

News from Switzerland

Objektyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand**

Band (Jahr): **16 (1951)**

Heft [9]

PDF erstellt am: **13.09.2024**

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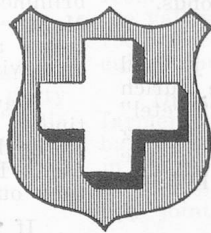
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HELVETIA

MONTHLY
PUBLICATION
OF THE



SWISS BENEVOLENT
SOCIETY IN
NEW ZEALAND (INC.)

GROUP NEW ZEALAND OF THE NEW HELVETIC SOCIETY

16th YEAR.

OCTOBER, 1951.

AUCKLAND.

NEWS OF THE COLONY

A Swiss Shooting Club has been born in Stratford, so following the Swiss tradition. The best results during the month of September were as follows:—

	Points.
T. Napfli	198.11
F. Suter	195.8
Niederberger	193.8
T. Schelbert	193.5
F. Gwerder	191.6
A. Risi	191.6

We wish the new Swiss Shooting Club in the Taranaki district every success, and hope that it will grow and prosper.

NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND

SWITZERLAND'S MERCHANT FLEET.

During the last world war Switzerland had eleven cargo boats, three boats for the Red Cross, and eight chartered Greek ships at her disposal. Today the Swiss Merchant Navy includes twenty ships totalling more than 100,000 tons. Several units will be added to this flotilla, and just recently Swiss enterprises have ordered three new boats, each of 5000 tons. The crews of these ships consist of different nationalities. Most of the captains are foreigners, but a certain number of Swiss have obtained their officer's or master's certificate. The ships sailing under the Swiss flag are officially registered in Basle.

Auckland and Wellington have just had the visit of the Swiss M/S. "Baden," 10,000 tons. This brand-new ship belongs to the Nautilus Co., in Lugano. She has left Wellington for Fiji, where she will load sugar.

The festivities to celebrate the 450th entry of the canton of Basle into the Confederation started on Thursday, July 12th, at Liestal and Basle.

At 9 o'clock in the morning all the church bells throughout the "Baselbeits" were ringing.

The "Landrat" of the canton of Basle-County met at Liestal in solemn conclave, and was addressed by its President, Dr. R. Straumann.

Amongst the invited guests were the members of the Federal Council, representatives of the two Federal Chambers, the Supreme Court, the cantonal governments, the army, the church, the universities, etc., etc.

A large procession, depicting various historical events passed through the gaily beflagged street to the military barracks where a performance of the "Festspiel" entitled "Gottwilche" by E. Wirz was given. The festive gathering was addressed by the Presidents of the governments of the cantons of Basle-Town and Basle-County, Dr. F. Ebi and M. Kaufmann respectively, and by Mr. E. Steiger, President of the Swiss Confederation.

As at Liestal, the members of the Grand Council of the canton of Basle-Town assembled at the town hall in Basle to hold a solemn meeting, which was addressed by its President, Mr. Burkhardt. Amidst the thunder of the guns and the pealing of church bells a historic procession was formed, comprising over 12,000 participants, which passed through the richly decorated streets, lined by 10,000 school children, to the old battlefield of St. Jakob. In the procession, one noticed the members of the Federal Council, who received a specially warm reception.

A "Festspiel" was performed in the evening in the big Hall of the "Mustermesse." Many of the buildings and monuments were flood-lit and dancing took place in all public places.

Swiss mountain guides will reduce their fares by a third as a result of a Swiss Federal Council decision to make a subsidy to the Mountain Guides' Association.

A day's climbing tour of the Matterhorn will now cost 100 francs (£8/4/-), compared with 150 francs (£12 6/-) in the past.

The Swiss Government warned housewives to lay in a two months' supply of essential provisions, including sugar, rice, fats, oil and soap.

Recalling a similar Government warning last year, the Department of Public Economy said that those families which had consumed stocks should lose not time in replacing them. "In a troubled period such as now," the statement said, "reason demands that citizens of a country without access to the sea should have sufficient supplies on hand."

The well-known mountain guide Otto Furrer (aged 48), father of four children, lost his life on an ascent of the Matterhorn. He was thrice winner of the Kandahar race. (Twice at St. Anton and once at Murren.)

Ugo Koblet, 26-year-old Swiss cyclist, won Europe's greatest bicycle race, the 2900-mile Tour de France, with an aggregate time of 142 hours 20 minutes 14 seconds.

A young man, under the influence of alcohol, jumped into the swimming pool of a polar bear at the Zurich Zoo. A few minutes later the female polar bear "Gretel" dived into the basin, and tried to get hold of him. Owing to the efforts of some of the visitors and one of the keepers the young man was rescued from his perilous situation without suffering any injuries.

In Switzerland, sixteen power stations are under construction or being rebuilt at the present time, the Swiss Electricity User's Association was told at its recent meeting. These will provide an additional 2,000 million kWh. annually by 1956. Last year, four large power stations and several smaller units were put into operation.

This year, the number of tourists entering Switzerland via Basle was 520,000 in July and 510,000 in August. This shows a very considerable increase compared with last year's statistics, which indicate an average of 300,000 visitors. From the beginning of the holiday season, that is, from June to the end of August, a total of 1.3 million tourists have entered Switzerland at Basle, that is about twice as many as last year.

TELEVISION IN ALL AMERICAN CINEMAS THROUGH A SWISS INVENTION.

After long negotiations the 20th Century-Fox Film Corporation has succeeded in getting a permit from the Columbia Broadcasting System to transmit television programmes in colour. The transmission to the big cinemas is done through the famous Swiss Eidophor-Projection system. The 20th Century-Fox Film Corporation has bought, some time ago, the right to use the idophor system from the Physical Research Institute of the Polytechnical School in Zurich. The agreement with the Columbia Broadcasting System now makes it possible to transmit shows of all kinds from the big cities to the smallest suburban cinemas of the United States. In American television circles it is stressed that the Swiss Eidophor Ssystem is the most perfect procedure for the transmission of big pictures and, therefore, best suited for television.

THE LION OF LUCERNE GETS A NEW SKIN.

The Lion of Lucerne, which was sculptured in the year 1820-21 by the sculptor. Ahorn, from Constance, after a model of the great Danish master, Thorwaldsen, has greatly suffered from the influence of the weather. After several works of amelioration and all sorts of experiments, it has now been decided to make a complete restoration, which will cost about Sfr.10,000. Already a sculptor and a stone mason have been working for a month to replace the missing parts, especially the left paw of the lion.

THEIR SWISS TOUR WAS A "DARING ADVENTURE" — 59 YEARS AGO

From the "SWISS OBSERVER."

Exactly 59 years ago the first large party ever to leave Manchester on an organised tour to Switzerland steamed away from the city with a rush of excited cheers and whistles echoing in their ears.

There were 74 of them in the party, including 39 women wearing the flowing, voluminous skirts and wide-brimmed hats of the day. It was organised by the Manchester Touring Club, forerunner of the dozens of travel agencies that now send thousands of Mancunians on Swiss holidays every year.

Dawn was breaking as they set forth for the Continent. On the boat they were given the choice of either beef steak or mutton chop and coffee for breakfast. They all considered it "a fairly good meal" as well they ought for it only cost them two shillings each.

If beef steaks were nothing unusual for the travellers they soon found more worldly surprises in store for them. The splendour that greeted them in their first continental hotel, for instance, brought gasps of amazement from the incredulous Mancunians.

"The dining room was an agreeable surprise," they recorded, "and the electric light shone around in a pleasant manner."

Lucerne, today's No. 1 Swiss attraction to British visitors, was their eventual destination. It was the time when Lucerne was first being opened up as a holiday centre. The ring of steep walls and turrets, built to keep out undesired neighbours in the fourteenth century, were now turning on all their medieval charm to welcome the visitors who were beginning to flock from all parts of Europe to see this fairy-tale city tucked away amid the Alps.

The party from Manchester was suitably impressed. In these days the English tourist goes to Switzerland for food first and scenery second, but in 1892 scenery came first every time.

They had their share of all the beauty-spots within reach. One day they climbed the 5,900-foot Rigi, which dominates Lucerne, by Switzerland's first mountain railway, built 20 years previously. It was this railway, incidentally, that was taken as a pattern when the Snowdon railway was built, and the first rolling stock to be used on the Welsh mountains was bought second-hand from the Swiss authorities.

They did plenty of sight-seeing. But when the day's excursions were over, what then? Lucerne was only beginning to develop into the gay holiday centre it is today. All the luxurious hotels, the elegant Casino and numerous entertainments that vary according to the season were mostly still a dream.

The Mancunians' chronicler gives the answer in one long sentence:

"When you are tired out with the pleasuring of the day, it is a great treat to hire a boat at eventide and gently push out into the bright clear lake, then lean back, light your cigar and meditate."

These early English tourists, like the millions more who were to follow them later, revelled in showing the foreigners they were English and proud of it. The Swiss, they observed, used to watch their proceedings, as they dallied around, with an air of calm serenity."

And they touched on a prophetic note that was soon to become only too true when they remarked: "We were probably looked upon as the advance guard of a troop of English tourists who would, by and bye, swarm down upon them from Europe and America."

Yet, although the Swiss tourist industry, destined to become the most highly-powerful in the world, was at that stage only in its infancy, they found that the Swiss were far from insular.

On their way down from the excursion to the Rigi they saw something that "well tickled the fancy of those who noticed it." It was an immense sign outside a picturesque and otherwise unspoilt mountain chalet proclaiming in English to all and sundry that "GRUB IS BALM."