

WHANGANUI WHANDERINGS 17 April 2016

On a rather overcast morning, but at least calm and dry, 12 cars assembled at the Feilding Railway Station to head over for our cruise on the Whanganui River. This run, there was a majority of our older vehicles turning out – interesting how this varies from run to run, with others being represented more by our modern counterparts. However, everyone warmly welcome of course.

After a run through of the day's itinerary and handing out the route instructions, we set off towards Halcombe, and through to SH1, before turning off on to Makirikiri Road. We followed this through the small settlement of Crofton and along to where we conveniently turned off before the road works, on to Williamsons Line and through to the Wanganui Road towards Turakina. Although it wasn't remarkably clear, there were views to be had of Ruapehu, and also Taranaki.

On reaching Turakina, we were joined by another two cars, who fell into convoy the short distance along the highway, before turning off to Lake Wairua for our morning tea stop. A surprise here to see an unfamiliar MGA waiting for us – how did he get here, I wondered. However, all was explained, and although unable to join us for the rest of the day, perhaps a new recruit to our ranks.

It seems a good many people hadn't visited this lovely little lake; driving past often on the way from A to B, without realising what was down the road. A good chance for some more chat and a cuppa, and comments about returning another day, before we headed in to Wanganui and parked up along the river by Mr Hatrick's Motor Vessel Wairua. It was with a sense of excitement we climbed aboard and found our possies, and settled down for our one hour cruise up the river. By now the sun was breaking through and conditions were perfect, as we steadily chugged our way upstream, under the city bridges and admiring some lovely houses along the riverbank. Our captain David was a wealth of knowledge, and regaled us with fascinating stories of the history of the river, the boats that plied them, and stories of the area.

On reaching the settlement of Upokongaro, and a gentle berthing courtesy of Sam, the apprentice captain, we climbed up to the roadside and crossed over to the local café, where we ordered some refreshments and enjoyed the lovely outdoor setting, and each other's company. Some had time for a wander to see the sights, including the little church with its unusual steeple, before we headed back to the boat and what seemed a much quicker return journey downstream and to our cars.

Those that were still keen for more driving then went on another excursion, following along the river bank towards Aramoho, before turning inland up Brunswick Road, and Western Line, which made for an interesting drive with some quite narrow roads, tight corners, one way bridges and railway crossings. Then up the main highway before turning off towards Kai Iwi Beach and views of the sea, before a stop in at the Bason Gardens.

Some people made their way home from here, and a few more did the last few k back into Wanganui via Springvale, and a welcome refreshment stop at McDonalds, before they too decided it was home time.