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# Switzerland in the UK

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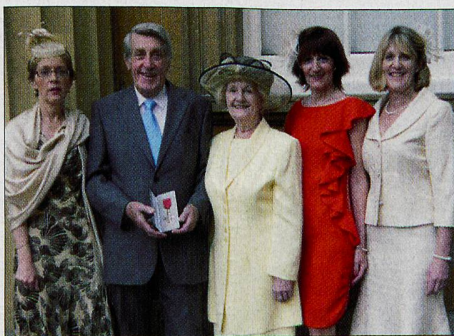
Jeffrey Long gets his MBE from the Queen

Jeffrey Long, who for 17 years was President of FOSSUK, the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK until he stepped down four years ago, was made a Member of the British Empire by the Queen at an investiture at Buckingham Palace.

The award was for his charitable work, particularly on behalf of the ex-servicemen's organisation, the Royal British Legion, of which Jeffrey – a former paratrooper – is a prominent member.

It was to raise funds for the Legion that in 2007 he went on a marathon 1,000km walk from London to Lausanne, which took 39 gruelling days.

RAF Regiment Warrant



At Buckingham Palace: Jeffrey Long shows his medal to his former wife, Audrey Lockhart (centre) and daughters Susan, Diane and Julie

Officer Alan Wanbon, who accompanied him during his first few days and was with him when he finally arrived at the Olympic Museum in Ouchy, said afterwards: "What Jeffrey has done is not only

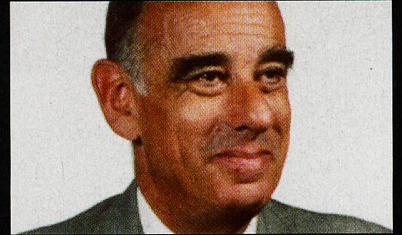
physically demanding but also mentally taxing.

"He is a humorous man and throughout his quest he has maintained a positive attitude and approach.

"At 75 years old he is to me an inspiration and I only wish some of our younger generation could do what he has done."

Before the investiture Jeffrey handed over two of his iconic 'Poppy' brollies for use by the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh.

## Ambassador says goodbye



After six 'memorable years' in London, the retiring Swiss Ambassador to the UK sends a personal message to the Swiss Community. Story on Page 3.

## Historic Royal tour recalled



Two pages of pictures, never printed before, of the four days the Queen and Duke of Edinburgh toured Switzerland on a State visit 30 years ago. See Pages 4-5.

## VC hero honoured at last



After 129 years, Switzerland pays tribute to the Bernese boy who joined the British Army in Africa, fought the Zulus and won the VC. Turn to Page 7.

## Switzerland in the UK

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## 'My thanks, respect and admiration'

It is said that "to everything there is a season," and after many springs, summers, autumns and winters spent here at the Swiss Embassy in London it is now time for this Ambassador to bid farewell.

I will be leaving after six memorable years during which time it has been my privilege to travel the length and breadth of the United Kingdom and meet the extraordinarily diverse and dynamic Swiss communities who live here.

The bond between Switzerland and the UK is deep, long-lasting and greatly valued on both sides. Thanks in no small part to the valuable work of the many Swiss clubs and societies based here, I can leave my post confident in the knowledge that the ties that bind us will only strengthen in the years to come.

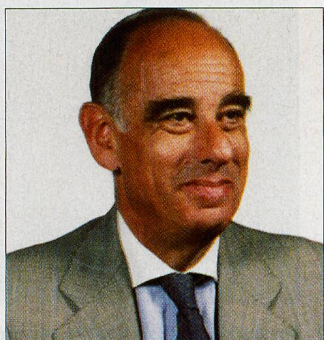
For this, I offer you all my thanks, respect and admiration.

I am leaving at a time when change is in the air all around us. The UK is coming to terms with its first coalition government for a long time. In Switzerland, such power-sharing is the cornerstone of our political stability and we have seen how British politicians, academics and journalists are ever-more interested in our system of government.

This is just one example of how dialogue between our two countries can lead to stimulating and profitable solutions for both sides.

The Embassy has been at the

## Ambassador Alexis Lautenberg sends a personal message to the Swiss community throughout the UK



forefront of such conversations – from our "Positive Agenda" on financial matters, to thought-provoking seminars on transport, environmental policy and sustainable development.

This dialogue will of course remain in place when my successor Anton Thalmann takes up his post. Indeed, continuity and change are two sides of the same coin, especially as Anton is concerned, as his father Ernesto served in the very same post from 1976 to 1979!

So you can rest assured that the new Ambassador already has a great familiarity with this country and the importance of Swiss-British relations.

Gabrielle and I, meanwhile, will be leaving these shores with many wonderful memories.

Britain's Victorian Prime Minister,

Benjamin Disraeli, wrote that "London is a roost for any bird."

We have been most fortunate to have found a splendid roost here, surrounded by all the vibrancy of this great city but also sustained by the support of the Swiss community.

Britain is of course no longer really an island thanks to the miracles of modern transport and engineering.

So I am sure that we need not bid "adieu" but rather "au revoir," – or, in the words of Vera Lynn's famous song, "we'll meet again"!

### Swiss Golf Day: The winners

Prizewinners at the last Swiss Golf Day at Silvermere were: Mike Knight (overall), Elisabeth Breitschmid (top Swiss), Steve Aldridge and Anita Sulley (longest drive) and Terry Bates (nearest the pin).

The next event will be the Swiss Trophy Day at Hendon. Details from Jeffrey Long on 01274 560 780.



## How to contact the editor

Reports of Swiss society activities and coming events, and articles and correspondence for the 'Switzerland in the UK' section of the Swiss Review, should go to the editor:

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• The Swiss Review, with its 'Switzerland in the UK' supplement, is published four times a year – in January, April, August and October. The deadline for the next issue, to be published in October, is August 17.

## The next ambassador: Anton Thalmann

One of the top civil servants in Berne, the deputy director of the political department at the Swiss Foreign Ministry, is moving to London as the next Swiss ambassador.

Born in Berne 62 years ago, Anton Thalmann is a citizen of Bertschikon, Canton Zurich. During his long career he has worked at the UN in New York, with the OECD in Paris, and in 1996 became head of the government's military and public security sector.

In 1999 he was appointed ambassador to Belgium and headed the Swiss mission to NATO, and four years later become ambassador to Canada.

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Garlands of flags are flying everywhere, decorating tiny villages through which the Queen's motorcade passes and festooning city streets, like here in Zurich



Thousands wait for hours to see the Queen arrive at the Parliament building, where President Chavallaz introduces her to members of the Federal Council



One of the many bouquets she received during the tour – this time while calling on the International Committee of the Red Cross at their headquarters in Geneva



Another day, another dress change: The Queen arrives at the 13th century Chillon Castle for a banquet given by the Government of Canton Vaud

# How the Queen wowed the Swiss – 30 years ago

Historic occasion recalled  
By **DEREK MEAKIN**  
who also took the pictures



Exactly 30 years ago Queen Elizabeth, accompanied by the Duke of Edinburgh, started on a four day tour of Switzerland. It was an historic occasion – the first State visit to the country by a British sovereign.

True, Queen Victoria had been there before her, but that had been very much an unofficial visit – a holiday that was so secret that not a word of it had ever leaked to the press.

What a contrast it was this time. The Royal tour dominated all the Swiss newspapers, and commentators pointed out that it was by far the most important State visit since that of the Kaiser in 1912.

I was privileged to see it in action, as one of the few journalists

invited to join the Royal party. It turned out to be the most hectic four days I had ever experienced.

On Day One I was invited to spend a few private minutes with the Queen, when she asked me some rather pointed questions about Anglo-Swiss relations in history.

What most impressed me was her own apparent knowledge of Switzerland and the Swiss. She had obviously been very well briefed beforehand.

But nothing she had been told could have prepared her for the waves of goodwill that were to engulf her everywhere she went. For the next four days the Queen was to be at the centre of a triumphal procession as her motorcade drove slowly through

streets lined by cheering crowds.

Swiss citizens, noted for their love of ceremonial, excelled themselves in the colourful cavalcade of flags that fluttered in a continuous, high pitched welcome.

It far outdid any expression of affection that I have ever seen displayed in the most loyal British city.

The Swiss Government, too, had made every effort to ensure that the whole tour would go like clockwork. Every detail had been meticulously planned in advance.

In Berne, for instance, all the capital's famous fountains had been specially gilded for the occasion. It made this most unreal of all Swiss cities look even more like a stage set, with the air of having been completely refurbished

for the Queen's visit.

And the royal couple showed their evident delight as they pointed out to each other the different features of this colourful cavalcade.

The cascade of emotion revealed how the Bernese were determined to take the Queen into their hearts and make this a visit that would really stand out in her memory.

But as the tour progressed the Swiss newspapers were becoming increasingly critical of the extent of the security precautions, which they said were preventing the people from getting close to the Queen.

At a press conference called by Swiss President Georges-André Chavallaz, I asked him why such an intense show of force was necessary. "Listen," he said. "If someone threw as much as a peppercorn at

the Queen it would be our responsibility. We just cannot afford to take any chances."

So, maximum protection was maintained. Zealous police kept the crowds under control, army marksmen could be seen on rooftops, and a noisy helicopter circled overhead. Such security would be considered normal today, but 30 years ago it was unprecedented.

In fact, it was only relaxed for a very brief period in Lausanne, where 640 expatriate Britons gathered for a visit from their monarch. It was a strictly unofficial event, and no Swiss guests were invited – not even the Swiss Foreign Minister, Federal Councillor Pierre Aubert, who was travelling in the car with her. He had to wait outside. It would be really difficult to say

which of the many Swiss cities and towns she visited put on the biggest show of affection for their royal visitor.

But Lucerne certainly tried hard to be in the forefront. All the primary schools closed for the day and 3,000 children lined up along the Schweizerhofquai, fluttering flags and screaming with delight.

There were unprecedented scenes, too, at the Rütli, the birthplace of the Swiss nation. To tumultuous applause the Queen drew an emotional parallel between the alliance agreed there in 1291 and Britain's own Magna Carta, signed at Runnymede only a few years earlier.

For me, one of the most memorable moments of the entire tour came after the Queen and the

Duke of Edinburgh had been escorted out of the banqueting hall in the Château de Chillon after yet another official reception.

A Vaud MP ran over to the top table and sat down in the chair she had been using. Then he immediately jumped up and at the top of his voice shouted to everyone: "Come and try it – it's still warm!"

We may never know what the Queen herself thought of the Royal Tour. Or how she would describe it to Margaret Thatcher when the Prime Minister next went to Buckingham Palace for her weekly Tuesday audience.

But for years afterwards the Iron Lady took her annual summer holiday during the Parliamentary recesses...in Switzerland!

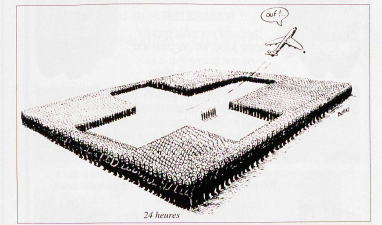


An excited crowd waits on the landing stage at Vitznau to welcome the Queen and Duke as they pay a courtesy call during their trip on a lake steamer to the Rütli meadow



A moment of tranquility: While crowds were kept in the background the Queen plants a commemorative tree in the grounds of the Basle Garden Festival

...and then she was gone



What the Swiss press thought of the ring of steel that always surround the Queen



## SWISS comes top in Which? airlines survey

SWISS International Airlines has been given a massive PR boost by coming first in a survey of 18 short-haul airlines carried out by the top-circulation independent consumer magazine Which?

Readers gave SWISS a 72 percent satisfaction rating, followed by Aer Lingus and Air Malta. The other major airline operating between the UK and Switzerland, easyJet, came 13th in the list with 56 per cent. And SWISS was the only airline to achieve a maximum of four stars in the 'value for money' category.

Which? said: "Flying with good quality airlines, such as SWISS, Aer

Lingus and Air Malta, can really make a difference to your holiday."

SWISS, now a subsidiary of Lufthansa, has only 30 employees in Britain. It operates 33 flights a day between airports in the UK and Switzerland.

Asked why SWISS did so much better than UK airlines in the survey, its UK head, Gregor Koncilija, said: "SWISS was one of

the few airlines to post a profit, not only in 2009 but also during the years before. These achievements allowed us to continue to invest in our products and services for the benefit of our guests.

"Recently we rolled out our brand new flagship, the Airbus A330-300, with a new first, business and economy class, new lounges in Zurich and Geneva, brand new

uniforms for our crew, new routes such as six new daily flights between London Heathrow and Geneva, a new long-haul route from Zurich to San Francisco and initiated many more investments.

"Furthermore we have won several prestigious awards over the last couple of years which are a recognition from our customers and travel agents around the globe.

"Last, but not least, it's the SWISSNESS which is part of our culture which differentiates us from other airlines."



Accolade: The front cover of the July issue of Which? shows SWISS flying high

## Embassy's cultural chief moves to Paris

Denis Charrière, Head of Public Diplomacy and Culture at the Swiss Embassy, is leaving London for a similar position in Paris.

Under him, the Swiss Cultural Fund in Britain has just enjoyed another successful year, promoting 19 projects across Britain. Seven of them were held outside London – in Cambridge, Manchester, Bristol, Edinburgh and Cardiff.

Highlights included the Swiss Ambassador's Award Concert with the Gémeaux Quartett, Handel's Agrippina by the Zurich Opera and Chiara Bachini directing the European Union Baroque Orchestra at the Edinburgh Festival.

Denis Charrière writes: "With the extraordinary developments in recent decades, the UK as a whole has become a magnet for artists in all fields of activity.

"The many festivals and local events, community projects and urban developments have become platforms for exchange where culture plays an



Denis Charrière: 'UK is a magnet'

increasingly prominent role, with a resonance which extends well beyond the metropolis of London.

"So it was a great pleasure for me to work with our British and Swiss partners from public and private backgrounds over these past four years to promote the Swiss cultural scene within this very favourable context.

"My thanks go to all those who, through their support, their expertise and their dynamism, were instrumental in this inspiring and exhilarating work throughout a series of magnificent projects.

"Here in the UK the Embassy can rely on a unique tool, the Swiss Cultural Fund in Britain, to assist it in its cultural activities, and I would like to invite everyone who might be interested in helping us to pursue this exciting adventure to visit our website [www.scfb.org.uk](http://www.scfb.org.uk)."

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## For Corporal Schiess VC the long wait is over

After more than two years in the planning, the Swiss are finally going to put on record the exploits of the mercenary who became the only Swiss citizen ever to receive Britain's highest military honour, the Victoria Cross.

In the Battle for Rorke's Drift, one of the most heroic events in British Army history, 4,000 Zulu warriors attacked a lonely army outpost consisting of little more than a hospital and chapel.

It was defended by only 104 soldiers, including Swiss mercenary Christian Schiess who was being treated for a foot infection.

At the height of the battle he tore off his bandages, limped to the makeshift defences, and as Zulus leapt over the barricade dispatched them one by one with



**The Victoria Cross: Britain's highest award for valour on the battlefield**

his bayonet – a courageous exploit that won him the VC.

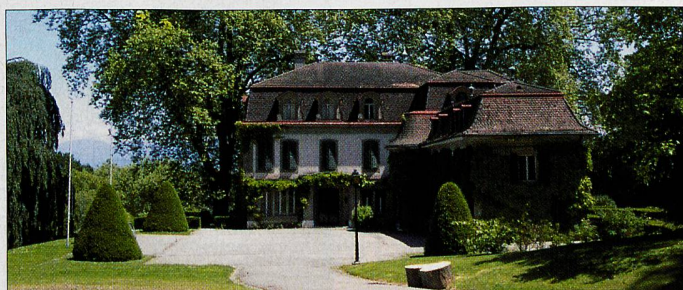
Jeffrey Long found out about Cpl Schiess while researching papers relating to the South African wars. He contacted the Swiss branch of the British Legion and Dr Anselm Zurfluh, head of the Museum of

the Swiss Abroad in Geneva.

They agreed the museum should put on a special display about Cpl Schiess, which will be opened on October 14.

Charles Jefford, British Legion chairman in Geneva, said it will include a dummy of a colonial soldier in his buff coloured uniform and slouch hat and carrying his Swiss-made Martini-Henry rifle.

It will also show how the Zulus were armed with their deadly assegais and leopard skin shields. And there will also be a replica of the VC itself.



The Château de Penthes, home of the Museum of the Swiss Abroad in Geneva

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## Civic farewell for the Ambassador in Cardiff

Retiring Swiss Ambassador Alexis Lautenberg has visited Wales as part of his farewell tour of the UK. But it was also a working visit: During his stay at the Mansion House in Cardiff – home of the Lord Mayor – he also gave a lecture about Swiss policy on Europe, which was attended by members of the government in Wales and the Swiss community.

The next day he went to Cardiff Bay and paid a courtesy visit to meet the Welsh Assembly's First Minister, Carwyn Jones.

Ambassador Lautenberg has made a point of visiting Wales every year since the Swiss Consulate was opened in Cardiff in 2006. On that occasion he appointed Ruth Thomas as Switzerland's first honorary consul in Wales.

The following year saw the setting up of the Cardiff Swiss Club, and this year it elected its first president, Rainer Arnold.

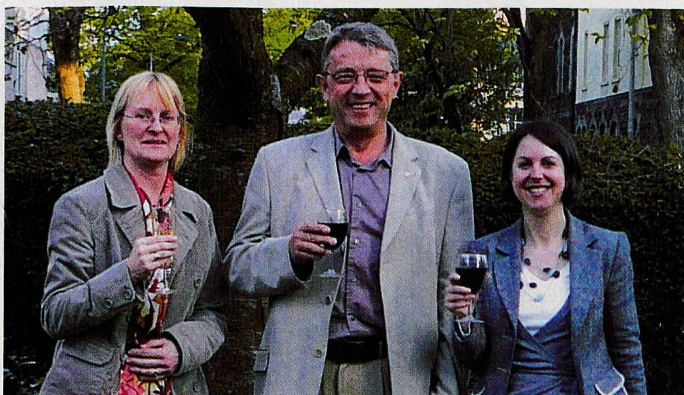
A citizen of Ottenbach, Canton Zurich, he came to Britain with his parents in 1968, and moved to Wales with BT in 1980.

A year later he married Welsh-speaking Gwyneth from Pembrokeshire, and they have three children, Niki, Kate and Richard.



Ambassador Lautenberg calls at the Mansion House in Cardiff to pay his respects to the city's Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress (Cllr and Mrs Brian Griffiths), along with the honorary Swiss Consul in Wales, Ruth Thomas-Lehmann.

BELOW: The new team running the Cardiff Swiss Club – secretary Claire Sansom, president Rainer Arnold and treasurer Mererid McDaid.



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