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RETURNING from holiday in Switzerland, my husband and I found three *Swiss Observers* waiting for us – had we really been away for such a long time?

Well, however long it had been it was a real wrench to tear ourselves away from our beloved country.

Looking at the *Swiss Observers* we were delighted at the superb picture covers and inside coverage of Swiss towns, landscapes and events, greeting us as old friends.

Beginning with the April issue – impressive but bleak mountainscape of the Furka Pass and Rhone Glacier ... we had been almost there, travelling on the famous Glacier Express (*Swiss Observer* June 1984, page 14) over its spectacular route.

But alas the glacier is no longer visible from the train because of the newly-built tunnel which enables the express to run all 12 months of the year.

On page 8 of the April issue we were encouraged to visit the Phaenomena exhibition in Zürich. We did visit it! What fun! Great stuff! No doubt its creators

had, apart from further education at heart, a twinkle in their eyes when planning it – well knowing that there is a child in every adult aching to get out from time to time.

Page 14 – the exquisite Ticino – yes, we were there too. From the bleak winter ravaged and partly snow-covered Upper Engadin we travelled over and down the Maloja Pass (August issue page 14) on the yellow postcoach through the Val Bergell and arrived in Lugano on a hot and sultry day.

May issue brings the picture of the handsome village of Boltigen nestling among the hills. This time we did not manage to travel the magnificent Spiez-Montreux route, but we revelled in many other "picture book" villages in the Baselbiet, Entlebuch and Appenzell.

June issue with its tempting picture of "A summer excursion

near Pontresina ..." This looks familiar to me – it could be in the Roseg valley.

Yes, we were in that region, but on a desolate grey day, thick mist curtains hiding the mountains, the meadows waterlogged and unsightly. But two days later a blazing sun revealed white gleaming peaks on a frosty morning on our way via St. Moritz-Maloja into the Tessin.

Page 10 enthuses over Solothurn – "Most beautiful baroque jewel in Switzerland". Yes, we were there! The matter of the number 11 is quite fascinating, and we did notice the sections of 11 steps. We also noticed that some of Solothurn's fountains are standing on what looks like old stone cannon balls.

July issue – rambling at Hoch-Ybrig. Never heard of this place. Ah yes, we find it on the map with the help of the Swiss railway timetable – there, near

The Chiverton family from returned from a holiday in Switzerland. A Swiss Observer waiting for the how looking through the pages

Einsiedeln. What longings it awakes in a rambler's heart. It makes me want to put my rucksack on, up myself and go.

Page 6, a visit to Spiez. How often we did use this junction? Bern-Frutigen-Brig, Brünig-Interlaken-Bern, Bern-Interlaken-Grindelwald. It is, of course, not only a junction, but a lovely place worth stopping at – if only for a break between train/boat connections for a snack in a restaurant overlooking the lake.

In the recently received September issue on pages 11 and 12 is Bern. Years ago we strolled through its streets, under arcades, admired the fountains and bear cubs.

This time we broke our journey there to visit an aunt, which



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The changing magic of the Ticino lakeland

By NINA MANSELL

"Is a lovely and gentle, and beautiful, and pleasant, and serene and joyful" wrote Charles Dickens. He could easily have been talking about the lakeland of Southern Switzerland.

Certainly this must be one of the most glorious areas of Europe. Add to the picture, sunshine, sunshine, the happy corner of flowers and trees, sprinkle the lake edge with the most beautiful scenery in the world.

It was painted about 1536. From the past, it is still there, but the green and pleasant town, cradled by mountains, with vast areas of gardens and houses rising around the still waters of a gentle lake. A calm, relaxing lake, even higher to the south, then a dash of a walk to the lake. It is a lovely, quiet, peaceful place.

Lucerne is picturesque and charming and much loved by the Swiss people.

Lucerne is only 200 metres above the sea level. It is the highest town in Switzerland. It is a lovely, peaceful, quiet, and pleasant place. It is a lovely, peaceful, quiet, and pleasant place. It is a lovely, peaceful, quiet, and pleasant place.

Swiss Observer in April – 'yes, we were there too'

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y-go-round

**Levedon, Avon have recently
Switzerland to find copies of the
n. Here, Mrs D. Chiverton tells
es stirs memories.**

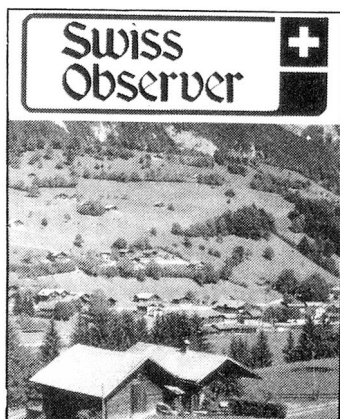
meant battling with directions, finding the correct exit out of the huge railway station in order to find the right trolley bus, consulting the friendly members of the long bus queue for advice on direction and to obtain the correct fare from the wayside ticket automats. What a job!

July issue, page 14 - Neuchâtel. Alas, we only passed through it on our way to La Chaux-de-Fonds, to Glovelier and Delemont, yet I would dearly have liked to stop and visit the museum with the music automatons. Perhaps next time.

Page 22, St Gallen. Since my husband's visit there several years ago, he has said time and again that St Gallen is a must because of the Stiftsbibliothek and the Abbey.

So now we visited this gem of gems, the library of the former Benedictine abbey of St Gallen and which still "houses the abbey's cultural treasures dating back to the period between the 8th and 12th centuries, and is of inestimable importance to the entire world of art and history".

The cover picture on the recently received September issue shows the glorious view of Lake Geneva with the vineyards and the Savoy Alps in the background. Coming by train from



Swiss Observer in May - 'we revelled in many other picture book villages'

Puidoux-Chexbres we are always caught by surprise when a similar breathtaking view suddenly opens up, particularly on a sunny day.

Now we look forward to future *Swiss Observers* bringing more pictures of the homeland which not only stir up memories but are a real incentive to up and go and look oneself.

Having grown up in Switzerland I really don't know why I had apparently seen so little of my own country. It reminds me of the boy in Stans station where we were waiting for a train.

A gleaming white mountain peak showed through a gap in the station platform canopy and I asked the lad what mountain it was, assuming he was a local schoolboy. He looked at me with a worried expression on his face

and said: "I don't know and yet I live in Schwyz, I really don't know".

Having retired earlier this year from full time work, my husband and I decided to take the opportunity of this priceless gift of unlimited time and the repeated invitations from family and friends over the years, to treat ourselves to a retirement celebration trip of 11 weeks, which, apart from a few weeks in Germany and France, would include a one month Swiss Holiday Railway card.

We have not regretted it. It was worth every minute and every penny. Particularly that holiday rail pass. To be able to get on any train, boat or post coach (apart from a few private mountain conveyances some of which offer discounts), without the fuss of buying tickets every time - bliss.

We had done a little forward planning, and over the past year or so I had been making notes of places of interest "to be visited one day" described in various Swiss magazines. Among them the beautiful Verzasca Valley which we could fit in between the St Moritz-Lugano and the Locarno-Domodossola-Brig trips. Others have to be saved for a next time.

Also, as planned, we managed a visit to the Cats and Toy museums in Riehen, the Caricatur Museum in Basle and the Giant Slide down the lower half of the Aetzmännig.

Then there were the surprises provided by family and friends. For instance that unforgettable sunny Sunday beginning with a ride on the steam train from Hinwil to Bauma.

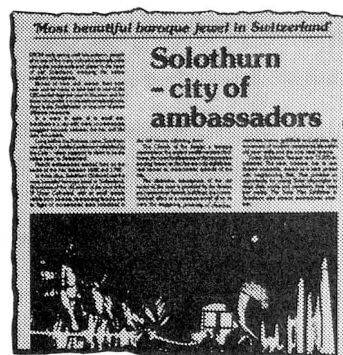
Here we found the same atmosphere as on a similar event in the UK, lots of excited children with happy parents, at the end of the line the steam enthusiasts' wives with stalls of refreshments, the old goods wagon transformed into a souvenir shop and the men rushing around with cameras.

From Bauma we went on to the Aetzmännig district (Goldingen), in the winter a busy ski resort.

Now a wizard has thought to transform it into a summer playground and among restaurant and amenities for children (playground and small wildlife park) a seatlift takes one to the top of the Aetzmännig mountain. But one can break the journey halfway and whizz down (on a trolley) a 700 metre long slide.

I had been looking forward to this and now, at last, here I was on this slide, exhilarated, imagining myself on the Cresta Run ...

Turn to Page 13



Swiss Observer in June - Solothurn, 'yes, we were there!'

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From Page 11

until I arrived at the bottom where the impatient attendant gesticulated me forward. Having heeded the notice "Now break your speed" there was not enough speed left to give me an impressive finale. I shall be wiser next time!

During the late afternoon we arrived at lovely Rapperswil on Lake Zürich. While having tea at the station restaurant – surprise of surprises for our rail enthusiast – in the station were carriages of the Orient Express bearing the notice "Nostalgic journey of the Orient Express Paris-Venice-Athens".

How was this possible? It was apparently a one-off railway special trip from Zürich HB with some old Orient Express carriages (privately owned) and a gleaming big steam locomotive tooting its way after the carriages.

If the Swiss Railways have more such lovely steam engines in ex-works condition tucked away why don't they take them out more often, thus providing an added tourist attraction?



Swiss Observer in July – St Gallen, 'visited this gem of gems'

The day ended with a chamber music concert in the Big Knights Hall (Grosser Rittersaal) with its beautifully decorated ceiling situated at the very top of the castle beneath the roof.

With the castle standing on a hill one has a superb view over the lakeside and town with its patchwork quilt of rooftops. The huge hall was packed, the music was enchanting and a gentle breeze blew through the open windows – a perfect day long to be remembered.

In Basle our friends said that under all circumstances we must see the old part of the town and took us on an afternoon walk along the Birs to the Rhine, through exquisite lanes and

streets beginning with the Letzturm, passing the water(mill) wheel in the Teich, St Alban Tal and Berg, Vorstadt, Münster, down here, up there, through gates, into courts. Fascinating.

Our friends from the Baselland insisted that we visit the Musik-automatenmuseum Seewen (SO) so we went.

This unusual private museum can be found in a delightful hilly landscape above the village. It really is a boy's dream come true through years of caring and repairing instruments then collecting old musical boxes, hand organs and a great variety of music automatons.

With a group of people we enjoyed an hour's demonstration. Among the instruments was Debussy's own grand piano with the piano-roll cut by himself, so that his wife could listen to his playing when he was away from home.

Then there was the old hand organ with seven hymn tunes which was in use until a few years ago by a Methodist minister who had no instrument at one of his chapels.

Under a glass dome is an old couple sitting side by side on a park bench, she knitting, he reading the paper, smiling and chatting to each other with movements of heads, hands, and paper, while a romantic tune is being played.

And so on. It was not just a demonstration it was an experience.

What about the sundrenched day on which we enjoyed a round trip on the Lake of Biel, or our boat trip on the Rhine from Kreuzlingen to Schaffhausen, or from Rheinfelden to Basle, or Lake Lucerne on a sunny morning on a boat full of school children on their annual outing, from Luzern to Flüelen where the sharp morning breeze made us rush for shelter.

Or the day we arrived in the holiday bustle one hot Saturday in Rapperswil and we gazed in rapture at the lake "full of giant colourful Easter eggs?" There I would have liked to snap the picture. It was a sight! Spinnakers they were, said husband.

Yes, our one-off "unlimited time" trip was worth it!

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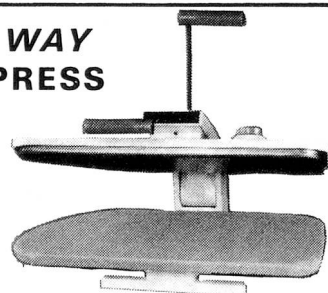
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