

National Rally/AGM

March 2009 in Pukekohe

BY Bryan Lawrence



Obviously the main focus of AGM weekend, wherever the location may be, is the AGM; but the annual event also promises convivial company and interesting driving. Pukekohe in March was no exception.

Our MX5 ("the smallest car to grace a P76 Club event") was our default vehicle of choice, as the Jaguar was only just back on the road after a lengthy lay-up, and I didn't fancy my chances of the long run from (and back to) Wellington passing without mechanical incident. Besides, March still held the promise of some "topless driving" weather.

We were going to share accommodation with Merv Cox and Rose Bendall, but they were late withdrawals, feeling rather banged up after a "woopsie" in their RAV4 the previous weekend. So our first port of call was their place in Levin, to make sure they really were OK. With the help of our trusty Tom Tom GPS we plotted a route to Pukekohe that largely avoided SH1, and we had a very pleasant journey north (even if the weather was not conducive to "topless driving".)

Having stayed there on the "Northern Sights" trip in November, BK's Motor Lodge felt almost like home. We were soon unpacked (you can't pack much in an MX5 anyway!) and heading towards the pool and barbecue area for a convivial meet and greet evening. I'm told I provided some of the entertainment later in the evening. I blame the medication. . . A lot of members took advantage of the motel pool; it was beautiful after a hot drive. Maybe the most swimmers I've ever seen at a club meeting?



(Above: Here we see the convivial company on display atop Pukekohe Hill.)

Surprisingly, on Saturday morning, the head was somewhat clearer than the weather overhead. This was brought home when we reached the top of Pukekohe Hill for a photoshoot, the results of which would adorn a commemorative T-shirt. Still, the mist added a certain moody, arty class to the photos! Moody P76's follow over the page.

Fortunately, the weather cleared some as we headed out of town for a very pleasant cruise to Kaiaua on the Firth of Thames for lunch at "NZ's Best Fish 'n' Chips". I can't vouch for the claim, but they were pretty darned good!

After a leisurely lunch and a stroll along the beach to walk at least some of it off, we were back on the road heading for Clyde Walters' property in Paparimu. Philip's notes simply said, "sheds for inspection". This did not give the slightest hint of the treasure trove we were about to encounter. To say Clyde collects old cars and motorbikes is about as big an understatement as one could find! Thanks for the invitation, Clyde. It was a great way to wind up an interesting afternoon.

(Right: A small part of one of Clyde's sheds, spot Linda in the middle. Believe it or not the stocks held in the sheds and on the mezzanine floors are all in useful order.)

Sunday morning promised slightly better weather, and we even started off with the top down. Unfortunately, we hadn't



even got out of Pukekohe before showers started taunting us, so back up went the hood, and there it stayed for the rest of the day (although it has to be said that the weather turned out OK). Our destination this morning was the Manukau Heads Lighthouse (what is it about P76 Club and lighthouses?) and the drive out was over some wonderful roads with stunning views. The most striking thing was how quiet and empty the roads were, despite being so close to the "big smoke". Counties people must dread the day when Aucklanders discover this gem right on their doorstep.

Views from the lighthouse and adjacent lookout were spectacular. You can see from the rugged West Coast coastline and across the narrow entrance of the Manukau Harbour to the Auckland suburbs with the Skytower looming in the background.

Is it a wagon train, is a queue to get to the toilets, not it's almost a circle of Leyland's accompanied by a Honda S2000 and Mazda MX5 beneath the Manukau Heads Lighthouse, Bryan

Lawrence is correct, we do have a thing about lighthouses and if there is one in the vicinity of a club event we visit it, no matter how many steps there are to the top - this one is small and accessible compared to the other ones we have been to.



Sunday lunch was had at the Orua Bay birdpark. The place was not set up for an onslaught such as we provided (very small food counter, no till, and not even a calculator to add up the bill!) However, we all got fed and had a very pleasant hour or so sitting at the barbecue tables and wandering around the bird park (some making particular friends with the local cockatoo!)

The sensible ones had decided to take an extra day so they could properly explore the area on Sunday afternoon, but we needed to head south so after lunch bid our farewells and hit the road for the long drive back to Wellington.

(Right- Cocky and Rob got on fine. Abby was not at all sure about this big bird sitting on Daddy's' arm!)



The Last Bit by Rob Jones

People leaving the birdpark brought some more rain that chased the Jones's out of the park, which was a shame, as we wanted to stay longer. However, we did manage to latch onto Ed and Paul leaving the car park, so we followed them as you do. Another beautiful drive through undulating bush and farmland, following a stream of Leyland's, saw us arrive at Graham's Beach - a gorgeous beach with a children's playground, Pohutukawa trees and sand for miles and miles and no more rain. It was low tide, so the extensive sands were plain to see.

After some chat, swings, a stroll on the beach and more photos a lesser number of us headed to the Glenfield Vintage Railway where a "Thomas Family Day" was in full swing. There must have been thousands there over the whole day. We all appreciated the fun atmosphere brought about by Thomas and his friends. We rode Todd on the long line in vintage carriages and Thomas in the yards on a short run in old open freight cars. Trevor the Traction engine was chugging around to.

The small group of P76's in the paddock was drawing favourable comments from the public even before we we'd all parked up. The AEB Deluxe was the last P76 to leave. In fact, the paddock was nearly empty when we left for Pukekohe and a great steak dinner for those of us who stayed the extra night.

Thank you to Philip, Jude and team for a wonderful weekend of touring an area we hadn't seen before.



(Left: A P76 not seen for a long time at a Club event is the BA Deluxe of Clyde Walters. As you can see it sports a few refinements from the old days of Graham Farrs' ownership. Clyde ditched (or sold at a huge profit) the Auburn diff and whatever the gearbox was and installed a Leyland diff and 4 speed box, a sweet sounding twin system, a sunroof, a Super headlight and grill set and a propensity to have "sustained loss of traction" off most intersections or wherever else one may be forced to stop and restart!)

(Right: John Rossen's unique Nutmeg Super is part of the "moody" line up of Leyland's atop Pukekohe Hill. We are certain this is the only Austin P76 registered in New Zealand. That is what the registration label says - Austin P76. There is a story behind it but at present I can't recall it.)



(Above: Also, atop the hill from a different angle we can see twelve Leyland's in nine different colours.)



(left: Winner of the Dale Rawlings Memorial Trophy - People's Choice on the day was Brian Morris who had probably travelled the greatest distance also having come from Waikouaiti in Otago. This shot is at Graham's Beach and shows off the rear aerofoil and colour coded PMAG rear louver. It doesn't show you the complete black leather interior.)