

# Night in the Country

## July 2 2011

By ??

This is a long overdue report on a very successful weekend away for the Central Group.

We spent the night in the old country pub at Manakau just south of Levin. A place we must have all driven past a 100 times. Organised by Merv and Rose it was a bit of a departure from our norm and may have set the tone for some future events - well at least one a year the way we get organised!

The plan was to meet at Hyde Park Cafe and Museum for lunch on July 2 and then tour the museum. Having been once before I was keen to go again, and it wasn't hard to convince Sonya as we both enjoy a good museum. The word spread and a growing group of people arrived at Te Horo for lunch in a selection of cars. Prize for the longest distance travelled was taken from Sonya and I by Don and Eileen Edmonds who were touring down from Auckland so joined us for the weekend.

Lunch saw 18 people happily filled to the brim and ready to wander off through the wonderland that is Hyde Park Museum. This was of particular interest to Sonya and I as we had already hatched a plan to open our own museum albeit quite a bit different from this one. I think it fair to say that Hyde Park has a representation of almost everything, far more than can be detailed here but it is well worthy of your time if you haven't been there. Touring the vintage machinery (in its broadest sense), haberdashery, appliance's, model trains and cars, local history, replica business's and many other exhibits were Don and Eileen from Auckland, Rob and Sonya from Masterton, Paul and Linda, Bryan and Beth, Bruce and Anne (complete with lorikeet in the car) from the greater Wellington area, Great grandparents, Ron and Colleen with Jack from Paraparaumu, Merv and Rose from Levin, new member Robin from Marton and locals Clive and Carol.

Having reacquainted ourselves with the past it was time to head to the pub and enter into another old-world atmosphere not commonly encountered.

Having checked in we wandered up the steep and not overly wide hand worn wooden staircase to the landing on the first floor where we located our rooms, most having shared bathroom facilities and there was a share kitchen up there as well. Round brass light switches lit overhanging lamps on the end of long flexes - when did you last see these? Heavy drapes on sash windows, decades old wallpapers above wood panelling, iron bed ends. This was enticing stuff and in fact proved to be very comfortable even if the floors were not perfectly level.

The dining room was fully set with fancy napkins and cutlery, centre pieces and suitably old-style paintings hanging on the wood panelled walls with the mandatory fire burning in a big open fireplace. The main bar was as you would expect today but we settled into a side bar fitting us all within a large booth with a huge wooden dining table set in the middle. With the addition of a few chairs we were all together in the booth - very snug and inviting.

The crucial point taken on board by all was that we were home (well most of us) No more driving required tonight, a few jugs before dinner and bed just a flight of stairs away.

Needless to say, dinner was excellent and enjoyed by all. We were joined for dinner by Brian and Colleen Francis and Mr and Mrs Ron Gibson, friends of Merv and Rose who were driving a nice Sunbeam Alpine. And so back to the booth, we should have brought a pack of cards!

Of course, in such an old establishment talk turned to ghosts. Who knows if such things exist or not? I do know that upon our arrival in bed we talked of the ghost laughingly only to be shocked by the ghost like wailing sound coming from the bathroom behind our room. Others heard it too. After a while we decided it was Linda being chased around by Paul but in the morning, she had no recollection of the event. She did confess to having a great time the night before and Paul just gave a knowing little smile and nothing else away.

The next day we had the photo shoot in front of the hotel before our visit to a local craftsman just up the road, Jeff Fox. Jeff was a builder but developed a fascination with aeronautics, especially the construction of laminated

wooden propellers for mainly vintage aircraft. Coupled with this he is also a car and motorcycle enthusiast of some luck and renown.

He has a decade's worth of Norton motorcycles, from 1920 to 1930 as I recall. By now four of these will be roadworthy and in quite regular use. Some are just rusty parts; others are better prospects but I'm sure number five will now be underway. He doesn't seem like a man to let things slip by. His other really cool piece is a 1948 Buick Straight Eight sedan, an ex NZ Post Office Garage limousine that his father used to drive as a chauffeur. True story!

Dad sold the car some years ago and later it returned to the district and was owned by a bloke not far away from Jeff's place. When Jeff's sister visited from Canada and heard that dad's old Buick was up the road she went straight there and made the man an offer he couldn't refuse and so the car returned home. He was awaiting some replacement quarter light windows from the US and a suitable wing mirror to enable its return to service.

One problem solved, I assured Jeff I had a Gemco extending wing mirror exactly the same as the one he wanted a mate for and that I'd get it to him. I did have one and he now has it even if it was awhile before I could deliver it to him. Even came with the mounting bracket.

However, we digress from the intention of our visit, the propellers. An absolutely fascinating product, presented in an interesting and simple enough fashion to ensure we understood the process. I think it true that even the women stayed for what was a fairly long presentation. The number of questions asked always indicates people's interest and they were coming thick and fast. I can only say that this man is a really talented guy, if he isn't designing a prop for some previously unknown foreign plane, he may be hand building new Norton parts or racing around the country on one of them.

Clive and Carol arranged this part of the weekend and we thank them along with Merv and Rose. We adjourned for morning tea about 1.00 pm to a little cafe in an old church just a bit up the road and were again treated to an open fire and fantastic food with our friends.



The photo above shows an array of different Leyland's. L to R we see Robins BA S V8, Bruce's BMW 528, Paul's PS S V8, our AEB D 6, Carol's new Rav 4, Ron's Sunbeam Alpine, Bryan's Mazda MX5, Merv's CW S V8 and Don's Holden Statesman. The Butler and Francis cars were not present on Sunday morning. The most modern car was from 2000.