

Zeitschrift: Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand
Herausgeber: Swiss Society of New Zealand
Band: 83 (2017)
Heft: [3]

Rubrik: Swiss inventions

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 22.02.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

Swiss Inventions

Fondue-e TUK TUK

There is always something new to enjoy when one returns to Zürich.



The world's first fondue tuk-tuk in Zürich makes for a city tour with a cheesy twist and plenty of white wine.

Auto rickshaws have been navigating Zurich's streets since 2011, they recently became a lot cheesier. Thomas Matter's Fondue-e TukTuk combines electric tuk-tuk city tours with Walliser Keller fondue. Where else in the world would you find the first fondue tuk-tuk but Switzerland? Expect to settle down around the caquelon (fondue pot) as your guide whizzes you up and down Niederdorf, across Quaibrücke and along the glamorous window displays in Bahnhofstrasse.

A nice touch is the cover on the vehicles that provides privacy from curious passers-by – who tend to look on, amused. The cover provides shelter too, while blankets add welcome warmth. It's nothing short of a bizarre experience, but it makes for a good night out with friends. The tuk-tuks have space for up to four people, and a bottle of white wine and digestive are included on every 90-minute tour.

Try it next time you are in Zürich.

How a Swiss invention hooked the world

Georges de Mestral, a Swiss engineer born 100 years ago, might not be a name around your house, but it's highly likely that one of his inventions is. The hook-and-loop fastener, was the result of an alpine walk, a dog, some burdock and a pinch of Swiss genius. De Mestral was born in 1907 in the castle of Saint-Saphorin-sur-Morges, the family estate in the wine region of Lake Geneva near Lausanne.

As a boy, de Mestral showed an inventive mind – receiving his first patent, for a type of model plane, aged 12. He later graduated from the Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne as an electrical engineer.

It was in 1941 that de Mestral had his eureka moment. Walking his dog in the woods, he spotted that his woollen socks and jacket and his dog's fur were covered with burrs - small seeds or dry fruits found in many types of plant including thistles and, in this case, burdock.

Back home, de Mestral slipped a few burrs under a microscope and saw that their barbed, hook-like seeds meshed with the looped fibres in his clothes.

He realised that this gripping device was more reliable than zips, which frequently jammed, and he saw the possibility of binding two materials reversibly in an equally simple fashion.

Few people took this idea seriously – several openly laughed at it – but with help from a weaver at a textile plant in Lyon and a loom-maker in Basel, de Mestral perfected his "hook-and-loop fastener".

By trial and error, de Mestral discovered that nylon, when sewn under infrared light, formed tough hooks for the burr side of the fastener. However, the logistics of weaving 300 hooks and loops per square inch to cloth tape meant slow progress, and mechanising the production process was another hurdle.

Finally, in 1955, the hook-and-loop fastener was patented, and de Mestral started a company, Velcro Industries, to market his invention under the brand name "VELCRO", an invented word that comes from the French words "velours" (velvet) and "crochet" (hook).

He eventually sold the company and



Velcro seed



worldwide patent rights to Velcro SA, which later became the Velcro Companies.

VELCRO® Brand fasteners were not an instant hit because people didn't know what do with it. Eventually clothing manufacturers caught on and then NASA. Looking for ways to keep things from flying around in zero gravity the NASA team discovered the fastening system and used it in its space missions.

Swiss Inventions

VELCRO® Brand fasteners are safe, easy-to-use and maintenance-free. They have been used for just about every conceivable application where a temporary bond is required. It is especially popular in clothing for children or disabled adults, where it replaces buttons, zips or laces. They are used in office equipment, sporting and leisure equipment, luggage, aircraft, the armed forces and for medical care – hook and loop even helped hold the first artificial heart together.

After the success of the VELCRO® Brand hook and loop de Mestral got involved in promoting other people's inventions, helping several young inventors obtain patents.

Key facts

Georges de Mistral was born in Nyon, canton Vaud on June 19, 1907. He attended the Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne. In 1955 he patented hook and loop fasteners, and marketed his invention under the brand name VELCRO®.

He died in Nyon on February 8, 1990.

Neeson Kripps Academy

Velcro Companies believe that everyone deserves the foundational elements of education and since 2011, Velcro Companies has supported the Cambodian Children's Fund (CCF), which provides education, food, family support and community development programs in the heart of Cambodia's most impoverished areas.

Today, there are more than 2,300 students enrolled in CCF's education program.

Together, Velcro Companies and CCF have constructed a state-of-the-art school, the Neeson Cripps Academy, where children receive high-quality education focused on science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) topics. It also provides much-needed teacher training, giving adults viable careers and opportunities.

Velcro Companies donated the construction of the school, which is named after Robert Cripps, a former chairman of the company, and Scott Neeson, the founder and executive director of CCF. They also provide in-kind and financial support to further the CCF's mission of caring for the most in-need children – and families – in Cambodia helping the CCF establish the food program to nourish hundreds of students and their families annually.

<http://www.velcro.com/about-us/corporate-social-responsibility/social-responsibility> www.swissinfo.ch

Editor's note: Our daughter Desiree worked as a PA to Scott Neeson (CCF) for 2 years and we have visited her and seen for ourselves what a huge undertaking and phenomenally well organized group that CCF is, especially when you consider that in 2004 its aim was to give a hand up to 45 children and their extended family and now it gives a hand up to 2300 children and their extended families!!! The rubbish dump where this all began has been closed and the Neeson Cripps Academy is now complete and opened February 2017.

Charity Navigator, America's largest independent charity evaluator, rates CCF's handling and accountability and transparency for its funds at 100%.



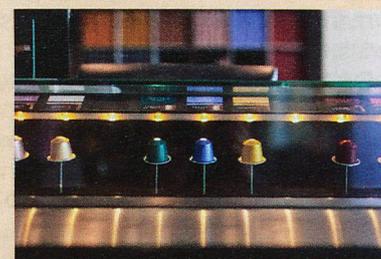
Menzi Muck Bagger

Since 1966 has been producing all-purpose excavators that can handle all sorts of terrain.



Logitech

Already in 1968, there was an American prototype for the computer mouse. But it was Logitech, based in canton Vaud, who brought it to the world wide market.



Nespresso

Nestle patented its Nespresso coffee capsule system in 1976. When the capsules went on the market ten years later they were a flop; but perseverance paid off and by 2010 they were selling 4.8 billion!!!!



Stewi cloth dryer

The Stewi clothes dryer, a swiss version of the rotary clothes hoist became a must-have in the post war years when it was commercialised by Walter Steiner in 1947.

Swiss Club News



Past events

5th March: Jassen

We played cards at the clubhouse, with reinforcement from Auckland; thank you, Edith! And thank you also for your help in tidying up the breakfast.

25th March: Garage Sale

Again our Garage Sale was very successful, thanks to the many contributions of good saleable items; a special thank you to Hans Scherrer. Like in all previous years, Heinz Jäggi and his crew, Peter Hynes and Ivan Rooda, had spent the night at the clubhouse, getting all the goods ready and having a good time in good company, too. Dealers and some seasoned customers arrived well before the official opening. We had a busy morning but managed to take turns having cups of coffee.

2 April: Jassen

We had one table with four and one

table with three players. This time the three played Bütter with the correct rules - though the incorrect rules on an earlier Sunday were sort of fun, too: Have you ever tried to play Bütter with Unenufe and Obenabe?

9 April: Easter eggs tinting

As every year we gathered to color Easter eggs with onion peels, the traditional Swiss way. It was mainly the usual same families, but we welcome newcomers or visitors. This is a low key events, free of charge, where everybody brings their own material, although our organiser Petra is always happy to help supply whatever one may not have remembered they may need. Petra has now found out her ideal mixture to create a warm shade of brown that made the eggs really beautiful (well, hers at least were great... I have the feeling my family needs to work on their decoration skills for next year!)

30 April: AGM

Twenty members gathered for our annual general meeting. The Swiss wine, Kirsch and the baking certainly were part of the incentive!

We held a minute of silence to acknowledge the passing of two key club members over the past year: Theres Scherrer and Andre Schleicher. We also remembered the unexpected passing of Thomas, our Austrian friend, with emotion.

The president thanked many club members (many of them present that day), committee members, and friends of the club for their help organising events throughout the year.

Noted:

- membership fee stays unchanged at \$60 per single member and \$85 per family.
- Olli, Marc and Jeanine left the committee. We thank them for their contribution over the year.
- we elected two new committee members: Oscar Gamper and Steven Bridewell.
- Roland, Odile, Bernie and Peter were re-elected as president, secretary, treasurer and committee member.

Forthcoming events

Jassen

7th May will be Cards. In June, July and August the card players will have to do without me, as I am - have a guess where. See you in September! Trudi

Other upcoming events:

We are now making the calendar for the coming 12 months.

Be sure that we will have a bonfire on 1st August and a dinner on the closest Saturday.

The Hang Instrument

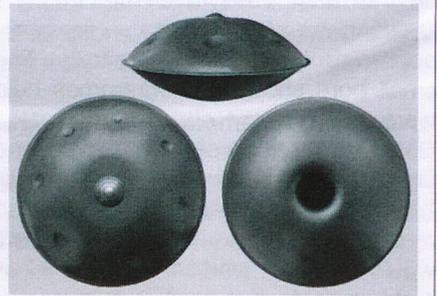
- another swiss invention.

The *Hang* is a musical instrument in the idiophone class created by Felix Rohner and Sabina Schärer in Bern, Switzerland. The name of their company is PANArt Hangbau AG. The Hang is sometimes referred to as a hang drum, but the inventors consider this a misnomer and strongly discourage its use.

The instrument is constructed from two half-shells of deep drawn, nitrided steel sheet glued together at the rim leaving the inside hollow and creating a distinct 'UFO shape'. The top ("Ding") side has a center 'note' hammered into it and seven or eight 'tone fields' hammered around the center. The bottom ("Gu") is a plain surface that has a rolled hole in the center with a tuned note that can be created when the rim is struck.

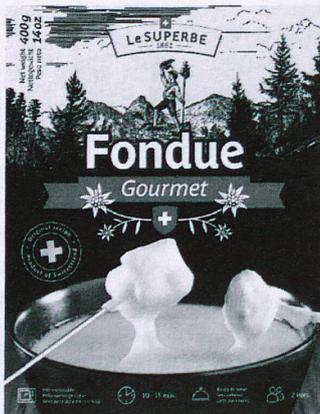
The *Hang* uses some of the same basic physical principles as a steelpan, but modified in such a way as to act as a Helmholtz resonator. The name *Hang* comes from the Bernese German word for hand. It is a registered trademark and property of PANArt Hangbau AG.

wikipedia

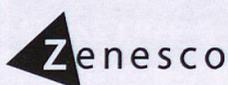


LE SUPERBE GOURMET SWISS CHEESE FONDUE

Made in Switzerland from real Swiss Cheese



Buy online now at www.zenescoco.nz/Shop
Free shipping NZ-wide



Zenescoco Limited
09 475 6540
info@zenescoco.co.nz
www.zenescoco.co.nz

Buy it once
Buy it right

Looking for superb quality european tools and products?
We import and sell tools and products for builders, roofers and many more.

REES STUBAI
LONG PLUS LIFE+ RECTO VERSO nedo
WUKO

see our whole sortiment on www.fribesco.co.nz

FRIBESCO quality european tools