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30 years in the service Mercantile Society College

E.W. Makin retires



ANOTHER era has come to an end with the retirement of Edgar Williams Makin after nearly 30 years as teacher, vice-principal and finally head of the Swiss Mercantile College in London.

The Schweizerischer Kaufmaennischer Verein was founded in Lucerne in 1873. Fifteen years later the London section came into being when a small group of 13 compatriots decided to form the Swiss Mercantile Society with the aim of advancing professional and linguistic education of its members.

The history of the SMS was published in detail in the February, 1979, issue of the Swiss Observer. From that article we know that the SMS College came into being in January, 1923, and that its reputation and success increased rapidly.

During the war it naturally had to be closed, but it soon opened its doors again, and the college went from strength to strength. It is still in Fitzroy Square, where it was opened in 1926.

Ten years ago the society acquired the freehold, and in November, 1974, the renovated premises were officially opened.

Edgar Makin was born in Bedford on May 14, 1916, one of seven children. His parents lived in Argentina up to the war, and he himself went to school in Buenos Aires for two years from the age of eight.

But he returned to Bedford where he was educated. At Cam-

bridge he read German and French at Pembroke College from 1935 to 1938. It was there that Edgar Makin had dreams of Switzerland.

"One day", he said, "I saw one of those wonderful photographs of snowcapped Swiss Alps advertising the Cambridge University Mountaineering Club." He had already tried some mountaineering in the Lake District without, of course, any of the sophisticated equipment in use today. One day he went up Great Gable and watched climbers on the Needle, Kern Knotts and the Innominate Crack.

"It was perhaps the memory of those climbers that turned that first picture of Swiss mountains into magic and prompted me to join the club," he recalled.

His first Alpine season took him to Arolla, the Pigne, the Aiguille de la Tsa, the Bouquetins

and others. This was a connection with Switzerland Edgar Makin looked forward to extending over the years, but the war put an end to these dreams.

After graduation he went to Germany as an exchange teacher of English. His stay came to an abrupt end when he was recalled to Britain in July, 1939. He volunteered for the army and was commissioned in the Oxford and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry.

In 1940 he was seconded to the Intelligence Service - MI5 - and served with the Combined Services Interrogation Centre. When the Second Front opened in June, 1944, he was on the Normandy Beaches in the invasion. He served with the Second Army in France and Belgium and spent some time with the Americans in Wiesbaden, working for the War Crimes Commission.

In 1946, having attained the rank of major, Edgar Makin was demobilised and returned to civilian life as a businessman in an important import and export company. As a married man with two daughters, he found that a business career was not for him.

Fortunately for the SMS College, he answered an advertisement in the teaching journals calling for French, German and business experience. After an interview with the then president of the SMS, Mr Walter Meier, and the principal, Mr Christopher Slade, he was offered the job as teacher of French translation to the

diploma class, commercial correspondence to beginners and intermediate grammar.

Edgar Makin took the job as a stop-gap. He said: "That is how it begins. One comes to the SMS thinking it will do for the moment, and somehow ten years later one is still there. Why? There can only be one answer: The Swiss."

In a talk called "L'appétit vient en mangeant" to the Nouvelle Société Helvétique in London a short time ago, Mr Makin described his very busy, not always easy, but happy years with the college.

Apart from doing an almost complete teaching programme with, in addition, proficiency and correspondence evening classes, he wrote a grammar book for the college, "Firm Foundations", and was for some years editor of the college magazine, not to mention students' homework.

"My family had to put up with late hours - the Swiss influence was at work," he said.

The college grew and accommodation became inadequate. After the purchase of Swiss House, the years spent in various other educational buildings all over London until the building conversion was complete were adventurous. It was due to Mr Makin and the college secretary, Mr Walter Burren, as well as committee members under their president, Mr A. Jaccard, and a co-operative staff that not one hour of teaching was lost.

Then came the building up of

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of the Swiss

numbers again, sometimes a rather frustrating job, but the quality of the college has remained, although expensive London and the general recession have been damaging to foreign language schools.

Edgar Makin was a much respected member of the college staff. In the course of just on 30 years he made many friends among the estimated 20,000 students who must have passed through his hands.

He witnessed many changes, and on the whole, Swiss youngsters have become more self-reliant and independent, although this change has not been as marked in girl students as in their male counterparts.

Mr Makin enlarged on the fact that the turnover in teaching personnel at the college has been negligible. He put it down to the fact that Swiss students were thoroughly rewarding to teach. They were not afraid of hard work and had a sense of discipline which simplifies the teachers' task.

Having known Edgar Makin for more than two decades I firmly believe that his success with the students is largely due to his ability to handle young people, be they Swiss or British. Apart from his intelligence, he has great qualities, not the least of which is fairness and a good sense of humour. He is also a shrewd judge of character.

All this is why he has made so

many friends, and why he has been made welcome in many Swiss homes over the years.

At a party given by the SMS's Council to mark his retirement at the end of April, his devotion and loyal service to the college and the society were rightly praised. As a token of their appreciation he was presented with a mahogany knee-hole desk of Regency design.

The work of the college will go on under the new head, Mr Leonard Cane, the former vice-principal. But the mark left by Edgar Makin will not easily be erased, and the gratitude of many will remain his.

He can now devote his leisure to enjoying the countryside and bird watching, to photography and gardening. He still plays tennis and follows all sports keenly. He can also indulge in travelling. He has visited most European countries and has visited Hong Kong twice – two of his six grandchildren were born there.

His many friends wish him and his wife, Joan, who always gave him full support in his work and was a constant friend of the college, many happy years of retirement.

For those who would like to keep in touch with him, the address is 74 Barn Way, Wembley Park, Middlesex HA9 9NP.

Mariann Meier

Baroque music at the Swiss Church

A CONCERT of Baroque music took place at the Swiss Church in London on July 15. It was organised by Miss Isabella Anderfuhren from Geneva and was held under the auspices of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique.

The three young artists – Isabella Anderfuhren, soprano, Yael Ronen, flute, and David Shemer, harpsichord – gave a highly polished performance, both as individuals and as an ensemble.

The recital opened with Vivaldi's lively and gregarious cantata, "Lungi dal vago volto". This was followed by Handel's sonata for flute and continuo in F major, and its quiet dignity was most relaxing.

In Bach's Toccata in G major for harpsichord, David Shemer, a very sensitive accompanist, came into his own as a soloist. As always, Bach's simple greatness was entirely satisfying. His sonata for flute and harpsichord was very demanding on the flautist, but Yael Ronen again played it with great competence and musicality.

Antonio Caldara, who lived in Vienna from 1670-1736, is a generally less well-known composer. His cantata on the nightingale, for soprano, flute and harpsichord, was a delightful surprise, and the three artists gave an excellent performance, the flute and the voice vying with each other in the bird's warbling expression. Again, the musical appreciation was of a high degree.

The Telemann cantata, "Umschlinget uns ihr sanften Friedensbande", was perhaps a trifle dramatic, but the fine soprano voice of Isabella Anderfuhren certainly showed up to perfection.

The concert ended with Bach's cantata extract (BWV 36b), "Mit zarten und vergnuegten Trieben", and a well-pleased audience showed their appreciation in no uncertain way.

The president of the NSH, Mrs Mariann Meier, thanked the three young artists for the fine entertainment and wished them success in their career. She regretted that the train drivers' strike had interfered with the usual good attendance, but she appreciated that the Embassy was represented by Consul-General and Mrs J. Keller and Consul and Mrs Duboulet. The audience also included Mrs E. Crack, Chairman of the Consistoire.

MM

A MEETING to be held at the Swiss Embassy at 7pm on Wednesday, September 22, will hear a report on the Assembly of Swiss Abroad in Sierre.

The meeting is being organised by the Nouvelle Société Helvétique.

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A GOOD number of members, their friends and children turned up for our annual Schueblig Party, held at the Green Bank House Club, writes Maertek Moor of the Swiss Club Liverpool.

The gardens looked fresh and inviting and the room was decorated with colourful bunches of flowers.

The buffet laden with big platters of favourite Swiss sausages and potato salad, the fluttering of so many little Swiss flags on the strawberry tarts, the filling of glasses for the cheery "Zum Wohl" – the scene could not have been nearer to a good afternoon in Switzerland.

And Mother Helvetia must have smiled because for once so many of her children made an

Liverpool celebrates with a Schueblig Party

effort to speak the language she had taught us.

The homely company was good for body and soul. Even our English friends enjoyed this Swiss family occasion and many of us stayed for quite a time, chatting and discussing holidays. Junior members sold August 1 emblems while the little ones were playing in the last sunlight of the day.

However, against this happy

background of a successful social event, Maertek Moor reflects on the changing role of the Swiss societies:

Never in the 35 years abroad have I felt so strongly that we old fashioned Auswanderer, who went under our own steam and had to find our way and niche in foreign countries, seem to be a disappearing race. Being abroad under the safe umbrella of a

protecting Swiss firm is the thing now.

Interests have changed too, as has life in Switzerland itself and the values in daily life overall.

A Swiss Club needs a good foundation membership, as was the case for so many years. We have lived in several countries and the farther away from Switzerland we were, the stronger were the Swiss Clubs. Now everyone hops over to home so often that the need for a place of honest friendship is not as great as it used to be.

Nobody can change this. We "oldies" can but try to keep the flag flying.

Skittles in Scotland

SWISS Club members from both Edinburgh and Dunfermline will be getting together again on October 28 for another skittles evening.

The last event was a great success, so the organisers are hoping for another good turnout to make it a really enjoyable evening.

The venue is the Sheep's Head Inn at Duddingston and the fun is due to start at 7.30pm.

The energetic ladies of the Swiss Club Edinburgh are still managing an early morning swim at the Commonwealth Pool every Friday. Perhaps they are in training for the skittles, or perhaps it's just for fun.

OBITUARIES

Mrs Alice Kenny

WITH deep regret we announce the death of Mrs Alice Kenny, née Bürgi, at the age of 86.

Having been brought up in Berne, she came to London in 1914 shortly before the outbreak of the First World War and stayed at Swiss House in Fitzroy Square, at that time a hostel for Swiss girls.

She later married Maurice Smet, a Belgian, and had two sons, both of whom are still living in this country. Her husband died at an early age and she subsequently spent many years in domestic and hotel service.

During the last war, she married William Kenny, with whom she took over the post of caretaker at Swiss House on the retirement of the late Adolf Bossert, a well-known personality

in the Swiss community.

In the course of her stay at Swiss House she became acquainted not only with the members of the Swiss Mercantile and other Swiss societies, who hold their meetings there, but with many thousands of students who passed through the SMS College.

After Mr Kenny's death in 1966 she carried on as sole caretaker until 1973, when the SMS acquired the freehold of the premises and moved out to temporary accommodation during the period of building operations and redecoration.

Mrs Kenny had since spent her time in well deserved retirement and greatly enjoyed the company of her grandchildren and latterly derived infinite pleasure out of her great-grandson. She will be remembered by all who knew her as a faithful and every willing servant of the SMS.

WB

Mr Walter S. Fischer

IT IS with deep regret that we announce the death of Walter Samuel Fischer, of Sonnenbergstrasse 2, 5734 Reinach, Switzerland. He died in his 87th year after long illness.

Mr and Mrs Fischer spent many years in the Swiss community in London. He was with the Swiss Bank Corporation, and both were very active members of

the Swiss Church.

Mr Fischer was president of the Swiss Young Men's Christian Association and leader of the Sunday School of the German-speaking parish of the Church. Above all, he was a loyal member of the Consistoire, and the Swiss Church owed him a great debt of gratitude.

To his wife Martha, their four children and families, we extend our deep sympathy in their loss. We shall remember him as a sincere and honest friend, and how better than to end with the appreciation sent in by one of the older members of the Swiss Church, Mrs Nora Towers: "I remember Walter Fischer with thankfulness. He so often encouraged me and others by his steadfast Christian witness and sympathetic friendliness tinged with gentle humour."

MM

NEWS AND VIEWS
Swiss society news is welcomed by the Swiss Observer at 68 Chester Road, Hazel Grove, Stockport SK7 5NY.

Your views about the magazine itself should be passed to Mrs Mariann Meier, 53 Priory Road, London NW6 3NE. Her telephone number is 01-624 5360.

For Information, Advice or Help contact the
SWISS WELFARE OFFICE

for young people

31 Conway Street, London W1P 5HL
Telephone 01-387 3608

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Great Portland Street, Warren Street

Colony get-together celebrates the First of August

AFTER having been traditionally held at Central Hall, and then taken exile for many years to the Merton Town Hall, returned to the centre of London to be held at both the Swiss Church and the John Southworth Centre, with an experiment at the Old Chelsea Town Hall last year, the Swiss National Day celebrations now appear to have found a definite venue at the Swiss Church.

This is indeed where a celebration of this nature ought to take place, particularly when problems of organisation and expenses are considered.

In previous years, the colony's First of August celebration had tried to bring together both the commemoration of the birth of our country and the fun and dancing that should rightly go with such an event. However, it was found that these two parts of the festivities attracted different people and that very few members of the resident community participated in the wine and dancing that traditionally took place at the John Southworth Centre after the ceremony.

This year the First of August Committee had decided to dispense with the dancing and choirs from Switzerland and

settle, very appropriately, with a colony get-together that began before the ceremony at the Swiss Church and continued after it. There was no dancing, but with the bustle of a very rewarding attendance, and a musical background of yodel and alpine tunes, the atmosphere was just as lively.

The ceremony took an original form because the Rütli Pact was not read out. Instead, a tape was played of the chiming bells of St. Nicholas, Ruschlikon, which were followed by a recorded address by the President of the Confederation, Mr Fritz Honnegger. The tape, which had been sent by the Federal Council, ended with the National Anthem which we all sang in our own language.

Mr Virgil Berti, Chairman of the First of August Committee, had introduced the ceremony by welcoming us all at 6pm. Speaking from the pulpit of the flag bedecked church, he thanked us all for coming and took pleasure in introducing our Ambassador.

Monsieur Caillat referred to

the diversity of Switzerland and recalled the individuality and independence of those people of different cultures, languages and convictions that made up the Swiss national. He said that our institutions were designed to protect this individuality and independence while at the same time fostering the solidarity that was essential for the survival of society.

He told his audience that, as Swiss abroad, they were demonstrating by their activities "Switzerland's openness to the international community." At the same time, he added, "by participating in this ceremony tonight, you are proving that you are still bound up with our country's concerns." Ambassador Caillat ended his address by conveying the best wishes of the Federal Council and expressing his warmest thanks to the organisers of the celebrations.

The remainder of the evening, which ended at about 8pm, was given over to enjoyment. Tables

had been laid out inside the church and the many families present could enjoy a buffet meal consisting of mixed meat sausages and potato salad catered for by the Swiss Centre. There was also a selection of cakes, wines and beers.

It was altogether an extremely successful event which also underlined the role that the Swiss Church building is now playing in colony life.

PMB

Times, and customs, changing

Here is part of the address given during the First of August celebrations of the Manchester Swiss Club by Mr CHARLES GLAUSER, the recently-appointed Swiss Consul-General for the North of England:

ON AN occasion such as this when we are gathered to commemorate the birth of Switzerland it is customary to extol the beauty of our country and to praise the accomplishments of its citizens throughout past centuries and up to the present days.

However with fast changing times customs also change and we Swiss people cannot any longer reflect solely on ourselves and on our past achievements.

Neither can we look at the future of Switzerland as that of a country isolated from the rest of the world by its traditions, out of a strong sense of history or by its inherited forms of direct democracy and its policy of neutrality.

The multilingual character of Switzerland, which links her to the great surrounding cultures as

A question of citizenship

THE Organisation of Swiss Abroad has been instrumental in starting a campaign for making Swiss citizenship available to children of Swiss women married to foreigners and living abroad. This is already possible for children born to Swiss mothers and foreign fathers living in Switzerland.

The OSA is of the opinion that this matter should be voted on as a separate item, and in the June Parliamentary Session in Berne, the Council of States agreed with this view when Councillors

debated the message by the Federal Council regarding citizenship. They disagreed with the Government, who had put forward three points suggesting that these should be voted upon in one proposal in a plebiscite. The other two points concern simplifying naturalisation for foreigners married to Swiss women – a possibility available under certain conditions – and simplifying naturalisation for young foreigners who have grown up in Switzerland, for stateless persons and refugees.

The whole discussion will now move to the National Council, and it is to be seen whether this Chamber will support the Government's proposal or whether the National Councillors will vote with the Council of States.

The OSA is of the opinion that the proposal regarding Swiss mothers being able to pass on Swiss citizenship to their children would have a better chance of being accepted by the electorate than if it were put forward with the other two ideas. **MM**



well as her economic development, made us all realise her extremely intensive interdependence with the entire world. It also made us aware of the contributions which in our modest way we can bring to the world of today through the many international non-political organisations to which we already belong.

Thus we can retain respect for our past traditions and at the same time meet the demands imposed upon us by the fast changing world we live in.

The declining economic situation abroad obviously reflects on the Swiss market and the position of the Swiss franc contributes also to the difficulties experienced by our manufacturers to export their products. This international recession also affects Swiss industry, and unemployment in our country has grown since last year. At the present time the jobless figure has reached a level of approximately 10,000 and we can't exclude the possibility that it may double by the end of the year.

Even with these seemingly high figures, this would represent less than 1 per cent of the working force, which is by no means a dramatic level. However this situation makes it more difficult for school-leavers to find employ-

WAVING the flag at Manchester Swiss Club's First of August celebration are 14 month old Sebastian Fahey and club president Paul Neher. Sebastian and his 12-day-old brother Christian were the youngest guests at an extremely well attended event to mark Switzerland's National Day.

ment, as jobs reserved for people without any professional experience are very rare indeed.

Even with a university degree youngsters have difficulties finding immediate employment and a number of them are still without work a year after having finished their studies, whether it was law, architecture, economy, political sciences or technology.

What the economic situation next year will be is difficult to forecast, but one can keep a certain degree of optimism as certain industries already show a tendency to increase their production and their exports

However we should be encouraged by the very positive attitude adopted in general by the young Swiss citizens of today who feel that harmony is the predominant factor that marks the present way of life.

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