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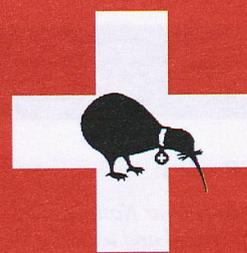
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Our Swiss Flag

Once again our National Day celebrations have arrived and today we look into the rich history of our Swiss Flag.

The characteristic white cross and the red background of Switzerland's flag have their origin in late middle ages. Until 1648, Switzerland was still part of the German Empire. The member states of the Old Swiss Confederacy did not try to build a nation, they just wanted to get rid of the counts of Habsburg that had tried to strengthen their influence. In the 13th century, the German emperor carried with him a flag with the cross as a holy sign, understanding himself as a protector of Christianity. Besides, he also carried a blood-red flag as a sign of his power over life and death. Occasionally, he granted the right to carry such flags as a special honour to single cities or regions. (The Dukes of Savoy and the City of Vienna bear a white cross on red ground on their coat of arms. The Scandinavian countries and Great Britain as well have a cross on their flags.) Often the right to bear a cross on one's coat of arms and on a flag was granted together with other privileges, like direct immediacy [direct subordination under the emperor's jurisdiction without jurisdiction of counts].

Old Swiss Confederacy, and the one, whose name was later in history used to denote the confederacy as a whole, was granted immediacy in 1240 and carried a red flag from the middle of the 13th century on (yet still without the white cross). In 1289 they supported King Rudolf of Habsburg in a war against Burgundy and received as a recognition the right to represent the crucifixion of Christ and the tools used to torture him in the upper right field on their flag. Originally they painted this symbol on parchment and fastened it on the banner. Only later the cross symbol was painted directly on the banner.

The larger the old confederacy became, the more they had a problem with inconsistently clothed troops that were hardly able to recognize their allies on the battlefield. In descriptions of the battle of Laupen (1339), white stripes forming crosses are mentioned for the first time as a joint recognition sign of confederate troops. The white stripes were fastened on the soldier's breast, back, shoulders, arms, leg, hats or weapons. In the middle of the 15th century, the white cross was integrated into the flags of the member states of the confederacy. Originally, the cross reached to the edge of the banner also in Switzerland, like in the Scandinavian flags.

What can be more ceremonial than the Swiss custom of flag throwing? Since 1910, flag throwing has been promoted by the Swiss Yodelling Association and rules introduced. In 1935, 55 flag throwers performed before a selection committee

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Word from President and Editor

Dear Readers,

Once again our National Day is about to be celebrated and us Swiss in New Zealand renew our relationship with our Swiss Heritage whether it be, as the Ambassador states, with our clubs, our families here in New Zealand or a trip home to our roots in Switzerland.

In this issue we also revisit the history of our flag, touch on some other traditions such as Swiss National Costume: "The Tracht", the history and making of an Alphorn and then move to read about our making headlines in the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung"!!!

Peter Ehrler reports back on OSA, AIA and AHV; all topics of interest to many of us at the moment.

The Embassy brings us news of educational opportunities, Swiss citizenship rule changes and future visits of mobile passport stations.

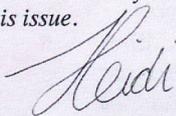
Our Lifestory section presents another couple's interesting life that straddles New Zealand and Switzerland and once again affirms that these moves between different countries did not always go smoothly and "langzüt" characterised for many the first tumultuous years as they grappled with work, language, food, accommodation and transport.

Beatrice Luenberger's continued translations of our "Swiss Tunnels" series reminds us that not only is Swiss Cheese full of holes but so, it seems, is Switzerland itself!!!

Many of you know that the Brig Yodel Fest has just been held and I take this opportunity to let you know that my brother Peter Arnold once again gained top marks for his solo yodel composition "Echo von Fern" and also came up trumps with his duet presentation.

Thanks to the dedication of the Helvetia Team we have the first year behind us and I am proud of what we have achieved!!! A magazine is nothing without its readers, so to you too, I extend thanks for your participation and leave you now to enjoy reading this issue.

Regards



Dear Friends

Another two months have passed and it's my pleasure and duty to add a few words to the new Helvetia!

Just looking at the last edition, there are two things that stuck with me. I found the front page interesting and surprising, as I had no idea of this celebration. The other thing that sprung to mind is the great story of another Swiss family that settled all those years back in the Waikato. I think the time has come where we would love to have a story of a Swiss immigrant from a different corner of New Zealand. Well, let me know if you have anyone in mind.

I was involved in a lot of activity with the Swiss community over the past 2 months. In May I took the Hamilton contingent to the annual 300 meter shooting competition in Auckland. It's always a nice, relaxing weekend and if anyone out there would like to join us let me know and I will try and include you in this weekend event next time round.

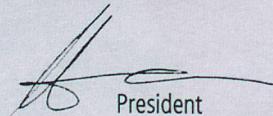
Soon after this we had the cowbell semi final and of course the final at the AGM with Hamilton taking the title with the narrowest of margins. I think the sport events are still very popular at a club base but when it comes to semi final and final competitions, the out of town club always struggles to get a representative team together and this time was no different. Maybe it's time for us to rethink the method of awarding the cowbell winner. With this, I am putting another challenge out there for you to express your views on it. Let's get the emails rolling in!!

For me there were a few other events of importance that happened during the last two months. For the last two years I have been involved in building new premises for our chocolate factory and I am very relieved that the factory is finally fully operational. The brand new plant and building is working well. This really has been an exciting and involved project. This is going to be my swansong and I will leave official employment with the company I have run for 23 years at the end of July. Don't worry; I still have a finger in the pie, or in the chocolate trough, I should say!!

It's exciting to see the Americas Cup coming back to NZ. I don't think it matters whether you are a yachting fan or not, having the cup here will generate so much positive activity that, I believe, we will all benefit one way or the other from it. Then we have the Lions tour, amazing followings from overseas on this. I know by the time you will see the report it will be over but right now, I am still eager to see the final test match next Saturday.

Well it's time to close off, I have to get up in the morning and follow the Tour de France, then go to work for a few hours and afterwards jump on the bike for my own "Tour de Hamilton" to shake my cold off! There is never a dull moment around here.

I hope you are all well
Till next time



President

continued from front page

and by 1964 there were already 675 flag throwers. At the Swiss Yodelling Festival in 2005 in Aarau each three-minute programme was assessed. There is no Swiss champion for flag throwing, as the respective winners are chosen from four categories of points. The judges are appointed from among Switzerland's finest flag throwers and instructed by the foreman in accordance with specified guidelines. Honorific titles such as Swiss champion, flag throwing king or even Olympic flag wavers are rejected.

