

Snippets from Switzerland...

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Past Events...

25 March: Outdoors Activities:
After some debating whether we should go for a walk in the nearby Tararua Forest Park, we decided to leave it for another day and make the most of our idyllic premises on this glorious autumn Sunday.

Heinz Jäggi, our expert entertainer, had plenty of games on his trailer and up his sleeve for the young and/or energetic. The less energetic soon had coffee and knitting and cards and even a game of chess going. Lunch was as informal as the rest of the day.

Hans Glauser organised the shooting for our eager and talented shooters of all ages.

Best results: Juniors
Cushla Glauser 69 points
Best results: Ladies
Marlene Rüegg 69 points
Best results: Men
Hans Glauser 76 points

Congratulations to all the winners - and all the competitors. How about getting an active group of shooters together?

Shooting can be practiced at the Wainuiomata shooting range on Monday and Wednesday evenings. Please contact our rifle master Hans Glauser (home 478 98 99, or work 478 74 55) if you are interested in improving your shooting skills.

Forthcoming Events..

Our club year ends with the **AGM on 21 April**. The Committee for the new club year will work on a new, exciting program. If you have ideas for new events, please let a committee member know. tb.



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Snippets from Switzerland...

Swiss Army expects 20 per cent of recruits to abandon military service

The Swiss army expects that the number of recruits who will abandon their military service in 2001 will be one in four compared to last year's one in five. The army estimates that 20 per cent of recruits will not finish their training in 2001, a figure the army wants to halve. The figures were revealed by the Swiss newspaper, Sonntagsblick, and confirmed by the spokesman for Swiss Army General, Felix Endrich.

Recruits who were deemed unfit for military service last year cost the armed forces an estimated SFr10 million, or a loss of 90,000 days of service. Over half of all recruits sent home consumed alcohol or drugs excessively, or were suffering from anxiety or insomnia.

Contrasting fortunes of Basel's drug giants

Two Basel-based companies, Novartis and Roche, have dominated the pharmaceutical sector - vital to the Swiss economy - for a number of years. But recently Novartis has clearly emerged as the company of choice among market analysts while the fortunes of its rival, Roche, have dipped.

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Papers and paintings draw visitors to Neuchatel culture centre

Cultural activities at the Dürrenmatt Centre in Neuchatel this year are to include at least one project which might have caused the late Friedrich Dürrenmatt to raise an eyebrow. On four separate occasions four writers will study the day's issue of the French-language Swiss newspaper *Le Temps*, and each will write a text based on one of its contents. "It might be a news report which inspires them, a photograph or even the weather forecast," says Eugène Meiltz, who is organising the exercise. That same evening the participants will read out their texts to an audience at the centre. "They are free to write whatever they like," added Meiltz, "and in any form they choose. For example it might be a short story or a poem."

Other planned activities are perhaps less unconventional, but wide-ranging. Seminars will be held on recurring themes in the written and painted works of Dürrenmatt – such as the Crucifixion, the Minotaur, the Tower of Babel, and the myth of money.

The third pillar in the programme for 2001 is a series of concerts of contemporary music.

Since it opened six months ago. The centre has averaged over 100 visits a day – far more than anticipated. Designed by architect Mario Botta, it incorporates the house overlooking Lake Neuchatel where Dürrenmatt lived for nearly 40 years.

Several towns on the shores of Lake Geneva will be celebrating the arrival of spring with flower festivals.

Morges will kick off the events with its annual Tulip Festival from April 7 to May 13.

Bern's Bellevue Hotel to get facelift

One of Bern's best-known landmarks, the prestigious Bellevue Palace Hotel, is set to close for a year of renovation work. Over the years, the hotel has become a significant political, social, and tourist institution.

Magnetism makes waves in Winterthur

A new exhibition at Winterthur's Technorama is exploring the magic of magnetism. Dozens of exhibits allow visitors to see magnetism at work and have hands-on experience of its remarkable qualities.

Switzerland not a land of cuckoo clocks for Graham Greene

Fans of Graham Greene are marking the tenth anniversary of the death in Switzerland of the acclaimed British author. His final resting place near Vevey is a far cry from the dangerous and exotic locations of his greatest works.

Scientists identify prion pathway

Swiss scientists have discovered how prions – the infectious agents believed to cause mad cow disease and its human equivalent, new variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease – reach the brain.

Key hole surgery for heart by-pass operations

The Zürich University Hospital is pioneering a new concept in heart by-pass operations.

The operating surgeon works in front of a monitor with the fingers of his hands fastened to so called 'finger loops'. Every minute movement of his fingers is translated by 'Telemanipulator' to the miniaturised operating instruments that have been inserted through key-hole incisions between muscle and the ribs of a patient. The size of these instruments is measured by millimeters and the videocamera, inserted together with the instruments, is just as small.

The 5-hour operation leaves only three tiny holes of one cm. They will heal much easier than the conventional opening of the chest that leaves a 30 cm wound. There is much less blood lost and the whole procedure is less traumatic on the patient.

The idea of robot-executed operations was developed in America as the military were looking for the means to direct units of soldiers in the battle zone from great distances. The Swiss surgeons first practiced on human cadavers, progressing on to pigs and sheep, then on to a plastic dummy with all human characteristics and finally to the real thing. - So far (17.4.2001) there have been eight such operations performed at the Zürich hospital. Surgeons hope that ultimately the operating robot will be perfected in order to operate on its own, making the 'guiding surgeon' on the 'Telemanipulator' superfluous.

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<h3>Wisdom...</h3> <p><i>Es verliert die schwerste Bürde die Hälfte ihres Druckes, wenn man von ihr reden kann.....</i></p> <p>The heaviest load on our mind will loose half of it's weight if we can talk about it...</p>
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The Rhine Falls and Tourism..

The authorities in northern Switzerland are making only limited progress in efforts to tap the tourist potential of the Rhine Falls. Up to two million people visit the falls every year, but they generate little income for the region.

"Wolfgang Goethe visited the water fall several times. He actually refused to describe the beauty because he found the falls so mighty. He said that there would be many attempts by many artists but they would all fail to describe its might." The German writer was overwhelmed by the sight of 700 cubic metres of water flowing over the limestone rocks lodged between high cliffs. Not so today. German and Swiss tourists use the falls as an excuse to hop out of their cars and stretch their legs on their way to alpine resorts or other tourist attractions in the region, with the added bonus of being able to say they've seen Europe's largest waterfall. Thomas Holenstein, an economic expert with the cantonal government of Schaffhausen, describes the typical visit: "About 60 per cent of visitors stay less than two hours and that's only long enough to buy a coffee or a postcard. About half of them don't spend any money at all. They only pollute the environment and use the infrastructure. That's our main problem." Holenstein heads a steering committee to find ways to convince visitors to stay longer and spend



more money. He wants to create interactive attractions, which he says will complement the natural spectacle as well as generate income. "Our goal is to show people the attraction of the Rhine Falls through the centuries. It was either a tourist draw or important for industrial development," Holenstein explains. "The power of water was on the one hand an element of fascination and on the other hand it attracted industry. Schaffhausen has the falls to thank for its economic development." The steering committee has proposed creating various multimedia simulations to explain the power of the falls, and to provide virtual rides over the cascade. Holenstein would also like to set up a simulation of a Faraday's Cage "for the visualisation of electricity" so visitors can experience a simulated lightning strike. "Hydroelectricity is no longer an attractive source of energy as it once was, but over the centuries, the Rhine Falls played an important role in tourism and industry in the region, particularly early industrialisation. We want to highlight these elements," he adds. Holenstein hopes the new attractions can be opened in 2004. He says the steering committee has settled most differences with environmental groups by agreeing to place the new attractions into existing buildings. However, he admits that investors have yet to be convinced of the economic feasibility of the

project, even though his committee is backed by the public and private sectors, including large Swiss firms, such as SIG and Alusuisse, based near the falls. Listening to the stories of guide Pellandini, it's easy to believe that investors could be put off by the fate of a foolhardy fisherman, whose ghost still haunts the falls today.

(A report from SRI -Swissinfo.org)

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