

Swiss business ventures in England

Autor(en): **[s.n.]**

Objekttyp: **Article**

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

Band (Jahr): **- (1929)**

Heft 404

PDF erstellt am: **25.04.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-690446>

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INSTITUTE OF TRANSPORT. TOUR IN SWITZERLAND.

In accordance with the programme already announced in *Modern Transport*, eighty members of the Institute of Transport left Victoria Station on Thursday, June 20, on a ten days' tour in Switzerland. The arrangements include travel through some of the most magnificent scenery of Switzerland and visits to a number of works and places of transport interest. Everywhere the welcome has been most cordial, and the reception and hospitality accorded the party by those whose works have been visited has been particularly gratifying. Thanks to the good offices of the Southern Railway, the journey from London to Basle was made in comfort in specially reserved coaches. Two saloon coaches have been placed at the disposal of the party for the first part of the tour in Switzerland, by the Swiss Federal Railways, and the comfort thus afforded has been a source of much gratification as well as conducing so much to everyone's convenience and pleasure.

Upon arrival at Baden the party was met at the station by several of the English-speaking representatives of Brown, Boveri & Cie and was immediately conducted to the company's works, which are situated in charming surroundings, close to the main line of the Swiss Federal Railways. The party was divided into groups of about fourteen, each of which was conducted around the works by an experienced guide. The firm of Brown, Boveri & Cie was founded at Baden in 1891; it then had some seventy employees; to-day it has over 5,000 employees in Baden and over 40,000 throughout the world. The party was impressed by the modern lay-out of the works and by their magnificent equipment. The following are a few of the firm's specialities which were seen under construction: Alternating and direct current generators of various sizes, switchboards for different tensions, currents and systems of supply transformers, mercury arc power rectifiers, locomotive and tramway motors, isolating switches, fuses and high-tension fittings, etc. Special interest was centred in the oil switches, which were seen with hand, solenoid, and motor controls, and built-on and separate overload time limit relays. After the tour of inspection, the company entertained the party at the Kursaal, when Mr. A. Winter Gray (secretary, Institute of Transport), took the opportunity to express the warm thanks of those present and of the Institute to Brown, Boveri & Cie for the reception accorded them. At the Hotel Limmathof, on the banks of the River Limmat, there was ample time to make a closer acquaintance with the beauties of the old-world town of Baden, and this was fully taken advantage of. Small groups were to be seen all over the town making mental and photographic images of its beauties—the famous Clock Tower, the old wooden bridge, the City Hall, the richly ornate church, the panoramic view from the high modern bridge. The party then left Baden for Zurich, which was reached shortly after 4 p.m.

On Saturday morning (June 22) the party caught the 9.23 a.m. train from Zurich for Winterthur in order to make an inspection of the works of Sulzer Brothers, where they were received by Mr. Robert Sulzer and members of his staff, and divided into three groups for the tour of the works. The firm was established in 1775 as a small brass foundry employing not more than seventy men. The original building still stands in the grounds of the modern works, and was regarded with great interest by the visitors. In the departments concerned with the construction of Diesel engines there were seen a huge 7,500 h.p. 2-cycle engine being constructed for a 22,000-ton ship of the Nederland Steam Ship Company; a 900 h.p. submarine engine; a 5,000 h.p. a.c. generator for one of the colonies; and a 6-cylinder locomotive engine on order for the Argentine. Orders were of course in hand for all parts of the world. Research is carried out on a large scale, and the company was much impressed in particular, by the great single-cylinder, double-acting Diesel engine (2,500 b.h.p.) which was built and is used for experimental purposes only. It is claimed to be the largest engine of the kind ever constructed, and cost 1,000,000 francs. The party also inspected the power plant (steam, gas and electric) for the works, the foundry, the refrigerating department, and the pattern shop, to mention only the sections of outstanding interest. At the conclusion of the visit, the party was conducted to the "Club zur Geduld," of Winterthur, and there entertained by the company. Mr. Winter Gray tendered the thanks of the members of the Institute to Sulzer Brothers for the splendid reception accorded them and the thorough organisation of the visit, which Mr. Robert Sulzer personally acknowledged in a speech marked by great cordiality.

Unique in the proceedings of the Institute was a meeting which was held on the afternoon of Saturday, June 22, to hear described the work of S.E.S.A. On their return from Winterthur, the party found, at Zurich Station, a special tramcar with two trailers waiting to take them to

Burliquin, where by the special invitation of the S.E.S.A., they embarked on the fine steamship *Stadt Zurich*, and had the pleasure of a two hours' excursion on the lake. Mr. R. Hohl, vice-director of the S.E.S.A., gave a comprehensive exposition, in excellent English, of the aims and activities of S.E.S.A.

Lucerne was reached on Saturday evening at about 8 p.m. The following day the Institute party visited the famous Pilatus Kulm by invitation of the Lake of Lucerne Steamship Company. In the morning after a group photograph had been taken before the railway station, all embarked on the *Winkeltrod*, and were carried to Alpnachstad, where they were met by the vice-president of the Pilatus Railway Company, and taken to the top of the mountain (7,000 ft.), which dominates Lucerne. The party travelled in the cars of this celebrated rack railway—the earliest of its kind (built 1886-8), and one of the boldest railways in the world. For those of the party to whom ascending gradients of 1 in 2 was a new experience, this was a journey not to be forgotten, and the magnificent view which gradually unfolded itself, and was seen in all its grandeur from the summit, is one for the poet to attempt to describe.

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An early start on Monday brought the party to Amsteg, the first of the power stations to be visited, and situated near the northern entrance of the St. Gotthard Tunnel. The main power stations of the Swiss Federal Railways are devised to be complementary to each other. That at Amsteg is used in the summer and the Piotta station on the Italian side is available in winter. The journey up the 3,000-ft. cable railway in the primitive truck provided and over gradients of something like 1 in 2 was not without thrills, particularly to those seated at the back of the vehicle. Alongside were the huge pipes which bring water from the Reuss reservoir, 900-ft. higher up the mountain, to the 15,000-h.p. turbine generators in the power station below.

Leaving the main line to Italy at Goeschenen, the entrance to the St. Gotthard Tunnel, the rack railway to Andermatt was negotiated through rocky gorges and by foaming torrents—a wonderful ride.

The following morning the ride over the Furka Pass produced some experiences which will long be remembered by the party. The sudden transformation, on emerging from a short tunnel, from mid-winter to mid-summer was as pleasing as it was surprising, as was also the raid on the lunch bags waiting at Gletsch station near the foot of the Rhone Glacier. At Brigue an inspection of the Simplon Tunnel was made and the system of ventilation and working explained to the members of the party. Continuing the journey by train, Martigny, in Canton Valais, and the Mont Blanc district was reached and here the night was spent.

Early next morning motor coaches were in waiting to take the party to view the Barberine-Vernayez hydro-electric plant, the biggest in Switzerland. The aggregate production of energy is over 180,000 h.p. and the plant cost nearly £1,000,000. The low level station at Vernayez, which was completed at the end of last year, was inspected first, and subsequently a visit was paid to Barberine high-level station. The climb to Chatelard provided thrills sufficient for all, no fewer than 62 hairpin bends being negotiated on the way up. The principal water reserve for the Barberine plant is formed by an artificial lake at the foot of the Dent du Midi, 6,200 ft. up. The water is diverted into the Trent Valley, where after a fall of 2,530-ft. it drives the turbines of the Chatelard plant which produces some 62,000 h.p. A further fall of the water into the Rhone Valley drives the powerful turbines of the Vernayez plant which yields over 115,000 h.p. The Barberine-Vernayez power plant is also connected with the Amsteg-Ritum plant on the St. Gotthard line, 100 miles away, so that its power can be distributed all over the network of Swiss Railways.

At Basle, which was reached later in the day, a visit was paid to the Rhine Harbour at which quays, warehouses and sidings are being provided for the reception of sea-going boats. At present ships coming up the Rhine have to transfer their cargoes at Strassbourg, but on completion of the canal works in two or three years' time, Basle will become a port for sea-going vessels, and traffic for and from Southern Europe can pass through Switzerland over the Federal Railway system.

(Reprinted from "Modern Transport" and "The Railway Gazette.")

"No Road" Maps.

The Automobile Club of Switzerland and the Swiss Touring Club have both published a road map which gives fortnightly information on the state of the Swiss roads. These maps show: all the blocked roads and their alternatives, roads closed generally, roads closed temporarily because of snow or repairs, names of hotels, garages, agents. These maps i.e., the A.C.S. Road Map and the "No Road Map Stop," may be obtained from the Swiss National Tourist Office, Price 1 fr. postage extra.

SWISS BUSINESS VENTURES IN ENGLAND

Following our repeated announcement that we are perfectly willing and even anxious to publish descriptive accounts of individual business ventures of members of our Colony, we are making a small beginning in this direction in the note printed below, hoping to be able to add other accounts from time to time. For several excellent reasons we think we are justified in devoting a modest part of our columns to this kind of information. Firstly and foremost we believe that our readers will be interested to hear of the business activities of their compatriots in this country almost as much as they are interested in our reports on the social events of the colony or in the home news. Secondly it should be of value to them in so far as they might wish to patronise the businesses of our compatriots if only they knew or remembered where they are to be found. Conversely, of course, we are aware that in some cases our accounts may be helpful to the owners of the businesses described, and we sincerely hope they will be.

Naturally we can indulge in this kind of publicity only under conditions of strictest impartiality and fairness to all. Those are absolutely guaranteed. In the first place we offer to report on the business of every Swiss in Great Britain, without distinction, who cares to give us particulars, to permit a trusted representative of the *Swiss Observer* to inspect their factories, etc., and whom we deem to be doing honour to the high traditions of quality, craftsmanship and integrity of our home country. In the second place we wish to make it clear that the accounts we intend to publish will, of course, not be influenced in the slightest degree by the advertising side of the *Swiss Observer*. Whether a firm is advertising in the *Swiss Observer* or not, our reports will be strictly impartial and objective. Lastly we declare emphatically that no remuneration in any form is either demanded or accepted for these reports by the *Swiss Observer* or its representatives.

By strict adherence to these conditions, which are really a matter of course, we think that we can render a real service to our readers as well as to the business community of our Colony. As we have stated before, we believe that the members of our Colony could assist Swiss imports into Great Britain as well as Swiss enterprise in this country very considerably by persistently patronising such enterprise and demanding Swiss goods whenever practicable. If our reports prove to be helpful in this sense, the *Swiss Observer* will be able to show another justification for its existence.

Our original idea was to write about different firms in groups according to their trades, but we have discovered that this method of collective treatment does not appeal to all enterprises. So we shall give single accounts from time to time as we manage to get them ready. We should be glad if all Swiss businessmen in this country would help us, by communicating with us, to get together a really comprehensive series of reports on their various ventures. THE EDITOR.

WEST END FANCY BAKERY CO., LONDON, S.W.

This is a highly successful Swiss enterprise in the art of pastry and cake making, both of the Continental and the English kind. It has several sales branches and tea rooms in the Kensington and Earl's Court district at Station Buildings, Gloucester Road; 59, Sussex Place; 174, Earl's Court Road; 11, Hogarth Place; 54, Dawes Road, Waltham Green; and 179, Upper Richmond Road, Putney.

The development of this business is one of those pleasing romances demonstrating what sheer ability and dogged perseverance can achieve despite all the handicaps of original poverty. The pastry and cake shop in Dawes Road was started 25 years ago by Mr. E. Spleiss with the large capital of £3. Mr. Spleiss who hails from Schaffhausen, was apprenticed in his home town, in Neuchâtel and in Geneva, and worked in Paris, Nice and four years in America. In 1897 he came to London, where at first he worked for a well known French firm. In 1903 he took a little shop of his own which, for lack of capital, he had to fit out as best he could. On the recommendation of his former employers he got the necessary credit for the raw materials. He pushed his own little two wheel cart about the streets for delivery. Thus he plodded along with obstinate resolution until he could afford to hire first an errand boy and later on other help. Eight years later Mr. Spleiss managed to start a second shop, to which he added by and by four others, while he had to enlarge his factory to cope with the ever increasing custom. At present his firm is daily making many thousand pieces of pastry and cakes.

In 1927 Mr. Spleiss took his son-in-law, Mr. W. Bachmann, formerly engaged in the silk trade in the City, into partnership. Both are looking confidently into the future as there are no signs yet that the smoking habit is reducing people's craving for wholesome and good sweet dainties such as the West End Bakery Co., is supplying.

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