




Napier Gentle Annie Weekend Run

It's Thursday the 27th of April. I am looking at my phone for the weather report for the coming weekend. There had already been widespread flooding around various parts of the country in early April. and Cyclone Cook had moved down the Eastern side of the country after that. So, I was eager to get the low down as to what to expect for the much-anticipated Napier Gentle Annie Weekend organised by Sandy and Trevor Hardy.

The news was not good for Hawkes Bay, Saturday had rain showers and Sunday had a 100% chance of downpours . Rain coats and gum boots may be needed on the packing list.

Oh well at least we had a GT.

We turn up to the Ashhurst Domain Car Park on Cambridge Street as arranged with about half the 17 or so cars expected already there. Drivers and passengers all out chatting in the lovely Autumn/Winter weather with nary even a heavy jacket in sight let alone a rain coat. There were a lot of GT's present though.

After a briefing from Sandy, and Trevor handing out the quiz questions for the trip we all set off over the Saddle Road. The quiz questions, Sandy assured us, would be able to be seen well enough as she had done so with Trevor as he was whizzing along at 100mph. I am sure it was a slip of the tongue on Sandy's Part. And, there was a mystery question to be answered verbally at the end as well. We had to guess what the question would be so our focus would be on what is going past us (at a bit less than 100mph).

The saddle was a bit busier than Sandy was hoping due to the major slip in the Manawatu Gorge earlier in the week, but it was okay. We travelled around Woodville and Dannevirke via Pinfold and Top Grass Roads then onto Onga Onga for a lunch stop and even more cars to join us. I won't put any names in here as I am bound to forget someone and I am not one to intentionally offend. I was struggling to keep up with who we had with us anyway with about 30 or so participants and several new faces, for me anyway.

After learning a bit about the history of Onga Onga, with the local museum opening the buildings up especially for us and enjoying a relaxed BYO picnic lunch in idyllic, and rather colourful, pre-fall settings we carried on up to Napier to meet at the Faraday Centre.

One of the party even made enquiries at Onga Onga regarding a suitor of sorts from time passed where probably distance and circumstance prevented them from being closer friends. I for one would be interested to see if the enquiries have led to any further contact.

The Faraday Centre is well worth anyone's time to visit for both young and old. It focuses on technology history and is very hands on with an old switch board party line in use and cable messaging system (txt by wire I suppose). After Faraday, we had some time to just do what we wanted till we all gathered at the motel.

The motel is a recycled small local hospital in Green Meadows, which made for some interesting décor in the rooms and a lovely communal kitchen/gathering area which we used to gather and chat before getting ready to go out for diner. Sandy revealed the joint winners of the quiz being the Eames' and Robyn and Graham with the mystery question being how many one-way bridges did we cross. Most of us thought this might be the question but we were part way through the trip when we did.

We piled into the mini-van taxis arranged to take us to the RSA and I think we all got overloaded on the massive variety of quality food available at the buffet of the RSA.

After a great night at the Taradale RSA we returned to the motel and we went over music preferences with a record player and records available for use in a communal kitchen dining area. This led us onto fashion in times gone by. Viv revealing that during that (great) time when mini (or was it micro) skirts were in vogue she had a pant suit but she never bothered with the pants as the top came down far enough. I couldn't help but notice John grinning quietly making out he was looking at a record or something as though he wasn't paying much attention to what was being said. I wandered off to our room to the sound of people laughing and having a very jovial time.

Sunday, we got up, fed ourselves at the more than ample facilities and then drove to the RSA to meet for our days briefing.

We headed up towards the Gentle Annie with an overcast day and some drizzle patches keeping with us. We made a quick stop at the Kuripapango rest area which we thought may have been good for lunch but decided to move on as it was a bit early when we got there.

We filed into the informal rest area near the Springvale Historic Suspension Bridge which crosses the Rangitikei River next to the bridge currently used by traffic today.

Built in the 20's the bridge has been restored to an amazingly good condition which much of the original Australian Hardwood timbers still in place along with the 44mm galvanised suspension cables. And with the sunshine coming out for us to have our lunch it was a marvellous opportunity for a final natter and then each to carry on home as and when we pleased.

Of course, a big thank you was given to Sandy and Trevor for their efforts with the fantastic organisation and itinerary. Well done Hardy's a very good trip was had by all.



Rob Illingworth