

# REGIONAL EDITION

UNITED KINGDOM | IRELAND

## Editorial

Dear Readers,

Happy New Year. We open with messages of solidarity and condolence following the tragic events in Crans-Montana, which profoundly touched Swiss communities at home and abroad. We report on the response of Swiss Community UK and on the Swiss Church in London, which opened its doors to offer a space for quiet reflection, support and solidarity. This edition also highlights the strength and potential of the next generation of Swiss abroad through the story of Layla Bruneau. At just 17, the young netball

player lives in the UK while proudly representing Switzerland at international level, embodying a confident, outward-looking Swiss identity rooted in strong personal ties. Across the regions, community life continues to thrive. We report on the festive Samichlaus celebrations in Wales, a long-standing tradition bringing together Swiss families across generations, as well as seasonal gatherings in Edinburgh and Manchester. Finally, we pay tribute to Juerg Bentele, who steps down after 15 years of dedicated service to Swiss Club Manchester, leaving a lasting legacy of commitment, dialogue and community spirit.



GIOIA PALMIERI,  
«UK & IRELAND PAGES»



## CRANS MONTANA

### Swiss Church London: In Remembrance

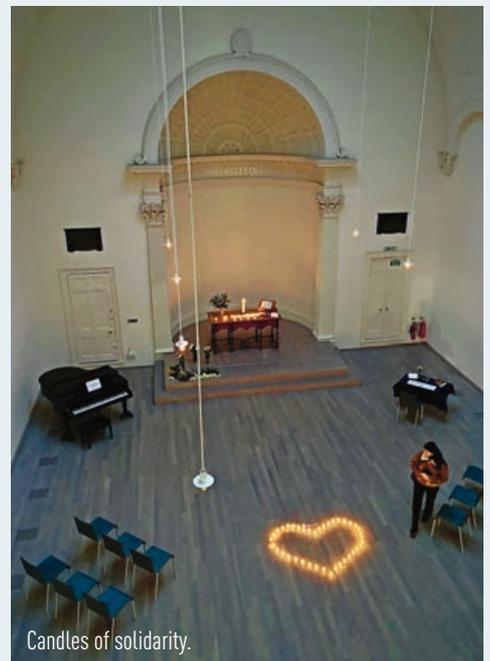
In commemoration of the tragedy in Crans-Montana, the Swiss Church in London opened its doors on Friday, 9 January 2026, to mark the Day of National Mourning and offer a place for quiet reflection and solidarity.

The official ceremony held in Martigny was livestreamed inside the church, allowing those present to follow it in real time. Representatives of the Swiss Embassy in London, as well as a considerable number of members of other diplomatic missions and the public, attended the livestream, reflecting the broad expression of sympathy and international solidarity.

Throughout the day, visitors were invited to light candles and to share their thoughts, prayers, and messages of sympathy in a book of condolence, creating a space for remembrance, support, and hope for all those affected by the tragedy. The church remained open until late in the evening, welcoming a steady flow of visitors who came to pay their respects, many staying for moments of silence.

### SwissCommunity UK: In solidarity

SwissCommunity UK expresses its deepest solidarity following the tragedy that occurred in Crans-Montana, which has profoundly touched our community abroad. Our thoughts and heartfelt condolences go to all those affected. We also wish to express our gratitude and respect for the hospital staff, police, firefighters, and all the authorities involved, for their courage, dedication, and tireless work in caring for, rescuing, and protecting the victims.



Candles of solidarity.

The Swiss Church in London is open to everyone. Pastoral support is available, and you may contact us under [minister@swisschurchlondon.org.uk](mailto:minister@swisschurchlondon.org.uk).

**Beyond borders:** Layla Bruneau and her Swiss netball journey



At just 17, Layla Bruneau already embodies the spirit of a young Swiss abroad. Born in England and holding dual nationality, she lives in Birmingham with her family but has always maintained a strong bond with Switzerland.

Her mother's family comes from Canton Nidwalden, while her father is Mauritian. Growing up, Layla regularly attended Swiss summer holiday camps organised by the Swiss Youth Abroad Service (SJAS), as well as Swiss ski camps – experiences that allowed her to explore different regions of Switzerland and strengthen her sense of belonging to the country. In September 2025, she was selected for the Swiss U18 national netball team, marking an important milestone in her sporting journey.

*Swiss Review: You live in the UK but represent Switzerland in netball – what does wearing the Swiss colours mean to you?*

**Layla Bruneau:** Wearing Swiss colours while playing such a British sport feels like enjoying the best of both worlds. When I discovered that Geneva had a netball team, I applied immediately – I couldn't believe it was possible. It's a real honour and makes me very proud.



The Swiss U18 netball team.



Layla Bruneau in Swiss colours.

*SR: You travel regularly to Geneva. What keeps you motivated while balancing school, travel, and elite sport?*

**LB:** I often fly from Birmingham to Geneva, sometimes with two flights, which isn't easy. But the joy of playing for a Swiss team outweighs every effort. I study at a grammar school, so it can be demanding, but it's incredibly fulfilling. My family's support motivates me every day.

*SR: From the U17 European Championships to your recent U18 selection, what moment best represents your journey so far?*

**LB:** The first time my name was announced as a Swiss team player was unforgettable. I felt an overwhelming sense of pride – it truly felt like everything had paid off. That emotion still returns every time I play.

*SR: How has Geneva Netball supported your development, and what does the Swiss pathway offer girls abroad?*

**LB:** The coach is very supportive and understanding of my situation. Netball is huge in the UK, but I was amazed by the quality of training and community in Geneva. It offers Swiss girls an international, welcoming environment and real opportunities.

*SR: Looking ahead, what are your biggest dreams?*

**LB:** I hope to study medicine in Zurich so I can be closer to my team. In the long term, I'd love to become a doctor and also a netball coach in Switzerland, helping promote the sport among younger generations, especially girls.

GIOIA PALMIERI

**EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS): Don't wait – secure your settled status**

Five years have now passed since 31 December 2020, an important milestone for many Swiss citizens (and their family members) living in the UK. If you were resident before Brexit and have remained in the UK without major absences, you may now be eligible to move from pre-settled status to settled status.

In the current climate, it is strongly advisable to apply as soon as possible rather than wait for any automated process. The simplest way to apply is via the EU Exit: ID Document Check app.

Not all cases are straightforward. Some applications may require additional evidence, particularly where there have been extended absences or family reunion circumstances. Even so, it is worth checking your eligibility now.

If you have Swiss friends and family in the UK who still have pre-settled status, please encourage them to check their eligibility and apply. Settled status is something you are rightfully entitled to where you meet the requirements, and it is worth taking action now.

For free legal advice, specialist organisations such as the3million or Settled can help. Guidance and signposting are also available on request.

Loredana Guetg Wyatt  
07727627302  
[loredana.guetgwatt@outlook.com](mailto:loredana.guetgwatt@outlook.com)

## Seasonal gathering: Samichlaus delights the Swiss community in Wales

We were once again delighted to welcome a full house to our annual Samichlaus in the Woods event in Swansea. Despite the weather, Swiss families travelled from across South Wales – including Cardiff, Swansea, Carmarthenshire, Saundersfoot, Little Newcastle and even Raglan in Monmouthshire – to take part in this much-loved tradition.

The Swiss in South Wales first came together for a Samichlaus event in 1997 and have held this event every year since. Its aim is to maintain our Swiss identity, bring together compatriots and their families in South Wales and celebrate a cherished Swiss cultural tradition.

We were also very pleased to welcome Marlies Höcherl, Honorary Consul, who travelled from outside Cardiff to join us and share the latest news from the Swiss Embassy.

This event would not be possible without the help of many



© Nathalie Stone & Ruth Thomas

## Christmas cheer: Swiss Club Edinburgh celebrates together

On 7 December, the Swiss Club Edinburgh gathered to celebrate the festive season at its traditional annual Christmas party, held at the community hall in Saughtonhall, Edinburgh.

Despite the wintry Scottish weather, 26 members came together for a joyful evening filled with home-baked treats, Christmas music, and lively conversation. The event was another wonderful success and a warm reminder that the Swiss community spirit in Edinburgh continues to thrive.



Christmas carols.



The club's annual party.



Everyone was welcome to take part in the event.

dedicated hands. A heartfelt thank you goes to all those who helped before and after the event, especially the Swansea Swiss group for decorating the Centre and creating such a festive Swiss atmosphere. Special thanks go to Michele and George for making sure everything was safely locked up at the end of the day.

A big thank you also to our main guest, Samichlaus – brilliantly played by my son-in-law Richard – and to Siwan for ringing the cowbell. Every detail helped to create a wonderful atmosphere. Thanks as well to Christine and Liam for brewing an excellent Glühwein, to John, George and especially Daniel for safely setting up the fire bowl for sausage roasting, and to everyone who contributed such delicious desserts. Last but not least, thank you for your generous financial contributions to the Swiss account and our kitty.

It was especially lovely to see the next generation taking part: the youngest Swiss guest was just two years old and had his very first encounter with Samichlaus – he wasn't quite sure what to make of him, bless him!

We plan to run this event again at the beginning of December 2026, and for many years to come, for our now third-generation Swiss community in Wales.

RUTH THOMAS



# NILE STORE LONDON

51 South Molton Street

**NILE – DESIGNED IN SWITZERLAND**

We look forward to your visit at 51 South Molton Street in London.

[NILE.CO.UK](https://www.nile.co.uk)

## Swiss design: NILE opens its first London store

Swiss fashion brand NILE has opened its first store in London, bringing Swiss design and craftsmanship to the capital.

The opening marks an important step in the brand's international development and strengthens its presence in the United Kingdom. The store was developed in-house and reflects NILE's calm, understated aesthetic. Custom-made furniture in brass, pig iron and wood was crafted by Swiss artisans, while reclaimed wood walls add warmth and character. All current collections are presented on one floor, with personalised advice in a relaxed and welcoming setting.

Founded in 1983, NILE designs every piece in its studio in Nidau, Switzerland,



The new store in London.

### Invitation

NILE invites the Swiss community and friends to a public store apéritif on **Friday 20 and Saturday 21 February 2026**, from 10 to 19, at **51 South Molton Street**, London. Drinks and light bites will be served, offering an opportunity to discover the new store and meet the team behind the brand.

land, from the first sketches and hand-drawn prints to the final selection of materials. Sustainability is central to the brand's approach. NILE works closely with long-term production partners and takes responsibility across the entire supply chain.

Most materials come from sustainable sources and are certified by recognised standards such as GOTS, OCS and RWS. The company is also an active participant in the Sustainable Textiles Switzerland 2030 programme.

Today, NILE employs around 230 people and operates more than 30 stores in Switzerland and Germany, alongside its online shop – with London now joining the list.

## Season Finale: Swiss harmony at the Embassy

The 2025 season of Unione Ticinese London concluded on 6 December with a Christmas Concert organised together with the New Helvetic Society at the Swiss Embassy in London. The evening featured young Swiss musicians performing works by renowned Swiss composers in a warm and elegant setting.

Performances by Sarah Murer, Anaïs Manz, Aline Christ and Tina La were warmly received by an appreciative audience. The concert concluded with festive drinks and panettone, offering a convivial moment to celebrate Swiss culture and community spirit – and to welcome 2026 in harmony.



The musicians were warmly received by the audience.



The musicians with UTL members who organised the concert.

## Interview: Juerg Bentele looks back on 15 years at Swiss Club Manchester



After around 15 years on the committee, including 12 years as President, Juerg Bentele is stepping down from the leadership of Swiss Club Manchester, one of the oldest Swiss clubs abroad. Under his presidency, the club has navigated change with dedication, warmth and a strong sense of community. As he hands over the reins, Juerg reflects on memories, challenges and hopes for the future.

*Swiss Review: What moments stand out most from your time at the club?*

**Juerg Bentele:** I have loved many events, from our New Year lunches and Raclette days to Mai-Bummels – each had its own uniqueness. In particular, I always enjoyed the Swiss National

Day celebrations: sharing food with members, the fireworks, the bonfire and the local Holcombe Alphorn Duo, which reminded us of the Swiss mountains we long for. For many years, I was also asked to be Samichlaus in early December, when many members still had young children. The children would play games and then perform songs or poems before enjoying a buffet – very much in Swiss tradition.



Young and longstanding members.

*SR: What have been the main challenges for the club?*

**JB:** Today, a majority of our members are elderly, and sadly some have passed away. Several families with children have returned to Switzerland, and over the past ten years only a small number of younger people have joined, leading to a decline in membership. We tried various initiatives, including a long-running Stammtisch in Manchester city centre, a Facebook presence and regular coverage in Swiss Review. More recently, in 2025, we invested in a new website to attract younger members and highlight our history, founded in 1850. With the support of the Swiss Embassy, we also reached out to Swiss residents across the North West. fulfilling. My family's support motivates me every day.

*SR: What has the club given you personally?*

**JB:** I am a people person, and communication is very important to me. I have made close friends through the club and had countless interesting discussions with people from all walks of life, which has greatly enriched my life.

*SR: What are your wishes for the future?*

**JB:** I sincerely hope that Swiss Club Manchester will continue to thrive and entertain Swiss people and friends of Switzerland for many years to come. The future leadership will be discussed in early 2026 – possibly with the committee running the club collectively.

GIOIA PALMIERI



Juerg and his wife.

## New Year Lunch: Swiss Club Manchester starts 2026 together

Swiss Club Manchester members gathered on 25 January 2026 for their New Year Lunch at the Best Western Pinewood Hotel.

Apéritifs and lunch provided a relaxed and convivial setting to reconnect and welcome new faces. The event highlighted the club's

strong community spirit and a lively programme of events planned for the months ahead. Info: [swissclubmanchester.org.uk](https://swissclubmanchester.org.uk)

**Festive Gathering:** Southern Area Swiss Club celebrates Christmas

The Southern Area Swiss Club marked the festive season with a well-attended Christmas party on 6 December 2025, bringing together 34 adults and two children for an enjoyable evening.

Guests enjoyed a generous food buffet, a lively raffle and beautifully arranged tables, with decorations created by Ruth also offered as raffle prizes. The club's next event will be a lunch at Côte in Farnham on Sunday 1 February 2026.

Info: [bcurtress@gmail.com](mailto:bcurtress@gmail.com)



Guests enjoying the generous dinner.



Thirty-four adults and two kids attended the party.



Christmas decorations were crafted by club member Ruth.

**Swiss Club Manchester**

Celebrating 175 years of life and commitment to the Swiss community in the UK, we are looking for new members and fresh energy. We count on Swiss nationals and Swiss-lovers to help us continue our activities and keep the club vibrant. If you are interested, please visit our website:  
[www.swissclubmanchester.org.uk](http://www.swissclubmanchester.org.uk)

CALL 020 7499 9806

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AmazingAlphorn.com

To get informed about the latest from the Swiss clubs and community living in the UK and to get in touch with the UK OSA delegates, please visit the website [swiss-societies.co.uk](http://swiss-societies.co.uk) and FOSSUK's social media:

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**Breaking News:**

An air-link will be introduced between Scotland's largest city Glasgow and Zurich.

Edelweiss Air will connect the two cities with flights every Monday and Friday from May 29<sup>th</sup> to September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2026.

Peter Müller-McDougall  
Honorary Consul General

**Alphorn lovers:** Swiss sounds in the English countryside this 31 May

The UK Alphorn Network will host its third annual Alphorn PlayDay on Sunday 31 May 2026, bringing a distinctive Swiss tradition to the picturesque grounds of Downe House School.

From 10 to 16, alphorn players from across the UK will gather to rehearse and perform, with at least ten instruments sounding together throughout the day. Guests are warmly invited to attend from 14:30, offering a chance to experience the evocative tones of the Swiss alphorn in a uniquely English setting.

There is no charge to attend, but those wishing to enjoy the refreshments on offer are invited to make a small contribution. Tea and cake will be available, and there is ample parking on site. Guests are asked to register in advance by emailing [frances@AmazingAlphorn.co.uk](mailto:frances@AmazingAlphorn.co.uk), while participants can find registration details at [AmazingAlphorn.com](http://AmazingAlphorn.com).

About 16 alphorn players will gather to rehearse and perform.

**Swiss citizens with Indefinite Leave to Enter or Remain (ILR) legacy documents:**  
International travel from 25 February 2026

From 25 February 2026, the UK government will strictly enforce its Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) rules ([www.gov.uk/eta](http://www.gov.uk/eta)).

Swiss citizens with permission to live, work and study in the UK do not need an ETA. But some Swiss citizens with ILR (Indefinite Leave to Enter or Remain) status obtained before Brexit continue to rely on legacy documents such as an ILR stamp, sticker or vignette in an old passport to evidence their immigration status in the UK.

These citizens are strongly advised to have their immigration status electronically

registered with an eVisa ([www.gov.uk/evisa](http://www.gov.uk/evisa)).

This is particularly important if they plan to travel outside of the UK after 25 February 2026 and cannot evidence their ILR with physical documents at the check-in and the UK border.

For further information see in the Embassy's Brexit FAQ ([www.eda.admin.ch/countries/united-kingdom/en/home/representations/embassy-in-london/embassy-tasks/political-affairs/brexit-faq.html](http://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/united-kingdom/en/home/representations/embassy-in-london/embassy-tasks/political-affairs/brexit-faq.html)).

The above information does not apply to Swiss citizens who have settled or pre-settled status (a type of eVisa) in the UK under the EU Settlement Scheme.



An ILR vignette in an old Swiss passport.  
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**IMPRESSUM**

HOW TO CONTACT THE EDITOR: Reports of Swiss society activities, news, coming events, correspondence, articles and advertising for the 'Switzerland in the UK & Ireland' section of the Swiss Review, should go to the editor:

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**Next Issues**

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