

# Swiss Benevolent Society

Objektyp: **Group**

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

Band (Jahr): **- (1974)**

Heft 1683

PDF erstellt am: **26.04.2024**

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various limitations such as advance booking and payment or a low frequency of service, to which my comments above apply. Hong Kong happens to be one of the few remaining points in the world to which, as a British Crown Colony, the UK government can fix a fare outside the international fare setting machinery.

We in Swissair have the greatest sympathy with the position Mr. Haberstick, and no doubt other readers of the *Swiss Observer* find themselves in during this period of rapidly rising costs and prices. Consideration is constantly being given to these problems, but no solution is yet in sight which would be fair to all concerned, while offering air transport on an economic and unsubsidised basis. This, regrettably, also precludes special fares for old age pensioners, since the latter are plainly not the only category of passengers deserving of special consideration and a liberal application of rebated fares over a wide front would undoubtedly lead to adverse operating economics and the eventual reduction in services available.

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# Swiss Benevolent Society Annual Report

presented by Mr. M. Schneebeli, President,  
at the Society's AGM on 6th April

Dear Friends and Compatriots,

It is with great pleasure that we present the 104th Annual Report of the Society's activities, which, as in past years, has been geared to helping, both financially and professionally, Swiss citizens living in the London Consular District who find themselves facing temporary or permanent difficulties of many sorts.

In the course of the year, we were in touch with a total of 337 people, representing 208 persons living alone and 41 family groups. Some of them, we have known for a number of years, others were brought to our notice by the Swiss Embassy, the Swiss Churches, English social workers and institutions or they approached us directly themselves.

First and foremost in the claim on our time and resources came as usual the pensioners, whose number has risen slightly from 57 to 61 during the course of the year. In addition to the help which we gave from our own funds, we continued to distribute the Swiss Old Age Pension to those who find regular instalments preferable to the quarterly payments made by the Embassy.

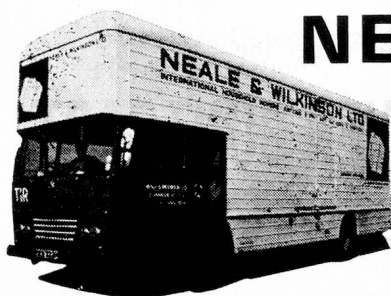
As a large number of our clients are elderly, it is essential to make as many visits as possible as they tend to find the journey to our office too long and wearisome, not to mention expensive. Thus, of a total of 757 interviews, 192 took place at people's own homes or in hospitals and old folk's homes. Ideally, these visits should be made on a rota basis, but in practice, there are always emergencies which at certain moments require a large portion of the Secretary's time, until some particularly urgent problem has found a solution, or at least simmered down. Also, some people live

so far away that a visit can only be justified if a particular need arises and for smaller problems it is more efficient to enlist the help of the local social services. This can, of course, only be done if the client is agreeable to this step being taken.

Members of the Swiss Churches take a great interest in the visiting of people and, in an endeavour to create better understanding of each others problems and points of view, the Secretary met a group of French speaking visitors during the year for a talk and discussion.

Apart from regular grants which go mostly to pensioners, we were again called upon to help in a number of cases when someone was faced with particularly heavy expenses caused by illness or other circumstances which prevented the breadwinner to pursue his or her normal activities. The Executive Committee examined every request with great care to determine how needs could best be met. In some instances, help from the Society seemed appropriate and sufficient, in others, clients had to be directed to another source of help, or combined efforts by us and other institutions were required to find the best possible answer.

The collaboration with English welfare organisations was not confined to financial questions only and social workers were brought in on a number of occasions or we were approached by them in order to give maximum help. The sheer fact that our 'district' is virtually the whole of Southern England means that regular personal contacts with many are out of the question. Where intensive care from a social worker is a necessity, it is our job to persuade people to seek it in



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the place where they live. If desired, we act as intermediary at the beginning of the relationship. Not all the help we give is financial and we are approached for a great number of reasons. Some questions are easily dealt with, others, such as counselling on the many problems that worry our clients often require a lot of time.

As in past years, we have been able to finance holidays or contribute towards them. The main beneficiaries were the elderly, but we can also help younger people who are in need of a break from the everyday routine.

Our Christmas action was as successful as ever. Thanks to the great generosity of our many friends, both individuals and Swiss firms, all sorts of extras could be added to the 128 parcels which went out for the benefit of 210 people. Apart from food and clothing, we were able to distribute grocery vouchers which were greatly appreciated for the freedom they give in choosing whatever is liked and needed. The Frauenverein and the Réunion de Couture, faithful as ever, supplied again a great number of beautifully finished garments. Under the able guidance of Mmes. Raulin and Kaluza, the packing and distribution were helped by Mmes. Burri, Gyssler, Harhalakis, Hill and Whiting and Mr. Buol. In spite of the fuel crisis, almost every parcel in the London area was again distributed personally, and we are especially grateful to our friends who used precious petrol to bring some extra pleasure to the elderly and lonely.

The Pro Juventute holidays were again a great success and we could provide, wholly or partly, the fares for 21

children to enable them to spend five weeks in Switzerland and get to know a bit of their country.

The number of youngsters needing help for repatriations has significantly decreased from 68 to 46. Whether this means that London is now a less attractive place for them or whether they have found alternative sources of help when in difficulties, we do not know for certain.

The house at Conway Street needed major repairs to the roof during the year under review and the buildings at Belsize Grove, accommodating the Swiss Hostel for Girls had to have a damp course installed throughout.

The Executive Committee held its regular monthly meetings to deal with the varied business that required its attention. Our May meeting was held, as on previous occasions, at the home of Consul-General and Mrs. F. Adams and the official business was followed by a sumptuous dinner. Everybody greatly enjoyed the evening which also provided an opportunity to meet in less formal surroundings and we wish to record here our thanks to our charming hosts.

The collaboration with the Welfare Office for Swiss Girls was as pleasant as ever and has greatly benefited both organisations.

We regret to report that Mr. P. Lehrian, a member of the General Committee for many years, has died during the course of 1973.

There have also been significant changes in the composition of the Executive Committee. Both Mr. J. Oertli and Mr. J. Zimmermann have felt it necessary to resign for health reasons.

They have both given the Society many years of faithful service; Mr. Oertli from 1929 onwards as Hon. Assistant Treasurer, Hon. Treasurer and later as Vice-President. Mr. Zimmermann joined initially in 1940 as Hon. Treasurer to the Home for the Aged Swiss. From 1952 to the end of 1968, he held the responsible position of Secretary and during these many years he gave the best of himself to the Society and its clients. Having moved away from the London area, Dr. X. M. Speckert found it necessary to retire from the Executive Committee to which he continued to belong after giving up his responsibilities as President. To all three, we express our grateful thanks for all they have done in their various ways.

Mr. Zimmermann having also decided to give up the temporary work he still carried out during Mrs. Sharp's holidays, we were happy to enlist the able help of Mrs. Margrit Lyster, a social worker from Zurich.

We are very grateful to our Honorary President, His Excellency the Swiss Ambassador Dr. A. Weitnauer, for his continued support and the interest he has shown in our activities. The Embassy was represented at our Executive Meetings by the Counsellor Dr. C. Bruggmann and the Consul-General M. F. Adams. Dr. Bruggmann left London in the course of the year and we wish to record here our thanks for all the help he has given us during his stay. We are happy to see him replaced by Dr. B. von Tscharner, Counsellor.

We also wish to thank all those who have supported us in our work during the course of the year: the Swiss Federal Authorities, the Swiss Embassy in



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London, the Swiss Churches, the Swiss Societies in London, the *Swiss Observer*, English social workers of both private and statutory bodies and quite specially the many individual friends and supporters on whose interest and gifts we depend so much. We also wish to express appreciation to the Finance Committee for the able handling of the Society's investments during a difficult year. To terminate, we thank the British Authorities for their hospitality and assistance. We would not wish to close this report without thanking our Secretary, Mrs. A. R. Sharp, for the way in which she carried out her administrative duties as well as the social work involved.

On behalf of the Executive Committee

M. Schneebeli, President

#### FORTHCOMING EVENTS:

**SWISS CLUB LIVERPOOL:** Friday, 3rd May. Card Evening at Hotel Dresden, New Chester Rd, Bromborough.

**NOUVELLE SOCIÉTÉ HELVÉTIQUE,** Thursday, 2nd May 7 p.m. Swiss Embassy, Open Meeting – Talk in English by Dr. Brigitte Geiser, Berne on "THE SWISS ALPHORN – NOT ONLY AN ATTRACTION FOR TOURISTS, BUT AN ANCIENT MUSICAL INSTRUMENT" – illustrated by slides and recordings.

Friday, 17th May – Annual General Meeting of Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK.

Sunday, 26th May – **ASSEMBLY OF THE SWISS CHURCH IN LONDON** – 79 Endell Street, WC2 – 10.30 a.m. Annual General Meeting – 11.15 a.m. Divine Service, The Rev. M. Pradervand. This will be followed by a meal. (Please notify one of the Ministers).

Sunday, 16th June – **GOLDEN JUBILEE OF GERMAN-SPEAKING PARISH OF THE SWISS CHURCH IN LONDON** – Family Outing to Ashburnham Place with a Service of Thanksgiving at the Chapel.

22nd to 25th August – **ASSEMBLY OF THE SWISS ABROAD** – Neuchâtel.

Saturday, 2nd November – **SWISS CHURCHES BAZAAR.**

**SWISS RIFLE ASSOCIATION:** Opening of shooting season on Sunday, 12th May at the Siberia Range, Bisley. Following shooting meetings will take place on Sunday, 26th May (Feldschiessen and Obligatorischesschiessen competitions) and Sunday, 30th June (same competitions, and all the others except the Gruempelschiessen).



#### DEATHS

We have recently been told of the deaths of a number of former readers:

*Mrs. Marion Beryl Brinkhoff* died on 30th November last at the age of 55, of cancer. She was the wife of Mr. Frederick H. H. Brinkhoff, of Wroxham.

*Mr. Ernst A. Muller-Mason*, formerly of Wood Lane Osterley-Isleworth, passed away in Zurich on 23rd March.

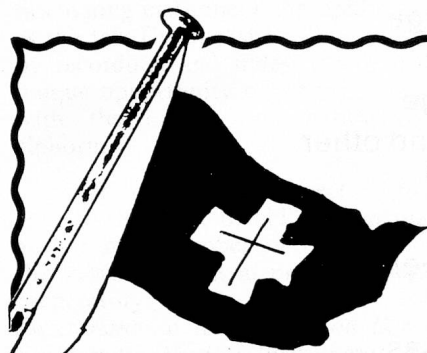
*Mrs. W. E. Gattiker*, of 123 Aeltenlandstrasse 8802 Kilchberg, Switzerland, died on 13th December at the age of 99.

*Mr. Pierre Savoie*, a faithful supporter of our paper and contributor of various series of articles on Swiss churches and monuments, died on 16th April, at the age of 83, of a heart attack, at his home at 33 Leithcote Gardens, London SW16. We shall be writing an Obituary in our next issue.

To the families of the deceased we should like to extend our feelings of deep sympathy.

#### CENTENARY

We have pleasure in announcing that *Mrs. George Ellison* (née Hermonie Burkhardt) of Burgdorf, celebrated her hundredth anniversary on 16th April. We should like to extend to her our warmest congratulations and hope that her longevity will be shared by many more readers.



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