

Obituary : George Bonny : 1913-2009

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We know now!

Do you remember the photo we published in the Helvetia of October 2008? We asked whether anyone recognized the five young men in the photo.

Bertha Kuriger-Kälin wrote:

The gentleman on the left is Charles Schuler. He came to New Zealand in 1909 and returned to Switzerland a couple of years later. Then he decided to go to America. On his journey to America, on the ship, he met Matilda Kaufmann who was travelling to New Zealand. Later Charlie Schuler also travelled to New Zealand and met up again with Matilda.

Charlie Schuler was working with Alexander Kälin (standing, in the middle) on the farms owned by Lord Rutherford at Cape Egmont - yes, Lord Rutherford who split the atom and whose portrait is on the \$ 100 note.

Alexander Kälin was a brother of my grandfather. They were from a family of 16 and lived at Egg, Einsiedeln. Three of the family came to New Zealand: Albert, Alexander and Bertha, who married Emil Schicker.

Charlie Schuler and Alexander Kälin worked together on the Rutherford farms for several years. I visited Alexander's only surviving daughter and she said she can remember her dad saying Charles and he milked 35 cows by hand. They started milking about 3 am so they could go to Rutherford's second farm down by the lighthouse, which was a flax mill. They worked at the flax mill all day, then went back to milk the cows again late afternoon. They worked long hours.

In 1913 Charles Schuler's sister Mary arrived from Switzerland. Mary was 17, and she took the job of being the housekeeper for her brother Charles and Alexander. Mary also worked hard in very primitive conditions. She must have been a good housekeeper, as Alexander Kälin married her on 6 June 1916. This was a double wedding, as Charles and Matilda were also married on the same day at the Pungarehu Catholic Church.

The Schulers and the Kälins worked together for some time and then each went sharemilking and later both purchased their own farm. Fifty years later they were fortunate being able to celebrate their Golden Wedding together at Pungarehu Church, 6 June 1966. Charles and Matilda were the parents of the late Charles Schuler.

The gentleman sitting in front left was N. Hürliemann. He lived at Mahoe near Mount Egmont. He never married. He always rode a bicycle as he went about visiting Swiss families. He enjoyed pruning the fruit trees for his friends. My brother Alf Kälin and I can remember him coming on his bicycle to our parents' place to trim the fruit trees. He always had some cuttings of fruit trees tied on the carrier of his bicycle.

That was in the late 1930s. Sorry, but we are not sure who the other two people are.



George Bonny

1913 - 2009

George Bonny was born in London in 1913 and had a brother Ray, a year or so younger. George's father and mother, who was a nurse, were not suited and they separated when the boys were quite young. Emile, the father, took the boys to Switzerland, the mother unsuccessfully tried to get them back to the UK. Emile was a musician and had very little money for the boys' education, so they were boarded out. George, through Emile's contacts, got an apprenticeship at Brown Boveri, and learnt to be a designer of machines. He was in London again around 1936, working for the General Aircraft Co. when he decided to go to New Zealand. By 1940 he had the option to carry on working in Auckland at the Radio 1936 Co. as he knew the physics side of the radio circuitry and could fix the problems.

However, by that time he already had a couple of years' experience with the Steel Construction Co. in Wellington as a draughtsman and was encouraged to take it further. He saw a university lecturer in Auckland who informed him what units he had to pass to get a diploma of Structural Engineering. After the war he worked in his own business and was considered very competent at calculations in structural engineering and very confident in designing.

He married Stephanie, a partly qualified architect around 1940 and they shifted to Titirangi in Auckland in 1951. George was interested in photography, music, pottery, stained glass pictures, the French Club, the Alpine Sports Club and could read German. The family shifted to Parnell in 1961. Stephanie died a few months before George in 2008 at the age of 90. George is survived by his three children Marc, Juliet and Paul and two grandchildren.

George was a member of the Auckland Swiss Club until he died.