

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

Herausgeber: Swiss Society of New Zealand

Band: 72 (2006)

Heft: [6]

Vorwort: Editorial

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Editorial

Well now, we have another AGM of the Swiss Society of New Zealand behind us and I feel it was a good and successful meeting. For most of us it was also the first chance to meet our new Ambassador from Switzerland and we sincerely hope the Nobs Family all enjoyed their visit to Taranaki and meeting the many Swiss kiwis who have made their home in Aotearoa, some Families already for five and even six generations! I also hope all our members who came to the meeting all got home again safely.

I will leave further details regarding the AGM in Marianne's and Silvias' capable hands, it's more their territory! I'm just sure we all had a 'good time' over that weekend, I know I did! I guess Swiss kiwis are a fairly 'lustige Bande' when we get together --, none more so than the 'Taranaki Mob'!!! You know the old English saying, 'Absence makes the heart grow fonder' well; maybe, it is also true that 'distance makes the heart grow fonder'!!! The further away from our ancestral Homelands we live, the fonder we are to keep and cherish our individual nationalistic cultural traits!

From my observations this applies to the English, Scots, Irish, Dutch, Scandinavians and many more, just as much as the Swiss! We all have our own little cultures and important festival days on which we love to get together for a really good 'shindig'!!! So, as one cannot go to a country further away from Europe than New Zealand, (unless one chooses to live in Antarctica!!), it is no wonder that our European-kiwis are the keenest in the World to keep their ancestral cultures alive and well!

And so we should!! After all, if we 'oldies', and yes, pardon, many of us not so old!! -- if we do not teach our children and grandchildren our individual national cultures and heritage and our ancestral history, all this knowledge and historical information, especially on individual Families, would be forgotten within two generations by all except the most ardent Students of History! And this would be a crying shame as well as a very sad event!

I myself had a very interesting and delightful experience in this field about eighteen months ago. A young Swiss tourist arrived at my house and introduced himself, 'Gruezi, my

name is Tobias Burch and I believe I'm a distant relative to you.' After quick refreshments, we started talking and he gave me a sheet of paper showing the Family trees of both our Families on the Amstalden side right back to my grandfather's great-grandfather, one Johannes Amstalden, who married in 1795. It turned out I was a fourth cousin to Tobias' mother. Her mother, who is still alive and 90 years of age, was an Amstalden, a third cousin to my late father.

You can imagine how enormously interesting all this information was for me. It seems a cousin of Tobias' mother is researching all this for a Family Tree he wants to produce; I'm hoping to be able to get hold of a copy when it's completed. Unfortunately I knew very little about my Paternal Family history up to about twenty years ago, when my Father had already died. He himself left his Home Canton, Obwalden, as a teenager in 1913 and never returned to live there. His last thirteen years in Switzerland he lived and worked in my Mothers' hometown, from where he immigrated to New Zealand in 1939. So I think he himself knew little family history past his own Parents! This may sound sad but he seemed to be happy with the way things were. I think his generation was not quite as overly interested in family histories as the younger generations who followed!

So, I'm sure most of us can agree how important it is for us to record and pass on Family histories, well, at least the good parts!!! Our descendants will thank us for it long after we have departed from this life!

Cheerio for now, Paul



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