

From the president

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Recently I spent some time at the Registry of Friendly Societies and 'rummaged' through the records of the Swiss Society since it was incorporated on April 2, 1947. Unfortunately, apart from legal documentation, not much historical material is deposited here.

However, I found pages one and two from the October 1947 issue of the *Helvetia*. Page one contains the Balance Sheet as per September 30, 1947. As a matter of interest the Society was flush with funds as it held 466 pounds, 16 shillings and one pence at the Post Office Savings Bank and 11 shillings and nine pence in cash, making a grand total of 467 pounds, seven shillings and ten pence. A. Peyer was acting President and F. Steyer acting Vice-President.

On page two was the following article I thought some of our older members would find interesting, and I quote:

"85TH BIRTHDAY"

Our much esteemed Compatriot and Fellow-member, Mr Konrad Altherr, has celebrated his 85th birthday on October 17, 1947. A proud record indeed and we believe he is the oldest member of the Swiss Benevolent Society.

Konrad Altherr was born at Speicher, Appenzell, and left his homeland in 1884 when 21 years old. He arrived in New Zealand on the then famous 4-Master Windjammer 'Ionic' 4300 tons, after an exceptionally fast trip of only 43 days from England.

Travelling in these days was not so comfortable as today, but all the more interesting. On board ship he made many close friends with English sailors, and he was nearly on the verge to become a sailor himself. (Can you fancy an Appenzeller boy, fresh from the mountains, as a sailor?). However, being too honest and straightforward to break his word to his employer, he started farmwork at once, at the now widely known farm of Mr John Schlapfer in Pukekohe. Being an active young man he soon started business on his own as a contractor with horse-teams from five (5) to nine (9) horses. He worked bush and rough country, in places without bridges or roads, through ti-trees and shrubs and mud. For many years this lively Appenzeller lad roughed it, and had his ups and downs like many of those old steward pioneers; he met with accidents that left their marks to the present day.

Later he settled in Rotorua, where he lived for over forty (40) years. All the townspeople knew him as old 'Kon' and he was much respected everywhere. The last thirty (30) years he owned and conducted two motor excursion launches across Lake Rotorua and Rotoiti. His home in Rotorua ... (Here the article unfortunately finishes but there may be a reader who has more information on this old pioneer. If so, please put it on paper and send it to me or the editor so we can all share the curriculum vitae of old 'Kon'.

ANDRE SCHLEICHER.

DID YOU KNOW?

Since it is now 700 years when the three 'Eidgenossen' swore the oath I often wondered what they actually said. I could ask: Hands up all you Swiss that know it! So here is a lesson in Swiss history and on the following page you find the 'Bundesbrief' (the Treaty!). It is an official translation from Latin into German. The original Bundesbrief is written in Latin and is preserved in the Staatsarchiv in Schwyz.

ANDRE SCHLEICHER.