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Century-old Schweizerbund votes to close down

JUST three months ago the Schweizerbund celebrated its centenary with a splendid dinner at the Café Royal, attended by 101 members and friends, when the club could look back on 100 years of varied activities.

But successful though the centenary celebration was, it was quite obvious that the membership was too small to warrant embarking on new ventures, nor were there enough members available to carry on the burden of running the club, on however modest a scale.

At the annual general meeting in May last year the three officers, president Vergil Berti, treasurer Roland Asch and secretary Juerg Schmid, informed members of their decision to carry on no longer than one more year.

The sudden death of Roland Asch deprived the club of a faithful member and officer last summer, and the other two officers informed the membership of their opinion "that the

time has come to terminate the existence of the club, which now really lacks a *raison d'être*".

And so it happened that the annual general meeting on March 14 decided regretfully and sadly to wind up the remaining business of the Schweizerbund and to close it down. The meeting took place at the offices of the Swiss National Tourist Office at the Swiss Centre, and it was followed by a dinner at the Locanda restaurant of the Centre.

It was decided that the president and secretary would remain in office just as long as it took to wind up the club, to hand over the archives to the Swiss Embassy for transfer to Berne and to donate the remaining funds to the Swiss Benevolent Society, as provided for in the club's rules.

It was also decided that the

old brass shield at present at Valchera's restaurant in Richmond should remain there, but that it should be given to the Swiss Embassy should the restaurant pass from Swiss ownership.

Members also agreed that the three silver cups held by the club should be offered to Mrs Asch, Mr Berti and Mr Schmid, in recognition of the valuable work Mrs Asch's husband and the two gentlemen had done for the club. The remaining cowbells from the days when the Schweizerbund ran its own premises in Charlotte Street should be given to the St. Moritz restaurant.

Mrs Asch, Mrs Crack, Consul-General Charles Glauser and Mr Weibel revived some of their happy memories of past times and expressed thanks and appreciation to the committee for their sterling work.

Mrs Meier, president of the NSH, a member of many years' standing, offered to write to the members of the club and ask them to join the NSH, with whom the Schweizerbund had always cooperated happily.

So now the Schweizerbund is no more. It is sad that yet another organisation has to disappear from the scene of the London Swiss community.

We older members remember with nostalgia other societies whose at one time successful life had to come to an end — the Swiss Male Choir, the Swiss Orchestral Society, the Gymnastic Society, the Confrérie Vaudoise, the Union Helvetia, the Ruetli Ladies' Club, the Secours Mutuels, the Swiss Accordion Club, the Young Men's Christian Association and the

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SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY

NOTABLE success had been achieved by Swiss Mercantile Society students in external examinations, it was reported at the society's recent annual general meeting.

Of 84 SMS candidates, 49 obtained the coveted Cambridge Certificate of Proficiency. In the examinations for the First Certificate, no less than 187 out of 204 candidates were successful, of whom 39 obtained a first class pass.

In the Royal Society of Arts English as Foreign Language examinations, Stages II and III, 38 of 60 candidates were successful, five with distinction.

At the meeting – the 91st to be held by the society – the chairman, Mr F.O. Hausermann, welcomed Dr Marino Baldi, Counsellor at the Embassy, who recently succeeded Mr Jean Pierre Zehnder, a keen supporter of the SMS.

Reviewing the activities of the society during the past year, the chairman stated that these had followed traditional lines and that most functions were reasonably well supported, especially the meetings held jointly with the Nouvelle Société Helvétique.

The main activities, however, were again centred on the college. In addition to the normal full-time courses, special day classes were again held for Swissair trainees, as well as preparatory day courses for the Cambridge Proficiency in English examinations, which brought the monthly average attendance up to 244 students.

The number of candidates sitting for the diploma examinations held at the end of each five-weekly period was 434, of whom 408 were successful. Only those students who reach the sixth grade are able to take

College students achieve considerable success in external examinations

these examinations, the high standard of which was fully maintained.

Although other subjects were offered, the evening courses were again entirely confined to preparation for the Cambridge First Certificate and Certificate of Proficiency in English. Altogether, 18 classes with a total of 331 students were held, compared with 18 classes and 296 students in 1978.

The students were again largely recruited from day classes, the number of external students being very limited due to the difficulty of obtaining labour permits by our young compatriots. As is now commonly known, this has been the case since Britain joined the Common Market and has more recently been accentuated by high unemployment.

A newly installed language laboratory in replacement of the old lab. continued to give good service in the tuition of spoken English, to which greater attention has been given of late.

As customary for many years, the Thursday afternoon lectures and film shows on topical subjects and places of historic and cultural importance formed a feature of the curriculum, as did Friday afternoon debates by students under one of the teacher's supervision.

Full-day excursions were arranged in each term, including Oxford and Cambridge universities and towns, Canterbury and Winchester cathedrals, Windsor Castle and Stratford-on-Avon.

In addition, visits were organised to places of interest in and around London and country rambles undertaken at weekends. Regular class visits to places like Lloyds, the Stock Exchange, Ford motor works and Kodak were arranged.

Visits to theatre plays and musical performances were organised throughout the scholastic year and disco evenings formed part of the programme of social events.

In the field of sports, tennis in summer and football in winter were practised by students and games arranged with English teams.

A staff of 17 full-time teachers of British nationality, the majority with academic qualifications and several with practical commercial experience, was employed throughout the year.

In conclusion, the chairman expressed appreciation of the valued support received from the Swiss Ambassador and his staff and the central authorities of the SKV and the Swiss Commercial Office in Zurich. The society were indebted to the

Swiss Government for their annual subsidy, which enabled the college to keep up a high standard of education, while maintaining the fees at a reasonable level.

Finally, the chairman expressed thanks to the members of the council, the committees and the society generally for their continued support of their activities and the teaching and secretarial staffs for their devoted service.

Mrs Mariann Meier, who acted as chairman during the election of the council and committees for the ensuing year, said she considered the SMS had the finest *raison d'être* among the Swiss societies in London, as without the unselfish work of council and committee members there would be no SMS college. She expressed appreciation to the president, the officers and committee members of the society for services rendered during the past year.

As all of them had declared their willingness to carry on, they were unanimously re-elected for another term of office, with Mr J.W. Bonjour appointed delegate to the NSH to replace the late Mr L.S.R. Asch.

WB

SOCIETY EVENTS

Sunday, June 8: Manchester Swiss Club treasure hunt.

Thursday, June 19: Nouvelle Société Helvétique lecture by Mr Philip Garraux.

Sunday, June 22: Union Ticinese car outing to Hurstpier point, Sussex.

Thursday, June 26: Nouvelle Société Helvétique concert at Penton House, Hampstead.

Friday, June 20: Annual general meeting of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom.

SCHWEIZERBUND

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Swiss Sports.

Others have lost some of their activities. The Corale of the Unione Ticinese, alas, is no longer. The Committee for the Study of Economic Problems has become the Swiss Economic Council, the Philatelic Section of the SMS has changed into a lively Swiss Philatelic Society, the Youth Club of the Nouvelle Société

Helvétique is no longer, but the Youth Club of the Swiss Churches is thriving. So is the Mothers' Group of the Swiss Church. And the Presidents' Assembly has become the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK.

There is still a great deal of lively activity, of valuable work done in several well-established and new organisations to meet the various needs of the

Swiss community. It needs courage to admit that one's purpose is at an end and not to insist on carrying on against all reasonable odds.

The committee and membership of the Schweizerbund have courageously admitted that the club's life has finished and are grateful to other societies and clubs for opening their ranks to the club's members.

Mariann Meier