

News release - SWITZERLAND TOURISM

London, November 2011

THE SWISS GLOCKENSPIEL RETURNS TO LEICESTER SQUARE.

One of London's best-loved landmarks has been returned to Leicester Square, reviving a sight and sound that has given pleasure to millions of Londoners and visitors. The Glockenspiel that rang out from the corner of the Swiss Centre has been returned as a redesigned free-standing unit and will be formally inaugurated on 28 November.

The original Glockenspiel – consisting of 27 bells, an astronomical clock and a procession of 23 farmers herding their cows to Alpine pasture – was given to the City of Westminster on its 400th anniversary in 1985 by Switzerland and Liechtenstein as a token of centuries of friendship. Redevelopment of the Swiss Centre from 2008 entailed its removal, but it was a condition of planning approval that the Glockenspiel should return to the square.

The rebuilt Glockenspiel features a procession of 11 moving Swiss figures against a traditional Swiss alpine backdrop, the coat of arms of the 26 Swiss cantons, 27 bells, and 4 Swiss Jacomas representing the 4 different regions with their individual language. Sliding shutters protect the figures from rain, and there is a clock with two faces at the top of the structure. The faces are inspired by the Swiss Railway Clock which was designed in 1944 and has become a famous design icon. One side of the clock faces Piccadilly Circus and the other Leicester Square.

The bells will chime and a five-minute performance takes place five times a day Monday to Friday (at 12.00, 17.00–20.00), and eight times a day at the weekend (12.00 and hourly between 14.00–20.00).

Reconstruction of the Glockenspiel.

Work to bring the Glockenspiel back to life has been a collaboration between artists and craftsmen in England and Switzerland.

Concept design and the planning application for the Glockenspiel and clocks were entrusted to Jestico & Whiles.

The historic world-leading clockmaking company Smith of Derby was asked by the developer McAleer & Rushe and Switzerland Tourism to design and create the clock from a basic concept. The brief required it to retain a strong Swiss identity and harmonise with the surrounding buildings and urban context.

H. Rüetschi of Aarau, producer of the former Glockenspiel, was given the challenge of blending the traditional elements with modern wireless technology, as well as co-ordinating art and design elements and the music. It has re-tuned the 27 bells and installed new magnetic hammers, which allow the sound of the bells to be adjusted.

The well-known Swiss artist Adalbert Fässler of Appenzell restored the wood figures, originally hand-carved by the sculptor Fritz Buchs in Brienz, and the music has been

written by the Royal Academy of Music in Westminster and the University for Music and Art in Berne.

The official inauguration.

The Glockenspiel will be formally inaugurated at 12.30pm on Monday 28 November by Councillor Susie Burbridge, the Right Worshipful the Lord Mayor of Westminster, HE Mr Anton Thalmann, Ambassador of Switzerland to the UK, and Mr Urs Eberhard, Executive Vice President of Switzerland Tourism. A past President of the Swiss Confederation, Mr Adolf Ogi, is honouring the occasion with his presence.

The ceremony will include a demonstration of the way that the Glockenspiel has been designed so that it can be played live by plugging in a keyboard. Six Alphorn players will be placed on various roofs around Leicester Square, some hidden so that people in Leicester Square will wonder where the sound is coming from. At street level traditional bell-playing folklore groups from various parts of Switzerland will parade towards the Glockenspiel and create a circle around the guests. The Glockenspiel will give solo performances and in unison with the bell-ringers.

Speeches of welcome will be made by the Lord Mayor of Westminster, the Swiss Ambassador, Mr Adolf Ogi and Urs Eberhard of Switzerland Tourism.

Press will be most welcome.

Quotes.

HE Ambassador Anton Thalmann said:

“It is an honour and a privilege to witness the return of the Glockenspiel to Leicester Square, which has been the epicentre of the Swiss presence in London since the 18th century. This magnificent restoration is a tribute to the best of Swiss and UK engineering and cooperation. I hope that as the bells chime, they will strike a chord with the thousands of people who pass through Leicester Square every day and remind them of the enduring friendship between Switzerland and the United Kingdom.”

Councillor Robert Davis, Westminster Council’s cabinet member for the built environment, said:

“After a hard-fought campaign to restore one of the city’s most famous and much-loved attractions, I am absolutely delighted that the Swiss Glockenspiel is returning to London’s Square. I am sure that this treasure will continue to delight and enchant the millions of visitors that pass through this busy area each day.”

Jürg Schmid, CEO Switzerland Tourism, said:

“The idea of dedicating a Glockenspiel to the people of the City of Westminster as a token of friendship between the City of Westminster, Switzerland and Liechtenstein in 1985 came from Albert Kunz, the former Director of the Swiss National Tourist Office for the UK/Ireland. With today’s rededication of the new Glockenspiel, this

symbol of friendship and the original idea of Albert Kunz lives on, and it makes the worldwide Switzerland Tourism team very proud. Our hope is that the Glockenspiel is a constant reminder of Switzerland and the many tourist assets our country offers: the beautiful mountains, the quaint cities, the sparkling lakes and the panoramic trains."

Eamonn Lavery, managing director of McAleer & Rushe which funded the Glockenspiel, said:

"McAleer & Rushe as the developer of the W Hotel has been very pleased to have played a leading role in the restoration of the Glockenspiel to Leicester Square. The new installation is a fitting symbol of Anglo-Swiss co-operation which fuses the best of British engineering and Swiss craftsmanship."

Jim Foster, Sales Director for Smith of Derby, said:

"This was a fascinating project in so many ways; as experts in clock engineering we faced a series of challenges to ensure that the Glockenspiel met a number of requirements relating to the design, fabrication and installation. We collaborated very closely throughout with Swiss experts to ensure we kept a very strong element of 'Swissness' running through the design. We are delighted with the result and hope that the Glockenspiel can once again become a great attraction in the area; a place for people to meet and enjoy this captivating piece of engineering."

René Spielmann, Director of H. Rüetschi AG, said:

"Having produced this attraction for the first time in 1985, we are very happy, that this symbol of friendship could be rebuilt in 2011. The developments of technology at the Glockenspiel as well as the musical arrangements are a result from intensive collaboration between the companies and organisations involved in both countries."

Factbox – Swiss Glockenspiel.

- Standing at over 10 metres high and 3 metres wide, it is the tallest Glockenspiel in the country.
- In 1944, Hans Hilfiker, a Swiss Engineer and Designer and employee of the Federal Swiss Railways, created a clock, which has become known as the Official Swiss Railways Clock. It is amazing just how long this design has endured and now it appears to take a place in the eternal hall of fame along side other well known design icons such as the Coca-Cola bottle, the Mercedes star or the Toblerone packaging.
- The clock features a unique Swiss time movement. The second-hand, shaped like a red train despatch baton, reaches the 12 position after 58.5 seconds and waits for 1.5 seconds. In that time, the black minute-hand jumps to the next minute and then the red second-hand begins a new rotation.
- The bells will chime and performances take place 2,132 times a year.
- The design includes a high-frequency distress sound system device to deter birds from roosting on the structure.
- A plaque is installed on the side of the tower giving information about the Glockenspiel, in both the written word and Braille.
- The idea for the original Glockenspiel came from Albert Kunz, the London director of what used to be the Swiss National Tourism Office.
- New tuning methods gave the Aarau makers the ability to tune the bells with a precision five times greater than in 1985.
- Smith of Derby was founded in 1856, and the company's clocks grace public

buildings all over the world.

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