



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2011 YORK

A summary by Margrit Lyster / Pictures Ursula Jost

The venue for the **FOSSUK AGM 2011** was the Heritage City, **York** --- an exquisite back drop for the organization's annual meeting, co hosted by the Yorkshire Swiss Club, attended by some 45 delegates and friends from all over the United Kingdom including Guernsey and Gibraltar and guests from Switzerland.

Amongst the special guests from Berne we were very pleased to welcome; Jean-Jacques Eggli, President of the Organisation for the Swiss Abroad and its Director Dr. Rudolf Wyder and from the Federal Department for Foreign Affairs, Division VI, the head of the Service for the Swiss Abroad, Jean François Lichtenstern. Last but by no means least we were very pleased that "our" Ambassador and Madame Thalmann were able to spend the weekend with us.

The **informal dinner** on Friday evening was the gentle beginning to the weekend, giving everybody a chance to either reacquaint or to get to know each other. On Saturday morning we were able to enjoy a most memorable guided tour of the **Minster**. Sketch of Minster We were indeed fortunate to have David Wardill, husband of Evie Wardill, President of the Yorkshire Swiss Club as our guide. It was difficult to concentrate between the overwhelming magnitude of the Minster and the wealth of information



View of York from the Minster Tower

provided by our guide. No doubt this monumental masterpiece will have left a lasting impression on us.

After the cultural delight of the morning it was time to proceed with the **46th FOSSUK Annual General Meeting** which was attended by around 40 delegates and guests; 14 of the 22 FOSSUK member organisations were represented. The guests were:

- Ambassador Anton Thalmann, London
- Consul General Eduard Krall, London
- Honorary Consuls:
 - Arthur Broadhurst, Manchester
 - Franziska Hewitt, Belfast
 - Albert Good, Guernsey
 - Yves Guisan, Gibraltar
- Jean-François Lichtenstern, Head of the Service for the Swiss Abroad, Bern
- Jean-Jacques Eggli, President of the Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad, Bern
- Dr Rudolf Wyder, Director of the Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad, Bern
- James Wilson, Business Development Manager, Switzerland Travel Centre, London



FOSSUK Committee l to r: Giuseppe Broggin, Margrit Lyster, Freddie Wyser, Daniel Pedroletti, Alain Meyer, Yves Guisan, Erika Farwell-Meier

Andrew Littlejohn, Editor: "Switzerland in the UK" and guest speakers Jacques-Simon Eggly, Jean-François Lichtenstern

FOSSUK President, Freddie Wyser took charge of the **statutory part** of the meeting, presenting the President's report and the reports of the ASO Delegates. The Accounts for 2010 and Budget 2011 gave some cause for discussion. All available efforts will have to be made to substantially reduce the reoccurring deficit for the present financial period and to initiate ways and means to increase revenue.

Before the recently elected Editor of the UK pages of the Swiss Review, **Andrew Littlejohn** was able to present the new version of Regional pages "**Switzerland in the UK**" Margrit Lyster paid tribute to the late Derek Meakin, editor of the "Regional pages" since 1995 who died in October 2010. His dedication, enthusiasm and involvement with the paper were acknowledged and honoured. Jeffrey Long's input as Advertising Manager and as interim editor was also recognized. It was then time to present the new team, Andrew Littlejohn, Editor and Marc Peter, lay out, together with the first copy of their newly created UK regional pages. The editorial team is aiming to create a lively and interactive publication.

With these recent changes the new editor is now under contract with the Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad and the Swiss Foreign Office. At the same time it has become possible to make some long overdue adjustments in the accounting system which now involves the Embassy and thus relieving the Editorial Committee of this task. As the consequence of this there is no longer a need for

either a Swiss Review Treasurer or an Advertising Manager. Appreciation and thanks were expressed to both, Erika Farwell-Meier and Jeffrey Long for their long, untiring efforts on behalf of the Swiss Review.

Freddie Wyser concluded the official part of the meeting surprising everybody present by tending his resignation as President. He is resigning for personal reasons but will remain on the Committee. **Margrit Lyster was elected to be his successor.**

Messrs Thalmann, Lichtenstern, Eggly and Wyder then each addressed the meeting on the following;

- Current Embassy tasks together with an update on present Anglo-Swiss relations: Ambassador Anton Thalmann
- The reorganisation and reconstruction of the consular representations: Jean François Lichtenstern (text on website)
- Federal elections 2011 and political priorities concerning Swiss Abroad: Jean Jacques Eggly (text on website)
- Information in connection with the elections 2011, Swiss Community and Congress 2011 in Lugano: Rudolf Wyder (text on website)
- Services offered by the "Switzerland Travel Centre London": James Wilson

The continuing closure of Consulates met with a lot of concern amongst the participants --- mainly in connection with the cumbersome proce-



dure of passport renewals. Particular concerns were expressed regarding the practicalities, not least the involved and lengthy travel arrangements some people will have to incur. It became clear in the discussion that a lot of thought had yet to be given to these new rulings to make them "consumer friendly"

After the AGM it was time to continue the cultural and social program which offered the participants a taste to the riches of York.

Bedern Hall, this little 13th century gem was the venue of the Ambassador's Reception and the formal Dinner for the evening. The Hall has a fascinating history since its original inception as a refectory in the College of Vicars Choral, having been over the years a school, a baker's, butcher's, slum tenement buildings and latterly since restoration, the venue of weddings and conferences. The delicious Dinner was served in the beamed medieval Hall where the atmosphere was relaxed and the conversation lively. After dinner it was time to draw the raffle prizes which brought some excitement among the guests. The most tempting prize was no doubt the 2 Swiss Rail passes, donated by Switzerland Travel Centre! Bettys of Harrogate, bakery and tea rooms, founded by a Swiss over 100 years ago, donated a huge box of chocolates. A hamper with local specialties was given by the Yorkshire Swiss Club. Many of the member clubs and societies



Bedern Hall

have kindly contributed prizes which were very much appreciated. The short walk back to the hotel, through the narrow lanes of York brought a day full of impressions to a fitting end.

On Sunday morning a very informative and entertaining City Guide introduced the group to some of York's history --- guiding it through the narrow lanes, the Shambles, drawing attention to a multitude of historic events, stopping near ancient buildings or the city wall, intertwining his explanations, comments and anecdotes with hu-

mor and tongue in cheek. This most engaging tour ended at the Castle Museum where we had a chance to learn yet more about the riches of the history of York. The authentically reconstructed Victorian Street scene enhanced with genuine smells, voices and sounds gave a very realistic short insight into Victorian life. With this museum visit the FOSSUK weekend came to a close.

From all accounts the weekend was hailed a resounding success. York has so much to offer sadly time and the occasion did not allow further exploration but a return visit can always be contemplated.

The Committee would like to end with thanking all contributors to this enjoyable and successful weekend --- the Yorkshire Swiss Club for hosting the event and its President Evie Wardill, Ambassador and Madame Thalmann and our guests from Switzerland for honoring us with their presence. We are very grateful to all the contributors to the tombola. Thank you to the Clubs and Societies for their contributions and "Switzerland Travel Centre" and "Bettys of York" for their generosity. All the help and support was very gratefully received.

Castle Museum

