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HELVETIA

MAGAZINE OF THE SWISS SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND



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HIGHLIGHTS:

- **Abbey of St. Gall**
- **Meet the Böögg at the Sechseläuten**
- **Announcing Swiss Society AGM and Games in Taranaki**

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St. Gallen and its Irish heritage

The City of St. Gallen finds its origin in the deeds of the Irish monk Gallus, who, around 589 AD, set out from Bangor in Wales with his teacher Columbanus and eleven other disciples to bring Christianity to Europe.

Following the fall of the Roman Empire around 450 AD, Central Europe and England were occupied by "Barbarians" - comprising a variety of tribes - and soon descended into the Dark Ages. Ireland alone in the north managed to survive largely unaffected and preserve its Celtic traditions and fledgling Christian beliefs.

The Chronicle of Ireland records that in 431 AD, Pope Celestine I sent Bishop Palladius on a mission to Ireland. Together with Saint Patrick, Ireland's best known patron saint, Palladius built the foundation for a strong Irish Christian culture, resulting in the collapse of the older druid tradition. In the monastic culture that followed, important Latin and Greek learning was able to be preserved during the Early Middle Ages. In particular, the arts of manuscript illumination, metalworking and sculpture flourished. Irish monasteries became sanctuaries for many great scholars from the continent and centres of learning excellence.

The Irish monk Columbanus was one of the great missionaries to spread Christianity through Europe. He set out from Bangor Abbey in Wales around 582 with twelve disciples, including the Irish monk Gallus (550 – 646). Gallus however fell ill during his travels and Columbanus left him behind in the vicinity of Lake Constance. In search of a suitable place for a hermit cell, he walked up the valley of the River Steinach, until he fell into a bush of thorns in the Mülenenschlucht in 612. He took that and his close encounter with a bear to be signs sent to him by God and decided to build his hermitage here. Soon, he achieved fame through his powerful preaching.

One hundred years later, on a site just south of Gallus' original hermitage, an abbey was built which was to emerge as the "writing room of Europe" in the Middle Ages and one of the most important cultural centres of the Occident: The Abbey of St. Gall. The town that gradually grew up around that abbey is St. Gallen. Gallus' legacy thus lives on in the Abbey of St. Gall, which was given UNESCO World Heritage status in 1983.

Sources: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Gall, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abbey_of_St_Gall, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Columbanus>



The Abbey of St Gall and its old precinct, with views south over the Appenzell Alps, including the Säntis mountain
www.st.gallen-bodensee.ch