

A word from the President

I hope that this Newsletter will be a nice diversion to while away these miserable wet days. In this issue you will be able to reminisce on the past events and have a taste of what is coming next.

I am pleased to say that two new members have joined our Council and you will be asked to officially elect them at our next AGM in April. It is always refreshing to have new members coming on board, who bring with them different and original ideas and opportunities. One of these opportunities was half-price tickets for a concert at the Queen Elizabeth Hall last December for example. And there is more to come.

Looking ahead we will be celebrating our 100th anniversary in June 2016. We are not quite so New anymore I hear some of you say. It has therefore been suggested to me that we should consider changing our name. What are your thoughts on this? Do not hesitate to email, write or talk to me. Your comments and suggestions are more than welcome. Whatever the outcome will be regarding our name we shall certainly celebrate this important anniversary in style.

On page 3 you will find a short history of the Cercle Genevois which was incorporated in the New Helvetic Society in January 2012. The Cercle was established 100 years ago and this is certainly a cause for celebration. We are working on it.

Last but not least, my apologies for the lack of newsletters in 2013 due to unforeseen circumstances. We are back on track now. And remember to contribute to our members' corner.

I hope to chat with you personally at one of our next gatherings.

Best Daniel



Daniel Pedroletti

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Past and Present Honorary Presidents

H.E. Mr Anton Thalmann

In May 2013 we said goodbye to HE Mr Anton Thalmann, Ambassador of Switzerland in the UK, who retired from the Swiss Diplomatic Service.



Mr Anton Thalmann was born in 1948 in Berne. He studied Law at the Universities of Berne and Geneva. He joined the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs in 1977, and has held high-ranking posts in the fields of economics and international security. In 1999 he was appointed Ambassador to Belgium and Head of the Swiss Mission to NATO in Brussels. He was transferred to Ottawa in 2003 where he took up the post of Ambassador to Canada and the Bahamas. In 2004–5 he chaired the UN Open-Ended Working Group on Small Arms and Light Weapons in New York. From 2006 he was Deputy State Secretary at the Political Directorate in Berne until his appointment as Ambassador to the United Kingdom in August 2010.



H.E. Mr Dominik Furgler

In July 2013, we welcomed HE Mr Dominik Furgler, newly appointed Ambassador of Switzerland in the UK.

Prior to taking up his new position, Mr Furgler was Swiss Ambassador to Egypt. From 2005 to 2009, he held the positions of Deputy Director and Head of Personnel in the Directorate for Resources at the FDFA, and Head of the United Nations Coordination Unit and Deputy Head of the Multilateral Affairs Division (2001–2005). From 1997 to 2001, he was Head of the Economic and Finance Section at the Swiss Embassy in London. Before that he worked on European Integration issues at the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs and Federal Department of Economic Affairs (1993–1997) in Berne and was posted to the Swiss Delegation at the OECD in Paris (1990–1993).

Future Events

We are planning several exciting events. Details will be published in due course. Here are a few samples to whet your appetite:

- April: AGM followed by a wine tasting party
- May: Forum on education with other Swiss Clubs
- June: Classical concert with an orchestra
- July: Swiss National Day London – We are one of the main sponsors
- October: Jazz concert
- December: L'Escalade 100th Anniversary of the Cercle Genevois

History of the Cercle Genevois in London

In December 1602, by a moonless night, the duke of Savoy, Charles Emmanuel, attempted to take Geneva by surprise and suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of its citizens.



Text by Marie-José Lindon
Photos by Daniel Pedroletti

In December 1602, by a moonless night, the duke of Savoy, Charles Emmanuel, attempted to take Geneva by surprise and suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of its citizens.

In 1914 a group of professional men from Geneva residing in London formed a committee to organise the annual celebration of this historic event, the Escalade, so named because some of the Duke of Savoy's men had scaled the walls to gain access to the city.

By 1939 the committee felt that a more formal organisation was needed to take charge of the festivities and also to celebrate the anniversary of Geneva's entry into the Swiss Confederation on 1st June 1814. All 'Genevois' living in and around London were invited to a meeting to discuss a way forward and at a further meeting on 31st May statutes for the new organisation were proposed and accepted unanimously and a name chosen. The Cercle Genevois was born. Its birth place was Pagani, the famous Ticinese restaurant in Great Portland Street, where a year earlier the 25th anniversary of the first London Escalade had been commemorated.

Despite the blackout the Cercle Genevois celebrated the Escalade as planned on 11 December 1939 at Pagani's as usual. There the 21 members present were elected Founding Members and proceeded to elect a committee:

Monsieur R de Cintra – President
Mr H Charnaux – Vice-President and Treasurer
Mr F Chapuisart – Secretary
Mr C Campart – Archivist
Mr J H Oltramare – Associated Member

That was to be their last meeting at Pagani's - the restaurant was destroyed by a bomb in October 1940. In fact no more reunions could take place until the end of the war, when they resumed at different venues, including another Ticinese restaurant, the 'Valchera' in Richmond, and at private homes too. In 1946 the committee was reelected, with one change, Mr Bleiker replacing Mr Chapuisart as Secretary. It was then



History of the Cercle Genevois in London

agreed that, in future, ladies would be invited (until then the Cercle had been a male preserve!). Raoul de Cintra remained President until his death in 1969, when a new committee was elected:

Mme Eliane Heisch-Dominicé – President
Mme Josiane Privat – Secretary and Archivist

Mr Jean-Pierre de Loriol – Vice-President
Mr Michael Metford-Sewell – Treasurer

That year the Escalade was held at the Dorchester to mark the 50th reunion since the first London celebrations. The following year the Genevans gathered at the Law Society Hall and then, again, at various venues in London until 1984. From 1984, with the kind permission of successive Ambassadors, the Escalade has been celebrated at the Embassy.



For the 400th anniversary in 2002, the Cercle Genevois commissioned souvenir bowls commemorating the fact. They were well received and are probably still in use in many families. By that time Suzy Allan, who had been President for over 20 years had stepped down and her son, Fairley, and a long-standing member, Marie-José Lindon, had taken over as Treasurer and President respectively. The 2003 gathering paid tribute to Suzy, who had died earlier in the year. She had been a dedicated President and was sorely missed.



Over the years it became more and more apparent that attendance was declining. So when it was suggested by the President of the New Helvetic Society, Daniel Pedroletti, that the Cercle Genevois join the NSH with the undertaking that the Escalade would become the NSH December event, it seemed the perfect solution to ensuring the continuation of the celebrations.

Thus a new page in the history of the Cercle Genevois in London was turned in December 2011 when the Escalade was celebrated under the new regime for the first time.

Past Events

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NOV 2012

Concert by the Pirandello Trio

Litsa Levendis, violin, Frédéric Steinbrüchel, cello and Delphine Hensler, piano, played music by A. Piazzolla, W.A. Mozart, Back-Siloti-Casal, J.S. Gershwin, D. Shostakovich for a delighted audience of about 50 people.
www.triopirandello.com



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L'Escalade

DEC 2012

50 members and guests gathered to celebrate this important event in the history of Geneva. After a delicious meal and singing the Geneva anthem, we all tested our knowledge of Genevan history with a quiz.

Past Events

17

JAN 2013

The New Swiss Financial Market Policy

Fabrice Filliez, Head of the Economic Section at the Embassy of Switzerland in London, talked about a very topical subject then as it is now. This event was sponsored by Nick Dobson Wines, part of Alpine Wines. www.nickdobsonwines.co.uk



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MAR 2013

From Lugano to Hackney

Veronica Dall'Antonia, a young illustrator from Lugano in Ticino, talked to us on her journey that brought her to London. Attendees were able to buy some of her artwork such as cards, posters and prints.

www.veronicadallantonia.com

Past Events

II
APR 2013

AGM followed by Living in the Land of Milk and Money

The AGM was quickly dealt with with the support of the membership. The President thanked our faithful Honorary Treasurer Rosmarie Sabir who served on the Council for so many years as she resigned from the post. Lucienne Greig who took over her duties was duly elected. All other members of the Council were reelected.

Renown writer and author of the beseller *Swiss Watching* Diccon Bewes spoke about Swissness. As he said, it is a word that is essentially self-explanatory: it means anything and everything to do with Switzerland. But it is in fact a made-up word, used by the Swiss to cross their own language barriers and so unite the country with a single word. Having an artificial English word to sum up a nation seems rather odd, until you realise that that in itself is typically Swiss. After all, this is a country whose official name is in Latin. Perhaps only the Swiss truly understand the real meaning of Swissness; the rest of us can only make educated guesses. www.dicconbewes.com



Past Events



25

JUN 2013

**Film night:
*Stealth***

The Swiss films we show most often than not provoke mixed reaction and this one was no exception.

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JUL 2013

**Swiss National
Day London**

We are one of the main sponsors of this event where quite a few of our members volunteer as helpers.



Past Events

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OCT 2013

Concert by The Tamesis String Quartet

Over 70 people gathered to listen to an exciting programme of chamber music. This included Frank Martin's beautiful string quartet inspired by a dream the composer had whilst staying in Graz, Piazzolla's exuberant Four, For Tango and Dvorak's splendid and evocative "American" quartet.

www.tamesisquartet.net



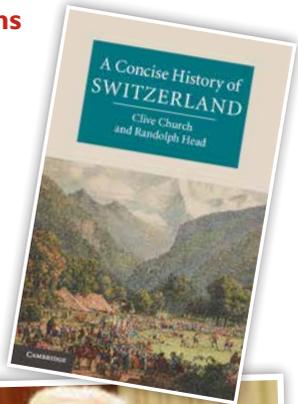
8

OCT 2013

Book Launch, Wow, the Anglo-Saxons rediscovered Swiss history at last

Clive H Church is one of the few English academics who specialises in Swiss studies. He started life as a historian and stumbled upon Switzerland in the early 1970s. This propelled him into a wider interest in the country and he produced many articles on its history, politics and European relations. He has also taught courses on Switzerland in Lancaster and Kent and, before his new history, produced books on Swiss Politics and on Swiss relations with the European Union.

Prof. Church signed his new book *A Concise History of Switzerland* published by Cambridge University Press.



Past Events

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NOV 2013

Dana Gillespie sings the Blues with Dino Baptiste on keyboard and Jake Zeitz on guitar

Well over 70 people came to listen to a mix of classic blues covers and Dana's great originals, which are so good it's hard to tell them apart. This was fantastic authentic Blues from one of Europe's finest exponents.

www.dana-gillespie.com



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DEC 2013

L'Escalade

As is now the tradition we celebrated this important event in the history of Geneva.



Members' Corner

The Society is pleased to welcome the following members who joined in 2013

Christina Brandao

Joelle Nebbe-Mornod & Robb Nebbe

Verena Byrne

Nina Haefele

Audrey Ruchet-Bach

Kavit & Sophie Shah

Camilla & Luca Ghislanzoni

Suzannah Stack

Christian Rochat

Loredana Guetg Wyatt & Jonathan Wyatt

Jennifer Grossman

Special Feature



South African Artist Yvonne van der Heul sketches musicians during concerts among many other projects. She has sketched the Dana Gillespie sings the Blues Concert for us.

www.yvonnevanderheul.co.uk

Last But Not Least



COMPETITION Result Issue 30

Heidi and John Williamson, winners of our competition from issue 30, receiving their prizes, a bottle of Swiss wine and a book. The answer was Lugano.



COMPETITION Result Issue 31

Stanley Millis, winner of our competition in issue 31, receiving two bottles of Swiss Wine. The answer was Château d'Oex.



Slow Train to Switzerland

This is the latest book by Diccon Bewes. He writes *One tour, two trips and 150 years – and a world of change – apart. That was the premise behind my new book, Slow Train to Switzerland. It's the story of the first conducted tour of Switzerland, and how that changed both the Swiss and the way we travel. It's a tale of trains and tourists, the British and the Swiss, a Victorian diarist and an English travel writer.*

Nick Dobson
Wines

part of ALPINE WINES



Nick Dobson Wines

We are grateful to our supplier of Swiss wines who sponsored our January 2013 event. Give them a try. www.nickdobsonwines.co.uk

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