

Zeitschrift: Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand
Herausgeber: Swiss Society of New Zealand
Band: 86 (2020)
Heft: [1]

Artikel: Proud young Swiss man
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-943890>

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Chalamandarz Continued from frontpage



Attempts have been made to connect the origins of Chalamandarz to the Romans. A correlation between the term "Chalanda" and "calendae" is presumed (the Roman term for the first day in the month). March was the first month of the ancient Roman year until approximately 153 BC. Written sources though trace Chalamandarz as a continuing festival only back to the early 19th century.

Whatever the case, Chalamandarz has been celebrated since then to expel the evil spirits of winter. At some point, the village council was sworn in on that day too, which is still observed in Ardez and Sent.

Thanks to the book "Schellenursli", Chalamandarz is known far beyond the national border. In the story - written by Selina Chönz and illustrated by Alois Carigiet - the small boy Ursli is teased by his classmates, because he only wears a small bell. He goes on a search for a large cow bell, and when he does not return by nightfall, parents and the residents of Guarda look in vain for him. He returns in the morning with the biggest bell of them all and now he is allowed to lead the parade.

Even though segments of Chalamandarz are the same throughout the valleys, the festival is celebrated quite differently in each village.

Guarda: The original "Schellenursli village" celebrates on two days. Only boys can participate in the bell-shaking parade from fountain to fountain throughout the village. On March 1st,

boys and girls visit the houses of Guarda and surrounding hamlets;

Zuoz and Madulain: In addition to the bell-shaking, boys also crack their whip. The event starts two days before March 1st. Older boys start wandering from house to house at 4am and call the younger boys (wearing smaller bells) to join the parade. The large parade starts at 7am March 1st and the event ends at the village square with whip cracking;

Sent: Last day in February. Standing next to a snowman on a pedestal, the outgoing Mayor holds his "s-chüsa" - a speech where he apologises for his follies, and the new mayor holds his opening speech, whereupon the children behead the snowman. The parade leads through all neighbouring hamlets. The girls are fully integrated in the whole occasion. The students' choir is conducted alternatively by the oldest girl and the oldest boy. The youngest children are dressed as gnomes;

Castasegna (Val Bregaglia): The two oldest boys lead the parade with flags. Noise instruments include also goat horn and drum. The Shepherd and a young calf follow behind a cart with the butter churn. Girls are fully integrated into the parade. Lunch with chestnut and whipped cream. Theater in the evening;

Poschiavo (Val Poschiavo): Traditional parade through the village and over the fields "to call the grass" (chiamano l'erba) and wake up nature. Burning of a snowman made of wood and straw, as a symbol for "burning winter away."

www.swissvistas.com/chalamandarz.html



Proud Young Swiss Man



Mangorei School Pet Day

This year the miniature scene theme was World Culture- so I did Switzerland of course. My main features were the Alp horn, Swiss cheese, Cheese fondue, Swiss Army Knife, Toblerone, Bern Bear and the Swiss Alps.

I think my Swiss Army knife creation looks real. I used two nail files and painted them red and made the cutting blades from silver card. I also learnt researching that 15 million Swiss Army knives are made every year. WOW!

Toblerone is my favourite chocolate- it must be because I'm Swiss

I love listening to the Alp horn. I recall the last time I heard it was at a funeral. The sound it makes and music it creates is wonderful.

I am very proud to be Swiss and I enjoyed learning more about the magical things of Switzerland

Luke Pennington (10 years old)

