

# The Bits Missed Tour

30/10/2009

BY Rosalie Maundry

Friday 30 October, we left home at 8.30 a.m. just as the power went off. While driving from our gate we could see black smoke and flame coming from the oil refinery chimney. Turning on the car radio we heard that power was off all the way from Auckland to the top of the country. The oil refinery which shuts down automatically when electric power is lost sends unprocessed material up the flare stack to be burnt as a safety precaution.

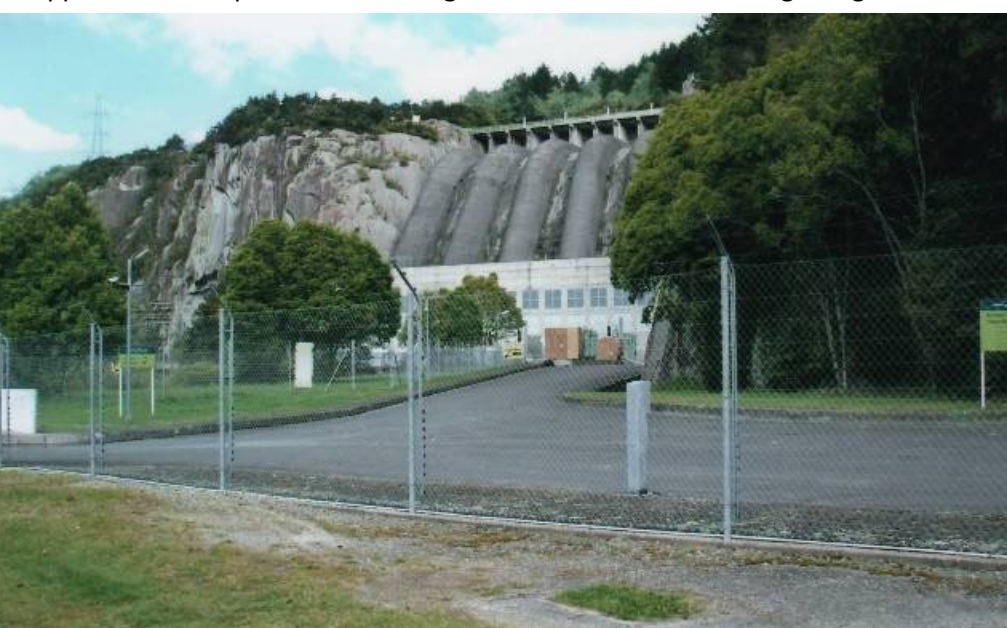
Road works and Auckland's traffic saw us have a slow drive down to Hamilton, arriving at Ed and Annette's at around 12.30 p.m. The four of us set off on a tiki tour to Taupo to meet up with the rest of the Bits Missed tourists. Through Whatawhata, down to Te Awamutu for our first fuel stop then across country to Bryce's Wharepapa Out Door cafe for lunch.

*(Right: Waipapa Lake Bridge)*

We stopped for photos at Waipapa Dam and more at Maraetai Dams one and two, what a feat of engineering. We peered through the fence at several new transformers waiting to be installed. We were told they weighed 60 tons each. I was impressed by what I saw.

We then went down through Whakamaru towards Lake Taupo, with a great drive around picturesque Acacia Bay. We

stopped at the shops before checking into our motel then we all got together for a chat and drink before dinner.



There were 6 P76's, an MX5 and an Aston Martin AMV8. Clive feels it only appropriate to bring his V8 in a P76 Club run.

*(Left: the Maraetai Dam.)*

Breakfast at 8 at Friends Cafe saw us negotiating the very large servings! I ordered an omelette that must have had at least 6 eggs in it, easily feeding two. I couldn't even manage half of it, what a waste!

Moving onto Rotorua we meet up with Alex, Lois, Pauline and Robert heading onto Whakatane. Now there were 7 P76's. We stopped at Awakeri for fuel and as we left another P76 turned up and the driver had a chat to Ed. Turned out he was a member just passing

and saw the group. Our lunch stop at Opotiki had closed down so we another further down the road and had a good meal before heading across country to Gisborne. A lovely drive.

We stopped at Matawai as Mike's car was suffering from fuel starvation, not because we wanted to go to the historic pub there. We didn't go to the pub. We arrived at the Mahia Beach Motel about 6 p.m. Dinner was at Cafe Mahia at 7 but by the time Ed had rounded up some of the group who had mistakenly gone to the local pub (yeah right) thinking it was where we were going to eat we arrived a little late for dinner. The relieved look on the faces of the staff awaiting our arrival on the veranda to greet us was plain to see.

They were very friendly people. Two youngsters served us, a boy about 9 and a girl of about 12 years of age. They did a great job offering excellent food and making it a great night out.

*(Right: we see Ed and Fred's cars in a scenic spot near the dams. This is the country you miss out on if you don't come along for the ride.)*



The next morning we awoke to an extremely cold day. A pity as the motel was just across the road from the beach and I would have liked to have

gone for a walk... We had a photo shoot trying to keep out of the wind. It was the quickest photo shoot on record, we quickly bundled ourselves back into the cars and headed for Wairoa.

We were to breakfast at cafe 287 south of Wairoa. Mike's car was still giving trouble at Waihu where we stopped for Paul to photograph an old truck. Don stayed with Mike to help if required and Merv and Rose shot off to visit some friends. They know someone everywhere! The rest of us carried on. The road between Waihu and Tutira is a very enjoyable drive. I enjoyed the scenery and the river running by the road. We stopped at Lake Tutira in the hope that Mike would catch up. The Station surrounding the lake once farmed 38,000 sheep. The small camping ground was the site of the shearing shed partly built out over the lake. Leaving the lake, we headed onto Napier, drove through the port, along Marine Parade which looked very crowded. There seemed to be a gathering of some sort.

Out through Clive and turn left to Haumoana to visit the British Car Museum. When we arrived at midday Ian Hope, the proprietor told us that a Nutmeg P76 with Targa mags had visited in the morning expecting to find us there. That was Calvin Mackie from Taradale.

After a good look around the cars we left about 1 p.m. We heard that Mike had got to Napier and was leaving for home. Leaving the museum, we took a back road on our way to Waipukurau. We didn't get to drive the entire back road as we were stopped by a fallen tree. So back we went the way we had come, having a late lunch in Havelock North at 2p.m.

What Ed forgot to tell you all is that Haumoana is my home village, the school at the top of the hill after the museum is where I went to primary school and the scenic back road is the Tuki Tuki River valley and this was the second time the club has been prevented from driving this route! Rob Jones.

Next stop Dave's Den in Dannevirke, a shed with floor to ceiling model cars on display and for sale. Don and Merv caught up us here. Merv used to live just up the street!

Don went onto the motel in Palmerston North with the rest of us arriving later, but in time for a nice dinner at the Rose and Crown Pub. Paul and Linda left for home after dinner and Merv and Rose stayed at a friend's motel.

The next morning we awoke to light rain (well it is Palmerston North) The MX5 and Aston Martin left for Wellington and the 3 remaining P76's of Ed, Fred and Don were left to head north but not before breakfast and a trip to Ezibuy for Annette, Elva and Rosalie. A relieved bunch of guys hit the road at 10. To Fielding, then onto Cheltenham, Kimbolton, and the Mangaweka Gorge. It is 30 years since Fred and I have been on this road and back then it was a narrow metal road clinging to the side of the gorge. That trip was in a P76 also.

The road is now much improved being completely rebuilt and sealed but there were still a few rocks fallen onto the road.

We stopped at Taihape for lunch and then onto Waiouru with snow covering the mountains and ranges. We stopped for photos, but my camera decided that its battery was flat by now.

On again with no stops until to Putaruru for fuel where we parted on our own routes for home. Fred and I stopped in Pukekohe for tea and arrived home about 9.15 p.m. We had a very enjoyable weekend, marred only by what happened the next morning when we went to put the P76 away after cleaning it. The oil light would not go out and the motor was letting us know it wanted more oil! The pump was not picking up oil so Fred dismantled it to find the relief valve stuck open. After cleaning off the varnish to free the valve, packing the gears with Vaseline and cutting a new gasket it picked up oil immediately. Good work Fred.