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It is the middle of winter – and it certainly felt like it, too, especially over those two weekends of mighty Southerlies at the beginning of July. The ferries stayed in port, our little ferry across the harbour was replaced by a minibus that proudly stated “I am the East-by-West-Ferry” and bravely faced the waves sloshing onto the road; Wellington Airport was closed for a while as the Southerly blew people away and not exactly to where they wanted to go, and luggage was blown off the carts. I could have collected a year’s supply of firewood on the road in front of my place, supplied by the sea, free of charge – and after the Southerly, when I ventured out, I could probably have scraped off a year’s salt supply from my windows, too.

The gardens in our area suffered from the wind and the salt. The geraniums are all shrivelled up, and the cinerarias look as if they had been cooked. Even some of the native plants are badly burnt: The ngaio will be lopsided for quite a while; the southern side – luckily facing the neighbours – is all brown and the leaves are curled up; they are still on the tree and look unsightly and will drop off over the next few weeks and slowly turn into an extra layer of mulch. The puka and the cabbage tree lost a lot of leaves – and look now better than ever, strong and healthy, the puka with its big, leathery, shiny leaves, the cabbage tree with its bare trunk and only strong, healthy, green leaves.

Do they feel sorry about all the leaves they lost? Or are they ruthless and think “good riddance”? No, they are just trees and concentrate on being, and growing, and adding more leaves.

Even where I selfishly cut a branch off the puka tree, so that I could get a view again, the tree cried for a day and then, out of the wound, produced another set of leaves, and a little branch, that will in time grow into a big branch again if I let it. Trees are good teachers, they teach us not to give up easily.

*Trudi*

As the Helvetia arrives in your letterbox, the committees of all the Swiss Clubs around the country are making preparations for our 1 August National Day celebrations. It is always an opportunity to look back to our Swiss roots – where we come from, our evolving Swiss history and what happened on Rütli in 1291.

For those who have lived in New Zealand for a long period of time, thoughts of large firework displays in Switzerland and activities for children and the ‘young at heart’ might be nostalgic memories. We try to replicate those activities here and to involve our children and grandchildren. Bonfires and lampions provide platforms for us to teach our children about Swiss history. Here in Wellington, we have Peter Hynes who buys big Guy Fawkes firework

packs and saves them for a display at our national celebration ‘kiwi style’ each year. Since the 1980s, weather permitting, we have always had a bonfire on Petone beach, but getting a fire permit is getting more difficult each year. I’m keeping my fingers crossed that a permit will be in my mailbox soon.

At the AGM held in Auckland I had the pleasure to nominate Max Fuhrer as the Vice President of the Swiss Society, and he was unanimously elected. I would like to congratulate Max and welcome him into our team.

I hoffe, dass aui Mitglicher vo üsne Verein am erschte-n August mitmache, äs isch sicher immer gschetzt vo dene, wo’s organisiere!

Uf Wiederluege  
*Roland*

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