

Climbing the Matterhorn at 71 (part 1)

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received with much interest and prolonged applause, and it brought to an end the working session of the Assembly.

An evening's entertainment

A happy crowd met at the pier of Neuchâtel harbour to embark on the *Ville de Neuchâtel* for a most pleasant trip on the lake and through the Thielle canal into the Lake of Bièvre to Le Landeron. From there coaches took the party to the famous Maisons Vallier at Cressier where dining and dancing went on until well past midnight. It was a most successful evening, and all concerned with the arrangements as well as with the organisation of the Assembly are to be congratulated, the Director, Mr. Marcel Ney, his deputy Mr. Paillard and their competent staff. Their talents were further evidenced next day when an outing into the Jura Neuchâtelois took place. At 9.30 on the sunny Sunday morning, congress participants and their friends assembled in La Collégiale for an ecumenical service. The Protestant Minister, Dr. E. W. Huppenbauer, gave a short sermon in German, followed by the R. C. Abbé Marc Joye who spoke in French. Hymns and prayers were sung and spoken in several tongues by the community, and it gave the whole Assembly a seal of being not only under the good care of authorities and friends at home, but under Him who has looked after our country through centuries.

Several coaches then left with men, women and children eager to see more of the beautiful Canton of Neuchâtel. A tour of the old proud town had been made on Friday, and now the drive lasting 2½ hours gave an opportunity of enjoying large unspoilt parts of woodland and fields, up to the Chasseral and by way of La Chaux-de-Fonds to the heights of Les Geneveys-sur-Coffrane. How one enjoyed the tasty pea soup and boiled ham together with a glass of one of the many fine Neuchâtel wines in the open air!

Equally enjoyable were the songs and folkore dances presented by a group from Neuchâtel. All too soon the coaches had to return to the capital of the Canton.

A last get-together took place, and

farewells were said. It will be au revoir until the end of August next year when the 53rd Assembly will take place in Basle. If it is in any way as successful as the one just ended, it will be well worth attending.

M.M.

Climbing the Matterhorn at 71 by Werner Stettbacher (Part 1)

I resolved to climb the Matterhorn for the fourth time last summer; first, in order to celebrate my seventieth birthday in a suitable manner, and secondly, because a talk on the Matterhorn with suitable slides under the auspices of the Scottish Geographical Society was expected of me at the Speakers' Hall at Glasgow University.

My wife and I spent three weeks in Macugnaga in July 1973, but the weather was unsettled that year and the conditions on the Matterhorn ruled out any climb.

This summer, we arranged for an eight-weeks' stay in Macugnaga, feeling sure that there would be a good spell for my fourth attempt on the Matterhorn.

Macugnaga is a famous Italian alpine resort at the foot of the Monte Rosa Massif, only about a kilometre away from the Swiss border.

The surrounding districts first came into prominence some thousand years ago, when gold prospectors were attracted by the gold deposits lying there.

Three or four hundred years ago Macugnaga came into being through a number of German-speaking Swiss from the Brigue area of the Valais, who crossed the Monte Moro Pass and settled down there. Swiss names such as Burgener, Zurbruggen, Müller, Buman, Reich and Lager are still common, and it is

remarkable how Swiss customs have been preserved through generations. Moreover, most of the descendants still speak Schwyzerdeutsch today with varying degrees of fluency.

In the early 1860s, when prominent British tourists started exploring the Alps – men like Whymper, the conqueror of the Matterhorn, who also came to this district – Macugnaga became more widely known. Our hotel – the Albergo Passa del Turlo – was built in 1862, in Borca de Macugnaga. Macugnaga covers a wide area, such as Davos for instance, and incorporates several villages miles apart.

Originally the most important one it has been superseded by Staffa since the advent of winter sports, and most of the hotels and shops are now situated in the latter.

Gold under the Alps

Before the Second World War, an English company began to search for gold dust in earnest. Buildings, shafts and tunnels of great length were constructed in several areas, and in the village of Pestarena alone (one of the Macugnaga villages) there were about a thousand men working in the mines. This kind of work, however gainful it may have been, brought nothing but misery and misfortune to the district; for most of the workers were severely affected by the dust, and many of them died at an early age. Those surviving are still suffering from the effects of working in those mines. Now all the buildings are in ruins.

Some ten years ago, attempts were made to restart gold mining, but after three men had died in an explosion during trials, it was decided to drop the whole project.

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