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Editorial

I suppose it is only natural that this time of year our thoughts tend to wander back to the 'old country' more than any other time. With the rapid approach of Switzerland's National Day, our Swiss Clubs are all busily preparing functions to celebrate Switzerland's birthday on the first day of August 1291AD. Although this is the official National Day, all we know for sure is that some time in the late summer of that year a small group of 'people leaders' from the three 'forest districts of Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden', as they were known in those days, came together at a top-secret meeting in the 'field of Ruetli' to discuss ways and means of ridding their people of the oppressive rule by the Habsburg-Austrian Empire.

By the end of that meeting, the fate of those regional governors, who ruled so cruelly on

behalf of the empire, was sealed by 'the Oath of Ruetli', made by all the patriots for and, to each other, all those centuries ago! And the rest, as the saying goes, is Swiss history!

So, as I said, our thoughts at this time are very much on 'Swiss' things and Switzerland itself. And for those of us who were born there, most still have some close relations living there, so our thoughts are visualising them enjoying beautiful summer weather, tramping the forest or climbing the mountains or, at my age, just taking a leisurely steamer trip around one of the many beautiful lakes!

But it is not only us Swiss-born Kiwis who are interested in Swiss culture and history. I am delighted to note in recent years, many first and second generation NZ-born Swiss-Kiwis taking a keen interest

in all things 'Swiss' and taking a lively part in their local Swiss Club activities!

This can only bode well for the future of our Swiss Clubs and hence our Society as well! I can only say to all our members, give all possible encouragement to your children and grandchildren to be proud of the Swiss part of their heritage. Encourage them to take part in their nearest Swiss Club's activities as much as is possible for them and tell them a bit about Swiss history and above all, about your families' ancestry, which town they are from, which Canton, etc. It is an inescapable fact that some of us 'oldies' will not be around many more years, so we had better tell our children these things soon!!!

So, let us all be proud of our Swiss heritage by doing our best to keep our Swiss Clubs going, to keep our Swiss Society of NZ going, to always try to give a fair day's work for a fair day's pay, which is a well-known trait of the Swiss people, to which all should always try their best to live up to! This too, is part of our heritage, developed by our ancestors over many centuries because mountainous Switzerland did not make it easy for her country people to produce a bit more food than the families' needs, as the farmers, even centuries ago, had to trade food with townspeople to buy things the farmers could not make themselves!!!

So, on the eve of Switzerland's National Day, let us reflect on her turbulent first 500 years of existence and wish her peace for the next 500 years!!!

A very happy 713th Birthday to you, Switzerland!!!

Cheerio, Paul

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