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Swiss representation in massive shakeup to support devolution

Following UK moves to give more governmental responsibility to the regions, the Swiss Federal Council has decided to make radical changes to its consular representation in this country.

Coinciding with the impending closure of the Consulate General in Manchester, Edinburgh is to have its first Consul General.

Subject to agreement by the British Foreign Office, the Consular Agency in Belfast, where Bruno Rüegg is already Honorary Consul, will be upgraded to Honorary Consulate, and a new post will be created in Cardiff with the appointment of its first Honorary Consul.

The Swiss Embassy in London describes these important changes as a root and branch transformation of Swiss government representation in the UK, and says the intention is to deepen and widen its presence throughout the country.

The new man in Edinburgh is Bruno Widrig, who has served in the Swiss Foreign Ministry since 1971. His postings have included New Orleans, Havana, Munich,

Dhaka, Antwerp and Barcelona.

From 1996 to 2001 he was Consul General in Cape Town, then in Amsterdam until the end of last year.

Fifty eight year old Bruno Rüegg was born and educated in Switzerland and moved to Northern Ireland in 1969, installing Swiss textile machinery.

Four years later he married a local girl from Carrickfergus and decided to settle down in the province.

The name of the new Honorary Consul in Cardiff has yet to be announced, but the Embassy says the decision to open an office there is an acknowledgement of Wales' increasing importance in cultural, political and economic fields.

Meanwhile, Manchester's Acting Consul-General, René Bänziger, has written to 2,000 Swiss nationals in the North of England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Isle of Man, informing them that the Consulate-General offices will be closed on March 10.

After that date all consular inquiries, such as passport



The last in a long line of Swiss representatives in Manchester: René Bänziger, the Acting Consul General, pictured (right) with one of his predecessors, Gilbert Schlaefli, and his wife Jacky. Mr Schlaefli was Consul General from 1987 to 1992 before being posted to Nice. But he liked the North West so much that when he retired from the consular service he and his wife returned to the Manchester area. Mrs Schlaefli is president of Manchester Swiss Club – the oldest Swiss society in the world.

queries, nationality matters and changes in civil status, should go to the Swiss Embassy in London, where they will be handled by Consul Hans-Peter Flückiger and his Consular Section team.

But there will still be a Swiss presence in Manchester with the shortly to be announced appointment of a Swiss Honorary Consul, who will maintain relationships with local authorities and businesses in the region as

well as building on the historic links between Switzerland and the North West dating back to the first Honorary Consul in 1917.

No decision has been announced on the next posting for René Bänziger. He has been with the Department of Foreign Affairs since 1985, first in Milan and Harare. Later he returned to Berne to take charge of basic training programmes for consular staff.

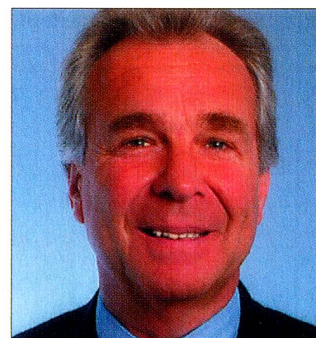
The men who represented Switzerland in the North over the last 90 years

Armand Guggenheim	Zurich	1917-23
Arnold Schedler	Basle	1924-41
Heinrich Werner Hirs	Dielsdorf ZH	1941-43
Edouard Pernet	Ormont-dessus	1943-46
Jakob Huber	Mägenwil AG	1946-51
Oskar Schneider	Murg SG	1951-55
Max Büchi	Ettenhausen TG	1955-59
Charles Ed. Rosset	Bougy Villard VD	1959-64
Gustav Brunner	Zuffikon AG	1964-68
Rolf Born	Thunstetten BE	1968-74
Horace Jacques	Ste-Croix VD	1974-78
Urs Karli	Basle	1979-82
Charles Glauser	Fraubrunnen BE	1982-87
Gilbert Schlaefli	Lausanne VD	1987-92
Ernst Keller	Dörflingen SH	1992-1997
Max Inhelder	Sennwald, SG	1998-2002
Hans Ulrich Tanner	Wädenswil ZH	2002-2005
René Bänziger	Flawil, SG	2005-2006

Our men in the regions



Bruno Rüegg: Looking after Swiss interests in Northern Ireland



Bruno Widrig: The first Swiss Consul-General in Scotland

Switzerland in the UK has its own Internet site, continually bringing you up to the minute news of the latest events as well as major stories from the most recent issues and links to other interesting sites in both the UK and Switzerland. To access it go to: www.swissreview.co.uk

The Swiss Review web site, updated daily, includes a complete calendar of Swiss club events being held during the year. Club presidents are asked to send all details to: editor@meakin.net

Françoise Logan awarded an OBE for services to the community in Yorkshire

A popular member of the Yorkshire Swiss community, dual national Françoise Logan (picture right) has been awarded an MBE in the New Year's Honours List for services to music and education in Leeds.

Geneva born Françoise, who is married to English surgeon StClair Logan, has been a committee member of FOSSUK and represented UK Swiss as a deputy delegate to the Congress of the Council of the Swiss Abroad.

Daughter of a Swiss Protestant pastor and with English and Italian grandfathers, she came to England and completed her education at Leeds University in 1972 by picking up an Honours BA degree in French and English,

followed a year later by a Certificate in Education.

She quickly became involved in many community activities in Yorkshire. As governor of Leeds College of Music she supervised the planning and building of the new college and its 350 seat concert hall, and is trustee and vice president of the Leeds International Pianoforte Competition.

She is also executive member of the Yorkshire Ladies' Council for Education, a charity which offers grants to women to help further their career, and is chairman of their non profit sheltered housing scheme.

She told *Swiss Review*: "When I received an official On Her Majesty's Service letter



from the Prime Minister's Office I wondered what I had done wrong! It was a very pleasant surprise to read the content.

Now I shall wait until I am called to go down to London to receive my award. It's all very exciting."

Swiss MRSA breakthrough could save many hundreds of lives in the UK

Britain, which has a much higher proportion of MRSA infection rates than anywhere else in Europe, is expected to be a major beneficiary of a breakthrough by Swiss researchers.

They have developed a new, and highly sensitive screening technique that could dramatically cut the number of

deaths caused by the MRSA bug, which has doubled in the last four years.

Until now, tests on patients admitted to hospital take four days to show whether they carry the bug - during which time the infection can spread to dozens of other patients.

The Swiss discovery cuts the time between screening and

identifying a carrier to only one day.

During two years of trials carried out in intensive care units in Geneva, doctors took swabs from 1,053 patients, then sent them for laboratory tests using the new qMRSA process. Within hours it can extract the DNA of the superbug - just a quarter of

the time taken to incubate a swab in a lab in the UK.

The importance of the discovery to the UK, where nearly 100,000 hospital patients are now carrying the bug, cannot be overestimated.

Statistics show that NHS patients are currently 40 times more likely to catch MRSA than those in other European countries.

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Eden Project visit will be the highlight of FOSSUK weekend



This year's FOSSUK weekend will be held in Exeter from June 9-11 and will end with a coach trip to see one of the world's most remarkable environmental developments – the Eden Project.

Visitors will be able to wander through the giant iconic Biomes, the biggest conservatories ever built, in which grow plants native to the

world's different climate zones, from the Mediterranean to the upper slopes of tropical mountains.

One, the Humid Tropics Zone, with no internal supports, is the height of 11 double decker buses and as wide as 24, and could contain the whole of the Tower of London.

Its artificial climate is constantly monitored and controlled by automatic misting machines and can create temperatures ranging from 18 to 35 degrees centigrade.

FOSSUK president Jeffrey

Long said: "All Swiss in the UK, and all friends of Switzerland, are invited to join us for what promises to be a really special weekend – whether they stay for all three days or for just part of our programme."

Further details can be obtained from the secretary, Freddie Wyser, on 0131 319 1682.



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, Derek Meakin, at: Charter House, 1-3 Charter Way, Macclesfield SK10 2NG. Tel: 01625 442 707.

His email address is: editor@meakin.net.

Enquiries regarding advertising should go to Jeffrey Long, 30 Finsbury Drive, Bradford BD2 1QA. Tel/fax: 01274 588 189.

- The 'Switzerland in the UK' supplement appears four times a year. The deadline for the next issue containing UK news, to be distributed in April, is March 3.

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Money man joins Swiss Review team



Luc Toutoungi has been appointed treasurer of Swiss Review/UK, following the retirement of Erika Richardson, who has occupied the post for the last six years.

With dual Swiss/British nationality, Luc was educated in Lugano, Geneva and Vancouver, later moving to Tennessee where he won a Cotton School diploma at the Memphis Cotton Exchange.

Then it was back to Lugano, working with a Japanese financial company, who later transferred him to London.

His next move was to Scotland, where he was engaged in developing cross-border business between that country and Switzerland, and is currently managing director of a Swiss finance company with offices in Glasgow.

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The house that Kuoni built: The company's UK headquarters in Dorking, Surrey, where a staff of 566 plan holidays to the world's most popular destinations

The pioneer that made good

Kuoni's birthday marks 100 years helping make holidaymakers' dreams come true

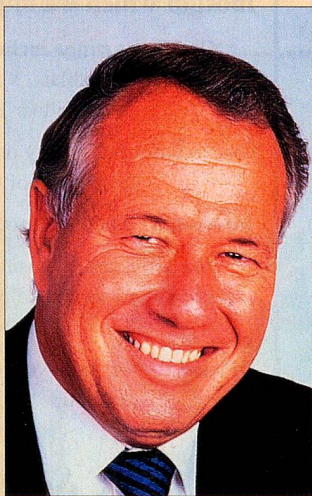
Exactly 100 years ago, what is now one of the world's top holiday companies had a very modest beginning – organising a group tour from its new office in Zurich to the top of



Sue Biggs: After 20 years with Kuoni she was promoted to UK managing director in 2001 and became a member of the group management board in Zurich

the local mountain, the Utlilberg. The cost: just one franc.

It was led by a 32 year old freight forwarding agent, Alfred Kuoni, who quickly realised that organising other peoples'



Peter Diethelm: As Mr Kuoni UK he has been a leading figure in the travel business for the last 40 years and is now executive chairman of the UK company.

holidays could become big business. And he was right.

Today, Kuoni Travel is not only the largest travel company in Switzerland, but also a massive global enterprise, employing a staff of 8,000 in 300 offices around the world.

It was not until 1965 that Kuoni branched out to the UK, taking over a well established travel business based in London's Bond Street.

But it quickly made up for lost time with a series of innovative holiday ideas which delighted sun seeking Brits.

In 1970 it flew 2,000 UK visitors to Expo 70 in Japan and organised the first holiday charter flight to the Far East.

This was followed over the next few years by Concorde charters to the Caribbean, and the first charters to Mombasa, Luxor, the Maldives, Acapulco and Cancun.

So successful were they, as well as the ever increasing range of holiday ideas that have since poured out of the company, that UK travel agents

have voted Kuoni the best longhaul tour operator every year for the last 23 years.

This year the centenary is being celebrated with the launch of a series of Centenary Journeys, which will be offering classic tours to some of the world's top holiday destinations.

This will culminate in October with an epic Cairo to Cape Celebratory Journey, crossing the whole of Africa from North to South and with all the profits being donated to charity.

Back to that very first tour to the Utlilberg in 1906: The ever innovative Alfred Kuoni chose women in search of a husband as his first target customers.

And just to show how forward thinking he was, today Kuoni offers the widest selection of overseas wedding and honeymoon destinations available to couples in the UK, from the grandiose Canadian Rockies to the romantic paradise island of Koh Samui, off the coast of Thailand.

City Swiss Club celebrates 150 years in the life of the Swiss community in the UK

This year the City Swiss Club proudly celebrates its 150th anniversary. It was founded in 1856 during a period of great danger for the Swiss Confederation and at a time when British sympathy for Switzerland was particularly apparent.

The Swiss community in London was growing rapidly and in 1856 the Anglo-Swiss Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Reciprocal Establishment was ratified which was expected to result in a significant enhancement of trading activities.

But this was also the year of the Neuchâtel Crisis, when Prussia threatened to invade Switzerland and detach the Canton of Neuchâtel from the Confederation.

This threat is considered to have been the catalyst for the Swiss community in London to form a Swiss club, one of the initial priorities of which was to provide help and support to their home country.

About 180 Swiss attended the club's first important meeting on January 2, 1857. As reported in *The Times*, collections were made for Swiss soldiers and their families and 20 of those present put their names down as volunteers for the Swiss Army.

Fortunately the King of Prussia backed down, not least due to the firm line taken by Britain.

In 1861 the club formally changed its name from *Schweizerverein* to City Swiss Club. Although the reason for this is not entirely clear, it can be assumed that the club's members wished to associate themselves more closely with the city in which most of them lived and worked.

From the outset the Club provided a meeting place in London for leading Swiss businessmen, directors and managers of Swiss commercial, industrial and banking enterprises, helping to strengthen their ties with the City of London.

However, doctors and diplomats, writers and artists, and other members of the Swiss community were also most welcome.

Even in the club's early years its objectives were broadly defined as the promotion of social intercourse among the Swiss colony in London, the maintenance of the spirit of solidarity and patriotism among the Swiss in London and the furtherance of benevolent,

**By Alan P Martin,
Vice-Chairman
City Swiss Club**

social and commercial activities.

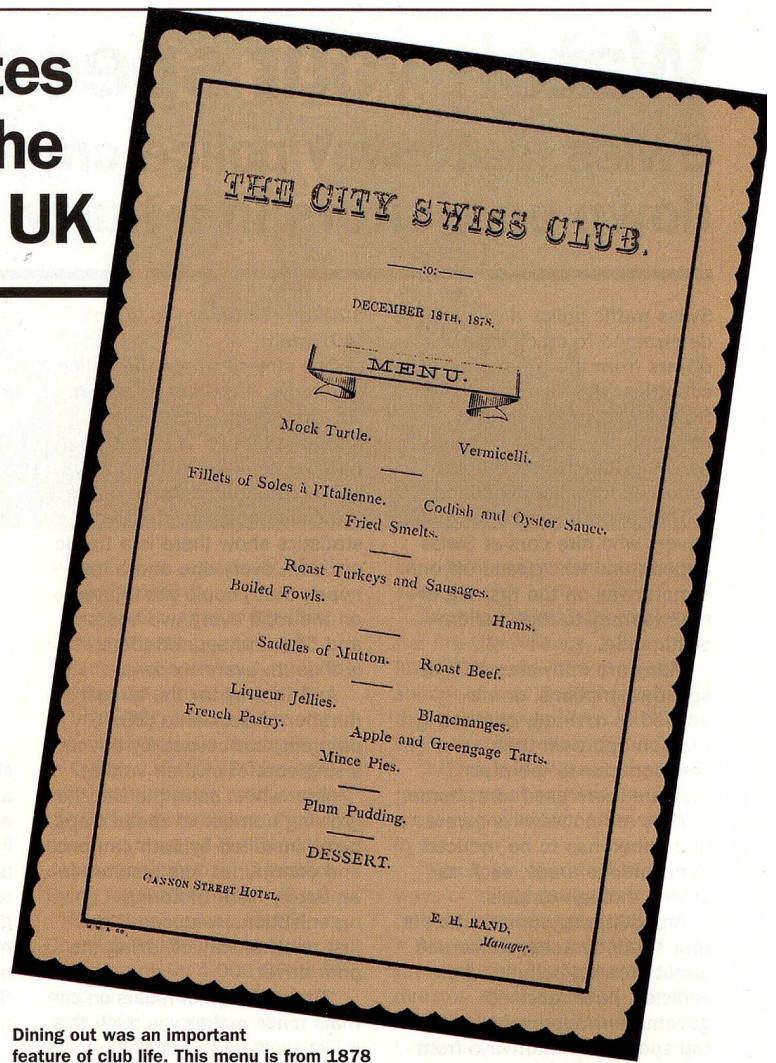
From the outset the City Swiss Club established the custom of holding a special dinner each year, which soon became its main event of the season.

Unfortunately the club's archives were all lost during the London Blitz, but its activities were frequently reported in *The Times*. For the first time the term banquet was used for the 20th anniversary dinner in 1877, which was attended by 138 members – a similar number to those attending today.

The first report of a dance appeared in 1906, the first year in which there was any reference to ladies being present. It appears that the Band of the Grenadier Guards regularly provided the appropriate musical accompaniment.

Since its earliest years, the City Swiss Club has always made successful appeals at its main annual event to support Swiss compatriots who have encountered difficult times. Today funds are mainly raised through a raffle, whereas in the past direct donations were collected at the tables.

For a century and a half, the



Dining out was an important feature of club life. This menu is from 1878

club has played a key role in the affairs of the Swiss community, helping to keep the colony together in times of stress and continuously furthering personal and commercial relationships between the host country and its Swiss community.

Thanks to the foresight, skill and commitment of its governing

bodies and its members, the City Swiss Club has constantly adapted successfully to the changes in society and the economic environment.

It continues to this day to perform an important role in the lives of the Swiss community in Britain and is well equipped to face the challenges of the future.



The Guildhall Tavern, which became the headquarters of the City Swiss Club in 1875-77

Watch your speed!

Swiss motorway police crack down on visitors in a hurry

Swiss traffic police are determined to crack down on drivers from the UK and other countries who flaunt Switzerland's tough speed restrictions - even if it means persuading them in their home countries to inflict penalties.

They are particularly targeting drivers who hire cars at Swiss airports and who speed off on a motorway on the first leg of their journey to their holiday destination.

Many are unaware of Swiss speed restrictions, or are unused to mentally converting the kph figure on their speedometer to the mph they are more used to at home.

They are not always aware that speed has to be reduced in hazardous areas, such as driving through tunnels.

An additional complication is that some cantons, concerned about growing pollution from vehicles, have received government approval to cut the top speed on motorways from

120kph (74.5mph) to 80kph (49.7mph).

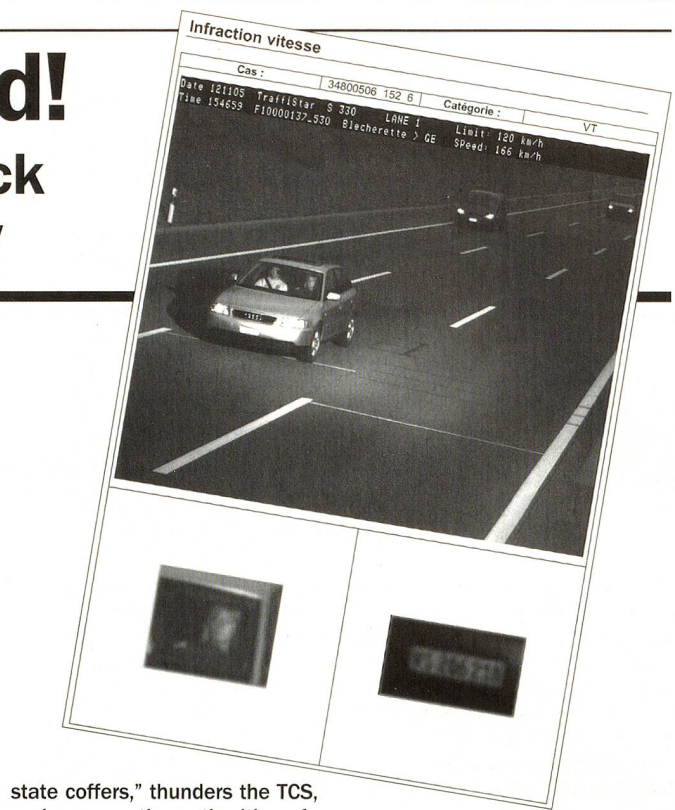
One stretch where the police are active is the busy A1 from Geneva airport, which is the starting point for a growing number of visitors from the UK.

In Vaud, the cantonal police are concerned that the latest statistics show there is a traffic accident every one and a half hours, that people are injured on the road every two hours and 51 minutes, and there is a death every six days.

And that by far the largest number of accidents (38.78 per cent) are caused by drivers losing control of their vehicle.

Meanwhile, as in the UK, the growing number of speed traps being installed by both cantons and communes has resulted in an outcry from motoring organisations, who see it as just another way of taxing the poor driver.

"The profusion of radars on our main roads makes you think this is just another tactic to fill the



state coffers," thunders the TCS, and accuses the authorities of arbitrarily imposing speed limitations in areas where there is no apparent danger to other road users. In addition, the latest generation of cameras, much more accurate than before, now have a margin of error of 3kph instead of 5kph, which is trapping even more offenders.

The answer for visitors from

The picture that tells its own story: the car speeds past the camera, which also shows a closeup of the driver and the number plate

outside Switzerland who are unfamiliar with the new speed restrictions is: "Don't take any chances. Curb your speed, and get to your holiday home in safety."

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Zurich offers the right to die – with dignity

An emotive debate over euthanasia dominated the pages of every British national newspaper following the much publicised suicide in a Zurich flat of a terminally ill retired doctor from Bath, Anne Turner.

Suffering from a crippling and incurable brain disease, Dr Taylor knew that she had not long to live.

A few months earlier she had unsuccessfully tried to end her agony with sleeping pills and a plastic bag.

This time, determined to succeed, she turned for help to the controversial Dignitas group, which had already helped more than 150 other Britons to end their life.

Before she flew to Zurich with her three children Dr Turner gave an interview to the BBC and recalled how her husband, also a GP, had gone through a lingering death from a similar illness.

She added: "I saw what happened to my husband, and I don't want to end up like that. And I don't want to end up like Dudley Moore, who couldn't walk, talk or even blink.

"Doctors should be able to help people to die. I always

quote the fact that I had a cat, and I had him put down because he was riddled with cancer. But we cannot do that with humans at all now."

On arrival in Zurich she was taken to the Dignitas clinic where she was handed a lethal dose of barbiturate, then moved to the flat where Nurse Erika Lully helped her with the bitter tasting solution.

Five minutes later she fell into a coma, and shortly afterwards her heart stopped beating.

Swiss Christian Democrat MP Beatrice Wertly has protested about the way Dignitas helps people end their lives, arguing it is giving Switzerland a bad

reputation as a destination for "suicide tourists."

But the founder of Dignitas, Ludwig Minelli, points to his organisation's motto: "Live with dignity, die with dignity."

In the UK, Deborah Annetts of the pro-euthanasia charity Dignity in Dying, told the BBC it was a truly heart breaking case, and said the British government should now find time for Parliament to debate the proposed Assisted Dying for the Terminally Ill bill.

But a spokesman for the Christian Medical Fellowship, which numbers 4,000 GPs and surgeons among its members, said: "We believe proper, adequately funded palliative

care is the answer, not assisted suicide."

And the political director of the Pro-Life Alliance, Julia Millington, said: "We are very saddened that Dr Turner felt that her life was of such little value that she chose to end it.

"I think it is perverse that the proponents of euthanasia use these cases to support a change in the law.

"Surely we need to find better ways of killing the suffering rather than killing the patient."

• After Dr Turner's death, it was revealed that the former medical director of the United Nations and chairman of the Voluntary Euthanasia Society, who now lives in Surrey, has been questioned by police about how he has been helping terminally ill patients to travel to Switzerland to commit suicide.

Dr Michael Irwin, aged 74, said he had admitted giving advice and encouragement to five Britons who went to the Dignitas clinic in Zurich over the last two years.

He told how he had personally accompanied some of them to Switzerland and watched them die.

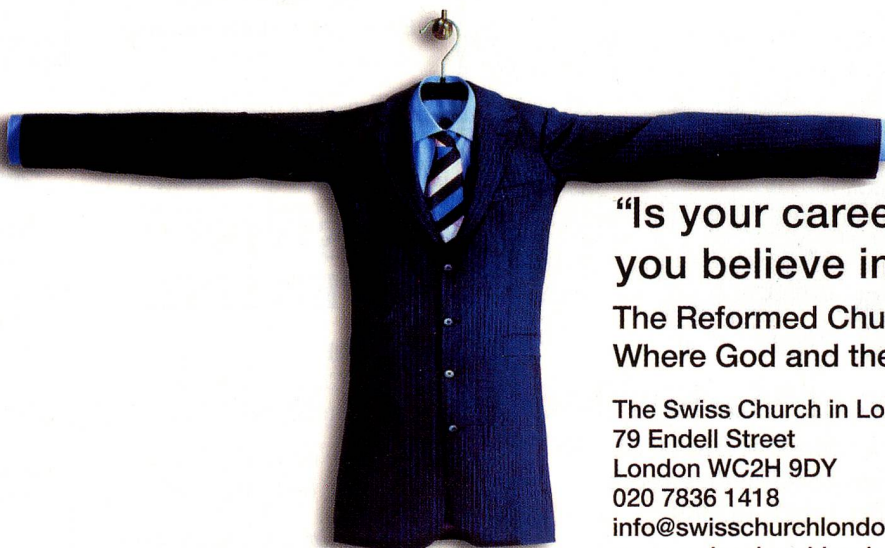
What is meant by 'assisted suicide'?

Assisted suicide is different from euthanasia in as much as a third party does not directly administer a fatal dose of drugs to the patient.

In Switzerland it is legal providing that the dose is self administered, that the person taking the drug is capable of making a rational decision to die, and that it is not carried out for gain.

But in England and Wales assisted suicide is a crime. Anyone helping someone to commit suicide faces 14 years' imprisonment on conviction. However, the law has a different interpretation in Scotland, where there is no crime in aiding and abetting or counselling a suicide.

• Dignitas has 673 members living in the UK.



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Day out on the Orient Express for West Surrey centenarian

Since joining Thomas Cook in 1925 John Fowler has spent a lifetime in the travel business. So when his 100th birthday arrived, how did he fancy celebrating it?

By taking a trip through the rolling English countryside with his Appenzeller wife Heidi, pictured with him here.

John - known as Jacky to

fellow members of the West Surrey Swiss Club - led a very active life in his early years, especially on the sports field.

He was captain of Thomas Cook's football and cricket teams, as well as being a champion swimmer. Yet when war broke out in 1939 and he tried to join the RAF he was rejected on medical grounds.

Undaunted, he was determined to do his bit for the war effort and found a job making armaments at Woolwich Arsenal, and in his spare time by joining the Home Guard. But he still wanted to see active service, and in 1943 his dream came true when he was able to join the Royal Navy.

He was trained as a coder

and served on escort vessels that shepherded convoys of merchant ships bringing much needed supplies across the Atlantic to Britain. On one occasion his convoy was attacked by a pack of 17 German U-boats - seven of which were sunk by Navy gunners.

Ever forward thinking, Jacky is now looking forward to enjoying the excitement of the London Olympics - in 2012.



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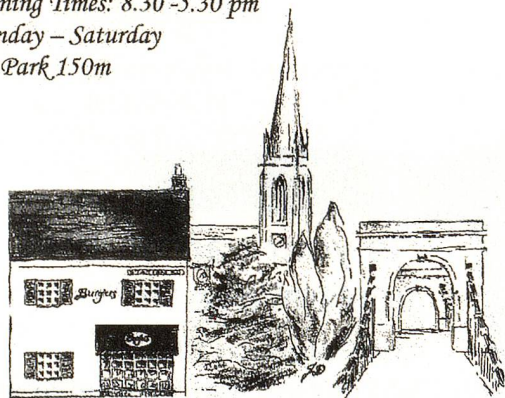
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