

Zeitschrift: Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand
Herausgeber: Swiss Society of New Zealand
Band: 74 (2008)
Heft: [2]

Artikel: Of knights and ruins
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-943616>

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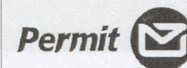
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HELVEZIA

Magazine for Members of the Swiss Society of New Zealand Inc

NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND

Of knights and ruins

Did you ever wonder what might have happened to all the knights whose castles are in ruins all over Switzerland? I remember quite a few Schulreisen to a ruin that stimulated our imagination. Ruins are romantic and ideal to play hide and seek – to the chagrin of the teachers who are haunted by their imagination of all that could happen to their students. But then: Why did they choose a ruin as the destination of the Schulreise? I guess they couldn't resist the romantic attraction either.

We all love to see ourselves as valiant knights or languishing ladies – though chances are we'd much rather have been a peasant, little more than a slave, at the mercy of every whim of our master,

living in a damp hut with a dirt floor and a leaky thatched roof.

Well, what happened to the knights? Sitting on my shady terrace on a warm summer afternoon, sipping a nice cup of coffee, I was enchanted by my trusty history book – and found the answer:

Some knights went to the court of the great kings and powerful dukes and were rarely ever home. - Some became robber knights, brigands – maybe a glamorous life? I doubt it; the upright citizens of the area used to put an end to that glory pretty swiftly. - And some sold their property to the next city and became or-

inary, if noble, citizens of that city. And so the castles were abandoned and decayed and now only serve the purpose of being nostalgic Schulreise destinations. *tb*



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