

# 2007 Lost Tour

## From Open Gardens to Open Road

BY Sandra Bray

We headed for Taranaki a day before the Leyland P76 “Lost Tour” was due to start in Stratford. This meant that we could have a leisurely drive to New Plymouth and stay the night in Bell Block with some friends.



Friday morning, we visited an ‘open garden’ in the area which was a large and impressive residence on a well-fenced section containing all sorts of plants from small azaleas to enormous succulents and cacti mixed with boulders.

Later that morning we stopped at Tupare Gardens at the top of Mangorei Road, but the timing was not right for a decent show of rhododendrons.

Next stop was McFarlane’s Café in Inglewood for lunch, then a short run out along SH43 before

returning to Stratford for a chat with the local physiotherapist about Dave’s gammy leg.



Early check-in at the motel before the team arrived and we congregated for nibbles and drinks. Dinner at the Midhurst Tavern was fine, once it arrived, but in the meantime the company was great.

Saturday saw us on the road soon after 9am on the undulating and twisty SH 43 – “The Forgotten Highway”. Stops were made to read Heritage signs about Douglas, Strathmore Saddle and Te Wera before arriving in

Whangamomona to have coffee and so on at the hotel there.

Soon after we were on about 20kms of unsealed road including passing through a very narrow wooden-framed tunnel – “Hobbits Hole”. By the time we reached Taumarunui we were more than ready for a late lunch of fantastic kebabs and a decent coffee.

Back to the garden theme. There were some enormous brightly coloured azalea bushes where we parked the cars.

Close to 3pm we left Taumarunui heading for Ohakune, including a stop at Horopito’s “Smash Palace” scene. Unfortunately, some would say, the place was closed.

Oh dear, too bad, never mind!

The Peaks Motor Inn was a good choice of accommodation as we could see snow on the lower levels of Mt. Ruapehu from our



back door. The Cyprus Tree (I always thought the tree was a 'cypress') provided good food and service in a town that appeared to be very quiet at this time of the year.

Sunday departure 9am and 12kms up the mountain to park and see the view – but not today! Drizzly & cloudy.

Back to Ohakune to buy lunch of rolls, sandwiches and juice then through Raetihi to our first stop at Pipiriki for attention to one P76 windscreen wiper, fortunately on the passenger' side.



Did anyone else see the caravan on the roadside selling hot pies?

There was a longer stop at Jerusalem to see the church and convent after a great view looking down to the river. Just before the end of the 37km stretch of gravel road at Matahiwi we stopped to visit Kawana Flour Mill, which had been restored, and was opened by Keith Holyoake in 1980.



Our picnic lunch stop was great, especially as the drizzle held off until we were just about to leave. Next stop gave us a great view back up the Whanganui river valley, so cameras were busy once again.

Driving into Wanganui (different spelling to the river, please note) the group – well, Ed actually – wanted a photo in front of the railway station, but since Wanganui no longer has such a thing it was taken where it used to be.

After a very welcome trip through a car wash for the Land Rover (at 3.9 litres, only a "P65") and showers for ourselves, we were ready for the "Stella Café" at 6pm.

Great food, great company, fun waitress, so a good way to end the long weekend of about 850kms in our case.

Thanks everyone – we had a ball!