

Moorland protection "not good enough"

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Alice Arnold-Portmann

4 June 1925 - 10 December 2008

Alice was born in Altstetten near Zürich 1925 to Josef and Maria Portmann-Rosli. She was the third of 8 girls. Alice spent her teenage years in the care of her godmother in Root near Luzern. From there Alice attended school and eventually went to work in the hospitality industry until she married Josef (Sepp) Arnold in 1945. They owned a small dairy farm in the area known as Rengg, near Alpnachstad. Once they had as many children as cows (6) it was time to look further afield and Alice, along with Sepp and 6 children began the 5-6 week boat trip through the Panama Canal, to Tahiti and then to New Zealand.

They lived with Alice's sister, Marie Louise Bartlett of Hamilton for the first few weeks while gathering enough beds etc to set up home on a farm near Hairini, Te Awamutu. After Hairini the family moved to Cambridge where Sepp and eldest son Josef milked 160 cows before 50/50 sharemilking took the family to Springdale for a few years. In the early 60s Alice and Sepp purchased their own dairy farm in Tahuna and celebrated this with the birth of their 7th child, Andrew, the only kiwi!!!!

While Alice came to grips with English she also had to search shops for Tomato Puree Swiss style, salamis, yoghurts and special cheeses but to no avail, as these products were then unheard of in NZ. Alice adjusted and gradually found her feet, had a large vegetable garden, orchard and hens and helped with milking when needed. She became a great DIY-er, renovating and painting wherever they lived. In the early 1980s Alice and Sepp retired to Hamilton Lake. Their Golden Wedding Anniversary was celebrated in 1995. Sepp died in January 2003 and Alice moved to the Hamilton suburb of Queenwood in 2004.

Family was always first in her life but as well as renovating etc Alice enjoyed tapestry. Her most beloved pastime both in Switzerland and NZ was Swiss cards, a game she was still playing in the final months of her life.

Alice is survived by her 7 sisters, 7 children, 16 grandchildren, 15 great grandchildren and more to come.

The Hamilton Swiss Club and the Swiss Society extend their deepest sympathy to the Arnold families.

A life well lived and eternal rest well deserved

Moorland protection “not good enough”

Two decades after getting a surprise thumbs up at the ballot box, an initiative to protect Switzerland's wetlands has received a mixed review.

Environmental organisations say that while most moorlands had been listed, this “protection on paper” was unsatisfactory.

The Rothenthurm Initiative was passed on December 6, 1987 - against the government's recommendation - by 57.8 per cent of the Swiss public. Only two cantons, Valais and Schwyz, the very canton in which the commune of Rothenthurm is located, rejected it.

The initiative - which was sparked by the army's plan to build a training ground bang in the middle of Rothenthurm's moorland - obliged the government to conserve the “mires and mire landscapes of national importance and particular beauty”.

Around 1,700 upland moors and fens as well as 89 moorlands are currently listed and protected, according to the WWF, Pro Natura and Birdlife Switzerland. This corresponds to around 1,100 square kilometres - twice the area of Lake Constance.

But while welcoming this figure, WWF said the total moorland in Switzerland had shrunk by five per cent since 1987; many moors were gradually disappearing without people noticing because water was being diverted for agricultural purposes.

Switzerland has a long record of federal environmental and sustainable development legislation and strategies. The Swiss public and non-governmental organisations continue to be a driving force behind policies for protected areas. Nevertheless the percentages of rare, endangered or extinct animal and plant species in Switzerland are among the highest in the OECD for mammals, fish, reptiles, amphibians and vascular plants, and the highest for birdlife (56%).

from swissinfo

Influenza cases are on the rise

A flu epidemic is gaining speed in Switzerland, the Federal Health Office has announced.

Health officials say there were 63 suspected cases of influenza per 100,000 residents in early January. They consider it a national epidemic once there are 48 cases per 100,000 residents.

The respiratory virus has attacked somewhat later this season compared with last year but now seems to be spreading through most areas of the country.

Federal health officials caution that the situation might even be worse, as the data over the holiday period are unreliable since many doctors closed their offices during the holidays.

from swissinfo