

Saturday 13th October, seven MG's met at the Feilding Railway Station at 8.45am to depart 9am. Robyn and Graeme our leaders for this part, was unaware of the road closures at Utiku (truck accident) or the Desert Road (snow). A quick phone call to our organiser Larry at Turangi and he didn't know this either.

We waited for the last car to arrive (Neil and Liz), it transpired that it was Neil's birthday so on arrival we all sang Happy Birthday to him. He was surprised. "Ok" said Robyn we will head out and by the time we get to the road closures it may have all changed. A good run on SH54 and we get to the top of the hill where SH54 joins SH1 to a road block, queued traffic mainly trucks on SH1.

We met up with Robin and Claire who were waiting in their modern.

Graeme decided to check out with NZTA officials to ask if we could be let through to Mangaweka. A phone call to the boss, NO, if they let us through it would cost them their job. Ok so time to get out the chairs, thermos and the MG flag for morning tea.

There was entertainment in the paddock across from us a cow and a bull!!!! whilst we had our morning tea. One hour later we approached the NZTA guys again, nothing happening. Meantime our MG'ers were talking to the Brains at Mangaweka by cellphone, and worked out a way to get around the road block. So off we went turning to the left I am sure the NZTA guys thought we were giving up or taking the Parapara/Wanganui way which they had suggested. We had a quick toilet stop in Hunterville, did a u turn and headed back the way we had come turning left at Murimotu Road then right at Kiekie road and we were back on SH1 bypassing the road block, you can't fool MG'ers.

It was so strange no traffic as we all roared off along SH1. A brief stop at Mangaweka and we found we didn't need to stop just carry on to meet up with John and Helen who were waiting at the next road block, corner of SH1 and Gorge Road at Utiku. They had been waiting an hour and a half!!!! Helen ran down to tell us we are going to do the back road to Taihape. John had been speaking to the Higgins guys at the road block. They had just started letting the southbound traffic through BUT the north bound would not be going for another 2 hours!!!!.

So John had another cunning plan, we would turn right at Gorge Road and go the back road to Taihape. Only 30Km he thought. The Higgins guys said we would encounter trucks, narrow roads and get lost etc but off we went following John and Helen (who said it was their old school bus route) with a couple of moderns as well who thought this sounds like a good idea. We went through gravel roads, narrow passages, encountered a car and caravan but saw the most spectacular scenery and gorges.

Arrived Taihape 1pm - some 40kms later. We were supposed to be at Stump Bay Turangi with our picnic lunch. So we sat on the Taihape Railway Platform and imagined it was the lake. We set off again for Waiouru and by this time the Desert Road was open, however there was significant snow around the area. There were 4 snow ploughs on "standby" not sure why as there was no snow near the road and a bluish cloudy sky with no sign of snow!!.

We arrived at the Turangi Bridge Motel at 3pm, some 6 hours after setting off from Feilding.

Larry said I THOUGHT YOU GUYS WERE NEVER COMING. He and Diane had their picnic lunch on the deck of their house while waiting for us.

Some of our group took the opportunity to visit the river next door and view the hopeful trout fishermen in the water trying to catch a trout.

Paul and Josie had come the night before (smart move) and Janice and Alan had come over from the Hawkes Bay via Napier/Taupo road. We noted only 1 MGF and 1 MGTF, the rest were either MG BGT's or MG Tourer, and a modern a total of 12 cars. Much talking as we were all catching up with each other.

By 5pm most of us made our way to the bar, where our leaders Larry and Diane had changed into a Sheriff and Indian squaw costumes which gave us all a laugh.

There was much laughter and chatter during the dinner which we all enjoyed followed by dessert. We had the chef make a small cheesecake with a candle for Neil and we all sang happy birthday again.

Larry had hidden under the chairs in the dining room 5 lucky vouchers, one entitled the holder to a free meal which Paul found and the other a \$10 voucher and the other 3 were vouchers to say you had won with the words \$priceless and the "lucky" recipients received medals saying they were winners. Much more laughter.

In the morning we lined up in our cars outside the motel. There was a frost overnight -1c and very white on the ground first thing. However all the MG's fired up first time.

Larry took us for a tiki tour of Stump Bay where we were supposed to have had lunch, most of us didn't know it existed. A turnoff to a lovely bay and would have been great venue for a lunch stop. Then we went on to the Marina at Motuoapa, its certainly a lot bigger than I remember. We turned off to the right and viewed the large number of properties now at Motuoapa, it certainly has grown, coming back to park outside Larry and Diane's house.

We were introduced to their neighbours, who had come over to help Larry and Diane with brunch. We had a lovely cup of coffee in warmed mugs (nice touch) as it was a brisk beautiful cloudless sunny day. Larry had us pick a colour and this was the team we were in for the 9 holes of mini golf on his back lawn. Our team green were first off, it looked easy enough, even though Larry had mowed the grass the balls seemed to go in a very different direction to where we wanted them to go. We could not find Hole 4 Larry had forgotten to put in the flag pole for that. At one stage it looked like the 5 teams consisting of 4 members each were all engaged in friendly golf crossfire but fortunately nobody got hurt.

Our team finished first and were able to watch the other teams still playing. Once all were finished Larry, Diane and their neighbours cranked up the bbq for a

very lovely and welcome brunch, sausages, bacon, hashbrowns, eggs and baked beans.

Larry said the PINK team had won closely followed by our Green team, it sure was a lot of fun and a great way to mix everyone up. Once again those "winner" medals were given out.

Trev and I then left as we were heading for a night in Taupo to return home Monday and the others all heading off back home. Some were going to stop at the Rangipo Intake road on the way home which we were supposed to stop at on the way up. The view on the way home on Monday was fantastic the three mountains looked spectacular against the cloudless blue sky. Coming home I noted the time it took from Taihape to where we turned off to Gorge Road was 4minutes hmm.. as opposed to the almost one hour it took us on the bypass route on the way up.

So all in all it was a great weekend, big thanks to Larry and Diane for organising a great weekend, we had it all, road closures x 2, drama, adventure, lots of unplanned spectacular scenery, fun, much laughter and a sense of competitiveness and fellowship.