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THE CITY SWISS CLUB TAKES TO THE AIR.

Wonders will never cease! After one hundred and three years of existence, during which innumerable social events have taken place — in London and in the provinces — the City Swiss Club has suddenly "gone up", not in its own estimation, but actually has left *terra firma* heavenwards towards the moon, without ,however, reaching the latter.

Ever anxious to find ways and means to bring and keep members in closer contact with each other, the vivacious and young President of the Club made arrangements for a visit to London Airport, which actually took place on Saturday, 31st October.

Mr. W. Wyler, General Manager for the U.K. and Ireland of "Swissair", was at the time acquainted with the committee's intention, and promptly suggested that this visit should be concluded by a flight over London by one of his company's aircraft, followed by cocktails in Queen's Building. This very generous offer was accepted with enthusiasm and forty-six members of the Club assembled in front of Queen's Building on that Saturday afternoon, and were taken by coaches over the vast area of London Airport — the largest in Europe. The visit began with a tour over the immense grounds of the airport, with its many hangars and administration buildings, to the BEA maintenance base. During the drive a running commentary was given by an airport official, and in the hangar of the BEA — where a number of long distance machines were assembled — an expert described the merits of the various aircraft. Unfortunately, owing to the scheduled flight being timed to take place at 5 p.m., the inspection tour had to be considerably curtailed, and what would normally take about two and a half hours, had to be accomplished in less than half the time; but nevertheless one got a fairly good idea of this airport, which, we were told, dealt during last summer with no less than 500 landing planes per day.

The visit ended with an inspection of the Central Tower, where both air and ground controls are housed. Here again the working was fully explained. Meanwhile, it got darker and darker, and it was soon realised that the proposed flight would be in fact a "night flight". Forty-four of the forty-six members of the Club boarded the Convair "Metropolitan" machine, and on entering were greeted by two smiling and charming air hostesses. When all were seated, and had duly fastened their belts, extinguished their cigarettes, "stumpen" and pipes, the motors started up, the propellers began to turn and the "Metropolitan" roared along the runway, and within a few minutes, if not seconds, we were air-borne. Over the microphone the pilot, Captain Ritzzi, introduced himself and the two stewardesses, the Misses Heidi Lanz and Marlene Menzi, wishing his passengers a pleasant flight. He gave us a few particulars of the "Metropolitan", which is a piston engined airliner carrying forty-four passengers. (The "Metropolitan" was introduced in 1956 as a short distance plane, and as the successor to the Convair 340 and 240 type already well-known on European air routes.) A new feature, he told us, is the air-borne weather-mapping radar which enables the pilot to "see' the flight route ahead of him as far away as 150 miles, and what is called

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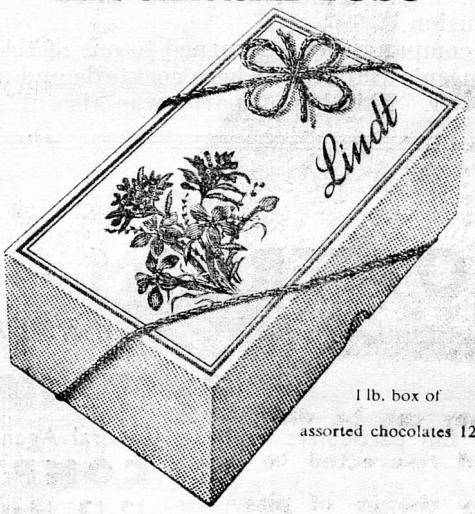
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the Sperry Beam Coupler, apparatus which not only steers the plane but, through an automatic pilot, with signals from an airport radio beacon can guide it down automatically on to the runway. The "Metropolitan" is also equipped with telescoping landing steps, which can be extended and retracted at will, allowing swifter loading and unloading.

The lights inside the plane were then dimmed, and through the windows one saw thousands upon thousands of lights in all the colours of the rainbow through which the River Thames wended its way towards the open sea. It was an unforgettable sight. This big Metropolis indeed looked like a fairy town. Landmarks such as the Houses of Parliament, Westminster Abbey, Trafalgar Square, St. Paul's Cathedral and the Tower could be clearly seen illuminated by a mass of lights, and so were the many ships in the London Docks.

The captain then informed us that we were flying at a height of six hundred metres and at a speed of 350 km.p.h. over Hornchurch (Essex), and that the machine would now turn to begin its homeward journey.

At the many hundreds of social gatherings which I have attended during the last thirty years in the Swiss Colony, I have seldom found one where there were no speeches made, and true to the age-old Swiss tradition that my compatriots must make speeches on the slightest provocation, Mr. X. Speckert, the President of the City Swiss Club, rose and thanked Mr. Wyler — who took part in the flight — for having given us an opportunity to pass over London by night. In reply Mr. Wyler extended to us the greetings of the "Swissair" management, and gave us a short *résumé* of his company's achievements and endeavours, acquainting us with the fact that by May or June next year "Swissair" would introduce the "jets". He also mentioned that in the near future he will be leaving London, to take up an important and leading post with "Swissair" at Geneva. This news caused universal regret.

Once again the notice "No Smoking" and "Fasten Your Belts" appeared on the panel. A last glance at "London by Night" was taken, and within a few minutes a smooth landing was effected on the spot which we had left half an hour before, and a most enjoyable flight — alas, only too short! — came to its conclusion.

The company then adjourned to one of the lounges of the Queen's Building, where cocktails and savouries were served. This happy party was also attended by the captain, the navigator, the two stewardesses, and by Mr. Theo Buser, of "Swissair", who throughout the afternoon had acted as a most efficient guide.

Once again the President asked for a few moments of indulgence, and in a few words thanked Mr. Wyler for his masterful arrangements, and his Company for their generosity. He voiced his sincere regret at Mr. Wyler's approaching departure, and thanked him for the many services he had rendered to the Swiss Colony during his *séjour* in this country, wishing him every success in his new sphere of activity. As a little memento of appreciation he presented Mr. Wyler with a crystal decanter with silver top, with an appropriate dedication inscribed.

The hour of departure now struck, and we left London Airport, where we had spent such a delightful afternoon.

The committee of the City Swiss Club and the Management of "Swissair" are to be heartily congratulated on this outing. The City Swiss Club, for the first time in its history, has now been "Taken up", and perhaps next time an opportunity will occur to be "taken down", maybe in a submarine of the Swiss Navy. *ST.*

CITY SWISS CLUB.

Annual Banquet and Ball at the Dorchester Hotel, Park Lane, W.1, on Friday, 20th November 1959.

We again wish to direct the attention of our readers to the Annual Banquet and Ball of the City Swiss Club, which will take place on Friday, 20th November at the Dorchester Hotel, Park Lane, W.1.

The committee extend their invitation not only to their members and friends, but to all members of the Swiss Colonies in London and the Provinces.

Applications for tickets can be sent to the editor of the "Swiss Observer" or any members of the committee, the list will be closed on Monday, 16th November 1959.

OUR NEXT ISSUE

Our next issue will be published on Friday, November 27th 1959. We take this opportunity of thanking the following subscribers for their kind and helpful donations over and above their subscription: Ad. Schmid, Mrs. M. Baerlocher, F. G. Sommer, J. Ammann, E. E. Rognon, Mrs. L. Moehr, M. Heilinger, G. Godet, E. Goodbehere, J. Dubs, C. Schorno.

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