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# HELVETIA

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

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## Solothurn

The canton of Solothurn is located in the north west of Switzerland. To the west and south lies the canton of Bern, to the east the one of Aargau. To the north the canton is bound by the

became a Roman stronghold (castrum) under the name of Salodurum. Its strategical importance lay in the position at the approach to the Rhine from southeast.



The city of Solothurn with the St Ursus Church on the left

canton of Baselland. Two of the districts are enclaves and are located along the French border.

The lands are drained by the Aare river and its tributaries. The southern part of the canton, the Aare valley and the foothills of the Jura massif, are more densely populated than the rest.

The total area of the canton is 791 km<sup>2</sup>. Does anybody know the length of the cantonal border? All I know is that it is a very long border, as the canton of Solothurn is, like Switzerland, not a geographical, but rather a historical entity, which led to the canton's "somewhat irregular shape", as a textbook calls it, which is a bit of an understatement.

An old Celtic settlement was renewed around AD 14-37 by the Roman emperor Claudius and

In the Middle Ages the settlement grew around the remains of the Roman fortress and the religious house of St. Ursen, dedicated to Ursus of Solothurn, founded in the 8th century. In 1127, it was acquired by the dukes of Zähringen, and became a free imperial city (freie Reichsstadt) in 1218 when that dynasty ended. It was admitted to the Swiss Confederation in 1481. Until 1797, Solothurn was the residence of the French ambassadors to the Swiss diet (Tagsatzung) and a center of cultural life. The town retains much of its historic character. It has old fortifications, a 13th-century clock tower, a 15th-century town hall, and the 18th-century Cathedral of St. Ursus and St. Victor, the see of the bishop of Basel and Lugano.

Up to the 19th century agricul-

ture was the main economic activity in the canton. Agriculture is still of importance, but manufacturing and the service industry are now more significant. The industries of the canton are specialized in watches, jewellery, textiles, paper and cement. Until recently the manufacturing of shoes was an important economic activity, but global competition meant that Switzerland was not competitive enough.

There is a nuclear power plant near Gösgen which started operation in 1979.

The canton is well connected to other parts of Switzerland, both by rail and road. There is a railway junction at Olten with direct trains to Geneva, Zurich, Basel and the Ticino via Lucerne.

*Wikipedia,  
Columbia Encyclopedia and tb*

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