

MG Manawatu trip to Whitecliffs Boulders Ohingaiti on Sunday 9th February.

Before the planning meeting in January I spoke to John Eames as to the location of these boulders, having seen them recently on a Flathills facebook page and I also remembered seeing them on the inside cover of a NZ Womens Weekly pictorial page years ago. These boulders had always fascinated me and I thought this could be a good location for an MG run. John advised the road trip involved a lot of walking and coming back it was a long climb over a steep hill, however the easiest way to see them was by rafting. His son organises tours down the Rangitikei river from Awastone at Mangaweka and he would see what could be organised.

So at the planning meeting the idea was put to those attending and well received.

So 8.10am Sunday on a cloudless sunny day we met 7 cars at the Railway station in Feilding and off we went to Awastone at Mangaweka. We met 3 other cars there and were given a cup of tea/coffee with a scone, then it was time for us to load into the van, taking two trips to take us to the river.

We went in by the Mangarere bridge with 24 people in 4 rafts and our guides Evan, Rana, Jack and Jordan.

Rana gave us all a valuable safety lesson of what to do should we fall out of the raft and how to behave in the water to get us back in the raft. Then he showed us how to put on our life jackets and once everyone was kitted up we ventured off with our guides.

The river was quite low, our guide Evan was very professional, we found out he had come out from Scotland and was on a working holiday in NZ, he had worked on many other rivers, both in NZ and all over the world. When he said to us paddle, the 6 of us did, then he would say stop and he would take over again, his experience really showed in the rapids area.

I loved the rapids, we must have had about a dozen in the whole trip and could imagine how exciting this would be if the river was higher, however for us it was a leisurely float down the river taking approx 1 hour to reach the Whitecliffs Boulders site. Then it was a small climb up a bank to the hill where the boulders lay. Wow it was quite sight seeing all these huge boulders entwined in the trees. Some had roots of the trees wound around the boulders, some had split in two and some were still intact the size of a car.

Awastone had provided lunch for us, we were spoilt, fresh bread and made your own sandwich with so many yummy fillings, fresh fruit, a lovely chocolate and raspberry slice and chippies, water, tea or coffee. Our guides were our lunch hosts, setting out the table and boiling the water.

There was a toilet situated in a nearby paddock near the site and i thought i would have to be brave and go, it was a little brown shed with corrugated iron door, complete with a large stone to step on to get inside the toilet. Wow upon opening the door here was a lovely flushing white toilet with handbasin, two taps, soap, quality toilet paper and a towel. I went back to the group and said has anyone been to the toilet, there was a hushed silence no, did you have to hold your nose I was asked, well I said you won't believe me if I tell you, you need to go and see it, so then there was a queue for the loo and everyone taken back with the fabulous toilet in the middle of nowhere. We were told the farmer who owns the land was a plumber!!

We set off again in our rafts with our guides and went for a further two hours floating down the river on a beautiful summers day watching those huge papa cliffs with their trees at the top looking like the next

wind would push them into the river and we met up with the odd sheep running along the bottom of the cliffs it truly was a wonderful experience.

Robert Wilson and Co in their raft produced a water pistol and can I say there were some splash battles all along the way back and if you did not get wet from rafting you did from the splash brigade. We had young Sarah and Monty up front who I could tell enjoyed this fun.

We came out at Otara road bridge and were met by van and bus to take us back to Awastone. We hopped into the bus, we had airconditioning, it was welcome as it was very hot and off we went. When the driver missed the turnoff and commenced driving up the Mangaweka hill we thought we must be on a mystery trip back, however, our driver who was used to always driving to Taihape, suddenly realised his mistake and we turned around at the top of the hill where we came back down. The showers at Awastone were available and a very pleasant rest of the afternoon was held with drinks and dinner purchased by many. A lot of the MG'ers were outside in a large table in the sun, but my lot opted to stay indoors away from the sun. We had entertainment from a young man from Whanganui so it was a very pleasant way to finish the day.

All 24 of us who went rafting thoroughly enjoyed the day, it seemed everyone was buzzing from the experience. It was such a great trip, one I will remember for years and our thanks must go to John Eames, Awastone, the River Rafting Company who along with their professional guides organised a fabulous day out for MG Manawatu.