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# HELVE<sup>TI</sup>A

Magazine for the members of the Swiss Society of New Zealand Inc  
Helvetia is in its 75th year

October 2009

## Neuchâtel

The city of Neuchâtel, with approximately 33,000 inhabitants, is the capital of the canton with the same name. With 802sqkm, Neuchâtel is a medium sized canton, with a population of almost 170,000 inhabitants.

The city is located on the northwestern shore of the Lake of Neuchâtel. Above Neuchâtel, roads and train tracks rise steeply into the folds and ridges of the Jura range - known within the canton as the Montagnes

In 1011, Rudolf III of Burgundy presented a new castle (French: neu-châtel) on the lake-shore to his wife Irmengarde. The first counts of Neuchâtel were named shortly afterwards, and in 1214 their domain was officially dubbed a city. In 1530, the people of Neuchâtel accepted the Reformation, and their city and territory were proclaimed to be indivisible from then on. Future rulers were required to seek investiture from the citizens.

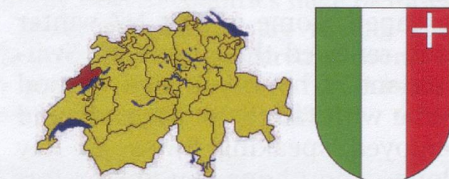


The city of Neuchâtel

Neuchâteloises. Like the continuation of the mountains to either side, this is wild and hilly country, not exactly mountainous compared with the high Alps further south but still characterized by remote, windswept settlements and deep, rugged valleys. It is also the heartland of the celebrated Swiss watchmaking industry, centred on the famous towns of La Chaux-de-Fonds and Le Locle, which both rely heavily on their horological past to draw in visitors.

The River Doubs marks the border with France, set down in a gorge and forming along its path an impressive waterfall, the Saut du Doubs, and lake, the Lac des Brenets.

With increasing power and prestige, Neuchâtel was raised to the level of a principality at the beginning of the seventeenth century. On the death in 1707 of Mary of Orléans, Duchess of Nemours and Princess of Neuchâtel, the people had to choose her successor from among fifteen claimants. They wanted their new prince first and foremost to be a Protestant, and also to be strong enough to protect their territory but based far enough away to leave them to their own devices. Louis XIV actively promoted the many French pretenders to the title but the Neuchâtelois people chose King Frederick I of Prussia. With the requisite stability assured, Neuchâtel entered its



golden age, with commerce and industry (including watchmaking and lace) and banking undergoing steady expansion.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, the King of Prussia was defeated by Napoleon I and was forced to give up Neuchâtel. After the fall of Napoleon, Frederick William III of Prussia reasserted his rights by proposing that Neuchâtel be linked with the other Swiss cantons (to exert influence over the lot of them). On September 12, 1814, Neuchâtel became the 21st canton, but also remained a Prussian principality. It took a bloodless revolution in the decades following for Neuchâtel to shake off its princely past and declare itself, in 1848, a republic within the Swiss Confederation.

*from the internet*

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