

News snippets from Switzerland

Objekttyp: **Group**

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

Band (Jahr): **65 (1999)**

Heft [2]

PDF erstellt am: **21.07.2024**

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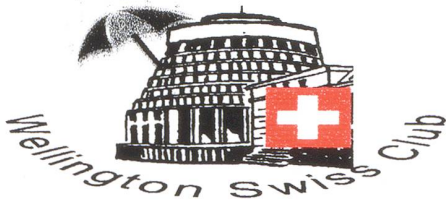
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Forthcoming Events....

The February walk has been organized for **March 07, 1999** at the Tunnel Gully Recreation Area.

Meeting Point: Tunnel Gully, Lower Picnic Area at **10.00 am.** - Tunnel Gully is 7.5 km north of Upper Hutt. Follow Road to Featherston, turn off State Highway 2 at Te Marua and follow Plateau Road. Bring a torch along.

- Dogs are OK on this walk. Please bring a picnic along and confirm your participation with Franz Schneider on 476 78 05.

13 March 1999, 7 pm at the Clubhouse:

"Fritz Adams Cup"
please bring a plate!

Walk on **March 28 1999**, Korokoro Dam.

Meeting point: Cornish Road, Petone at **10.00 am.**

- Dogs are Ok on this walk. Please bring a picnic along and confirm your participation with Franz Schneider on 476 78 05.

Still a fair way off, but it won't do any harm if you make a mental note already;

17th. April, Annual General Meeting of the Wellington Swiss Club.

You might think AGM's are a bit boring, but the coffee and cake afterwards and the friendly atmosphere are definitely worth coming to our AGM. And there should be time for a 'Jass' too!

tb.

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Forthcoming Events...

Coming up shortly is the **Wine Trail** on **Sunday, 7th March.** By bus, we will visit some vineyards north of Christchurch. Families are also welcome. To check for space, please contact Werner Schibli immediately, Ph. 332 5525

Playgroup - First Friday of each month, at the home of Nicki Damm, 45 Ramahana Road, ph 332 8520. Open to all mothers with pre-schoolers, from 9am. Call Nicki by the prior Wednesday to confirm.

Stammtisch - Every first Tuesday of the month at René's of Cass Bay, 15 Governors Bay Road, Cass Bay, beginning at 6pm. Magnus's Swiss snacks, sweet and savoury, will be available on the evening.

TAURANGA SWISS PICNIC

Held on Sunday, 7th February 1999, and hosted by Colleen and Henri Limacher on their property in Oropi Road. - Many tables were set up with colourful umbrellas, where there was ample sitting room for the 85 adults and children present. It was great catching up with old friends and also becoming acquainted with many new people.

- The B.B.Q. luncheon was delicious and plentiful - Bratwurst, Frankfurters, salads, fruit salad, pavlova and ice cream, followed by coffee.

- The afternoon passed quickly with activities provided for all ages - swimming, bowling, darts, cards etc. or a nice amble around the spacious grounds.

A big thankyou to Colleen and Henri and their willing helpers for organising such a wonderful picnic.

J.F.

News Snippets from Switzerland

**Trouble with
the draft accord on the free
movement of persons between
the EU and Switzerland
(Feb.1999)**

Swiss Trade unions are worried that free movement of workers could lead to wage dumping in Switzerland, when workers from low-wage-countries come to Switzerland.. The Swiss Government says overall the bi-lateral accord with the EU is a good deal, giving plenty of opportunities for commercial expansion. But from the very beginning it was clear that Switzerland as a high-wage-area could act as a honey-pot for workers from southern Europe or low-wage-countries like Britain and Ireland. Swiss Trade unions fear that Swiss employers would not resist employing workers from low-wage-countries, thereby putting pressure on Swiss wage-levels. Employers, Trade unions and the economics Minister Caspar Couchepin have been getting together a draft package offering a measure of protection against wage or social dumping. Employers say the proposals go too far, the Unions say not far enough. Despite Union and employer criticism Mr Couchepin remains optimistic agreement can be reached. Labour relations in Switzerland are largely governed by industry-wide collective contracts. The Government is suggesting that if any employer substantially undercuts the provisions regarding wages, working hours and holidays, a collective contract can be imposed on the whole industry. Where no collective contracts are present the authorities can impose minimal wage levels and social standards. A law is due to be introduced obliging foreign firms who send foreign workers to Switzerland to comply with Swiss labour regulations. Neither the Trade unions nor the employers are totally satisfied by this package and the Unions are threatening a referendum against the bilateral accords. The final draft however is not due until June/July. A compromise will no doubt be reached by then.



Would You Believe This?

Over 800,000 Swiss people are participating in the sport of Inline-Skating!!! This must be good business for the manufacturers of the roller skates!!

Mergers Free From Interference
(Feb 1999)

The government has rejected calls to interfere in business mergers. A statement said the success of mergers was in the hands of the individual companies. It adds that companies usually heeded their social responsibilities and cooperated with trade unions. The statement comes in response to the planned merger of the Al-Group with the German conglomerate, Viag.

Reciprocal Visit
(Feb 1999)

Switzerland has invited the president of South Korea, Kim Dae-jung, for an official visit.

The economics minister, Pascal Couchepin, made the offer during a meeting with Mr Kim in Seoul. Officials said the talks focussed on bilateral trade relations and Swiss efforts to help reduce tensions on the Korean peninsula.

Swisscom to lengthen phone numbers
(Feb 1999)

Plans are going ahead to introduce nine-digit phone numbers. The federal authorities have rejected criticism by a telecommunications lobby group that the changes come too early and are too costly. The authorities say the new system, to be in place in 2001, is needed to increase the numbers available in a liberalised market.

Dishonest Manager
(Feb 1999)

A former manager of Swisscom has been found guilty of fraud and falsifying documents. A court in Zürich handed down an eighteen month suspended prison sentence. The head of the accountancy department siphoned off one and a half million francs and spent it on gold ingots, shares and luxury items.

Worldwide Problem
(Feb 1999)

Drunken driving is the most common traffic violation in Switzerland. Figures for 1996 show nearly half of the thirty-five thousand penalties were linked to drunkenness. The Federal Statistics Office says compared to the rising number of vehicles, the ratio of offences for drunken driving has remained stable since the 1960s. The report also shows that every third man gets sentenced by a court for traffic violation at least once in his life. The ratio for women stands at six per cent.

A Milestone in Health Care
(Feb 1999)

As of the year 2000, all out-patient medical treatment in Switzerland is to be performed according to a uniform schedule of fees covering doctors and hospitals. Announced jointly in Bern on Thursday by Swiss physicians' and hospital associations and health insurers, the new fee structure upgrades the value of basic medical services over high-tech procedures. The new fees will supposedly have no impact on the overall costs of medical care here, but general practitioners can expect to earn somewhat more in future, while medical specialists can figure on some loss of income.

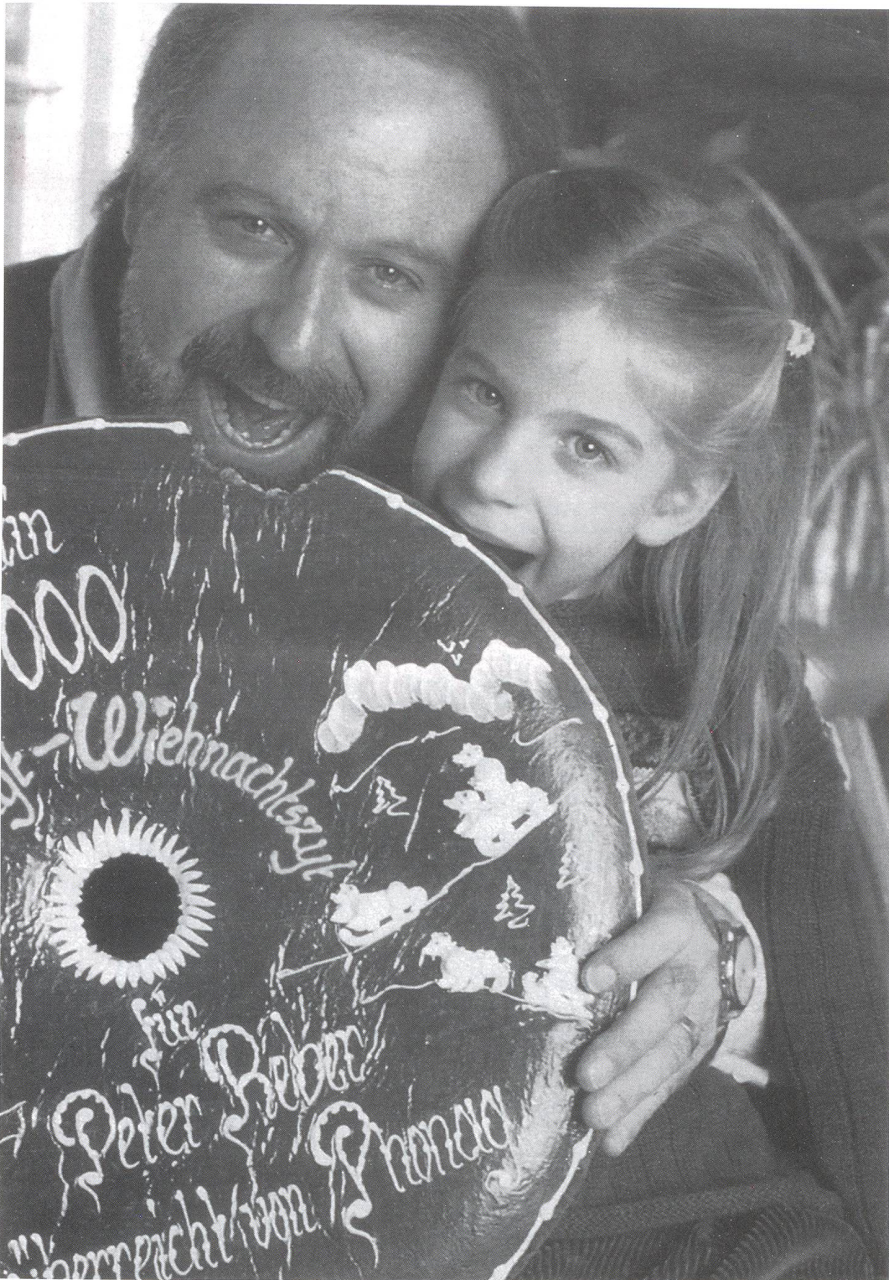
Upcoming Swiss Cultural Events in New Zealand

(As indicated by the Swiss Embassy - Wellington)

The Swiss Embassy in co-operation with 'Pro Helvetia-Arts Council of Switzerland' is pleased to announce the Photographic Exhibition of 'The Patient Planet/So Many Worlds' for 1999.

Dunedin	Otago Museum	27 February - 11 April 1999
Christchurch	Canterbury Museum	5 May - 7 June 1999
Palmerston North	Manawatu Art Gallery	19 June - 1 August 1999
Wellington	Dowse Art Gallery (Lower Hutt)	21 August - 21 November 1999
Auckland	Auckland Art Gallery	11 Dec. 1999 - 23 Jan. 2000

The Patient Planet/So Many Worlds is a remarkable exhibition of photographs which tells the story of the major political and human events of the second half of the twentieth century. Turbulent, yet touching, the 255 images tell individual stories with formidable authenticity, a factor which is frequently overlooked in today's art-directed or manipulated images. Nearly all the renowned names of humanistic photojournalism are represented including Switzerland's Werner Bischof, together with Henri Cartier-Bresson, René Burri, Robert Frank and many others. This is an important exhibition, brought to New Zealand by Pro Helvetia, Arts Council of Switzerland, and should be of great interest to every age group - it is a photographic history of the world that is our's.



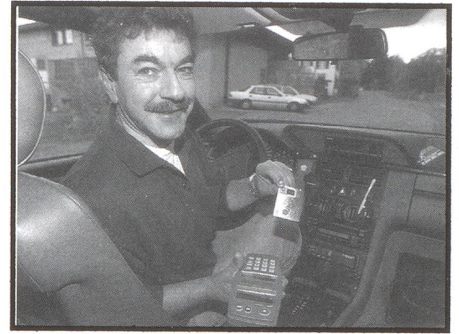
Peter Reber's success....

3 weeks before last Christmas the popular folk-song-composer Peter Reber released a new CD on to the Swiss market. This new release with compositions in 'Schwyzerdütsch' (Swiss-german) found such a response that it sold 50,000 units in the 3 weeks leading up to Christmas. The title track of the CD is called Winterzyt-Wiehnachtszyt and is sung by Peter Reber together with his 6 year old daughter Nina.

Animal Protection at Work in Switzerland

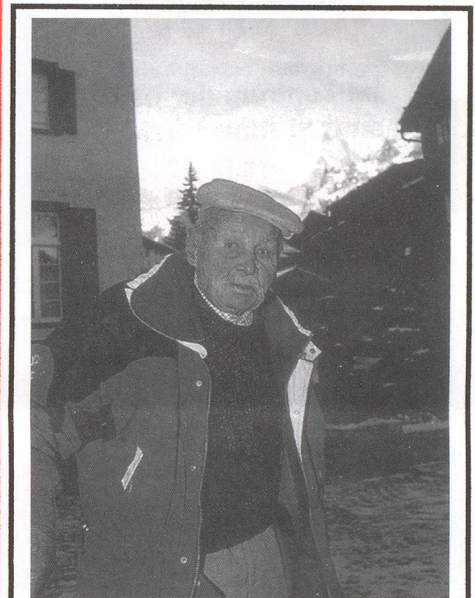
(Feb 1999)

Farmers will continue to have to let their cattle out into the open for at least thirty days during winter. The veterinary office refused to change the animal protection regulations, despite numerous irregularities. But, the office says a working group would set up a list of exemptions and define sanctions. The regulations came into force in 1997, but a survey shows regional discrepancies in their implementation.



New CASH-Card for Switzerland

The Swiss are warming to plastic money in the form of a new cash-card, which can be charged and recharged with up to 300 francs. It can be used for small payments, like taxi fares, tram tickets, etc. and is supposed to replace all small cash transactions. The organisation of the Swiss national exhibition "Landi" in 2001 has decided that no cash as such will be accepted and all transactions will have to be done with the new cash-card.



The Old Man and His Mountain

Ulrich Inderbinen of Zermatt, Switzerland claims to be the oldest mountain guide alive in the world. He has recently celebrated his 98th birthday and remembers climbing the matterhorn for the last time eight years ago. During his working life, he has conquered 'his mountain' approximately 350 times, guiding people of many different nationalities

Science and Research
(Feb 1999)

Switzerland is among the top countries when it comes to science and research. More than nine billion francs, or nearly three per cent of Gross Product, went towards scientific projects in 1996. Only Japan spent more. Nearly one and a half per cent of the working population are involved in scientific research. Official figures show Switzerland has the highest number of applications for patents per capita.

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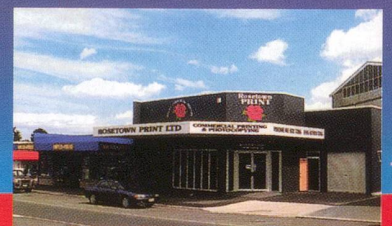
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