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An SMS dinner dance to remember

"FOR the Sake of Auld Lang Syne", says the Scottish traditional message. Undoubtedly certain elements of the past constituted some of the ingredients in the successful annual dinner and dance of the Swiss Mercantile Society, held at the Dorchester Hotel last month.

To my knowledge the SMS is the only Swiss society which has remained faithful to the Dorchester, having gone there to dine, wine and dance for several decades.

Today, sadly, diminishing numbers attend events of this kind. This is one of the reasons why the London group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique joined forces with the SMS on this occasion. Still, even if the gathering at the Dorchester was smaller than usual, the atmosphere could not have been improved upon.

Before dinner the president of the society, Mr Franz O. Hausermann, welcomed members and friends and introduced them to the Swiss Ambassador and Madame Claude Caillat.

During his toast to the guests Mr Hausermann expressed appreciation of the never-failing interest Swiss Ambassadors have taken in the SMS and its college and said he looked forward to Monsieur and Madame Caillat's visit to the

college where several hundred Swiss students study every year.

He also thanked other members of the Embassy for their unfailing support, including the Counsellor, Dr Baldi, and Consul-General Julius Keller.

He also mentioned the president of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK, Mr Bernard Simon, who had travelled specially from Manchester for the occasion, and gave a warm welcome to the Rev. Urs Steiner representing the Swiss churches.

The president singled out Mrs Mariann Meier, member in her own right and president of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, as well as Mrs Kathleen Grob and her family, who represented three generations.

The college was represented by the Principal, Mr E.W. Makin, and the vice-president, Mr L. Cane, as well as the secretary of the SMS, Mr Walter Burren, "without whose efforts and organisational skill," said Mr Hausermann, "the function could not be held."

The next speaker was the

Ambassador, who recalled the activities of the SMS and its college over more than 90 years and stressed the value of this work for Switzerland.

"Ever since the Society was established its chief aim has been to provide young Swiss residing in this country with an opportunity to attend classes in languages and commercial subjects for moderate fees," said M. Caillat. "The Education Department has therefore always received an annual subsidy from the Swiss Government."

"Swiss business men of all trades found Victorian and Edwardian London a busy and prosperous place which tempted them to stay for good."

"In the 'Belle Epoque', Europe was in some ways an integrated continent. There was free movement of persons, services and capital in quite a large measure, which encouraged many Swiss to take up work or trade here and finally to settle."

"Before the First World War you helped them to find suitable jobs and schools. Then, after that war, immigration and work became more difficult, but the English language had become more important for the Swiss businessman."

"You took up the challenge. In 1922 more than 200 students followed 36 courses arranged by the Society, and it became necessary to find suitable accommodation. A year later your remarkable college came into being."

M. Caillat proposed the toast to the Swiss Mercantile Society and its college and quoted the old SMS adage that SMS also stood for "Study Means Success." He said he would like to make it into "Send More Students."

The president of the Federation maintained that he was no speaker, but that he could get away with it by using his innate Basle humour and crack a few jokes. Replying for the guests, Mr Simon used this effectively and certainly received a good many laughs. The guests were

happy to have in him an excellent representative to express thanks and appreciation for being invited to such a congenial evening.

Nat Temple and his orchestra provided the music for dancing. Having been at several such events in recent months, I find his is the only group I have come across which deserves the name of dance orchestra.

And so the evening came to a close in the old manner with "Auld lang syne," a correctly played "Tritts im Morgenrot daher" and "The Queen". A lovely SMS dinner dance to remember with pleasure. It can't possibly be the last one, can it? - **Mariann Meier.**

Enter the rabbits

THE Swiss Centre top chocolate-maker, Urs Regli, is hard at work making traditional Swiss Easter eggs and rabbits which, if sales figures for previous years are anything to go by, will be much in demand during the weeks before Easter.

All of them are made on the premises, from Lindt and Suchard chocolate imported from Switzerland. Every egg is individually priced from £1.50 to £15.

They will go on sale in the Swiss Centre's Gourmet Corner on Monday, March 16.

Relaxing get-together

EIGHTEEN members of the South-West Swiss Club met recently at my home in Creech St. Michael, Taunton, for their winter get-together. It proved to be a most relaxing and friendly Swiss day, and included fundraising towards club expenses.

We had immense fun selling all the various items which everyone had brought from

STAMM cocktail party

THE London Stamm will be holding their AGM, followed by a cocktail party for all members, at the Savoy Hotel in the Strand on March 23.

John Macedo, assistant general manager of the Savoy has been elected to the Stamm

Committee and will be arranging the AGM. Officials say it would be extremely encouraging if they could have a large attendance - it would make the job of keeping the Stamm alive and interesting - so much more rewarding.

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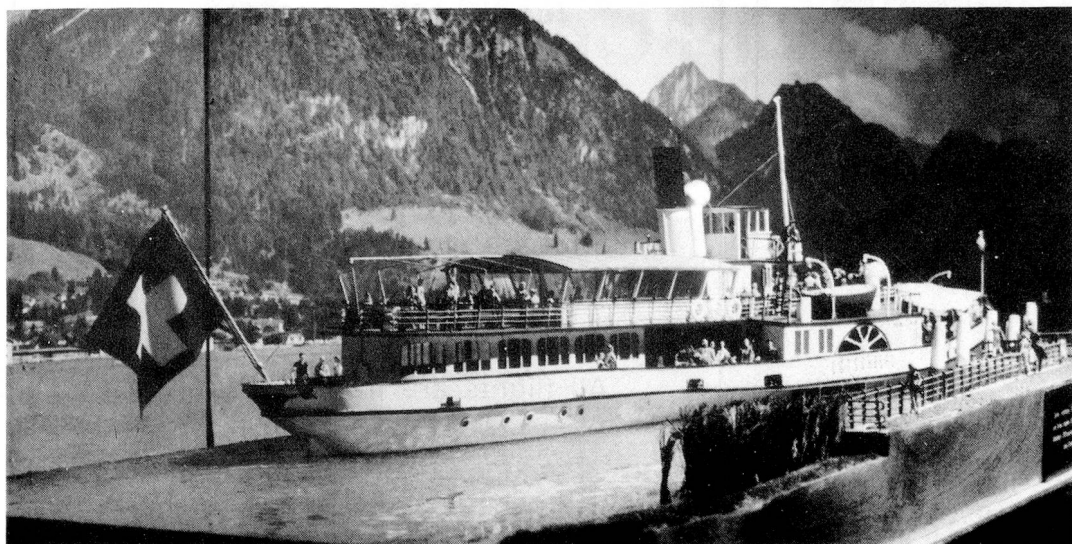
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miles away, ranging from apples to Endivie salat, Zopf and Bretzeli.

The highlight of the day was surely the enormous lunch to which these 18 talented Swiss chefs had brought their specialities. It was a feast for the eyes to see the choice of traditional Swiss dishes – Basler Mehlsuppe, Würste, Aufschnitt, Nüsslisalat, then Rüebli torte, Birmenmuesli, Gugelhopf, Basler Leckerli, Sachertorte, and to go with the coffee melting pralinés which our eldest member, Emil Krapf, so kindly had made.

Once again it was a nostalgic atmosphere to hear everyone speak Swiss dialect.

The afternoon was filled with a quiz of Alpine flowers and Swiss towns. Forty beautiful Swiss colour slides were also shown, loaned by the Swiss National Tourist Office. While showing these, members had a good chance to refer to individual pictures, describing their recent holidays, or simply to spread some knowledge of current Swiss news.

Towards the evening we all gathered around the piano, where traditional tunes were played and sung, remembered by all so well from home, school or "Schulreise". We sang for a long time while others chatted quietly in a corner.

At the end of the day everyone agreed that once again several hours of perfect Swiss atmosphere had elapsed with better understanding for each other. And so we parted, and are now looking forward to our summer meeting in Salisbury on Saturday, July 4.

May I take this opportunity to thank all my Swiss friends for their enthusiasm and support. – **Ruth Cole.**

THIS picture of the well-known Swiss paddle steamer the "Lötschberg" was not taken in the Bernese Oberland – but in Wembley.

For the steamer is a model, built to the scale of 1-87, by Swiss Observer reader Mr Barry Harper and his son Nigel, who live in Croydon, Surrey. And it was in Wembley because the Harpers had entered it at the Model Engineer Exhibition at the Wembley Conference Centre, where it won a bronze medal.

Measuring 30 inches in length, it was built from drawings and photographs supplied by the Berne-Lötschberg-Simplon Railway. Now the Harpers, who regularly go to Switzerland on holiday, are building a model of a BLS mountain railway.

Eventful year

AT ITS recent annual general meeting the Swiss Club Dunfermline was able to look back on an eventful year. We had regular monthly meetings with film and slide shows, interesting talks, a theatre visit, and an excursion to Falkland Palace. We also saw the Edinburgh Tattoo. Of course, we celebrated the 1st of August and Advent together.

One of the highlights of our year is our annual dinner. Every lady (and some gentlemen!) prepares something and as a result 28 people sit down to what turns out to be, at least, a five course meal. We also had our twice-yearly skittle evenings with the Edinburgh Club.

We enjoyed good fellowship and happy hours together but have, unfortunately, also experienced great sadness.

At the very beginning of our club year we lost one of our most longstanding members, much liked by everybody, Mrs Anna Weiss-Schäppi. She was 81 years old, a citizen of Wädenswil.

In 1926 she was sent by the

Rapperswil from Gessner to help to start a silk manufacturing firm in Dunfermline. Some time afterwards a young man was sent, too. Today he tells with some pleasure how she was not at all pleased about the arrival of this cheeky young man whom she had already known in Switzerland. However, she must have recognised his true value – they married in 1928 and have had a very happy life together.

Mr Weiss was in charge of the Castleblair Works, his task made easier by his able and hardworking wife, taking care of home and children. They have two sons.

In May we lost another member, Mr Charles Benz. He

came from Thalwil, where he grew up and lived with his English wife for the first two years of his marriage. In 1933 he moved to Galashiels in the Borders of Scotland. He came to the Dunfermline area in 1964. On retirement in 1968 he moved to Muthill near Crieff. He has two sons.

Some time after the death of his first wife he remarried – again very happily. Although living 35 miles away, he came, whenever he could manage, with his second wife, Freda, to our club meetings.

In December we heard of the death of our oldest member, 85 years old Mrs Elisa Hulda Schönenberger-Reiser. She came from Rütli, Zurich. She was much loved because of her warm, affectionate personality.

Shortly after their marriage in 1921 they were sent by their Swiss firm to a branch in France. They stayed there for four years. Two sons were born there, and another one in Switzerland. In 1933 the firm then sent them to Dunfermline, the "Winterthur Silk."

Both were very active in the Swiss Club. Mr Schönenberger was president for several years. After celebrating a very happy Christmas with their son's family, Mrs Schönenberger died suddenly in the early hours of December 26.

The death of these three members is a real loss to our club. – **F. Adams-Keller, hon. secretary.**

WE regret to report the death of one of our oldest readers, Mr Herman Linder, at the age of 87. Born in Reichenbach (Berne), he came to London when he was 20 and attended the Union Helvetia.

For 20 years he was head chef at the Hotel Great Central in Marylebone Road, London.

SWISS CHURCHES

EGLISE SUISSE, 79 Endell Street, WC2

10am Services in German, every Sunday, except 4th Sunday of the month.

11.15am Services en Français, tous les dimanches.

Minister: Pfarrer Urs Steiner, 1 Womersley Road, London N8 9AE. Tel: 01-340 9740

SWISS CATHOLIC MISSION, 48 Great Peter St., SW1

6pm On Saturdays (Meditation Service)

11.30am On Sundays (in English)

6.30pm On Sundays (in German-ecumenical)

1.05pm Monday - Friday

Chaplain: Fr. Paul Bossard, 48 Great Peter St., London SW1P 2HA. Tel: 01-222 2895