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Jet-lag's a funny thing, isn't it? I used to deny I got it, especially when I was returning to New Zealand and straight into work. Jet-lag? No problem! Of course coming to Switzerland it was the opposite; it was the best excuse for heading for the deck-chair when the effort of following conversation got too much.

Now? Now it's one of those surprises that arrives just on odd afternoons, like a sand-bag on the back of your head. You realise that although your mind has fully switched time-zones, your body is still en route. This page is requiring another cup of coffee!

Or perhaps it's the change in the weather. Finally after a Spring drought, it's wet and grey. The farmers are celebrating. We expected to see them dancing in the fields when we were out earlier - but we could just see (and smell) where they'd been. Rain means manure spreading time, and the farmers are out there with their tankers hitched up to the tractor, getting the good stuff onto the ground. "Farmers' perfume" we call it round here when we're being delicate. Otherwise "*Schüttli*".

The farm effluent pits would have been getting pretty full. It's more than four weeks since they've had rain, and it was a dry winter too, so there are restrictions on taking water from streams, and dire mutterings about crop failures.

Bodensee is at a record low - you can see rocks and reefs well out from shore - and the ferries can't get up the old Rhein to Rheineck. From the entry to our place, you can sometimes see the top parts of a ferry moving between the trees as it goes up and down the river- but now the channel is so shallow and narrow we could walk across to Austria with a decent pair of gumboots. The fish and water-birds are in trouble too - both lay eggs and raise young among the Schilf-grass along the lake-edge, which is now high and dry.



The old Rhein - fishing boats, but not the ferry

In the time since we arrived, we've been making the most of the sunshine. The tomatoes and herbs are planted, the scarlet runner beans and sugar-snap peas are sown, the flower-pots are filled, and all is looking well. Next week I reckon we'll be eating the alpine strawberries that over-wintered happily in their planters!

The final garden-chore was completed in good time, just before the rain. Our two elder trees were so dense with new growth and *Blattläuse* (fat black aphids) that something had to be done. We needed more light for the elderberries, us, and the geraniums - not to mention the hazard of being showered with honey-dew from the aphids when we were lying in the shade. So - up with the ladder, out with the pruners, and then on with the spray. Now the rain has rinsed the last dead *Blattlaus* from the remaining juicy new growth, and everything in the garden is lovely.

Last month, we were marvelling at the road changes under construction on the Rimutakas between Wellington and the Wairarapa, and how the modern machinery was chomping through whole bluffs. This week - they're doing it here too! There's a little road that joins Rorschach and Thal, and has a deep cut through a rocky outcrop called *Steiniger Tisch* (on which is our esteemed editor's favourite restaurant), and then a narrow road walled in near the base of a grape-hill. Somehow that road seems special to me - perhaps because it must have been quite a major feat to initially hack through the rock, and cut a road platform into the bottom of the hill. You get a real sense of the work and workers involved. Now - the heavy machines have moved in, doubled the size of the cutting, and started building up the wine-hill road from the very bottom of the valley. Some sense of the human history is lost.

Sure - the road probably had more than its share of scrapes and prangs, but it did require caution and respect. Soon, it will be wider, and should be safer - but maybe not if it just lets people go faster. The people of Wattwil have just voted to make a street narrower and more difficult for traffic!

My new favourite word - "*Strassenrowdys*" (Street-rowdies) - from a news story about the Freiburg police having just dealt to a *Rasergang* of 19 youngsters and their modified cars. (It turned out they were rich young Portuguese - which only went to confirm the popular view that all trouble is imported.) We've been saying in NZ that calling them "boy-racers" doesn't really work, given that some are girls, and some are men-old-enough-know-better .... But "*Strassenrowdys*" - now that has a ring to it!

The other thing I've been admiring is the local health service. Mani's brother Hans had a bit of a scare the day after we arrived. First thing was to call the local ambulance. Those guys were great. Getting a stretcher down the stairs would have been quite a job - so out came a sort of sedan chair with rubber grips on the bottom struts, specially designed for the purpose. Then off to the hospital - just a small one, I think about 30 beds. He's recovering well - and to cap off the excellent service, the hospital confirmed to the Traffic Department that we'd been ambulance-chasing when we parked right over from the parking-fee machine without seeing it and copped a Fr40 fine, so we've been forgiven that. All's well.....