

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: - (1977)

Heft: 1736

Artikel: The escapades of a grand old man

Autor: [s.n.]

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-692488>

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: 11.01.2026

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

snow and ice. Everybody stops here for a breather, and to take some refreshments and drinks.

As we rose, some of the climbers found the breathing more difficult and had to make a short halt at intervals. The older I get, the less that seems to worry me. Soon we passed the spot where two climbers were killed last year by falling séracs of ice. At 8.30 a.m., I planted my feet firmly on the platform outside the observatory. The weather was well nigh perfect, visibility enormous, with the sky virtually cloudless everywhere. The view was overpowering, and defies description; in the west, the great Mont Blanc dominating all, more to the South-West, the great mountains of the Dauphiné, while south of Turin, the Monte Viso was plainly visible. Nothing but mountains with enormous masses of snow everywhere!

I took a good number of photos (transparencies) representing good material for my illustrated talks in Palma de Mallorca during the coming winter.

After refreshments, we started traversing the snow ridge leading to the well-known Zumsteinspitze, 4,561 m. Fairly easy going, except for the last 100 metres, when the ridge gets steeper and narrower. The last 20 metres, normally bare rock, were covered with snow and sometimes underlying ice. Crampons, which I did not have on this occasion, would have been of advantage.

On our descent to the Gnifetti hut,

we conquered two other "Viertausender", the Ludwigshöhe and Parrotspitze, but had to by-pass the Balmhorn, as the snow was very soft by now, and impeded progress. Anyhow, I had already taken numerous photos of the statue of Christ some years earlier.

My return to the hut caused a little stir. My guide spoke about my excellent performance, especially at 74, but the tourists present would not believe that I was so old; some mentioned that if you are of such an age, you are either grey or bald, and you do not have a big mop of dark-brown hair.

A VETERAN

I had a rather different experience in 1946, when I became the proud bearer of a veteran's badge of the Swiss Alpine Club, after 25 years' membership. In those days, many younger members of the Alpine Club, pointing to my veteran's badge, commiserated with me, saying that now that I was getting old, I would no doubt leave the more difficult climbs and go in for small excursions.

We enjoyed our 52 days' stay in Macugnaga very much. Most of its inhabitants, owners of hotels, bars and restaurants, or sports shops, guides, etc., are of Swiss origin, Valsers, having emigrated to Italy several hundred years ago. Most of them still speak the Swiss dialect, and have kept to many Swiss customs.

In 1976 and this year, we had to

switch over to the other hotel in Borca di Macugnaga, which is both cheap and excellent. The previous hotel, Passo del Turlo, was no longer regarded as safe against fire by the Italian authorities. Its owners gave up, as it would have been too costly to rebuild.

THE SMUGGLING "TRADE"

Each summer, one is reminded that in the past, and even today, smuggling is quite an industry in this area. One former smuggler, interviewed by an Italian newspaper, stated that he had spent more nights on alpine passes to smuggle than in bed. During the last war, Italian smugglers took over the passes to Switzerland, cycles and rice, while in return they brought back cigarettes and certain foodstuffs. On the Mondelli pass, about 3,000 m high, each August a ceremony is held here, assisted by Priests, in honour of smugglers who have perished in snow and ice or avalanches. A small monument in their honour was erected on this pass some years ago, and this summer a cross was added. The officiating priests point out, however, that they do not condone smuggling, but that they are naturally sorry for those who lost their lives. Over the same pass, British prisoners in Italy during the last war, or particularly R.A.F. men who had to parachute down in Italy, were taken to Switzerland, thus regaining their liberty.

So ended a memorable holiday, and I am already planning for the next.

Geneva and the Alps.....

... from only £45

If you propose flying to Switzerland this winter then take advantage of CPT's unique service.

★ 6 departures every week by British Caledonian jet from Gatwick to Geneva. Any combinations of days (excl. Tuesdays) from 1 night to 13 weeks. Prices from only £45.00. (Flight timetable shown below).

★ Wide choice of Geneva hotels from 2 star to De Luxe.

★ Special Christmas and New Year flight programme at normal prices.

And for Skiers

★ Skiing in Courmayeur Weekend and 1 and 2 week ski holidays to this fabulous resort, with prices from £49.00 for a weekend and £65.00 for a week.

★ Alpine Express service to other leading Swiss and European airports with prices from only £45.00.

★ Special bus and coach transfers to many of the top resorts in France and Switzerland and reduced car hire rates — ideal for small groups of independent skiers.



**Crawford
Perry
Travel Ltd**

260A Fulham Road, London SW10 9EL
Telephone: 01-351 2191/6
Telex: 919078 "SKI CPT G"

For details of our complete Winter
Programme please call our office or
return the attached coupon. →



Ski Courmayeur

Geneva
Name
Address

| DAY PERIOD | WEDNESDAY 2/11 - 29/3 | THURSDAY 3/11 - 30/3 | FRIDAY 4/11 - 31/3 | SATURDAY 17/12 - 25/3 | SUNDAY (1) 18/12 - 26/3 | SUNDAY (2) 6/11 - 26/3 | MONDAY 7/11 - 27/3 |
|--|--------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| OUTWARD Flight No. Dep GATWICK Arr GENEVA | BR417 1210 1435 | BR425 1725 1950 | BR403 1405 1630 | BR637 1040 1305 | BR635 1015 1240 | BR421 1725 1950 | BR407 1405 1630 |
| RETURN Flight No. Dep GENEVA Arr GATWICK | BR418 1535 1600 | BR426 2050 2115 | BR404 1710 1735 | BR638 1405 1430 | BR636 1330 1355 | BR422 2050 2115 | BR408 1710 1735 |
| Continental Times 1 hour earlier. | 22 + 29 March | 23 + 30 March | 24 + 31 March | 25 March | 19 + 26 March | 19 + 26 March | 20 + 27 March |