

Society and social scene

Objekttyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): - **(1982)**

Heft 1790

PDF erstellt am: **01.05.2024**

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Swiss Mercantile Society's AGM

THE Swiss Mercantile Society, London, held its 93rd annual general meeting at Swiss House, the chairman, Mr F.O. Hausermann, bidding a cordial welcome to the members present, mentioning specially Mr Julius Keller, Commercial Attaché and Consul General, Mr R.J. Rossier, Swiss Consul, and the auditor, Mr J.H. Try.

Reporting on the society's activities during the past year, it was stated that these had followed traditional lines, the highlights being the annual dinner and dance at the Dorchester Hotel and the summer family outing to Woburn Abbey and Safari Park, the Duke of Bedford's estate.

Most of the monthly meetings, followed by interesting talks and film shows, were held jointly with the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, thus ensuring a more satisfactory attendance.

As for nearly six decades past, the main activities were centred on the college. An unwelcome feature was the dwindling number of students, due mainly to economic factors such as the highly increased costs of accom-

modation, meals and travel.

The downward trend in foreign students of all nationalities coming to this country, which had already manifested itself in the previous year, was if anything accentuated during 1981.

The fall in attendance was reflected in the society's accounts which, despite increased fees, showed a substantial decrease of revenue. In an endeavour to redress the position as much and as speedily as possible a sub-committee was formed in the latter part of the year to organise courses on broader lines and to launch a more intensive propaganda campaign in Switzerland.

While the 15 week full-time course leading to the college diploma would still form the main basis of the curriculum it was felt necessary to admit students for

shorter periods, to arrange more flexible courses and to widen the appeal to other professions such as engineering where a good all-round command of the English language was paramount.

In addition, short-term refresher courses for former students, as well as holiday courses, were foreseen to form part of the future scholastic programme.

During 1981 the average monthly attendance at the college was 157.5 students, compared with 189 in 1980. As a full programme was nevertheless carried through, there were on balance considerably smaller classes, very welcome and beneficial from the students' point of view but, unfortunately, uneconomical financially.

Apart from the normal courses, a special class of 10 weeks each term was again held for Swissair trainees.

Day time preparatory courses for the Cambridge Proficiency in English examinations, in June and December, which have become a regular feature of the college programme, were held last year and attended by a total of 49 students.

At the request of Swissair, a preparatory day class for the Cambridge First Certificate on two afternoons a week was held from July to December, and a similar class was arranged for

January 1982.

The college diploma was awarded to 261 students, compared with 285 in the previous year. The percentage of successes was again high, due to the system whereby students have to pass tests at the end of each five-week period to progress to the sixth grade, at the end of which the diploma examination is held. By that time the majority have reached the required standard, hence the relatively high proportion of passes.

In view of the difficulties experienced by Swiss nationals in obtaining labour permits, the evening classes were again mainly attended by day students, together with a small number of Swiss working with organisations such as Swissair and the Swiss banks established here.

The courses, therefore, were chiefly confined to the preparation of the Cambridge First Certificate and the Certificate of Proficiency in English examinations. Fifteen courses were held in the course of the year with an average attendance of 17 students per class, which compared favourably with a total of 14 courses held in the previous year, attended by a similar average number of students.

The result obtained by SMS students at external examinations were again highly satisfactory. The Cambridge Examinations in

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English as a foreign language continued to be as popular as ever.

A total of 64 candidates, compared with 53 in 1980, sat for the coveted proficiency examination, with a success rate of 60 per cent, including four grade "A" and six grade "B". Slightly fewer took the First Certificate in 1981, 137 against 143, but the success rate rose from 92 per cent to 93.5 per cent.

The Royal Society of Arts examinations attracted fewer candidates than in previous years and the results in Stage III were disappointing, with only three out of nine candidates being successful, but of the six failures four obtained the Cambridge Proficiency a month later. In stage II however, all three SMS candidates passed, one with credit.

The language laboratory with 20 booths and Philips recording decks gave reliable service and assisted in improving the standard of the spoken language, to which great importance is attached nowadays, both for examination and practical purposes.

As in the past, full day excursions to places of historic and cultural interest were arranged periodically, and class visits to the Ford motor works, Lloyds, the Stock Exchange etc., as well as theatre parties at greatly reduced rates, were organised throughout the scholastic year.

In the field of sport, tennis practice and games, as well as football matches were organised, both of these principally in nearby Regent's Park. The SMS football

team continued to play in the West End league which is composed mainly of English teams.

The staff consisted of 15 to 17 full-time teachers, most of them with academic qualifications and long experience in teaching English as a foreign language.

Concluding the report, the chairman expressed appreciation to all who had helped the society to pass through a difficult period, notably the Swiss government for their financial assistance, the central authorities of the SKV and the Swiss Commercial Employment office in Zurich, as well as the Swiss Ambassador in London and his staff, for their constant interest and support.

Finally the meeting dealt with the elections. Mr A. Jaccard, who acted as chairman pro tem., thanked Mr Hausermann for his continued devoted services to the society and the members of the council and the committees for their loyal support throughout the year.

All of them having signified their willingness to serve for another year of office were

declared duly elected, with Mr W. Burren as an additional member of the council and Mr K. Deutsche an additional member of the education committee.

W.B.

Manchester club's diary

IN a new venture designed to encourage members to meet more frequently, Manchester Swiss Club have started to hold informal monthly get-togethers in a country hotel in Cheshire.

They meet on the last Thursday in each month in the Gold Suite of the Deanwater Hotel, Woodford, where they can play cards, records, pool or croquet. A variety of basket meals, are served, and members are asked to bring along their English friends.

Other events planned by Manchester Swiss Club are:

June 6: *Treasure Hunt.*

July 30: *National Day Celebration.*

Coming concerts

Heinz Holliger, oboe, is the soloist in Haydn's Oboe Concerto No. 2 in a concert with the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, Monday, June 7, 8pm, Royal Festival Hall.

David Josefowitz conducts the New Symphony Orchestra in a concert with works by Mendelssohn and Mozart, Tuesday, June 8, 7.45pm, Queen Elizabeth Hall.

Felix Aprahamian talks on

Arthur Honegger and his Symphony No. 2, Tuesday, June 22, 6.30pm, Royal Festival Hall Waterloo Room. This work is played in a concert by the Philharmonia Orchestra, Tuesday, June 22, 8pm, Royal Festival Hall.

The **Zurich Ballet** perform "Manfred" in a season with Nureyev at the London Coliseum, June 14 to 20.

September: *Bowling competition and barbecue.*

November 12: *Dinner Dance.*

December 4: *Children's Christmas Party.*

January 21, 1983: *Raclette Party.*

March, 1983: *Annual General Meeting.*

Details of any of the events can be obtained from the secretary, Mrs Sandra Glauser, 260 Bramhall Lane, Davenport, Stockport (tel: 061-487 1428).

Philatelists meet

SOME 60 people enjoyed a meal of shrimp cocktail and roast beet at the Throgmorton Restaurant in the City of London on March 31. Normally this, the London Swiss Philatelic Society's annual dinner, is held at the end of February, but the change to a time of better weather was appreciated by all, especially since several members now come more than 100 miles to attend.

The President of the LSPS, Mr Burren, reviewed the past year of the society, and welcomed the many persons present. He also offered congratulations to the society's honorary secretary, Mr Ron Foster, and his wife Rae, who were celebrating their 25th wedding anniversary at this dinner.

The speech for the guests was given by Mr Hawkins, a senior partner of Frazer Whiting, the

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firm where Mr Foster works. Mr Hawkins likened London to Zurich, both cities having an area that recalled the past but also renewed one's faith for the future.

For London, he praised the Barbican Arts Centre and suggested that all members should take advantage of the prospects offered. He finished his speech with a story about the good long term investment value of certain New Zealand stamps.

The final speech was given by Mr Foster, who had acted as a very capable toastmaster throughout the evening. On behalf of both his wife and himself, he thanked everybody for the handsome presents, especially the society for its large spray of flowers.

The next item on the agenda was the tombola raffle, and an excellent selection of gifts helped to raise £101.30 for the LSPS. In several respects this had been the best of our regular annual tombolas.

The evening closed with the usual stamp auction. The Society's practice is to donate half the proceeds to the Swiss Benevolent Society and half to another society. As a memorial to the recent loss of Mrs Rothlisberger, it was decided to select the Madame Curie Foundation as the second society and, mainly due to good bidding on some Bhutan, Swiss, United Nations and Yemen material, a total of £86.10 was raised.

Martin Smith

SPECIAL birthdays: On April 22 **Mrs E. Stauffer**, of 48a Putney Hill, London SW15, celebrated her 85th birthday.

Mrs R.D. Diviani, of 16 Calcott Road, London NW6, was 85 on May 5.

On May 18, **Mrs K. Grob**, of 1 Cartref, Ellesmere Road, Weybridge, Surrey, celebrated her 80th birthday.

Belatedly we extend best wishes to the three ladies and hope they have had enjoyable birthdays and will have many happy returns of them.

MM

Stamps link 26 nations

TWENTY-three years ago this summer representatives of European governments met in the Swiss lakeside resort of Montreux. Their mission – to map out a plan for increased co-operation in postal and telecommunications matters.

The result of that meeting was the setting up of an organisation called CEPT, in English, the European Conference of Postal and Telecommunications Administrations.

The founding of CEPT was linked originally to a plan drawn up by the postal administrations of the European Common Market.

When the CEPT was finally established at the conference hosted by Switzerland in 1959, it linked the postal administrations of 19 European countries. Now it has 26 member nations. These include all the Common Market countries, also "mini" states like the Vatican, Monaco, Liechtenstein and San Marino, Mediterranean countries like Cyprus, Turkey and Malta and even Yugoslavia, the only East European member.

Every year CEPT countries issue "Europa" stamps. Although the actual stamp design differs from country to country, a common theme is chosen every year. The 1982 theme is "His-

torical Events", and the two values comprising Switzerland's issue recall the most significant event in the nation's history – the founding of the Confederation in 1291.

The subject of the 40c stamp is the "Bundesbrief" archives in the town of Schwyz, which house the oldest original documents of the Confederation.

A detail from the mural by Uri artist Heinrich Danioth (1896-1953) depicts the representatives of the three valley communities of Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden swearing the Oath of Eternal Allegiance on the Rütli Meadow.

The 80c stamp features a reproduction of the parchment of the original treaty, which was drawn up in Latin and still exists to this day.

In 1938 Switzerland issued the first of another special series of postage stamps. In addition to the usual selling price or face value of the stamps, a small surcharge was added in aid of Swiss charities. These stamps became known as Pro Patria – or in English "For the Homeland" – and they have been issued every year since.

Over the years a wide range of



Echoes of 1291: this year's "Europa" stamps



Swiss charities and other good causes have benefitted from the sales of this increasingly popular series. These charities have included the Swiss Red Cross, funds in aid of aged people and refugees, and national research into such illnesses as cancer and tuberculosis.

This year's attractive series carry a small surcharge in aid of cultural causes. The stamps themselves depict four of Switzerland's most attractive inn signs – the Hotel Sonne in Willisau, the Auberge de l'Onde in St. Saphorin, the Hotel Drei Könige in Rheinfelden, and the Hotel Krone in Winterthur.

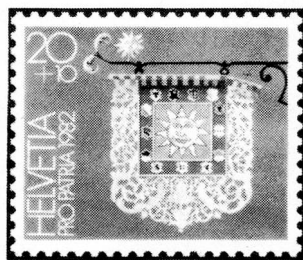
The first Pro Patria stamps date back 44 years – which is relatively recent, if one considers that Switzerland along began producing postage stamps almost 100 years before that. Nevertheless some of the earliest Pro Patria stamps are now very elusive items, much sought after by dealers and collectors.

North London dealer Heinz Katcher, who specialises exclusively in Swiss stamps, has described the price increase among early Pro Patria material as staggering. Some prices have even doubled in recent years.

The most sought after of all Pro Patria stamps is the imperforate item issued in 1939. Imperforate is the printing – often unintentionally – of stamps without the usual perforation holes in between.

Of the nearly three million Pro Patria stamps issued in 1939, a mere 50 were printed in error without any perforation – and found their way on the open market at their individual face value of only 20 cents.

These days the same stamp will set you back around £3,000 – even in the unlikely event that you can still find a copy.



Picturesque inn signs depicted on the latest "Pro Patria" stamps