

Tornado over Switzerland

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tures Swiss folk dancing, yodelling, singing, the blowing of alphorns, accordion playing and flag throwing. Crafts such as wood working and Scherenschnitt are also still mastered.

FROM MAY THROUGH OCTOBER

All this is a part of the sesquicentennial celebrations of New Glarus, which commenced in May and which will end in October. One part of the event, organised largely by the Glarus-based "Friends of New Glarus", will comprise old and new. Along with the traditional presentation and activities, evoking images typically Swiss - such as Heidi and William Tell - there will be displays of works by nine contemporary artists from Glarus, organised by the Art Society of Glarus, as well as the exhibition "Textile Industry in Glarus from the past to the future". The canton of Glarus has also commissioned a present to be handed over to the birthday child. A young artist, 30 year old Tina Hauser, won the competition with her sculpture of Fridolin's talking stick, Fridolin being the Catholic Saint from Ireland who first converted the valley of Glarus. The 3 meter high statue is being sculpted from Alpine stone and will be shipped overseas for the unveiling.

"Old" Glarus will also be having simultaneous celebrations recognizing the birthday of its "little sister" and the efforts taken by the forefathers (and mothers) who courageously took to sea to set up another Glarus so far away in distance, yet so close in the heart.

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TORNADO OVER SWITZERLAND

Switzerland has its own winds such as the "Foehn" in the Alps and "La Bise" in Geneva, but it never had anything like tornadoes, hurricanes, whirlwinds, twisters, typhoons or cyclones. But with the climatic changes worldwide, Switzerland has experienced its first major twisters which recently created havoc in Baselland.

The climatic conditions in Switzerland demand that houses are being built in much stronger material than in New Zealand for instance and roofs must be able to withstand tons of snow during winter. So for a building to be damaged the way this one was, requires a more than usually strong whirlwind because it practically lifted the whole roof off this apartment block and threw it into the garden. Things are obviously no longer what they used to be.

MULTILINGUAL BIVIO

The village of Bivio at the northern side of the Julier Pass leading to the Engadin is quite unique in the world.

Although it has only 260 inhabitants, three languages are officially in use there: Italian, Romansch (Rätoromanisch) and German, of which Italian and German are written languages. But the inhabitants actually communicated with one another in eight different languages, counting the 3 mentioned above plus the local Italian dialect and several German Swiss dialects as well as some English.

Strolling through the village, you will notice a sign in Italian saying "Diventa capo muratore" (become a French polisher), another in Romansch with "Tschangs alla tschinta" (dogs on leash) and a third in German with "Zimmer" (rooms to let). Workmen talk to one another in their unique Italian dialect, the Postmistress speaks to you in perfect "Schwyzerdütsch" while ski-lift operators address you in "Berndütsch" or in English according to your preference.

Bivio is the only "Italian" village north of the Engadin and north of the Alps. Officially it is situated in the Romansch part of Switzerland and its name in that language is "Beiva" (Stalla in German). This peculiar situation comes from the fact that for many centuries, its main connection was via the Septimer Pass with the Bergell and upper Italy. Trade and cultural contacts were closer with these regions than with the region of

Oberhalbstein to the north. And so Bivio became and remained until now an "Italian" village in the middle of a German and Romansch speaking region.

It was only with the opening of the Julier Pass road that Bivio came in closer contact with the Oberhalbstein to the north and the Engadin to the south. And so Italian is still the main language being taught in school although all inhabitants, by necessity, can read, write and understand several other languages as well.

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