

Zeitschrift: Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand
Herausgeber: Swiss Society of New Zealand
Band: 74 (2008)
Heft: [7]

Rubrik: Carolyn Lane : trains, boats, planes, bikes - and Swiss-Kiwi Yodellers!

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Trains, Boats, Planes, Bikes – and Swiss-Kiwi Yodellers!

This *Bodensee Bulletin* was starting out to be about various ways of getting round and seeing the country-side – until our train excursion to Luzern to see the Eidgenössisches Jodlerfest took a serendipitous turn. Don't you love it when luck works that way? Mani and I, with our friends Margrit and Roman, had caught an early train from St Gallen to Luzern and got there well before the action started. That gave us time to read the festival newspaper – and there, half of page 5 was a photo and story about the Swiss Kiwi Yodellers, and that they were performing that night. Some hasty re-planning, and we could just make their performance at the last possible moment before our last possible return train left.

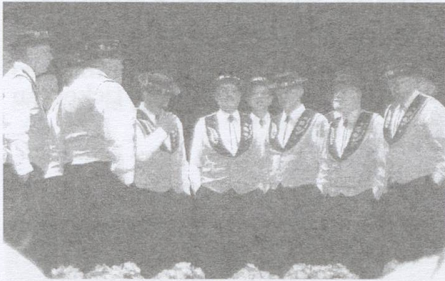


Mani with Ursula Arnold (conductor) and husband Peter Arnold (lead) and Kurt Hirzel, a foundation member of the group.

Meantime, the whole area along and on either side of the Seebücke was filling with what would end up being 360,000 visitors over the weekend and 12,000 performers. We followed some with flag-cylinders under their arms for the *Fahnenschwingen* – what an art those guys made out of waving and throwing a flag! As we arrived, the announcer was saying something we couldn't quite catch about New Zealand – so just in case, I gave the performer who followed a rousing 'kia ora'. Well – he wasn't a Kiwi, and may have been a little confused!

Later in the afternoon after listening to the start of the Alphorn competition, we were off in search of a beer – and guess where we found the Kiwis! They looked great and stood out from the more

traditionally dressed groups in the *tracht* that Yvonne Buhler had de-



Swiss-Kiwi yodellers on stage in Luzern

signed, complete with silver fern motif on one lapel and Edelweiss in the other. Yvonne and husband Marcus were also responsible for the float for Sunday's parade. We had a quick chat with Ursula and Peter Arnold, and with Kurt Hirzel and Tony Thum, then went off to listen to some other choirs. Talk about queues!

Later again, fortified by some food, we were queuing again to watch the Swiss-Kiwi performance when we had yet another stroke of luck. A chap we were standing with said "oh, the New Zealanders – no – they're in the Luzerner Saal just over there". A hurried queue change, and we were in.

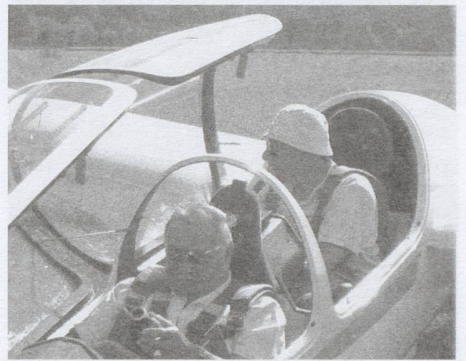
We suspected the crowd had a certain bias when they erupted with cheers as Ursula Arnold (conductor for the choir) hurried across the stage before the previous number. That was confirmed when the choir's arrival onstage was greeted with more applause and cheers. Happily – when they opened their mouths they earned every bit of the pre-applause. Their yodelling, led by Peter Arnold with a wonderfully pure tone and great flexibility, was just great. The crowd went wild. Of course our party was a little biased, but I don't think there could possibly have been enough Kiwis in the audience to make that kind of racket, so obviously the choir had many more admirers – and deservedly so.

So – what of trains, boats, planes, bikes?

Well – there was a "girls' day out" to Zurich, when Inge, Margrit

and I took the train to Rapperswil and then a paddle-steamer down the lake to the city. Short version: I love Zurich. Longer version may have to wait till there's more space.

Then, a glider-flight to see our place from a different perspective. Altenrhein has what it boasts is "the smallest international airport in Switzerland" – and it's home to a gliding club which offers short flights the first Sunday of every month. Having watched many gliders soaring over our deck-chairs (just another similarity with our Kapiti Village life), we couldn't resist. The pilot who took first me, then Mani, then Roman up, is com-



Mani in the glider

ing to NZ in December. He's keen to look at the Paraparaumu club, so we hope to see him again then. And yes – the electric bikes. It's like you're wearing seven league boots! I remember when I first started biking again, one of the joys was how far you could move with minimal effort. Well, imagine pushing a button that gives you a three-to-one power boost when you need it! I can accelerate up hills that were really hard (and sometimes impossible) before. You still have to pedal, and most of the time I have the power off to get the exercise value from biking, but... And there are even better ways to cheat the hills: we put the bikes on the *Bähnli* up to Walzenhausen the other day, and then it was a downhill ride all the way home! That little train is an amazing thing which hauls itself up a tremendous gradient which would defeat even jet-assisted bikes.