

'A Head Scratching Run'

Fortunately, the head scratching component of the run featured while we were all settled in the Hall at Apiti. For those of us who drive solo, the thought of trying to resolve some directional problems without a navigator while motoring around the hill country of northern Manawatu was a little disconcerting! Actually, the journey was one of discovery, of learning more about the communities around which these twisting and turning roads wander. To say nothing of the gorgeous glimpses of superb scenery as we followed our leaders, Murray and June, in their classic 4wd Land Rover.

We all met at Kimbolton (12 cars), and once all were gathered, we were lead just down Grammar St in Kimbolton to the home of Rob Green, whose house and work-sheds seemed happily ensconced in well-established trees and gardens, until he lead us around to the back of his section where we were introduced to a healthy stand of 26 year old pine trees. Rob talked to us of his long-time passion – making pine wood coffins, showing us every step of the way, how he picked the tree, felled it and sliced the long trunks into neat slim planks. They are then left to dry naturally, after which he cuts them into sizes and shapes to create beautiful simple natural coffins. Once completed, a calico pillow and mattress is made with a filling of pine shavings. Nothing wasted, and purely organic, guaranteed to decompose organically and quickly. It was fascinating to meet a man so passionate about the environment and so creative and thoughtful about his craft.

Time was now upon us to get back on the road again, so we continued on motoring down Grammar Street, right into Flyger Line, then Fleury St then into Rangiwahia Road. After many k's of gorgeous northern Manawatu scenery, we turned right into Te Parapara Road which also took us through more vistas of natural bush and farmland, finally coming across the Mangahua Wetlands on Main South Road. This gorgeous piece of country is owned and managed by Michael Bourke who has established a beautiful wetland by digging out swampy ground to form large shallow lakes, fed constantly by local streams, and finally running out into a stream taking the water on to the Oroua River. He created an island in the larger lake, then set about landscaping and planting the 40 acre area in a great variety of trees and shrubs. 25 years later, the landscape has evolved into a very pretty setting with a large variety of water birds and handsome white swans who have made this beautiful place home. Recently, a couple chose the location as perfect for a wedding, with the island being the destination for their first night together as a married couple, while their guests camped on the banks of the lake! Michael expressed his passion for his wetlands and its inhabitants, and even spoke of his earliest memories as a farm boy, giving us a vision of life for these pioneering farmers in the early 1900's, the family having owned the property for three generations.

We then drove on down Main South Road (the Manawatu Scenic Route), which took us into Apiti where we all stopped outside the shop (Creative Woodwork) and the work-room of Errol (Terry) McKay. Many of us were stunned at the beauty of the wonderfully crafted pieces of wood Errol (Terry) showed us. He seemed to have an extraordinary ability to see the potential of every piece of wood he'd picked up, and crafted it in a way that the original piece retained its individual personality whilst being honed and turned. The grain of the wood was essential to the finished article, including the bark skin, all remaining in its entirety in the finished piece of work. There were coffee tables, clocks, mirrors, picture frames, pieces of wood in their natural state, some with delightfully crafted