

## **Mooching the Manawatu**

There is nothing like an MG mooch in the middle of winter, exploring roads and viewing scenery as sun peeks out through grey clouds onto a saggy countryside. It is a time to put aside the qualms of the daily grind, to return (temporarily) grandchildren to their rightful homes and don the woolly scarves, hats/bonnets, rugged coats and thick socks and drive, if you are brave enough, top down through our rural roading network.

17 MG's (including a couple of vehicular cousins) met outside AFC Motorcycles in Terrace End, Palmerston North as instructed by our leader of the day Rob Illingworth on 15<sup>th</sup> July, all intent on fellowship and exploration. Rob led us south-eastwards down Main Street then left onto Vogel St, where we journeyed on to Railway Road towards Bunnythorpe, exiting the township via Dixons Line towards Colyton. After we went through Colyton, we turned onto Valley Road where the country side here, despite a cold and wet winter looked well and pristine and as we turned into Taonui Road, the scenery continued to please. Healthy and contented sheep and cows grazed on properties, and the trees, generally native, gave balance to the rural scenes, of the low lying hills with small valleys formed by wandering streams.

Finally, having followed the Valley Road onto the Pohangina Road, we travelled alongside the Pohangina River alongside lower Ruahine Ranges on the far side of the valley, windmills busily generating power thanks to a cold and vigorous wind striding across the countryside. Our trip continued on through Ashhurst, temporarily causing more traffic congestion at the intersection with the Saddle Road, as SH1 traffic merged with us MGSers.

We followed Rob back along Napier Road towards Palmerston North, mingling with the usual state highway traffic, until we arrived in Palmerston North where we all turned off into the carpark of Sosky's Café and completely took over the carpark. Great conversations were enjoyed, yummy lunches devoured, noting that Viv had snuffled Rob's fish and chips, before walking into the facilities next door, of Mike Racing, formerly the location of a plant and gift shop.

Mike Racing is a company which provides professional racing management services and support to its customers who do real endurance car racing – you know, the kind of racing that competes in Dubai and Asia, while at the same time establishing similar events in New Zealand at Manfield and Christchurch. The large room was set up with Porsches, Hondas, Aston Martins, Lotus's and Mercedes Benz along with a Kawasaki 4-wheel bike and a huge Hummer 6.5 STD (almost as wide as it was long) and a KTM XBOW.

Note on some details on the XBOW and Mike Racing from Rob;

The XBOW was built for racing and although legal on the road the machine we saw would be more at home and suited on a track to enable it to unleash its full potential

At around 800 kg in weight (about the same as a MG Midget) it is powered by a 2-litre power plant pushing out 300hp and 420 Nm of torque, enabling it to accelerate to 100kph in a fraction under 4 seconds. With a top speed of over 200 kph you want to ensure your brakes are up to the task. The XBOW can stop from 100kph in just under 33 meters. Just one of the very impressive machines Mike had on display.

The 3 SLS Mercedes gull wing race cars Mike had for us to gape and gasp at are all very, very impressive, I hesitate to call them machines as to many of us they are more works of art. They are set up and tuned specifically for particular races from local, national, and international events of varying distance right up to 24-hour events in the likes of Dubai. Tuning takes into account the track, driver(s), conditions, type of event and competition and is very precise.

Mike imports and sells exotic cars and is very easy to get along with and talk to. His knowledge of the vehicles he imports, and sells is second to none. Thank you, Mike, for taking the time to show us around your vehicles.

Back to Sue;

This was a league of racing way beyond the comprehension of some of us, especially the author, who found the enormity of these racing machines –even somewhat threatening, if apparently stunningly designed. Our thanks must go to Mike for opening his rooms for our visit – very much petrol-head stuff!

The day ended with wandering around the carpark, meeting our new members Alan and Robyn who have moved from New Plymouth, Daniel Fyles of Palmerston North and his mother Audrey from Leyland, NE England. We also took the opportunity to check out Doug Angove & Jan Hewlett's new possession, a Blue MGF. The author was also proud to show off her new companion – a 2004 MGZR called "Scruffy"! A happy and friendly day – thanks to Rob for his organisation.

Sue Forde