Taranaki Overnighter.

Friday 17 October.

7 cars (5 with drivers only and 2 with couples) met in Bulls on a sunny morning and were given folders with detailed information about the weekend. A great effort by Neil and Liz. We were away by 9.30am. We met John and Viv at Turakina and on to Peat Park in Whanganui for a morning tea stop. With views of the mountains and the Targa Rally cars going the other way we continued north to Hawera where we left SH3 and on to the Surf Highway along the coast. After going through the bread capital Manaia we turned off to Kaupokonui Beach for lunch. We sat in the sun by the river watching the whitebaiters. Back on to the main highway to Opunake and a visit to Citizen Leather. Layla cut up an old leather jacket and showed us how to make a bag. Leatherworker Steve gave a talk saying he did the leatherwork for the Lord of the Rings and other New Zealand made movies. They were both very interesting. After a look round the wide variety of leather goods in the showroom we continued on to EnviroFur. This is in an old dairy factory. The possum furs come from the South Island because they are bigger and have better fur. We were surprised at the range of clothing and articles they made. We then carried on to our accommodation in New Plymouth. A pleasant 5 minute walk got us to our evening meal at the Good Home. An interesting and enjoyable day.

Saturday 18 October.

We set off on a fine cloudy morning for Tupare Gardens. Entrance is free as it is owned and managed by the Taranaki Regional Council. We took our morning tea and had it near the entrance. We had plenty of time to explore the large hilly gardens until the guided tour of the Chapman Taylor designed house at 11am. We had an excellent guide who told us the history of the property and about every room. Chapman Taylor designed it but the owner had his own ideas which led to a falling out between them! The house is solid concrete construction with Jarrah woodwork. Lunch was at the Summerset Village cafe with a wide range of good food. An excellent choice. We then went to the Taranaki Aviation Technology and Transport Museum. This was in several spread out buildings. The men especially found the technology part fascinating. The volunteer guides were very good. There was no time for the scenic drive up the mountain so it was back to the motel. The evening meal at Gengys was good value. Another good day.

Anne and John Ireland.