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Objektyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand**

Band (Jahr): **78 (2012)**

Heft [4]

PDF erstellt am: **02.05.2024**

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Isn't it interesting thinking what gives our brains pleasure? We know what gives our body pleasure (start with chocolate and go on from there....) We know what makes our social side smile (think about the relationships that matter and go on from there...) But - the things that make our brains start to sing seem to vary wonderfully from person to person. For me - it's about connections.

This month has been full of connections over time, so how happy my little brain has been!

It started out at dinner at the Swiss Club when our Taranaki friends came down for the Cowbell semi-final. You might remember from last Helvetia how taken I had been with the Boxthorn-cutting mammoth machines at Tawhiti Museum? Well - who should be at our table at dinner than one of my previously unknown heroes of Taranaki boxthorn-cutting fame - Lou Butler. So I got to hear about that amazing piece of local invention first-hand.

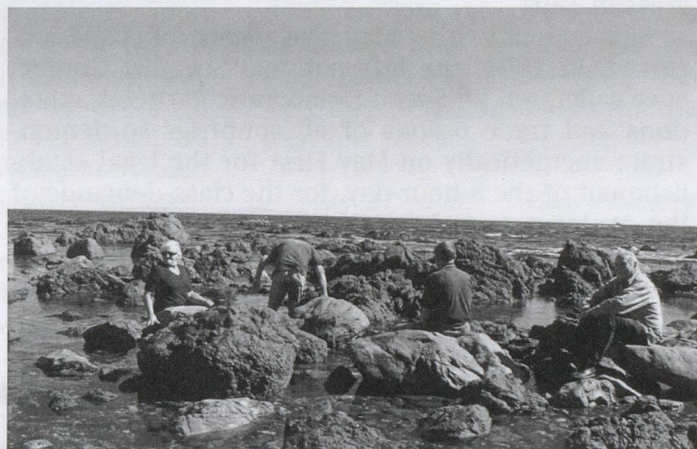
Also that day - Walter Seifried provided the link into another past-present connection. Elsewhere in Helvetia you'll see a request for some Sherlock-sleuthing around a set of old postcards from the early 1900s. Their recent story is also one of amazing connections. We met Bruno Böckli through Hans Küng last year in Switzerland. Bruno, whom some of you might remember from the 1970's here, is a collector of art and artefacts. Here's his story of how he got the postcards. "One of my "old" life-friends, who is a keen collector of postcards for the area of Zurich, got hold of these "Arnold"- postcards in the office of the University of Fribourg. Since many years he and a group of collectors select in Fribourg worthwhile postcards every week for an auction, which takes place on a yearly basis only. The benefit of those auctions goes towards cost of accommodation for (poor) students coming from overseas countries. My old friend had at the time the strong feeling that this collection of the "Arnold"-postcards should go to a funny Swisskiwi man called bloody Bruno! That's the story!"

So - Bruno sent them to Walter, and then over lunch in Altenrhein, we thought - "aha! let's see what a little story in Helvetia brings", so Walter lent them to me. They'll go back to Taranaki again soon. Bruno is a keen reader of Helvetia, so he'll be especially enjoying this issue, and looking forward to hearing what comes out of it when next we meet.

Another connection over time: a certain sauerkraut *Hobel*. On the way back from my father's 93rd birthday party we picked up maybe 80 kilograms of quinces. We'd once had the most glorious Quince Schnapps in Hungary, and Mani has been itching to make it ever since. So - we have the quinces - and some of you will know what a job they are to cut up. Inspiration! Once upon a time Mani and Hans Scherrer and Roland Schütz got together to make a seriously large five-bladed sauerkraut *Hobel*. It has survived several shifts and garage-cleanouts, because, as Mani says "it's not eating any hay". But you should see what it can do to quinces! Of

course this reminded Mani of the great sauerkraut-making working bees when a glut of cabbages resulted in Wellington Swiss Club members making huge drums of sauerkraut and supplying them to the Swiss Club in Melbourne. How they dealt with Aussie Border Control he can't remember - but it's hard to imagine that happening now!

And yet another then-now story ... when I was a girl, the Wairarapa Coast was our hunting ground for crayfish and paua. In those days the crays were so plentiful...sigh... that we'd take a sack-full back to boil up in the old copper. We kids had the job of trying to keep them marshalled in rows on the washhouse floor, largest crays in front to be first in to the boiling water, smallest at the rear, so they'd all finish cooking together when the fire burned out. Anyway - a call from sister-in-law Helen summoned us to join an impromptu part-family reunion out at Ngawi for paua-fishing. It was a trip back through time for both of us, because Mani had been out that way often too. The joy was that in this flick back to childhood summers, it was just as warm and clear as those days always are in memory. Blue sky and sea, clear water in still rock pools rich with seaweed snails and little fish, and family and friends enjoying it all. The only difference was the wet-suits. Did we not feel the cold as much once upon a time?



Paua gathering at Ngawi

Right now, we're storing up such "real-New Zealand" experiences, to carry away with us. Very soon, we'll be off again.

Meantime, there are things to do - this summer's Williams pears from an old farm hedgerow are fermented and awaiting the still. I've had a rush of the "here we go again and I still haven't progressed my German further" angst, and downloaded more language software. Why, I want to know, can't I download it directly into my brain yet?! There's a neighbourhood farewell party to have; we're lucky to have neighbours who are fascinated rather than horrified by our busy garage/winery/distillery, so they'll get to sample the recent fabulous elderflower wine, and the grappa from last year's grapes. And...and...and - never mind. The to-do list *will* get ticked off, but perhaps I'd better get back to it now!