be introduced to a German-speaking public, but Oliver will make his way without parental protection. He played his first part in London, and had a leading role in the rock musical "Hair". This determined his choice of English as the language of his career. Although he speaks Zürich-German flawlessly he believes that he has more chances as an English-speaking artist. Whoever believes that the shaggy-haired maverick who jumps on the stage of the Shaftesbury Theatre is a hippy in real life will make an egregious mistake. Oliver belongs to the avante-garde of the London jet set. You will find him in all the important parties and in select circles, "but hash and sherry will not bring you far", he says, "these things are done as a recreation". The young actor is ambitious. He would not be content with replaying the role of the "Saviour" in the Israeli stage production of "Hair" in Tel Aviv. He has also studied by himself the complete choreography of the troupe.

Oliver celebrated his 23rd birthday in Jugoslavia, where he is making his first film with co-stars Serge Gainsbrough and Jane Birkin. "Romance of a Horse Thief" will be released next spring. Until then, Oliver will spend most of his time holidaying, practising water-skiing, snow-skiing and skin diving. He's also exercised horse-riding for many years and he finds that an all-round education is more useful than formal dramatic studies. He may turn one day back to the stage. For the time being, it is the cinema which is in the

foreground, with perhaps the goal of assistant director behind it. But Oliver will make no concrete plans. He will wait for the critics of his first film. Maybe he is expecting a stream of offers. "One never admits one's wishes", he cowers. What about Switzerland? "It is my home, but my place of work is the world!"

(Caption: Horseback-chase sequence of "Romance of a Horse Thief").

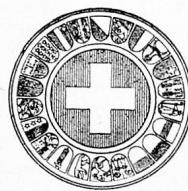
### JO MATTLI

"I was the eldest in my family. After me came 12 girls. You can guess where I acquired my interest for fashion!" The small, silver-haired Ticineser Joseph Mattli learned his trade from its basics. Having accomplished his obligatory schooling, he went to play with the needle in a Paris atelier. There he made the acquaintance of his future wife, who was working as a model. Then came the leap across the Channel, and today, many decades later, Jo Mattli can count himself as one of the first five couturiers of the British capital. He doesn't need to supply large warehouses, although he does own a ready-to-wear boutique, because he works almost exclusively for the ladies of high society. He doesn't as yet dress the Queen, but he counts many duchesses and ladies among his clientele. A

discreet gentleman, he will not reveal their names.

Jo Mattli is no extremist in taste. He picks his choice among high quality materials (and the St. Gallen knitwear are often included) and then discovers the idea for a dress. He drapes a model himself with the garment and gets a picture of the ready-made dress in his mind. He hardly ever needs to draw sketches and his collaborators are attuned to his methods. Six weeks before the Collection nothing may yet be ready. But on the day of the show everything is fitted to the last stitch. Jo Mattli dresses elegant middle-aged ladies. He is too expensive and conservative for the very young. This is not to say that he spurns the trendiest novelties of the day, but he impresses them with an unmistakable Mattli stamp and with refined and simple tailoring. "In my profession, one has to live from season to season", exclaims the master. "We spend our week-ends in the country in Gloucestershire. We are alone, my wife and our dog. We regularly return to Ticino during our buying tours. I have so many relatives. But our worlds have become separated. The Swiss outlook no longer matches my own. I admit I occasionally feel homesick for the Switzerland I like to represent in my mind, but not for the Switzerland which I find in reality!"

(Caption: Jo Mattli at work in his Atelier with one of his models).



# Swiss Life

INSURANCE AND PENSION COMPANY  
(Incorporated with limited liability in Zurich Switzerland)

Mutual Company—Established 1857

**ASSETS EXCEED  
£500 MILLIONS**

24 Cheapside, London E.C.2.  
Telephone: 01-236 3171

Head Office: SCHWEIZERISCHE LEBENSVERSICHERUNGS-UND RENTENANSTALT, ZURICH.

## RENTENANSTALT

specialises in Pension Plans for  
International Companies with the

## MASTER COVER CONTRACT

and offers in Great Britain all types of  
life assurance and annuities.

30 Exchange Street East, Liverpool L2 3QB  
Telephone: 051-236 6712

## URSULA STREBI

One may not know the exact entrance to Ursula Strebi's home but one can guess it at a hundred yards. For the neighbours are accustomed to the blare of the trumpet of Philip Jones, first trumpeter of the BBC Orchestra. He married the niece of the painter Hans Erni. "He makes music and I organise it", opines his energetic wife, whose English is hardly tinged with any Lucerne background. The former student in philology came to England to learn languages, and wound up as the director of the most important chamber orchestra of Great Britain. The "English Chamber Orchestra" is well known to the Swiss public for its tours in Switzerland. The 35 musician-strong ensemble represented the Union Jack at the World Expo in Japan and has become a summer tradition in Canada and America. The Orchestra spends the winter season in England and performs regular concerts in the Queen Elizabeth Hall, London's second largest concert hall. In addition to that it plays for film tracks and gramophone recordings. Ursula Strebi is behind all these immense duties.

"I must seek work for my orchestra". This is how she describes her daily work. She is already planning as far ahead as 1973. It is indispensable to plan and to make reservations long in advance for a non-subsidised orchestra. "The musicians are my children", smiles Frau Strebi. "Their everyday life is made up of rehearsals, deadlines, flight dates and finally of concerts. I'm still married from time to time", she adds with pleasure. But as her husband belongs to a competing orchestra, they are often separated by concert tours made by one or the other. They enjoy their moments together all the more intensly and spend them in their tastefully furnished house in North London. Their dearest wish is to go on an archaeological tour of Mexico. Both are wonderful organisers, as far as their commitments are concerned, but have not managed to settle on a date for their own dream journey. Why live in London? "If I had found a husband in Switzerland, I would doubtless have lived there. But my home is now English and there's very little room left for homesickness".

(Caption: Ursula Strebi concentrates on a rehearsal in the Queen Elizabeth Hall).

## HANS FEUER

"What does it feel like to earn £2,000 a week? I've often asked myself that question. Now I know. It's nice!" This kind of money cannot be found on a park bench. A few years ago the young Art Director of the Paris advertising agency J. Walter Thompson packed his bags and set out on a year's

traipse across Africa. Twelve months later he turned up again at the firm in which he had begun work after completing his school of commerce. But the sale of toilet paper didn't excite him for very long. In London he found an agent who gave him the right contacts in the photographic world. All of a sudden he began to rise sky-high. The seven telephones of his 4-storey Notting Hill house, a dwelling he has entirely redecorated and painted pitch black, ring day and night. He gets up at six o'clock every morning and meditates over a cup of black coffee for two hours — just as during his younger days in the parental home in the Toggenburg. The twelve following hours are entirely devoted to work, most of it outside. Hans rarely reserves himself a free week-end. He's forgotten what holidays are. "I've always worked hard in my life", he says. His second passion is to travel. It blends ideally with his profession. "It is great to reach the point at which I have arrived. I can set my own tasks myself. My friends all live the way I do. I rarely go out and hardly drink at all. Nearly all my social life takes place at home".

A beautiful housekeeper will soon be calling at the door. Gunnar is a model and comes from Sweden. "I've experimented long enough (now Hans!). The time has come to take up the matter seriously. I'm ripe for children," grins the bridegroom. They will live in London and marry (where else) in Alt St. Johann at Christmas. And a special band will play at the village nuptials: The minstrels will sing to their emigrated brother!

(Caption: Hans Feuer at work with the top photo-model Jean Shrimpton, making a fashion picture for the English woman magazine "Nova").

## HEINRICH WAGNER

The Zurich student Heinrich Wagner was never interested in living languages. He learnt Hebrew and Ancient Greek at the Gymnasium and then pre-occupied himself exclusively with Celtic languages at University, and Celtic includes Gaelic. He left for west Ireland in 1945. The first inhabitants he came across understood the young Swiss perfectly well. But the further he pushed westwards, the blander were their faces, until Heinrich had a brainstorm: The majority of the islanders spoke only English and Heinrich decided to learn his first modern language! A grant given to him from a private Gaelic foundation after he had already obtained his doctorate enabled him to survey the dying Celtic dialects for several years and compound a linguistic atlas. He had already published articles on dialects (in Celtic of course). He read in Utrecht, Holland, and Basle, in Germanic languages from 1951 to 1959. He

was then called by the Queen's University in Belfast to the chair of Celtic studies and has since then not been attracted by any other offer. Now married to an Irish woman, Heinrich Wagner doesn't think anymore about going elsewhere. The favourable conditions of work in an institute which he directs with the intimate co-operation of three other lecturers could not be better elsewhere, he explains. Gaelic is a compulsory subject for the teachers of Catholic secondary schools. The conservation of language has naturally got a political side to it. But Professor Wagner restricts himself to historical studies and practical dialectical research. He doesn't believe that the problems of Northern Ireland would be solved that easily, but asserts that it would be seen in a different light if the pro-British administration were ready to open its eyes to historical realities. His sympathies naturally go to the indigenous Celtic population now rising against the sequels of the colonisation of Ireland by English and Scot Protestants in the 16th century. But a republic englobing the whole of Ireland would not, in his view, be economically viable, and he never fails to see Swiss industrialists during his frequent trips home, and put before them the problems of the insufficiently used human resources of Ireland. He thus contributes in his own way to the solution of the unemployment problem of his country of adoption. As Honorary Vice-Consul for the north of England Professor Wagner remains in close touch with Switzerland.

Living on the northern tip of an out-of-the-way island, it is surprising to hear him say that living in Zurich wouldn't satisfy him at all. "To live in Switzerland would be too boring for me in many respects!"

(Caption: Professor Wagner in his studio at his Institute).

## WILLIAM DE VIGIER

"I had given up worrying about finances after the first million pounds. The main thing is that business continues to go forward". Money has become unimportant in the life of the industrialist from Solothurn, William De Vigier. The son of a prosperous merchant, he had already made his choice when he came to England in 1936. He founded the Acrow enterprise which today, a multi-million pound concern, sells machinery in 94 countries. "Every time I buy a couple of acres of land and pace across that same tract a few years later I have the feeling of having achieved something", he says. Can't a world-wide business be founded in Switzerland? Answering in English, which comes to him more fluently than Swiss German, he asserts without hesitation. "People have broader and bolder views over here. I stumble on fewer

obstacles. Holidays in Switzerland, in my chalet in Gstaad, fair enough, but to live and to breathe I must be here". Taking a break from the 120,000 miles of travelling which he accomplished last year, he is momentarily relaxing in his property outside London. He crawls in his heated swimming pool every morning at 6.45 a.m. and makes sure to cover the obligatory four lengths. The day's work starts as soon as he sits in his limousine, where he is already busy at the telephone and the dictaphone. He is often accompanied by his wife during his globe-trotting journeys. But the only time he can actually see his two grown-up daughters is during the skiing holidays. One of his daughters

is an actress in the West End, the other has a family. William De Vigier's work is his hobby. Nuts and bolts can be fascinating even to the layman when they are explained by an enthusiastic specialist. William De Vigier doesn't know what rest means. His factories work day and night, just like the mind of their founder.

headed or chiefly managed by Swiss people, who demonstrate in faraway lands the drive and industry of the Swiss, are welcome.

The exhibition will be publicised in the Swiss press and on radio and television. Thus, not only the Swiss but also the numerous tourists in Berne will visit the exhibition.

Any product of the firms and institutions mentioned, as well as documents on the activities of Swiss organisations and institutions, can be exhibited: in principle, anything from jewellery to bulldozers, from precision instruments to hotel equipment, food-stuffs, textiles or service facilities for foreign industries. Exhibits should preferably be real but posters and illustrations are also acceptable.

The exhibition space is available gratis. Decorating costs and other expenses will be borne by the organisers. On the other hand, the costs of transport in both directions (to Berne and return) and of storage in Berne are chargeable to the exhibitor.

More detailed information is obtainable on request from the Embassy or direct from:

"Kramgasse Exhibition, Rendezvous for the Swiss the world over", Kramgasse 68, CH-3001 Berne, Switzerland.

## MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION

### MARRIED WOMEN'S PASSPORTS

The regulations governing the issuing of passports to married women have been changed: they now require the applicant's maiden name as it appears in the register of families to be added, with a hyphen, after the husband's surname. At the express request of the applicant, however, the maiden name can be omitted.

### SKI CAMPS

(Fr. 120—130 not including fare and cost of ski-lifts.)

As in past years, the Youth Service (Jugenddienst des Auslandschweizersekretariats) is arranging SKI CAMPS for young Swiss living abroad (aged between 16 and 25).

Next dates: I) 26.12.1970 to 4.1.1971, Marmorera/GR.

II) 8.3.1971 to 19.3.1971, Riederalp/VS.

III) 24.3.1971 to 8.4.1971.

I) Preference given to schoolchildren.

II) Particularly suitable for young working people (Berufstätige).

Enrolment: I) 1st December at the latest.

II) and III) 10th February at the latest.

Conditions and detailed information on request from the Embassy or "Jugenddienst des Auslandschweizersekretariats", Alpenstrasse 26, CH-3000 Berne/Switzerland.

### BERNE: FIRST EXHIBITION ON THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF SWISS PIONEERS IN OTHER COUNTRIES

On the occasion of the 50th conference of Swiss people living abroad in August 1972, the "Kramgasse" in Berne will house a large exhibition on the theme of the Swiss abroad.

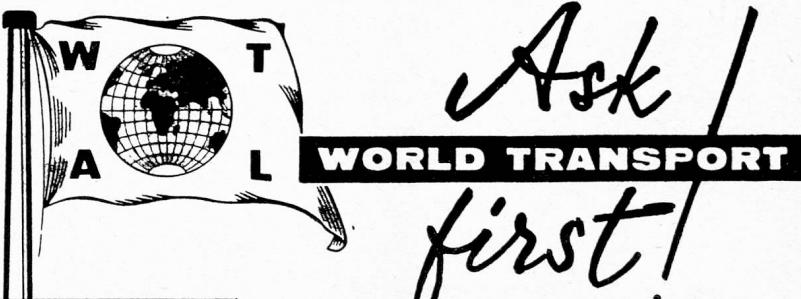
100 display windows of all types and sizes are available for this purpose.

Any Swiss firm, any Swiss agency, any Swiss institution abroad and not very well known in Switzerland may take part and exhibit. Even enterprises

The Embassy wishes to bring to the notice of those interested that the office of the Scientific Counsellor of the Swiss Embassy in Washington publishes a quarterly "Bulletin" in French, German and English intended for Swiss scientists, engineers and technicians resident in North America.

This Bulletin contains news and articles about scientific, economic, political and cultural life in Switzerland.

### BULLETIN FOR SWISS SCIENTISTS



FOR Your  
WORLD  
TRANSPORT  
(ANYTHING - ANYWHERE)

**WORLD TRANSPORT**

20/22 EMERSON STREET  
LONDON S.E.1.

AIRPORT OFFICES:  
LONDON BIRMINGHAM SOUTHEND  
MANCHESTER YEADON GATWICK

BRANCHES: BASLE · MANCHESTER · BRADFORD · BIRMINGHAM · HULL · SHEFFIELD · LIVERPOOL  
LEICESTER · STOKE

**AGENCY LIMITED**

Specialized Regular Groupage Services

GREAT BRITAIN - SWITZERLAND and ITALY  
and VICE VERSA