

Zeitschrift: Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand
Herausgeber: Swiss Society of New Zealand
Band: 80 (2014)
Heft: [1]

Vorwort: From the editor
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From the Editor/President

Dear Helvetia Readers

A very happy New Year to you all! I trust you had enjoyable celebrations and a relaxing break, even if the weather has not quite performed...yet. Thankfully, we have another few weeks of summer, during which we can hopefully have a few swims!

Watching the troubled world around us over the holiday season once again highlighted how blessed we are in New Zealand, our little arc at the bottom of the world. Living in a well established democracy and benefiting from related freedoms really is a privilege. But for many countries, it comes at a high price. It seems that the path to democracy requires each society and its people to go through a process that cannot be cut short, in many cases taking decades if not centuries, and much suffering. Examples of existing democracies and libraries full of books on the subject do not seem to make a difference. Switzerland without doubt is a highly evolved democracy, and our Ambassador's article on federalism serves to highlight this issue.

Monte San Giorgio, the central theme of this issue, has been a great surprise. A dinosaur heaven of international significance in Switzerland! I am ashamed to say I knew nothing about it until this Helvetia issue. Luckily enough, we are able to publish a first-hand account on excavating dinosaurs on Monte San Giorgio by one of our Auckland club members, Lukas Lanz. Fascinating.

Basler Fasnacht! You may not know that your Editor is a "native" from Basel and of course a great carnival fan. Therefore, to cover it brings back many memories: As a child, creating "Larve" (masks) from old shoeboxes, with toilet roll inners for noses. Then, as a young women, being lured with Mimöslis (flowers) and stuffed with sacks of confetti by a "Waggis", shedding confetti for days to come! Feeling the hair on my back stand up on the first sound of the piccolos and drums at the Morgestraich. Sitting in the restaurants after with friends, slurping Mehlsuppe (flour soup)...what a treat.

Wishing you a very enjoyable summer,

Word from the President

The Christmas tree has been stored away again but I still keep finding the odd pine needle in the carpet that reminds me of the festive season - it seems almost a distant memory now. I hope that you and your family had a wonderful time and a very good start into the New Year.

Thank you very much for all the great feedback and lovely comments about our 80th anniversary Edition of the Helvetia magazine. It was fun producing such a special issue and knowing that you enjoyed it, too, made it worth the effort.

During this year, we will continue to add a few snippets of old issues to celebrate the 80 years of our special Swiss magazine. If you would like to contribute something, please get in touch with me, I'd love to hear from you.

For all those Swiss/Kiwi composers out there, this year brings a special challenge for you! You now have the chance to enter a competition with your own new Swiss National Anthem – just imagine! You can read all about it on page 7. Talking about those X-Factor style shows, congratulations to Kurt Mueller from Wellington – our Swiss Harmonica Hero – who made it to the semi finals of 'New Zealand got Talent'. Well done, it made me proud to see a fellow Swiss on National TV!

On behalf of the Swiss Society of New Zealand I wish you all a wonderful, memorable, happy and healthy New Year.

Tschüssli,

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