

Rob's Rally Run

We should all know by now that when Robert plans a run he will do so with a huge amount of effort and planning. We also look forward to the day knowing Rob's Rally Runs have that point of difference which requires each of us to be alert and get on well with our navigator! Yet above all to appreciate the beautiful country we travel and to thoroughly enjoy the moment.

A good number of us (including some new members with their new MG acquisitions) turned up at the Ashhurst Domain prepared for an 11am start. The first objective of the day was to drive off with time having been recorded, following a sheet of instructions provided by Robert, and in a single timed sequence with the instruction to drive an average of 50kph, return time to be recorded upon arrival back at the Domain. It was a lovely journey on a Spring-like day, through Ashhurst, across the Saddle Road – up to Pinfold Road, then back onto SH2 back through the Manawatu Gorge. Given both Rachel and I had arrived without navigators, we decided to leave my car at the Domain and I attempted to navigate. It was a reasonably simple rally/time trial, so we could both just enjoy the fresh country air, the bird calls and the superb views of the country-side. What Robert was unaware of however, was that progress through the gorge was stalled given the road maintenance activities and the temporary installation of traffic control lights, which stymied Robert's plans to ensure times taken were a realistic record! What Robert has decided to do to the time results following that interruption remain to be seen?

After a lovely leisurely lunch in the Ashhurst Domain and delivery by Robert of the next sheet of instructions, Rachel & I decided to drive our own cars, acknowledging that as solo drivers, we would find things a little slower as we constantly checked instructions and answered questions to the quiz Robert had scheduled to be responded to during the journey. This time there was no timing of our trip, but the driving instructions included a scattering of those questions throughout so for the solo driver you had to be very aware of your surroundings, while keeping your eye on the road. Our journey took us away from the Ashhurst Domain again, turning left, then right down Fitzherbert East Road (SH57), checking out clues to the questions, then stopping as instructed at the antique shop and the small Church at Aokautere, we began to see glimpses of Manawatu's history – what year was that little church built?

Following that, a small loop around the suburban streets of Aokautere, then turning left down Old West Road we continued down SH57, on past Linton Camp, then turned right into Akers Road, to stop at the Linton Country School to answer more questions. Shortly after that we were instructed to turn right into Linton Drain Road. This long straight road is accompanied by a long straight man-made ditch, excavated in the 1920's to attempt to manage the regular flooding of this extensive Manawatu flood plain and ensure the stability of the North Island Main Trunk Line. It was an area where dairy farming was prevalent, with frequent wafts of the smell of dairy farm waste or closely grazing dairy cows. After all, it is Spring!

Leaving the Linton Drain Road to join Tane Road and later the Opiki Road, one became aware of the evidence of deep layered peat which is an unhappy foundation for the roading network. The roads rocked and rolled and undulated, which caused the car to bump and lurch along the way, requiring

extra attention to the driving. More questions were asked and answered, more instructions followed along these wallowing roads and we found ourselves ducking under a rail bridge at Tokomaru before turning left onto SH 57 back towards Palmerston North – via Old West Road, then taking a right turn up Kahuterawa Road.

This time the rally took us (for many of us – the first time) up a winding road into the hills where native forest and sheep and cattle farming covered the hill country. Vistas around each corner were breath-taking – what beautiful country – hills and valleys – the sounds of birds in the trees and burbling streams. After the last instruction to turn right into the Kahuterawa Park, and the last question answered – we found ourselves in the most glorious park, surrounded in native bush alongside the bustling waters of the Kahuterawa Stream, and in the company of some very elegant roosters. What a beautiful location. It took a while for the final vehicles to arrive so given the time this journey took we decided to forego Robert's third planned adventure, and all drive together into town to enjoy a coffee at Breakers Restaurant before departing for home.

Thanks must go to Robert whose creativity and planning gave us all a great fun day, an opportunity to discover yet more beautiful parts of the Manawatu and we await with interest for the MG Christmas event to hear the results of the quiz.