

Hedy's corner : a short history of the Christmas tree

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Christchurch Swiss Club

ST. NICKLAUS DAY PICNIC

Christmas seems to arrive earlier every year to me and this year is no exception. The wind which had been blowing from the north changed suddenly to the south just as everyone arrived at Moser's bach to celebrate St. Nicklaus Day. It was very pleasant, although a shower of rain would have done the ground a lot of good. In all we were about 25 adults and 17 children, which was quite a surprise turnout. It was lovely to see Mr and Mrs Wagner again. St. Nicklaus arrived in his red outfit and white beard and gumboots (!!!) — I didn't envy him a bit! Some of the children crowded around him, but most had to be coaxed up to him. He presented each child with a stocking full of nuts, biscuits, chocolates, raisins and fruit. No doubt, there were less people at the tea table after the children had nibbled on their goodies!

This was our last social event until February, so now the Committee can relax for a while.

The Committee of the Christchurch Swiss Club extends to members of the Northern Swiss Clubs its best wishes for the Christmas Season and a very happy New Year. —J.F.

HEDY'S CORNER:

A Short History of the Christmas Tree

A chronicle of 1606 says: "A fir tree was placed in the room, decorated with paper roses, also apples, wafers, sugar. A square frame was made around the tree and . . ." (here the document ends abruptly).

In 1646 a pastor at Strassburg Cathedral writes the following: "Rather than celebrating God's Christmas Word, it has become customary to also have a fir tree, called Christmas tree, which is mounted in the home. It is decorated with dolls and sugar, whereupon one shakes the tree till everything has fallen off. Where this childish play comes from I do not know".

The earliest mention of a candle-lit tree dates from 100 years later. A German university lecturer has this to say: "The housewife decorates fir trees (as many as there are persons in the home). These she then places in the largest room, starting with the largest tree down to the most modest and smallest one. By each tree she places gifts and burning candles beside them, as well as on the trees. The people of the family and household then file in and regard the order of the trees from largest to smallest; thus they can tell which is their's and appropriate their tree with their gifts".

In 1795 we read the following: "All branches and twigs were laden with delectable sweetmeats such as angels, dolls, animals and similar things, all made from sugar; even everything harmon-

ised in colour. Furthermore, the tree was hung with a large number of gold-coated apples. In the middle front of the tree was hung the dove (Holy Ghost), the Christ Child and His Mother, all made from sugar. Finally every vacant space was then entwined with chains of thousands of gold-coated hazelnuts, threaded like a necklace, as well as with garlands, forming a golden net all over the tree. From between all this profusion the little wax lights shone and twinkled”.

Around the middle of the 19th century the beloved Christmas tree as still seen all over Switzerland was finally established in its present form: candles, baubles, strands of glitter and all the other sundry decorations and the burning candles.

Forthcoming Events

Hamilton Swiss Club

The Hamilton Swiss Club **Picnic** will be held on Sunday, 21st February, at the usual place in Ngaruawahia.

Wellington Swiss Club

A **Picnic** in Queen Elizabeth Park (1 mile from Paekakariki) will bring us together as usual during the holidays. It is scheduled for Sunday, 17th January.

Our Camping Weekend will be on February 13th and 14th in Riversdale, near Masterton. —M.K.

Laugh a little . . .

A married couple went to the pictures and saw a good love story. The wife begins to feel romantic. “Do tell me darling, if you had to start all over again, would you marry me again?”

The husband’s tender answer: “If I had to — yes”.

* * * *

“Do you play any instrument?”

Answer by the husband: “Only at home — second violin”.

* * *

An English lady sent a letter to her favourite women’s magazine “Question Corner”, asking: “My husband went to buy a tin of spinach and has not returned. This was two years ago; what shall I do?” The answer was: “Open a tin of beans”.

* * *

The old maid arrives in heaven: “My whole life long I have acted like a saint. Is this supposed to continue for all eternity?”

Nebelspalter.