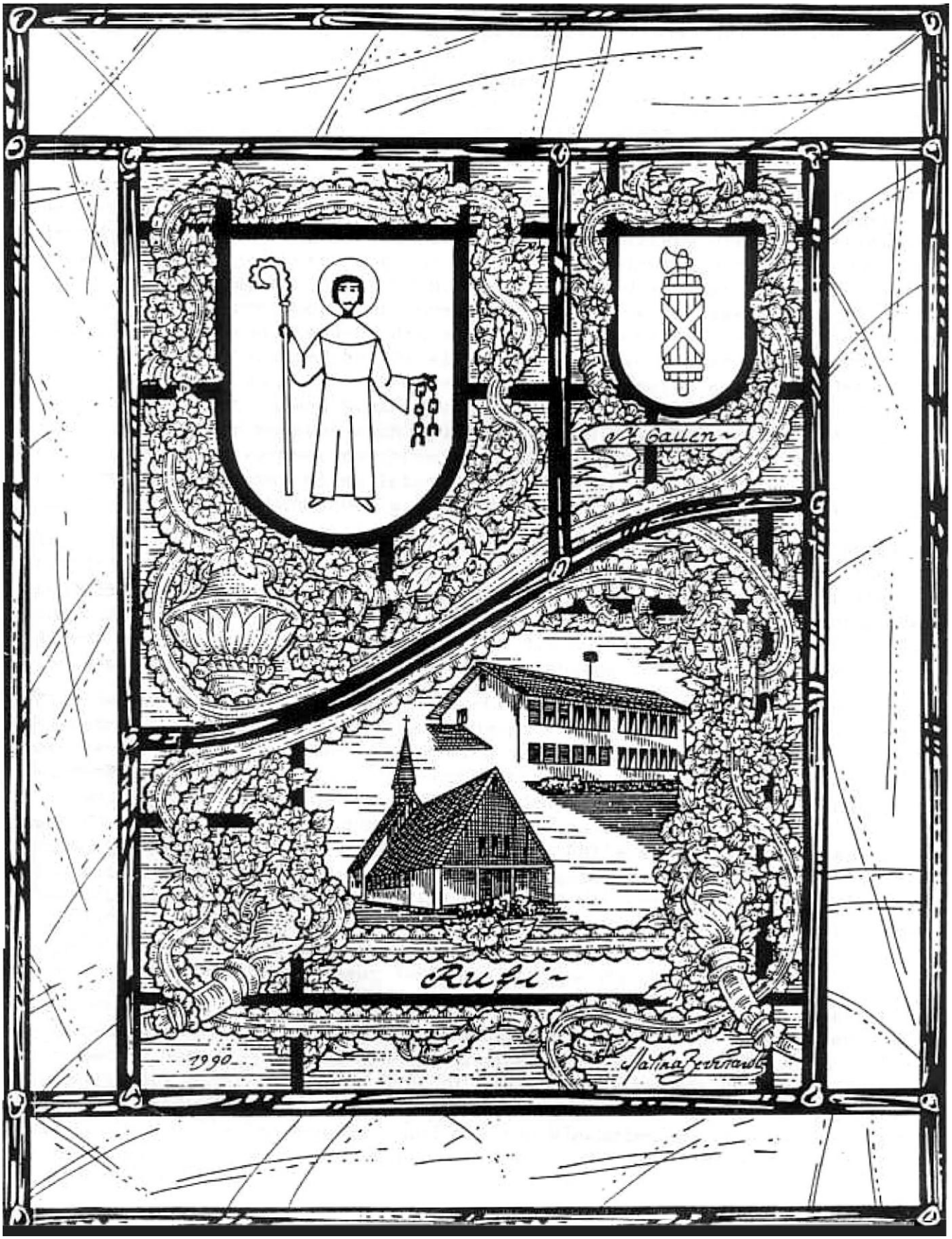
Die Chronik der Ortsgemeinde Rufi



Albin Egli, Ortsschreiber von Rufi, Niederurnen im Herbst 1990

The "Ortsgemeinde" of Rufi

Count Hunfried of Istria knew very well why he fulfilled his vow - to found a monastery in return for the gift of the precious cross relic - in Schänis in around 820. The aim was to secure the north-western border of the Diocese of Chur. For centuries, this border ran along the Letz in Maseltrangen. The lower Gaster belonged to the Diocese of Constance. Reichenau monks had already founded the Benken monastery earlier. In 744, the leading Alemannic family of Landolt and Beate donated large parts of Uznach to the monastery of St.Gallen. On the other hand, the land of Glarus belonged to the monastery of Säckingen, and Kaltbrunn in turn became subject to Einsiedeln around 940.

Caught between so many different rulers, the Alemannic farmers, who had settled there since around 580 and were partly free, lost their independence. In return, the indigenous population (Helvetii and Raeti), which had already been subjugated by the Romans, was able to breathe a little more freely. By around 900, a large class of so-called "Eigenleute" *[serfs with some specific rights]* had emerged. However, our ancestors were never as subjugated as Roman slaves. They were allowed to own houses, livestock and estates. However, there were restrictions on freedom of movement, freedom of marriage and obligations to pay all kinds of taxes and perform corvée labour.

In the following period, individual families gained significantly more power at the expense of the monasteries. In our region, these were the Counts of Toggenburg, Rapperswil and, above all, Habsburg, because the latter were able to inherit the estates of the extinct Lenzburg and Kyburg families. In order to avoid being crushed between the counts and the monasteries, the peasants had to join forces more closely to defend their remaining rights, because even then the authorities were quite eager to invent new taxes. Often it was a matter of warding off new corvée labour. Together, this was easier to achieve than for an individual subject. Local communities ("Ortsgemeinden") emerged in our region soon after 1150. Dorf and Ruvi also appear in the Schänis monastery's inventory of goods from 1178. (The monasteries also had to constantly defend themselves against the counts and took advantage of favourable opportunities to have their land holdings and taxes confirmed.) The counts were primarily interested in jurisdiction, as fines were a good source of income. The monasteries continued to collect tithes.

None of these few, very old documents mention self-government of the local communities, because local problems were necessarily always dealt with by the illiterate farmers themselves. What did the abbess in Schänis care if the weir on the Nässi- or Rufibach was damaged or the alpine path slipped away? The people of Rufi had to deal with such matters themselves, without subsidies. The problem of the two torrents in particular caused a great deal of trouble.

A particular source of discontent was the so-called "Fall" (inheritance tax). In the event of a death, the best livestock or the best garment of the deceased was confiscated. Because of the many different lords in our area, it was inevitable that people often married into other territories so that not all marriages were between relatives. In the event of a death, of course, no lord wanted to forego the Fall. The unfortunate consequence was that, in some cases, the bereaved had to pay two inheritance taxes until the 17th century. Perhaps this is the meaning of the name of the ancient Rufner family Zweifel (two Falls). Häsine (Hässig) already appear in the Habsburg Urbar, and in 1301 Hug Tremp lived on the Strick and Ulrich Zwivel in Rufi, probably in the Forsten. The Förstler and Rüttiner families, who later moved away, also settled in Dorf and Rufi at a very early stage.

According to a ruling from 1356, the local communities certainly existed at that time. Rüttiberg had to defend its grazing rights on the common land of Gastermatt, which were disputed by farmers from Schänis and Winkeln. Therefore, "die erbern lüte ab Rüti gemeinlich" *[the honourable people of Rüti together]* came to the court "ze Schennis an den Bul und offneten mit fürsprechen, si hetten in Gastermatt teil und gemeind und steg und weg, als vil und als ver*, als die von Schennis und die von Winkhelen und die us dem rieth, und baten, ob si das jahen oder lougneten." *["in Schennis and declared with advocates that they had a share in Gastermatt and the common land and paths, 'als vil und als ver*' as those from Schennis and Winkhelen and those from Rieth, and asked whether they would accept this or reject it." *(vil und ver = so far and so intensely)]*

The court ruled in favour of the Rüttibergers, who requested a written judgement to prevent future disputes. This court ruling is the oldest evidence of the existence of local communities ("Ortsgemeinden") in Gaster.

The population suffered greatly when, after the Battle of Näfels (1388), the Glarus people plundered Gaster and the county of Uznach. Due to the many wars, the Habsburgs were always short of cash. Therefore, in 1405, they pledged the territories of Sargans and Gaster to the Counts of Toggenburg. However, when the last Toggenburg died in 1436, his inheritance caused utter confusion and led to the "Old Zürich War". Afterwards, Uznach and Gaster belonged to the two ruling cantons of Schwyz and Glarus. This remained the case for almost 350 years. However, the inhabitants were never exploited as badly as those in Werdenberg, for example, because they had only agreed to help against Zürich in exchange for favourable treaties. They also always appointed the so-called Untervogt (deputy bailiff), the Landschreiber (county clerk) and the Weibel (bailiff's assistant) from their own ranks. Among them were also several Rufners.

From around 1450 onwards, there were many divisions of common land due to the large population in our area. At the instigation of the Rufner, who felt disadvantaged, the common Alp Steinegg between Rufi and Maseltrangen was divided in 1482. It is also astonishing that many place names have hardly changed or not changed at all since then. In 1447, it was a matter of right of way. This letter begins: "Wir ganze gemeind von Ruffy, ab Rüthy, von Wonhusen, ab dem Strick bekenen und tuon kund ..." (ab Rüthy = Ortsgemeinde Rüttiberg). *["We, the entire community of Ruffy, from Rüthy, from Wonhusen, from Strick, acknowledge and declare ..."]*. In 1535, a Kaltbrunn document refers to the Gleiter.

By around 1520, the population of Rufi had grown to such an extent that a separate priest was appointed for St.Leonhard's Chapel. However, this young clergyman was inclined towards the Reformation, and the iconoclasm in Gaster began in Rufi. After the Kappel Wars, the population was forced by Schwyz to return to the old faith. Rufi, Dorf and Rüttiberg had obviously had enough of having their own priest and now only maintained the chapel.

At that time, bartering was also almost over in our region. People now paid with money (gulden), including the interest to the Schänis monastery. Inflation already existed at that time, but there was no cost of living index yet. However, because a fixed amount of money had been agreed upon for the taxes, the serfs soon paid with money that was of little value. As a result, in the following decades, many Rufner residents were able to buy their freedom from the monastery with a one-time, larger sum of money.

The oldest baptismal register of Schänis begins around 1620. Now it becomes easier to record the newly arrived families. These are mainly the Glaus, Hofstetter, Jud, Kölbli, Roos, Rosenast, Stoop and Thoma families.

With the exception of the Glaus, Hofstetter, Jud and Thoma families, however, these families were never numerous in Rufi. The situation was quite different for the many descendants of Ulrich Grob, who moved from Kaltbrunn to Rufi with his three sons around 1620, and Fridli Egli from Alt St.Johann in Toggenburg, who bought himself in on 21 June 1674.

At all times, however, there were also "Hintersassen" (residents) who lived in the village but had no share in the communal property because they did not buy into it or were not accepted by the citizens.

As early as the 18th century, the alpine pastures and forests of the Wengital valley were divided up among the Gasterland communities that had previously had rights of use. Rufi sold its share of the forest to the local community of Benken.

The extremely limited employment opportunities at that time also tempted young men from Rufi to enlist as mercenaries. Most of them never returned home and were later declared missing.

In 1800, the "Genossen" *[members of the local cooperative]* sold their share of the Steinegg Alp, presumably to private individuals, as this share was owned by the Grob family of Rufi in 1861.

The invasion of the French (1798) ended the dependence on Glarus and Schwyz as well as on the monasteries. However, the joy of new freedom, equality and brotherhood was greatly dampened by military turmoil and quartering. Great hardship was also caused by the increasing swamping of the Linth plain, which had been triggered by excessive logging in the Glarus region. This was compounded by fierce political disputes.

The canton of Linth *[set up by the French in 1798, with Glarus as capital]* and its districts were short-lived. Neither the Uznach nor the Gaster regions were particularly happy about the new canton of St.Gallen (1803). The inhabitants felt a stronger connection to Schwyz and Glarus. People also had to get used to the newly created political municipalities. The Schänis monastery , founded almost 1,000 years ago and supported by the South German nobility, was now very ill-suited to the democratic landscape as a noble ladies' convent and was abolished by decision of the Grand Council, as were Pfäfers and the glorious monastery of Gallus and Othmar *[in St.Gallen]*.

Many good projects were also decided upon during this very turbulent period. Shortly before 1810, school lessons for children (including those from Rüttiberg) began in Rufi. Following a decision by the Tagsatzung *[meeting pf county representatives]*, Johann Conrad Escher from Zürich was able to divert the Linth into Walensee and then build the Linth Canal to Lake Zürich, employing up to 200 workers from our region. However, it was not until during and after the Second World War that the plain was improved and made truly fertile.

Since 1820, the administrative and municipal decisions of Rufi have been recorded in a book. Much older are the "Marchenbücher" *[boundary books]*. The book from 1781 records the locations of 28 boundary stones in the alpine pastures and forests. They were copied from an even older book at the time and all the stones were checked under the supervision of Genossenvogt (local bailiff) Anton Leonzi Steiner from Dorf. Afterwards, the municipality clarified the exact boundaries with all its neighbours. In 1838, a new boundary book was written by schoolteacher and local clerk Christian Grob. Additions have been recorded in it up to the present century.

The actual meeting minutes begin on 1 January 1835. Three vote counters were always elected. Until around 1895, four or more meetings of the members per year were by no means unusual. They always took place in the Rufi schoolhouse, occasionally even on Sunday afternoons. At that time, the local administrative council was not only responsible for the cooperative's property, but also for social welfare, the school fund, the chapel, pilgrimages, wells, roads, bridges, streams, etc., because until 1803 there were no local councils.

On 20 August 1835, an inventory listed the old parchments, letters, judgements, notes and books that had already been collected and numbered by Sebastian Förstler around 1800. Among them, the oldest was:
1447 Road maintenance obligation
1481 Division of the Steinegg alpine pasture
1498 Rufibach regulations (residents had stolen weir stones)
1557 Regulations for the use of the Bogmen pasture (then known as Alp Bobman)
1610 Upper "Bachbrücke": maintenance and weir duty (Wonhusen bridge)
1614 Commons regulations

Most of the names and dates for the new civil register started in 1839 were copied from an older book. This register, which was not completed until 1956, provides fairly accurate information about the citizen families from around 1770 onwards.

On 20 October 1841, the Rufners adopted new community regulations. First, all the community's properties are listed:

I Plantation fields
- a) Abrächlandung
- b) Schwabenlandlandung

II Allmeind oder Trattboden *[both commons]*
- a) obere Allmeind including Nässi
- b) untere Allmeind (Ried)

III Alpine pastures
- a) obere Bogmen including buildings
- b) untere Bogmen including buildings

IV Forests
- a) Plamplege
- b) Schwändibort
- c) Geisseck
- d) Riedlen
- e) Krotenloch
- f) Hasenrüti
- g) Feldmüseln
- h) Glockhütten
- i) Moser
- k) Hugen
- 1) Gleiterwald

Thirty articles then set out how to become a shareholder and beneficiary, what the benefits are, how to use the forests, the obligations of beneficiaries towards the municipality and penalties for violations.

The population now grew steadily. A written petition from 14 citizens for the distribution of the common land among the members was initially blocked by the administration in 1843. But the pressure increased. At the meeting on 8 April 1844, the final motion was passed: "Es soll die Allmeind, die Nässi, der Dörfliplatz und das Ried sammt Allmeindzopf *[a small extension of the Allmeind]* unter die Genossenbürger verteilt werden." *[The common land, the Nässi, the Dörfliplatz and the Ried, together with the Allmeindzopf, shall be distributed among the members of the community."]* Just three days later, at an extraordinary meeting, it was decided at the request of the administration to divide the Nässi common land into plots and leave them to the members of the cooperation for 10 years. The Ried was not suitable for parcelling due to the many drainage ditches and remained common land. However, the obere Almeind - located to the left of the Rufibach stream - was put up for auction. (At that time, it was partly covered with scrub and piles of stones.)

Around 1852, "Franken" appeared in the books instead of the previous guilders. The two completely dilapidated alpine huts were now replaced by new buildings. Lower Bogmen in 1856 and upper Bogmen in 1863. The latter fell victim to a fire in 1924. The stables were repeatedly renovated and expanded. Instead of the traditional wooden shingle roofing, more durable Eternit panels now protect the alpine buildings.

From 1861 to 1868, the local treasurer kept accounts for the cooperative, the poor relief fund and the school fund, as well as an account for the "Amerikaner-Rechnung" *[bills in connection with citizens emigrating to America]*. The community was apparently pleased that quite a few Rufner residents emigrated to America from around 1845 onwards. (No fewer than 15 people from the Egli family.) These people could not find work at home and would possibly have become welfare cases. Therefore, the local treasury lent them part of their travel expenses. However, many emigrants "forgot" this advance. The accumulated debt of Fr. 2,600 ultimately had to be taken over by the local treasury.

The 1865 revised cooperative regulations also mention more cultivated land due to the larger population:

a)	Schwaben- und Abrächlandung	200 Klafter *[unit of area]*
b)	Binsenlandung	136 Klafter
c)	Erlenlandung	120 Klafter
d)	Nässilandung	120 Klafter

At that time, all members were required to perform five days of compulsory labour per year. For each day of labour missed, Fr. 1.50 had to be paid into the local treasury.

In 1872, with the permission of the St.Gallen cantonal government, the Rufner citizens sold the Feldmüselnwald forest to the local community of Maseltrangen.

In 1878, horses were grazed on the alp pasture for the last time. The alp rent at that time was:

Horse with foal	Fr. 100.--	Cow	Fr. 60.--
Pregnant horse	Fr. 90.--	"Zeitkuh"	Fr. 48.--
Foal, 1 year old	Fr. 60.--	"Mäss"	Fr. 34.--
		Calf	Fr. 25.--

[Zeitkuh: cow that becomes pregnant unusually late, only in its second or third year]
[Mäss: a young cow before its first pregnancy, usually 1-2 years old]

Great care was taken to ensure that at least Fr. 2,000 from the alpine farm flowed into the local treasury each year. The three or more pages of often harsh auditor's reports from these years are striking.

This marked the beginning of a period of around 12 years that can best be described as a period of "Prozess-Hysterie" *[litigation hysteria]*. Often two or three times a year, legal action was taken, not infrequently against members of the board of directors, usually for trivial matters, such as wood piles. The local clerk, Johann Egli, gave a vivid account of how turbulent things were at the time on 21 December 1879:

* The election of the president followed:

Following the proposals, a vote was taken on Tremp Anton, administrator, and Glaus Josef, former administrator, both of whom were entrusted with 22 votes. However, due to various contradictions that degenerated into tumult, unrest and disorder, the meeting was then dissolved, partly by the presidium, but largely on its own initiative. *

(Tremp was the chair for the day - Glaus was one of the three vote counters.)

The next election meeting on 1 February 1880 was therefore chaired by Bezirksammann *[district administrator]* Anton Kühne and minuted by clerk Rüdisüli. Initially, two of the three proposed vote counters could only be determined by a contested vote count. Grob Mang ultimately prevailed over Glaus as administrator by 30 votes to 28, and Grob Mang was also elected president over Tremp by 29 votes to 27.

For many years, citizens had been trying unsuccessfully to find *a* joint solution for the poor relief funds of all five local communities with the political municipality of Schänis. From around 1880 onwards, the burden of social welfare became unbearable. With total annual revenues of around Fr. 9,000 for the local community, often more than Fr. 3,000 had to be spent on supporting the poor.

The bitterness of the local administration is clearly evident in the following minutes of the extraordinary citizens' meeting of 15 June 1884. Sebastian Förstler wrote:

* As is generally known, Leonhard Kaufmann had been causing the community considerable expense for several years due to his propensity for idleness and debauchery. When he was transported here twice in 10 days by the constable for drunkenness and begging, the administrative board unanimously decided that if he were to arrive under police escort again, arrangements should be made to place Kaufmann in the Bizibad forced labour camp for a period of time in order to cure him of his whims. The decision in question was communicated to the Gaster district office and approved by the same. In the meantime, Kaufmann arrived back in Rufi, but without police escort, and demanded assistance. He was then given the choice of either spending a longer period in Bizibad or, if he wished, being helped by the municipality to emigrate to America, whereupon he chose the latter and declared his intention in writing.

It is now clear that it is far more advantageous for the municipality to send such a good-for-nothing away at relatively low cost and never see him again than to make great sacrifices for him in a compulsory institution and then possibly have to support him again afterwards. *

The administration's approach met with unanimous approval from the citizens. It was not only in Rufi that such problem cases were solved in this way.

A short time later, the clerk recorded with bitterness:

* As a result of the significant burden of poverty, the communal woodlands had to be used for several years to pay off the poverty deficit, thus causing the citizens to suffer a considerable loss of their rights of use ... *

The misery was certainly not caused by the innate laziness of the Rufner people. But there was a lack of jobs for the growing population. Even a hard-working man could lose everything in a matter of hours due to fire or flooding. Illnesses in the home and barn often ruined him too. There was no health insurance or other insurance, and the banking system was still in its infancy. In order to go ahead, you needed not only robust health but also a great deal of luck.

In 1887, social welfare was taken over by the political municipality of Schänis. The benefits amounted to:

Ortsgemeinde Schänis	Fr. 131 000.--
Ortsgemeinde Dorf	Fr. 48 000.--
Ortsgemeinde Rufi	Fr. 44 000.--
Ortsgemeinde Rüttiberg	Fr. 16 000.--
Ortsgemeinde Maseltrangen	Fr. 33 000.--

In order to raise this enormous sum - for the time - half of the Gleiterwald forest had to be felled. By way of comparison, in the same year, 1887, the alpine herdsman's wage was Fr.300 per summer.

On 7 February 1886, forestry regulations were approved. At that time, the municipality's forests covered 75.1 hectares. The information from 1888 shows how controversial many issues were at the time: 46 of the 64 men eligible to vote took part in a meeting. However, the number of members soon declined, falling to less than 40 eligible voters in 1936.

After many disputes, good projects were once again approved: drainage of the Nässi in 1897. In 1903, various private landowners purchased about one hectare of land in Rufilanden. A devastating flood of the Rufi stream in the night of 2/3 August 1902 swept the Mühlehof and Bitzi down to Oberdörfli with debris. To repair the damage, the local community had to take on heavy debt from private individuals. However, a very solid bed was then built for the torrent. After this natural disaster, the comrades' meetings were much calmer. In the years of world war and the crisis that soon followed, the citizens certainly had other concerns than power struggles at meetings.

In 1922, the Rufi-Rüttiberg water corporation was founded and fresh water pipes were installed in the houses. In 1924, elections were held for the last time by the usual open show of hands. Since then, a ballot box has been set up. (Until 1980, this was a cardboard box.) Two vote counters are now sufficient for the peaceful meetings.

In 1941, the Ortsgemeinde joined the Linthebene Melioration Association and approved its project to drain the Ried.

In 1949, a new school building was constructed in Rufi. The Ortsgemeinde sold some land to enlarge the playground at a price of Fr. 3 per square metre.

In 1952, a large-scale land consolidation took place, and citizens were asked to give up their cooperative shares.

Whereas previously the Nutzergemeinde *[users of the commons]* meeting was held every January and the Rechnungsgemeinde *[accounting community]* meeting in autumn, since 1955 both meetings have been combined. This meeting usually takes place in the second half of March.

In 1960, the term of office for the administration was changed from three to four years. The rights of citizens and the administration, as well as the use of the land, were laid down in new cooperative regulations in 1961.

Due to the sharp increase in motorised road traffic, the winding old country road was no longer adequate in 1959. The new road from Schänis to Kaltbrunn runs through Rufi via the former upper Allmeind, between Dörfli and Oberdörfli and over the Nässi. At the same time, the Nässibach stream was moved a little further towards Maseltrangen and a large debris collector was built for it.

Despite the tight financial situation, new tasks had to be tackled in addition to the most necessary repairs. Rufi's share of the total cost of the Rütteli-Obermatt road, amounting to 1.33 million, was 15.3%. At the same meeting (1963), the centuries-old maintenance obligation for the chapel in Rufi was also transferred to the parish of Schänis. The venerable but impractical chapel was immediately replaced by a new building. Due to the heavy burden this placed on the local coffers, the municipality abolished the community benefit at the time, despite some resistance. As a result, it was also possible to get rid of other outdated burdens, in some cases through high compensation payments. For the time being, however, there were new burdens: in 1967, the Dörflistrasse and Nässistrasse roads were tarred.

The two remaining village wells and the springs in Baumgarten and Loch were sold to the water corporation.

A new era also dawned in Rufi. In 1969, a kindergarten was built on Nässi. The good earning opportunities of the so-called boom years resulted in a very pronounced labour shortage. For this reason, the Schänis Forestry Association was founded in 1971. This highly efficient institution is sponsored by the local communities of Dorf, Rufi, Rüttiberg and Maseltrangen. Since then, many kilometres of forest access roads have been built cost-effectively by the forestry association's efficient construction team.

The year 1975 brought a major innovation. For the first time in the centuries-old history of the local communities, female citizens were also invited to the assembly. At that time, the number of eligible voters doubled.

At the memorable citizens' assembly on 9 April 1976, the most expensive project to date for the Ortsgemeinde of Rufi was unanimously approved: the road from Zimmerwiesli to

Unterbogmen. This construction project, costing almost half a million, caused major financing problems. For this reason, even before the decision was made, the administration approached its citizens, the Ortsgemeinde of Rapperswil and the citizens' corporation of Uznach to obtain low-interest loans (3%). More than 70,000 Swiss francs were raised in this way. This self-help campaign impressed the authorities in St.Gallen and Bern so much that Rufi was granted the maximum subsidy rate.

Since 1978, the local community's fine-grained coniferous forest has been able to be used much more cost-effectively, improvements to alpine buildings have been carried out more quickly and greater attention has been paid to the maintenance of alpine pastures. During the extremely hot and dry summer of 1983, many hundreds of litres of water were transported from the valley to the alpine pastures because all the springs had dried up. The 400 m^3 timber that had to be cleared after the Föhn storm in November 1982 could not have been processed so quickly and cost-effectively. The Alp Bogmen local recreation area, which was already very popular with hikers, is now visited even more frequently to enjoy the magnificent view of the Linth plain. Accompanied by a refreshing drink from the mountain restaurant.

In 1979, the Dörflistrasse, Nässistrasse and part of the Obermattstrasse were sold to the political municipality of Schänis after prior repairs at a total cost of Fr. 32,000. Since 1981, a new feature has been introduced that is greatly appreciated: visitors to the town hall meeting are offered a free drink and a small snack at the Freihof. The 1983 municipal code now regulates the powers of citizens and the administration.

Twice (in 1986 and 1988), the Bogmenstrasse had to be protected by expensive safety measures shortly before the alp. However, since 1989, a separate Obermatt-Bogmen road corporation has been responsible for all forest roads. The water reservoir built in 1987 is intended to combat the chronic water shortage in Bogmen. However, the administration will certainly not run out of work in the future.

Although farmers now make up less than half of the electorate, the annual town meeting still follows the ancient custom of setting the alp rent, determining the number of days of labour (corvée) required of alp cattle owners and deciding on the amount of compensation for work done for the benefit of the community. The administration considers it its duty not to curtail the rights of the citizens and to use and preserve the property inherited from their ancestors with care.

Niederurnen, autumn 1990, the "Ortsgemeinde" clerk of Rufi
Albin Egli

Today's communal property:

Alp Bogmen	ca. 50	ha	*[unit of area]*
Forest area	78	ha	
Nässi	3,8	ha	
Rufilanden	12,3	ha	
innere Erlen	5,8	ha	
äussere Erlen	6,3	ha	
Strüpfen	1,3	ha	

The current local administration:

President:	Christian Grob
Vice-president and Alpmeister:	Alois Zweifel
Treasurer:	Josef Hässig
Werkmeister:	Beda Egli
Vice-Alpmeister:	Ruedi Schnyder

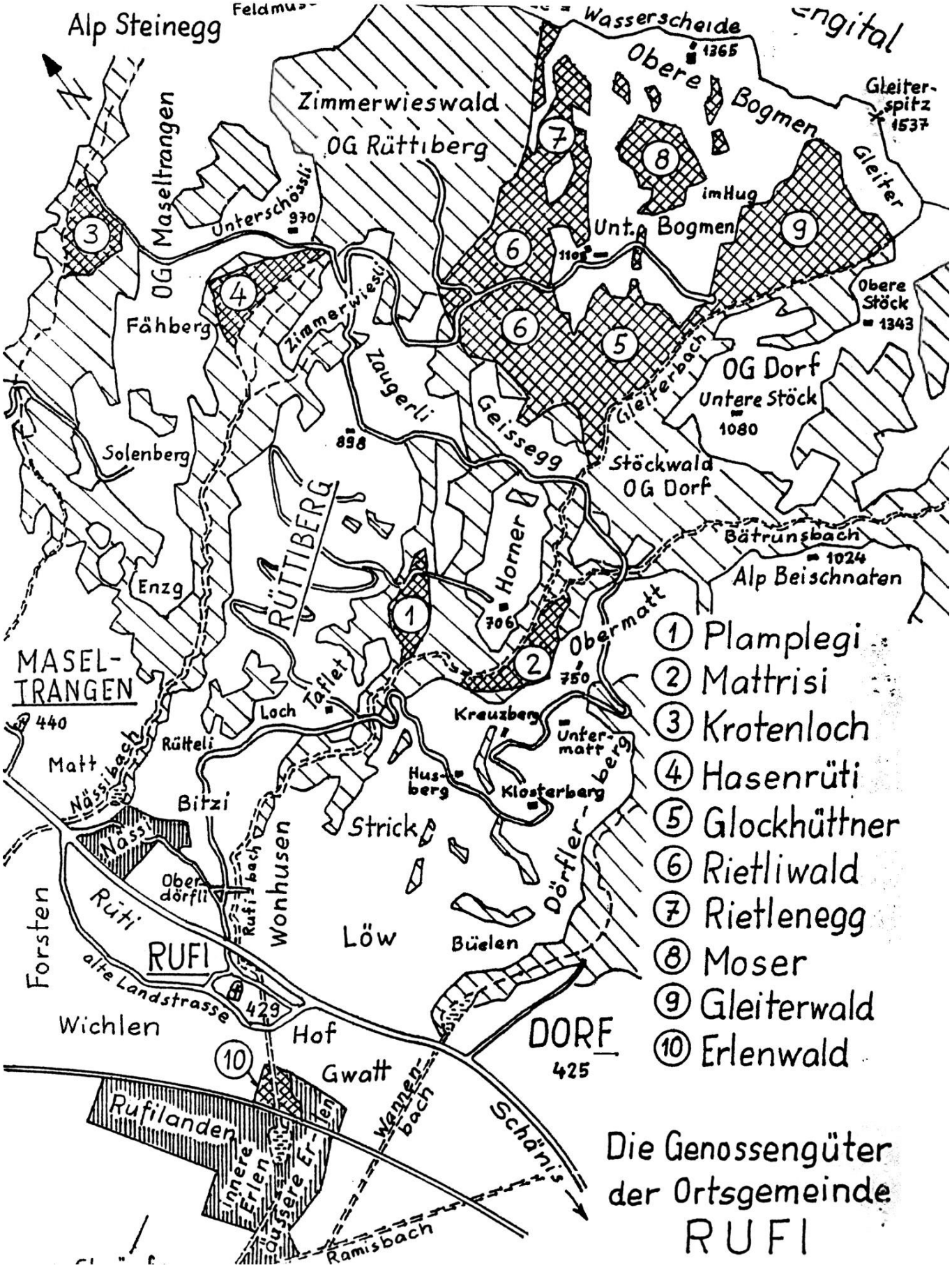
Every year, around 100 young cattle are grazed on Alp Bogmen for an average of 112 days.

The annual felling rate for the local community of Rufi is 300 m^3 of wood.

The grassland on the plain is preferably leased to local residents for a period of six years. Average annual interest rate: Fr. 5.50 per are.

Only a small remnant of the once extensive plantations remains, as the residents of Rufner make little use of the favourable offer from the Ortsgemeinde.

All Rufner residents aged 20 and over who live in the political municipality of Schänis are entitled to vote at meetings. There are currently 90 eligible voters.


Alp Steinegg
Wasserscheide
1365
Obere Bogmen
Gleiter-spitz 1537
Gleiter
Zimmerwieswald
OG Rüttiberg
Maseltrangen
OG
Unterschössli
970
im Hug
Unt. Bogmen
1105
Obere Stöck 1343
Fähberg
Zimmerwiesli
Zaugerli
Geissegg
Gleiterbach
OG Dorf
Untere Stöck 1080
898
Solenberg
Stöckwald
OG Dorf
RÜTTIBERG
Horner
706
Bätrunsbach
1024
Alp Beischnaten
Enzg
Obermatt
750
MASEL-TRANGEN
440
Loch
Taflet
Kreuzberg
Untermatt
Rütteli
Matt
Nässibach
Husberg
Klosterberg
Bitzi
Strick
Wonhusen
Rutibach
Oberdörfli
Rüti
Dörflerberg
Forsten
RUFI
Löw
Büelen
alte Landstrasse
429
Wichlen
Hof
Gwatt
DORF
425
Rufilanden
Wagenbach
Schänis
Ramisbach
① Plamplegi
② Mattrisi
③ Krotenloch
④ Hasenrüti
⑤ Glockhüttner
⑥ Rietliwald
⑦ Rietlenegg
⑧ Moser
⑨ Gleiterwald
⑩ Erlenwald
Die Genossengüter der Ortsgemeinde RUFI

An elderly fellow citizen recalls

In today's fast-paced world, much is irretrievably lost. This includes knowledge of the strenuous and often dangerous work of our ancestors. That is why I would like to describe a few events from days long past:

The R u f i b a c h and the E r l e n

This torrent, with its large and steep catchment area, has always been a source of concern for the local community. Whenever a net profit was made from alpine farming and forestry, this money had to be spent immediately on road maintenance and clearing the debris collector in the Erlen. Sand and various types of coarse gravel were separated by gates, as a lot of gravel was needed to constantly repair the roads in the village, over the Nässi and in the Riet.

In the 1920s, such huge piles of stone boulders were stored in Erlen that the cantonal road administration moved in with a stone crusher. All the stones were crushed into gravel, as there was a great need for it. At that time, the country roads were also still gravel. Although cars only drove by occasionally, the road dust became a nuisance. Therefore, during periods of good weather, it was necessary to water not only the garden but also the country road several times a day.

Although the removal of the gravel trap in Erlen cost the Linthebene melioration project and later the roads in the political municipality of Schänis a great deal of money, the Rufners can be glad that they are finally got rid of the biggest worries of many years.

Mouse trapping

The local community of Rufi employed an elected field mouse catcher for a long time. The Rufiriet and the Nässi were his favourite hunting grounds. My brother Emil (Forsten-Mili) was a specialist in this field. I still vividly remember how I had to show the dead mice he had caught to the then foreman, old Sebastian Tremp (known as Senn Tremp, father of Weibel Tremp Baschi). The catch reward was 10 Rappen for a jerboa, 15 Rappen for a field mouse and 20 Rappen for a mole. One paw was cut off the dead rodents. But I had to bring the mice back to my brother. The reason was this: mole fur was a highly sought-after commodity at the time. My brother earned considerably more from these pelts than from catching mice. Today, the mice are crushed by heavy agricultural machinery. But back then, these animals were found in very large numbers.

The D ö r r h ü t t l i

The Dörrhüttli *[shed for drying fruit]* used to stand on the site of the fire station. It got its name during the First World War. The local community had a powerful drying oven installed. The population brought in so many pears and apple slices that work had to be done day and night.

But when the war and lean years ended, the drying operation was also discontinued. With today's refrigerators in all homes and, in many places, freezers or freezer cabinets, it is hard to imagine how in the past every conceivable means was used to preserve food.

The "G e i s s e r" *[Goatherd]*

Seventy years ago, there were more goats than cows in Rufi. Not only workers and craftsmen, but also almost all farmers owned goats. Therefore, the local administration elected a goat herder every spring. This position was highly sought after among school-leaving boys.

In the morning, the goat herder drove his herd from Dörfli to the äussere Erlen. At lunchtime, the animals were locked in the former Dörrhüttli, which had been converted into a goat shed, and in the afternoon they were taken back to the Erlen. In the evening, the owners collected their goats, hopefully with full udders, from Dörfli.

The P l a m p l e g i B r i d g e

Until the construction of the mountain roads, the alpine path led from Wohnhusen to Unterbogmen in an almost direct line for centuries. In many places, such as the Rietliwald, this route had very steep gradients, which also required a lot of maintenance.

An important part of this path is the Plamplegibrücke, because not only did the alpine cattle cross it, but all the wood from the forests around Bogmen was also transported via Geissegg and Horner over this bridge.

At the end of the 1930s, flooding of the Rufibach stream destroyed this bridge. The force of the unleashed masses of water was so strong that even the bridge bearings and the stream bed were torn away and washed away. The Toneatti company from Bilten built the current bridge bearings from massive natural blocks. For cost reasons, the local community built the new bridge itself. Approximately 30 cm thick fir tree trunks were laid side by side, covered generously with earth and sand, and a railing was installed.

However, bridges of this type never lasted long. This time, it was a particularly short-lived structure. Only 8 - 10 years later, an accident occurred during an ascent to the alpine pastures. As the heavy cattle belonging to former local mayor Johann Tremp (Löw), crossed the bridge, it collapsed. One cow fell into the stream and was so badly injured that it had to be put down. This damage made the administration wiser, and they awarded the contract for the new bridge to Dominik Selva. This time, it was built of reinforced concrete.

It is a pity that today only a few hikers use this bridge and the path through the wild and romantic Rufibach Gorge, which was always well maintained by former foreman Josef Egli (Horner Sepp).

The O b e r b o g m e n Hut

The fireplace used to be a latent danger in all residential buildings, especially in alpine huts. In 1924, Martin Egli was a cattle herder and Alois Jud, former owner of the Frohsinn inn, was his farmhand. While the two were busy building a hayrack in the glider, the hut suddenly caught fire. By the time the men ran back, it was too late to extinguish the fire. The only thing left to do was to save at least some of their belongings from the fire. For a long time afterwards, people laughed about how the farmhand, in his excitement, threw the mirror out of the room window but managed to carry the bed springs to safety via the stairs.

Only the foundation walls of the old hut remain today. Master carpenter Johann Rusch from Maseltrangen immediately began rebuilding the hut. The necessary spruce trees were felled in Rietlenegg and laboriously hewn by hand. A strong ox then pulled the finished beams on a sledge to the construction site.

An *U g f e l l* *[luck in a difficult situation]*

When I was still barely attending school, foot-and-mouth disease broke out in Bogmen. As the sick animals could no longer walk, there was no choice but to treat the cattle on the alp. Oatmeal had to be cooked all day long and spooned into the sick animals. It was an enormous amount of work.

Only a small cow belonging to Beda Egli in Steinzaun - which had probably already been infected as a calf in Graubünden - did not fall ill and was fortunately able to provide the helpers with milk at least.

However, none of the infected animals ever regained their pre-epidemic productivity.

Rufi, spring 1991, Edwin Zweifel 11, Dörfli