

News and articles from Switzerland...

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CHRISTCHURCH SWISS CLUB

Christchurch Club Home Page:
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Spring is upon us and we are planning pre-Christmas functions and summer holidays.

But first, a report back on a couple of very successful functions.

Past Events...

Firstly, the **Fondue Evening** was well patronised - food, company and atmosphere were very enjoyable.

The **Swiss National Day**, the highlight of our Club's activities, was again held at the Old Stone House. With new ideas and the keen involvement of the committee, the evening turned out being a great success. The well organised tombola attracted lots of support and is sure to be repeated.

A big thank you to the committee for all the work done for this function.

And with the change of venue of the **Stammtisch**, we have had quite a good turn out over the past months.

If you have a chance, drop into the Museum during **November** to view the **Cosmopolitan Canterbury**

Exhibition we are involved with. If you're lucky, you may even be treated to an alphorn concert by Rainer Kuprecht (dates on website).

Forthcoming Events...

Stammtisch - at The Cellar in the Sign of the Takahe, Cashmere, meeting every **first Tuesday** of the month, **from 7pm**.

Upcoming Stammtisch: Tuesday, November 7th and December 5th.

Cosmopolitan Canterbury Exhibition - celebrating Canterbury's rich cultural diversity. The exhibition runs to 6th February, 2001, **featuring Switzerland from 4th November to 3rd December in Exhibition Three**.

Samichlaus - at Renate and Ernst Frei's, 564 Cashmere Road, **from 2pm, Sunday, 3rd December**.

Samichlaus is looking forward to poems, songs, drawings, etc from the children. Parents - add a personal note with something about your children when booking.

There will be an early BBQ tea with some sausages provided. Each family please bring salad and dessert to share. BYO drinks, plates, cutlery. To book, contact Stephanie Turner, ph 381 4341.

The day is **free to members**; and **\$10 per family for non-members**.

News and Articles from Switzerland....

Reform of Family Allowances

A special commission appointed to review family allowances in Switzerland has proposed a number of reforms, hoping to reduce poverty within families by 50 per cent.

The Federal Co-ordination Commission on Family Matters proposed a standardised programme to replace the inefficient existing system, which currently varies widely amongst all of Switzerland's 26 cantons.

The reform proposal is based on a three-tier system: the two existing systems of tax deductions and family allowances, plus the "Ticino Model", which would introduce extra allowances for low-income families.

Currently, about six per cent of all families in Switzerland are considered to be living in poverty.

The commission reported that the "Ticino Model", used on a national level, could reduce that by half, after successful trials in the southern Italian speaking canton of Ticino. They also favoured reforms in the family taxation system, recommending a federal payment of at least SFr200 (NZ\$280) a month per child - eliminating cantonal differences.

It was felt the cantons would not object to losing their authority on the issue, as the present system no longer has any bearing on mobility in modern society. If somebody lives in one canton and works in another, there is often the problem of deciding which canton is responsible for paying the family allowances.

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Artefacts on sale at "Cultura"

Leading dealers from around the world attended Basel's international art and antiques fair - *Cultura* - which included classical antiquities from ancient Rome, Greece and Egypt, as well as Asian art.

The fair was expecting total sales of up to SFr30 million (NZ\$42 million). But not all of the items were for sale. Also featured was a special exhibition of Tibetan art and culture entitled "Buddhas, Gods and Tibetan Saints". The objects - some of which were on public display for the first time - were all recently acquired by Basel's Cultural Museum.

The Hubertus Festival

Canton Grisons (Graubunden) marked the end of this year's hunting with an ecumenical church service at St Carl's Church, St Moritz.

This was followed by the annual *Hubertus Festival*, which included a parade, brass bands and the sound of hunting horns.

The festival is a major event in Canton Grisons and for its 5,500 licensed hunters, the highest number in Switzerland.

It's widely accepted in the canton, where game populations are healthy, that a "regulated" hunt plays an important role in nature and wildlife protection, controlling the threat of overgrazing of the region's fragile alpine forests.

The hunting season focuses mainly on red and roe deer and chamois.

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"Handy" use on the Increase

The use of mobile phones is on the increase - nearly one in two people living in Switzerland now has a mobile phone, or a 'Handy' as it is called, putting the country in eleventh position worldwide, even ahead of the United States, Britain and Germany.

At the end of 1999, 44.2% of the population had a mobile phone contract. By the end of March 2000, this rose to 47.8%, an increase of nearly 4% within just three months - and the trend is still rising...

Swiss "Ironwoman"

Switzerland's Natascha Badmann won the 2000 women's "Ironman" contest in Hawaii in October, regaining the title she first held in 1998.

The contest involves a 3.8 kilometre swim, 180 kilometre cycle ride and 42 kilometre run - a physically gruelling course which the 33 year old completed in just under nine and a half hours.

The Hawaiian title, which included a cheque for \$175,000 and a car worth \$75,000, was Badmann's sixth World Championship title.

And in a huge field of over 1,500 participants, only 60 men managed to cross the finish line ahead of her!

Consumer confidence returns

Consumer confidence in Switzerland is on the rise, reaching levels not seen since before the recession at the beginning of the 1990s. Households are also optimistic about their future prosperity.

A survey of 1,100 households by the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs in Berne showed the index of consumer confidence to be at its strongest for 10 years, reaching 21 points in July, up from an already high level of 19 in April.

Only 18 months ago, the reference index was around zero, and has registered a positive figure for the first time in 10 years.

The Secretariat said the optimistic attitudes were due to a "remarkable improvement" in how households view employment security.

Households also seemed more positive about the economy in general and most reported they were able to save money, although households were still reluctant to make large outlays for such things as cars, furniture and electrical appliances - still concerned about rising prices.

There are also fears that inflation will again increase.

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It is up to the four Clubs to discuss the matter at their respective AGM's (and Society members) and make appropriate nomination(s) to the Society secretary in good time so that such nominations can be suitably published in the *Helvetia* at least one month prior to the election weekend in early June. I feel it's absolutely essential that AGM participants are aware of who the nominees are so that they are able to make an informed decision as to whom they are asked to vote for!

Note: When I was first elected as Delegate, I had little knowledge of procedures of the Swiss Abroad Organisation. This was not least because over the years very little information about the Organisation was forthcoming, albeit the *Swiss Revue* was a good source of information. Yet, as is often the case - you read through (any) publication, put it aside, and then forget about it! However, if you become interested in something new, you learn about it fast. The one thing I then learned very quickly was that my election for this position, although by no means 'illegal', was not carried out strictly according to the current procedure, as in 1989, the OSA put on statute that elected Delegates and Deputies serve a *four year* term of Office. Prior to this, they were elected on a *yearly* basis. Our Society, through lack of knowledge or information about this statute, continued with the status quo, which may have caused the incumbent some displeasure at the time. This was, of course, unintentional. *Heinz L.*

Swiss President Resigns from Politics


The Swiss Defence Minister and President, Adolf Ogi (58), representing the 'Swiss People's Party' will step down on 31 December, at the end of his one-year mandate as President. He has been Defence Minister for five years, beginning his Cabinet career in 1987 as Minister of Communications, Transport, and Energy. Ogi has twice been President - a largely ceremonial position rotated annually among the seven members of the cabinet. After a 13-year cabinet career, he said that, like a sportsman, he was stepping down at the "highpoint" of his career, and wanted to spend more time with his family. Both houses of parliament will meet in December to elect a successor, which will take several weeks to decide. Fourteen names were already put forward by the party shortly after the resignation was announced. Although the People's Party received the largest share of the vote in the last general elections in October, Ogi is still its only representative in the Cabinet, while the other three parties each have two ministers.

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Update on Swiss Olympic Results

Following the article in last month's issue on early Olympic successes, the hopes of the Swiss delegation were indeed fulfilled! Switzerland was able to celebrate its biggest medal tally since the Helsinki Games of 1952, with a total of nine medals.

The gold and bronze in the women's triathlon, as well as the silver in the women's individual fencing tournament, preceded several further achievements in the first week. The previously male dominated sport of fencing brought a second silver medal, this one in the women's team épée event. A great achievement!

Perhaps the biggest surprise was the third silver medal, won by Michel Ansermet in the men's rapid-fire pistol event. The 35-year-old actually made it to Sydney only as a "wild card" entry, because several countries didn't fill their allocated places!

Yet another silver went to the men's single sculls rower, Xeno Müller, (*second, of course, to our own gold medalist, Rob Wadell*). Although a potential favourite, he was delighted with his second placing after initially thinking he had even lost out on the bronze medal!

In the second week of the Games, mountain biker, Barbara Blatter, won Switzerland's fifth silver medal, not quite able to hold on for the gold after leading for over half of the race.

Twenty-four hours later, this time in the men's mountain biking, Christoph Sauser came in third to win the second bronze medal - a 'small' consolation after race leader and gold medal favourite, Thomas Frischknecht, finished a 'disappointing' sixth place.

The sixth and final silver medal went to an elated Swiss show jumping team - well deserved after a 76-year wait for an equestrian team medal.

But, besides the one gold, six silver and two bronze medals, another major achievement is that of the 102 Swiss athletes who competed in Sydney, more than half finished in the top twelve of their sport.

So, congratulations to the Swiss Team for a great result!!

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Eliane Burki, the 16 year old soloist from Feldbrunnen, Canton Solothurn, has raised the alphorn's profile on the international concert scene.

A Rare Gift

Sixteen year old Eliane Burki, from Canton Solothurn, has been playing the alphorn for about ten years. Music was always a part of her life - her mother is a music teacher, and all three of her sisters play a variety of wind instruments. Eliane is currently attending the 'Konservatorium' in Berne. Although already accustomed to wind instruments, the first time Eliane played the alphorn, it was

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before Hansjörg Sommer, a specialist alphorn player and composer - an amazing achievement for a six year old girl! She has since remained with the alphorn, and Sommer became her teacher. Eliane was only eight years old when she gave her first concert - which was a great success. Although alphorn playing is still largely male dominated, she is doing about 30 concerts a year, even the odd one outside of Switzerland. Having also played with various ensembles, they have been highly impressed at the rhythmic control this young girl holds over her far from easy instrument. When she performs solo, Eliane is usually accompanied by her mother, Erika Burki - as she recently was for

an international audience at a concert for the Swiss Disaster Relief Corps in Berne. This year, she will also be playing in Hungary, and in 2001 she has been invited to Nepal. Eliane has an excellent technique, enabling her to play both classical and more modern peices, and she is interested in exploring the more unusual possibilities of the alphorn - but less enthusiastic when it comes to playing the more traditional Swiss folk music. Because Eliane is so well in control of her instrument, practice can be kept to a minimum, leaving enough time to spend with her horse. Although very involved with her musical interests and activities, she still dreams of one day becoming a therapeutic riding instructor.



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