

Pear Tree Sapling in Luggage

HOCHDORF-ASSENHEIM: Irish Palatines make a Visit

Christy Switzer, a respected man in his home town of Tralee in the County of Limerick (sic), was in the Irish National weightlifting team for twenty years and Sunday was a home match for this descendant of Assenheim Schweitzers who emigrated to Ireland in 1709. The villagers of Hochdorf-Assenheim had prepared a hearty welcome for him and the 46 other Irish Palatines on the 2004 Irish Palatine Tour.

The visit started in Assenheim Church with the Welsh folksong 'Morning Has Broken', the service being held in both English and German. Father Heiko Schwarz from Ludwigshafen-Mundenheim gave his sermon in perfect English, recalling the poverty and distress of times past.

With the newly refurbished town hall serving as a backdrop, the guests from Ireland, England, Canada and USA were welcomed by the Mayor, Johannes Bach, Monika Schönbucher, the organiser of the day's events, and serenaded by the Assenheim Brass Band. Christy Switzer, a fan of the several times Olympic weightlifter Ronny Weller, was presented with a personally dedicated poster of his idol and an original weightlifting vest in the German national colours. On behalf of the Irish Palatine Association and the Association for the Preservation of Old Species, Austin Bovenizer (formerly Bobenheiser) presented the community with a sapling propagated from a pear tree which had been planted in the first Irish Palatine settlement in 1709.

Then everyone went into the town hall to sign the new guestbook: tour leader Ken McDonald, a Teskey (Disque) [sic] on his mother's side, delighted by the town's hospitality wrote 'Remembering our wonderful day in Assenheim'. Christy Switzer wrote 'A gold medal for Ronny in Athens' before posing for photographs outside the half-timbered town hall under the 1712 inscription showing the name Tieter Schweitzer.

Beef with horseradish sauce, a typical feast day dish of former times, was served by the Sports Association and long-established Assenheimers were amazed to discover family links with no less than six Switzer family members.

In the afternoon, led by the young Assenheimer linguists, Mady, Lukas, Markus, Stefan, Frederic and Stefanie, the guests visited several agricultural establishments: a collection of old farm machinery at the Pinno farm, the modern installation of Bernd Neff and Walter Schmitt, where rocket and lamb's lettuce is processed and packed, and livestock at the Schalter farm. There followed coffee and cake in the sports hall and the day ended back in the church with a classical concert on the Geib organ. For his last piece organist Bernd Braun from Mannheim chose, especially for the guests, 'Greensleeves'.

photograph caption:

Mayor Johannes Bach greets the visitors