

Taranaki – the long way around.

Taranaki's rural roads are by necessity – wiggly – uphill and down dale – hard turn left here, and then a right, then up over a hill then down over a one way bridge, then suddenly off the bridge, turn left and drop a gear to climb yet another hill. We startled horses in roadside paddocks, surprised cows munching on silage and were totally ignored by the occasional roadside goat. As we meandered through farm land and beautiful track-hugging lush native forest, seemingly to resent the foray of human society, we were all mesmerised by the beauty of the scenery, and of course the constant domineering majesty of Mt Taranaki and the surprise peeks at Mts Ruapehu and Tongariro.



The Manawatu MG Club's road trip to Taranaki on the weekend of 13 – 15 June was a tremendous success, thanks in no small measure to members Robin and Claire Brown. Their planning, knowledge of the area, organising of meals, trip stops, entertainment and briefings made the trip memorable. Of course, what was also important was that Taranaki put on a weekend of gorgeous weather. Frankly, there is nothing quite like driving, top down for some of us, through mild clear winter air where the light gave everything, cows and horses included, clarity of detail and colour not seen at other times of the year. Photographers made the most of

every opportunity to record the sights and scenes of rural Taranaki. 16 MGs of various vintages and models started at the lake edge of Virginia Lake, in Wanganui in the morning, leaving that gathering place at 8.30am. It was cold, but clear, but with many of the cars still dripping with heavy dew, and only a hardy few starting the journey – top down.

Trip Stop and Information sharing

Way along yet another windy rural road, we stopped to regroup again and Robin took the opportunity to talk to trippers of plans for the rest of the day, he was out debated by a resident rooster, of very elegant and erudite conduct who obviously objected to Robin's self-assumed leadership role on his kingdom and crowed far louder than Robin could! At least I think we were all well informed of the rest of the day's actions.



Tarata and Brian and Helen Hocken's farm

Lunch at the Hocken farm, at the end of a long country road, where a barbecue was hastily assembled and it wasn't long before we were all dining on hot chips, beetroot salad, steak and sausages in the wool shed. It was an opportunity for the Hocken's to introduce their daughter and her husband who were now managing the property and gave us a short history of the generational occupancy and management of the farm for 4 generations. Much was acknowledged of the

determination and passion founded by the original family and still evident in Jared and Sarah's character. Fascinating also was the trip we took leaving the property, cross-country through the centre of the farm, noting the significant use of road signs and notices, previously used in a more official manner, now adding to the charm and sense of humour of the residents!



Waitara and the Johnstone Collection

Our first visit to a private collection was to wander through Colin Johnstone's property admiring the stunning antique touring car, parked with great dignity outside the Waitara Fire Brigade building and front of the vintage fire engine, previously owned by the fire brigade. Alongside other classic vehicles and motoring stuff, was a massive collection of radiograms, phonographs, stereo sets and 45 vinyls and LP's. Mind blogging really, and much to be admired.



New Plymouth – time for fellowship and rest

Our stay, at the Flamingo Motels, in New Plymouth was a great opportunity to continue the tripping connection fostered that morning. A bulk purchase of fish and chips scoffed in the games room of the motel, kindly lent to us by the proprietors, an impromptu sweepstake on the England/All Blacks game being held in Dunedin on Saturday evening and the Sunday morning breakfast barbecue all added to great kinship of the motoring/touring kind. After breakfast and yet another briefing at 9.30am, we set off for another day's tripping around the country.

A collector's dream stop- Trevor & Julie Cox

Many of us were blown away by the massive collection which Trevor and Julie had gathered over the years. Everything from Holdens and Fords and farm machinery, to a sizeable collection of ornamental pigs, and yet many more road and street signs.

I kind of fell for this dear little cream vintage Citroen, looking very much alone in the shed crammed among elderly trucks, chainsaws, farm equipment and all sorts of yesteryear paraphernalia with a motoring link. It (the Citroen) seemed to be saying to me "Please take me home with you, I promise I'll get on well with your MGF and your Bengal cat – we'd be so good together". I stood there gazing at in awe, wondering what on earth Maggie my MG would think. But the wiser and more knowledgeable around me said that while it has spiked wheels, rare for a Citroen, and was born in the early 1930's, probably with a wooden frame, it would take heaps of money and expertise to restore it'. Oh well.



Dawson Falls – Lunch and time to Explore

At breakfast, we had all assembled a bun of bacon and egg barbecued after breakfast, lettuce and sauce if you wanted it, wrapped it up in glad wrap for our lunch, and having wended our way along these gorgeous rural roads yet again, climbed into the higher country of native bush heading towards Dawson Falls. 16 MGs completely filled the carparking space at the Dawson Falls Information Centre and Café where the mountain truly commanded our attention and where we lunched and chatted, while some of us explored the walks in the surrounding bush and viewed the falls for themselves, and a working vintage hydro power station.



Ag Museum – Ian and Jean Harrison

Is there something about Taranaki, which encourages people to begin collecting in such an extensive way? Boys toys of the vintage kind - tractors, bulldozers, farm machinery

and surveying equipment, and yet again more road signs were abundant again, most in great condition for their age including a couple of tractors in which Ian and Jean had toured around New Zealand over 40 years ago! Jean was very generous in providing a lovely home-made afternoon tea for us all and Ian very generously shared his favourite vintage bulldozer, by starting it up, driving it out into the paddock and encouraging some of our members to have a go! Happiness is!



Homeward Bound

As I drove into my garage at about 9pm on Sunday night, I did wonder how Robin and Claire managed to get home after his car struck mechanical trouble, but he seemed confident he would fix it. At Wanganui it was tops back into position, and another coffee and a hamburger for the rest of the journey home in the dark. A truly awesome weekend.