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NEWS FROM THE COLONY

SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY

The Society held its first monthly meeting after the summer recess on Wednesday, 9th September. There was a moderately good attendance, despite the fact that a number of "regulars" were still on holiday.

Since the Society last met, the death of two members had been notified, Mr. Charles Mayr, who had been an active member since 1940, and Mr. Oswaldo Togni, who had joined the Society in 1921. The Chairman, Mr. A. Jaccard asked the members present to pay a silent tribute to our departed friends.

That the S.M.S. has many staunch and faithful members, who have served and supported the Society for a long number of years, was again evinced at the Veterans' Day of the S.K.V. at St. Gall on 20th June, when no less than four members of the London Section were honoured with a "Wappenscheibe" in recognition of fifty years' membership of the Central Society, namely Mr. A. H. Andrea, a member of the General Purposes Committee, Mr. H. Ott, Mr. H. Schwander (now resident at Basle) and Mr. A. C. Stahelin, Hon. Member of the S.K.V. and Hon. Member and former President of the London section.

The Chairman added a personal note of thanks and congratulations to the veterans who had thus been honoured for a half century of faithful membership.

For more than a decade it has been the custom for members to show their holiday photographs, slides and films, at the September meeting, and the quality of the displays, as well as the commentaries, has notably improved over the years, testifying to the assiduity with which these shows are prepared. In fact, those who have attended these meetings regularly have seen and learnt a great deal of countries and places which they have not themselves been able to visit, or conversely have been able to revive recollections of travels and scenery which had faded in memory over the years.

This year proved no exception. Mr. O. Grob opened the programme with a short colour film, showing the comings and goings of some of the guests who had come over from Switzerland on the occasion of the Society's 75th anniversary celebrations last October, with some of our own members finding themselves prominently in evidence.

There followed scenes from all around the National Exhibition at Lausanne which gave a vivid account of this great national display on the shores of the Léman. After the roving camera, Mr. Grob followed with "stills" of the Exhibition on colour slides. Some of the modern sculpture and motives in close-up evoked pensive moods rather than exuberance, but art, as well as time marches on.

Mr. C. Slade supplemented the views of the exhibition with a number of very colourful indoor studies, so that those who had not had an opportunity of visiting the Exhibition were able to get a colourful and picturesque view of much that was on display.

Finally, we were taken on a tour de Suisse by Mr. L. S. R. Asch, who showed us a fine selection of his colour slides. Crossing numerous mountain passes, we saw a great deal of Switzerland's finest scenery in almost every aspect. Mr. Asch particularly revealed himself as an excellent photographer of alpine flora in all its singular beauty. Many of his fine studies evoked great admiration.

The Chairman, on behalf of all present, expressed thanks to those who had provided such an interesting and entertaining evening.

Family Outing to Hever Castle

Favoured by excellent weather, a party of members with their families and friends paid a visit to Hever Castle near Edenbridge, Kent, on Sunday, 27th September.

The meeting place was Pitt's Cottage, Westerham, a quaint XIII century building and one-time country house of Wm. Pitt the Younger, Britain's youngest Premier and one of its most brilliant statesmen.

The house is now a restaurant under the able management of Monsieur Bernard Audergon, a compatriot of ours, whose cuisine was very much to the taste of the party of close on forty participants, who greatly enjoyed a leisurely lunch.

In pleasant sunshine, the party made its way by car to Hever via Chartwell, where all had a glimpse of Sir Winston Churchill's famous country residence; its silvan beauty now tinged with glorious autumn colours.

Along narrow country lanes, the party reached Hever, where they viewed the Castle, which dates back to Norman times and was once the home of Anne Boleyn. The fine wood carvings, tapestries and paintings, some by the brush of the famous Holbein, were a source of delight. The Castle, which is now owned by the Astor family, is steeped in history and the beautifully illustrated booklet on the Castle and the Gardens makes very interesting reading, particularly the part dealing with the period of Henry VIII.

Although late in the season, it was in fact the last Sunday in the year on which Hever is open to the public, the Gardens with their numerous figures of statuary and sculpture and the huge loggia with a colonnaded piazza by the shores of a lake extending to the far end of the grounds, were well worth a visit.

A further attraction was a maze with more than one thousand yew trees with topiary work, including a unique set of chess men.

It was altogether a most enjoyable afternoon spent in congenial company and fine surroundings. On leaving the grounds, some parted company and made their way homewards, whilst others wended their way back to Pitt's Cottage, where a most welcome tea awaited them. That there may be more such enjoyable outings was the wish of all participating.

W.B.

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