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## The Dürrbächlers of Welwyn Garden City

NUMBER 72 Sweet Briar looks just like countless other semis in the pleasant leafy suburb of Welwyn Garden City.

You notice the difference when you ring the doorbell and approximately half a dozen dogs start to bark in unison; you know that you have arrived at the right address if you want to visit the London family or their dogs.

Derek and Doris London-Ludwig started breeding dogs some 16 years ago. Bull terriers were Mr London's choice, and Mrs London, who comes from Buwil/Thurgau, chose Bernese mountain dogs.

Whereas Mr London has a full-time job and looks after the "marketing" aspect of their doggy business at weekends, the kennel has become very much a full-time concern for Mrs London, along with running the house and looking after the family.

As it soon became apparent to me, owning and especially breeding dogs involves a lot of work and devotion.

The London children are very fond of their dogs. Corinne, the youngest one (17) in particular has a special knack with animals and has won a number of prizes for junior handling at dog shows.

The main reason for my trip to Welwyn Garden City was the new litter of three Bernese mountain dog puppies of Inca, who is seven years old.

Mrs London describes the three male pups as Inca's "last fling", since she is getting on a bit for breeding.

The proud mother "held court" on the sunny patio and seemed very pleased with herself, while her offspring made their first attempts at walking on their unsteady pink-toed paws, frequently toppling over and bumping into each other.

Mrs London plans for Inca's two year old daughter Nadja, a very handsome and extremely friendly bitch, to have her first litter soon.

To demonstrate the difference in size between Dürrbächler dogs and bitches, a friend of Mrs London brought her dog Minus along, who seemed very big indeed to me although he is not yet fully grown.

A fully grown Bernese



*Inca and her pups*

measures approximately 25 to 27 inches and weighs 105 to 130 pounds; a bitch measures 23 to 26 inches and weighs 95 to 115 pounds.

The Bernese mountain dogs are certainly very attractive with a soft silky coat (which should not curl), jet black with russet brown or tan markings on the legs and over the eyes, white chest and white markings on the face and paws and a bushy tail.

They are good-natured and self-confident, strong and dependable, although slow to mature, which means that training as guard or guide dogs may take longer than with other

breeds, such as Labradors.

It is assumed that the Bernese mountain dog descends from the dogs introduced into Helvetia by the Roman legions for guarding their military outposts.

Subsequently the Dürrbächler, as it is known in the canton of Berne, was mainly used as a farm dog and for drawing carts. Competitions used to be held to find the top draught dog which could pull carts weighing up to 150 kgs with ease. They can still be seen today in the Emmental pulling carts with milk churns to the dairy.

Interest in the Bernese as a

pedigree breed grew only in the latter part of the last century, when dog shows came into fashion.

England saw the first Bernese in the early 1930s. Today the Bernese Mountain Dog Club of Great Britain has around 200 members.

The Bernese, originally a farm dog, will happily settle in a flat, providing the owner is prepared to spend a great deal of time exercising it. A well-fenced garden — however small — is a must. They make excellent companions and command respect as houseguards by their size.

Feeding a Bernese mountain dog costs approximately £1 a day, according to where one gets the meat. Puppies sell at around £120 to £150.

Holding a handful of soft, nuzzling Bernese mountain dog puppy certainly made my day, and I left Mrs London's kennels thinking that it was time that our little boy's wish for a dog — maybe of slightly lesser size than a Bernese — came true.

**Marianne Hill-Moser**

## Mgr Joseph Scherer — the

MGR Joseph Scherer, who is still well remembered by many Swiss in England died in August in Escholzmatt, Switzerland at the age of 80. Born in 1900 in Schupfheim, Lucerne, he was ordained priest in 1924.

After having worked several years in different parishes in the diocese of Basle he became parish priest in Finsterwald, the last village in the Entlebuch, where, as the Swiss used to say, foxes and rabbits waved each other good night.

When he was 58 years of age the Bishop of Basle asked him to take over the post of Fr. A. Lanfranchi at the Swiss Catholic Mission in London, where he had to care especially for the numerous young Swiss who lived in England as stagiers, students and au-pair.

His friends tried to dissuade

him and criticised the bishop for sending such an "old man" from the "last village" of Lucerne to care for young people in the metropolis of London. They thought that a young priest from Zürich or Berne would have a better chance of success.

But Fr. J. Scherer accepted and said: "My bishop thinks I should go. Why should I question his judgement? For me it is the will of God!"

And so he went, learnt English and spoke it with a really unmistakable Swiss accent to the delight of his very refined colleagues at Westminster cathedral.

And for nearly 10 years he did a marvellous job, built up a lively centre around St. Ann's church in the Abbey Orchard Street and his Swiss Catholic youth club with several hundred active

members. When he went about his business he reminded people of a teddy-bear, coming out of his "hole" at old Pye Street and then disappearing again.

At his Sunday services he used to preach in three different languages and anybody who understood the three really knew what he wanted to say. For the young people he was a father and they knew it, liked him for it and sometimes tried to avoid his searching eye.

Many a young man still remembers the discreet pat on his shoulders and his friendly advice: "It would be about time for you to come for confession again, and don't be afraid, you cannot tell me anything which I have not heard a hundred times over!"

And there are some girls

LUGANO — the very word conjures up a serene blue lake, gorgeous sunshine and an azure sky.

And that is exactly the condition nearly 600 Swiss from abroad found in this lovely corner of Switzerland when they gathered for their 58th Assembly of the Swiss resident outside their homeland.

The first business meeting was that of the Committee on Information held at the beautiful Villa Ciani situated in a lovely park along the lake. Information to the "Fifth Switzerland" comprised the whole agenda.

The Parliament of the Swiss Abroad, the Commission, met early next morning in the modern council chamber of the old Municipio building. The president of the Organization of the Swiss Abroad, Dr Alfred Weber, welcomed about 60 delegates, proxies and inland members. Great Britain was represented by Dr Alex Lang for the north and Mrs Mariann Meier for the south.

The agenda was long, and among the main subjects was the savings campaign of the Confederation which affected the subsidy to the OSA. It had already been cut and is to be cut further.

The next item which caused a

# Lakeside gathering of the Swiss abroad



long debate was the future of the "Echo", as well as the progress of the "Review". The proposal put forward by the Commission in Information was that the "Echo" be discontinued as from the end of the year and the contents somehow fused with the "Review", which should take more the character of an *Amtsblatt* and contain more information rather than cultural articles now that the essays on the cantons had been complete after eight years. It was also hoped that advertisements could be transferred from the "Echo" to the "Review".

Of course it is sad that, after 60 years of such an excellent publication, there has to be an end. But the large deficit of a magazine which reaches only 4,000 subscribers is just not justified, and some of the money saved could be used towards improving the "Review", which reaches 200,000 Swiss abroad and is published in five languages — a great success indeed.

No final decision could be taken until the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs had worked out details, although the basic decision to stop publishing the "Echo" was taken, however reluctantly.

The Assembly in 1981 will be held in Solothurn, and the theme will be "New forms of Emigration".

In the afternoon a guided tour of the town took place, as well as several meetings on various subjects, especially the council meeting of the Solidarity Fund followed by the AGM. Generally speaking the fund was doing well, but it was again stated that many Swiss only joined when their country of residence looked like being in political danger.

Changes in the constitution were accepted with this in mind, for instance a possible lengthening of the qualifying period if Swiss do not join within five years of emigrating.

Thanks were expressed to the retiring president of the fund, Dr Gustav Schelling, and Mr Alfred Matter was elected in his place. To those who are members of the fund it seems incredible that so many compatriots have not

yet realised what a marvellous thing it is, both as an insurance with a savings angle but also as an expression of solidarity.

On Friday evening was the official opening with the usual speeches and reception by the local authorities. The plenary session took place on Saturday at the modern and spacious Congress Palace. The president of the OSA welcomed Federal Councillor Ritschard, who later delivered the main address of the afternoon.

Later there were speeches by the vice-president of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, and a director of the Federal Cultural Office. The deputy director of the Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad, Mr Lucien Paillard, gave a talk, illustrated by slides, on the possibilities of schooling and training in various countries, based on a questionnaire. The president of the Advisory Committee for Swiss Schools Abroad reported on a survey, led by director Marcel Ney, and there was a round-table discussion in which various people connected with the 20 Swiss schools abroad took part.

The result of the day's deliberations will be analysed, and remedies will be sought to continue the schools which make an important contribution to Swiss presence abroad and in fact form part of Swiss development aid. It is hoped that the Confederation will find a way of helping increasingly with the financial problems.

The dinner and dance on Saturday evening was a very happy gathering, with Ticinesi folk singers and dancers making a most attractive contribution.

An ecumenical service on Sunday morning was followed by an outing by boat to Morcote, where a risotto luncheon was served out of doors in blazing heat.

Thus a most enjoyable congress came to an end. Many friendships were renewed, new ones made, and one returned refreshed and contented.

**Mariann Meier**

## young in heart

(being or considering to be "on the pill") who still smilingly tell how he discreetly lisped into their ears: "Don't gorge this silly stuff, it will do you no good!" Of course he said that in Swiss dialect which sounded much better (fr... das ch... Züg nid...).

On Sunday evenings after Mass he organised dances and social evenings at Westminster Ballroom, 30 Strutton Ground for his youth club.

There still were priests who criticised him for such "ungodly activities".

But he told them: "How can I expect young people to come to Sunday Mass from all over London without offering them something they really like?"

After nearly 10 years of working in London, he retired to Switzerland in 1967 and offered his services in the

canton of Lucerne. He would have liked to work with the young people — and I think they would not have minded his fatherly style.

To his disappointment it was the parish priest who did not dare to give it a try.

But he carried on, first in the parish and then in an old people's home to care for "his children".

Funnily enough nobody resented it in spite of all the trends with anti-authoritarian education.

A memorial service in the ecumenical chapel of the Swiss Catholic Mission in London was celebrated on October 2 in thanksgiving for all Mgr Joseph Scherer had done and been for the Swiss in London.

**Paul Bössard**