

Zeitschrift: Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand
Herausgeber: Swiss Society of New Zealand
Band: 67 (2001)
Heft: [10]

Artikel: Christmas Carols, their meaning, their history
Autor: [s.n.]
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-945148>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 11.01.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

Christmas Carols, their meaning, their history

Vocabulary: Carol, Hymn -The word "carol" originally referred to a dance being performed in a circle. Gradually words were introduced to these dance songs and the spectators became involved as well. Later, the term "carol" came to be applied more to verses of song than dance. Christmas Carols refer to those songs that tell the story of the wondrous event of our Saviour's birth. Christmas Hymns are those songs that address the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

JOY TO THE WORLD

This incredible hymn by Isaac Watts is only one of the many thousands of hymns and songs written by him. His start in hymn/song writing came about as a challenge made by his father in an attempt to stifle Isaac's teen-age complaining. What was this 15 year old boy complaining about? He was complaining about the poor quality of hymns that were sung in his church. He took on his father's challenge and his hymns were an instant success. Sunday after Sunday Isaac wrote and presented new hymns to the congregation. He was a preacher-poet and incredibly well loved by his congregation. At the age of 38 his declining health required him to leave the pastorate. He went for a "short" visit to stay with friends and left 38 years later! During that time, he devoted himself to writing hymns based on David's Psalms. "Joy to the World" came about as he meditated on Psalm 98.

HARK THE HERALD ANGELS SING

It's hard to get away from songs by Charles Wesley because he wrote so many of them! This one, however, has a really interesting history. First, it is important to realize that Christmas carols and hymns as we know them now were abolished by the English Puritan parliament in 1627 as being part of a "worldly festival". The Puritans considered Christmas to be a secular celebration. (Can you imagine what they would think of it today!) HARK THE HERALD ANGELS SING was one of the few written during the 17th and early 18th centuries. In Wesley's original text, the first line read "HARK! how all the welkin rings, glory to the King of Kings." Welkin is an old English word meaning "vault of heaven". The famous Reverend George Whitfield changed the first line to the one we now sing today. That final change was made in 1753. The music was composed by a Messianic Jew named Felix Mendelssohn. Originally composed in 1840 to celebrate the anniversary of Gutenberg's printing press, it wasn't until 1855 that the tune and Wesley's poem were put together.


Albergo Hanmer *Bed & Breakfast*
 Rippingale Road • Hanmer Springs • North Canterbury

*We look forward to treating you!
 Specialising in Swiss brunch-style breakfasts, we
 are passionate about our cuisine - try us out!*

Bascha & Beat Blattner
 Booking FreePhone: 0800 342 313
 Ph/Fax: 03 315 7428
 e-mail: albergohanmer@hotmail.com
 www: albergohanmer.com

Only 90 Min drive north of Christchurch Intl. Airport!

True hospitality without compromise



**NEW HORIZON
 COLLEGE OF ENGLISH**

Owned and Operated by New Horizon College Limited

Saletti zame!!

**English Language
 in Napier**

Do you have friends or relations in Switzerland who would like to learn ENGLISH in the "Art Deco Capital of the World", Napier, New Zealand?

Contact me at
New Horizon College of English
 for details about our courses.


Christine Schmidli
 Phone: 06-835-6423
 06-TEL-NHCE
 Fax: 06-835-6523
 Email: english.newhorizon@clear.net.nz
 www.nhce.ac.nz

*Very competitive rates.
 Excellent quality programmes.
 Wonderful modern campus.*

**YOUR SWISS
 BAKERY,
 PATISSERIE
 & Café**

EVELINE & FRANZ
 Müller

PH. 09 489 9737



5 Milford Road, Milford, Auckland.

* Bündner Nusstorte * Zuger Kirschtorte
 * Hauskonfekt * Biberli * Urner Leckerli

Orders taken for all your special occasions

Hours: Monday & Tuesday 8.00 - 15.00
 Wednesday to Friday 8.00 - 16.30
 Saturday 8.00 - 14.30 Sunday closed.