

# National Rally/AGM 2014 in Invercargill

BY Rob Jones



*(While it is a long line of fourteen cars it very unusually includes 5 Deluxe's, a new record that could have been 8 if the absent ones had been there. I didn't split the Super / Executive count and I'm not going to try and name the owners in the line (until I get the driver/ car photos sent in) however, I can tell you there were 14 cars in 8 factory colours, 3 CW, 3 BA, 2 SO, 2 N, 1 AG, 1 CB, 1 PMAG and 1 DR. There were 5 members AWOL - attending without Leyland's and they all had roadworthy cars which would have made 19 in total, added two more colours (FB and AEB) and put SO as the top colour attending with 4 cars.)*

## **Part 1. Trains, Planes, Boats, Buses and Automobiles, all to get to Invercargill.**

Having made the decision and lots of bookings (thank you Sonya) my journey began with a train trip from Masterton to Wellington where I joined Sonya. The following morning, we had a smooth as glass ferry trip to Picton, entertained along the way by some obviously very well to do North American tourists who had been EVERYWHERE!

From here we were to travel on the Coastal Pacific train to Christchurch, however, we went by Volvo coach. This wasn't an entirely bad thing as we had a well-informed chatty driver who entertained us most of the way, so we knew what we were seeing.

It meant we arrived a bit later than expected which maybe put us a couple of pints behind the others at the birthday party we attended in Christchurch. Old Dark with Mexican food, a great combination and a good way to celebrate friend Chris's birthday, he, having just returned to NZ from Germany two days before. An unusual feature of the evening noticed by me was that all the guys there had full beards!

A reasonable time frame saw us at Christchurch airport in time to learn our flight had been cancelled. No explanation required, feel free to spend the next 5 1/2 hours at the airport. We didn't as we had the benefit of some local knowledge and after debating our options went to the Antarctic Centre to check out the new artwork (as installed by Paul Heath and co) and go for another thrill-seeking ride in the Haglund. This time I went in the back, but it's easier to hang on in the front! Not the cheapest place to visit but a very good experience all the same. We weathered an Antarctic storm, rode a snowmobile and had great fish and chips.

*(Right: Here we are in the snowstorm riding the snowmobile. It does get cold in there! An American woman returning to the State's after living in Malaysia found it very cold. There were women wearing the big jackets over their skirts and sandals! The shoe covers wouldn't defeat that cold.)*



Later in the day (5 1/2 hours) we boarded a fully laden plane to Invercargill with several passengers bemoaning the lack of entertainment to be found in airport terminals.

Having never been south of Dunedin airport (and I couldn't see that for the fog!) I didn't know what to expect in Invercargill. A busy little airport greeted us with a smile and an ash covered Toyota Yaris hire car and many apologies for the state of the Yaris. A large fire burning nearby had covered everything in ash despite their best efforts. No matter, it was new and clean inside and we were off into town for supplies.

First surprise, no alcohol in the supermarkets! Having discussed this strange phenomenon with a woman in New World we headed for the recommended bottle store and bought a lot of supplies, most of which came all the way back to Masterton stuck in my shoes and other protective places.

Finding home base, Ascot Park, wasn't difficult so we checked in, just in time to meet Mike and several others at reception on their way to the get together so we unloaded into our very nice unit and returned for beer and nibbles and for Sonya, hers and my share of the oysters on offer. It is Invercargill after all but I don't do oysters, or prawns, or crayfish, or whitebait or Brussels sprouts!

This was a special time for me as a founder member as I was about to meet several new members and some who had been in the club for more than 20 years, people I'd never meet before. I expected a turn out like this given the meeting was being held so far away from any others held before and I myself hadn't been down here at all. I supported the Invercargill idea from the beginning because I fully expected this to happen. What I didn't expect was to get a phone call from member Lance Wagstaff within half an hour of arriving inviting me to go hot air ballooning with him in Masterton the next day. Damn, I'd just come from there. Lance kindly took Abby in the Carterton balloon parade that evening, an experience she won't forget in a hurry. He quickly organised this with Abby's grandparents where she was staying. Thank you, Lance.

Socialising continued until a little while after Peter Venning arrived and then we had to adjourn for a Natcom meeting, after which we adjourned to bed.

We did our own breakfast and were ready to follow the leader out of the hotel grounds and proceed to our first attraction. As we were out in the country the convoy scenario wasn't essential, but leaving the grounds was entertaining and as always it was later proven that the ability to convoy a group of P76's correctly is sadly lacking. 'Some have suggested lessons in Penzed and I'm still thinking on how to frame the instructions!

We were off to Gore, famous for Torana's and funny music and as it turns out illicit booze. We arrived at the Gore Historical Museum and Hokonui Moonshine Museum. The welcome and presentation of the bootleg history given us by the local custodian was exceptional. A knowledgeable man of dubious taste, keen to share and convince the world of the value and flavour of the Hokonui brew. Most of us sampled the wares and to be honest I way prefer my Wild Turkey! But this gentleman knew his history and museum very well and his tour was of interest to us all. The Gore Historical Museum was pleasingly presented also.

Winding our way out of the car park and Gore we headed to Mandeville, where you may well ask, but as is so often the case At P76 events we were in for another real treat on several levels.

We arrived at the Old Mandeville Airfield, to lunch at The Moth Restaurant and explore the aircraft restoration workshops and aircraft museum, one where all the exhibits still perform their duties on occasion, but taking their immense value into consideration, they don't fly daily!

*(Right: "Tui" the De Havilland Dominie. This is not the same one I'd flown in many years ago out of Hood Aerodrome in Masterton, long before I lived there. Believe me they can be thrown around the skies like you wouldn't believe.)*





The photos below show some of the attractions at the Mandeville Airfield. Remember the title of the story, it reflects more than just our modes of travel.

*(Right: The train is a K92 Locomotive under restoration by the Waimea Plains Railway Trust. She was rescued out of a swamp and looked nothing like this back then!)*

I didn't photograph the workshops, but they were fascinating, interesting machinery, a prop making service, exceptionally skilled woodworking, these are very old planes remember and great stocks of parts, be they nuts, bolts timber or special coils of wire. Very dusty too.



*(Left: The CW EV8 P76 is Mike Kings framed by a Tiger Moth that had just taxied into that position after Mike parked the car. The airfield may be old, but it is still active, and that Moth was soon away again.)*

Making our way to the museum we could see many children enjoying a sausage sizzle fundraiser and rides on a tractor powered train around the grounds of the establishment, and before we got into the museum, we enjoyed a superb art exhibition of sculpture and painting in some unusual mediums. Whole miniature villages with inhabitants and vehicles made out of sticks, beautiful postcards, photographs of paper-based sculptures hanging all around the walls. We sent one of these cards to Abby, and amazing sculptures made out of — jigsaw pieces. Some of these were very big artworks and would have consumed 1000's of bit of jigsaw. And all of this was being done by local school children. Must be something in the water! A wonderful display of talent and skill.

As you progressed through the exhibition you came to an exit that lead to the train. There

was a sign board about the train's history just before you went outside into the sunshine.

Our tour of the museum wasn't fully guided due to the custodian having other visitors to attend to but all the planes were well documented so most questions could be answered by reading the presentation boards. It was pretty spacious given what's in there and superbly lit as you can see from my photo. Someone did their research in setting this display and its home up. Well done.

Then a quick walk across the lawn and we were at lunch in The Moth, obviously named after the little yellow terror outside! Lunch was lovely as was the company. Sonya and I were joined by the Dunnage's and the Storer's which was great as we'd not meet them until this weekend and we live so far apart, but not so far that Graham Storer didn't know about the now long defunct Bambery Brothers Trucking company that operated in my home village of

Haumoana in HB. I went to school with the kids of the brothers who owned the company! Famous for their TS3 Commer's.

We had a leisurely and pleasant lunch but soon enough had to move on as funny Valiant, Ford and Holden type cars were arriving bedecked in white ribbons and the like, all carrying well overdressed passengers. Must be a wedding!

From here we travelled to an all under cover car collection owned by John Tremaine. This was again a very interesting "little" collection of Ford's until you went into shed #2 and it was almost entirely BMC. Lots of gorgeous Model A's and a varying selection of Falcons, Cortina's, Escorts and other derivatives of the marque. A sprinkling of 1940's models as well as a great Valiant station wagon from the mid 70s. I love them.

In shed #2 there was a great selection of Morris Minor, Mini, Humber and a few others on display. Here my nerdism took over as many of these cars bore number plates from the old silver on black series that started with the letter A, like AC 6534, and I have decided to collect these number plates and keep on a computer file just for fun. As such I have several A series photos but none of any whole car! I capture the plate and make of the car in frame if I can. I got a 1940 Ford too!

For the record I otherwise only collect plates from P76's that have been wrecked and the odd foreign plate. I have 2 Canadian, a UK and an Aussie plate that they are not happy about! But you had any old coloured earlier NZ plates lying around that you don't want I'd love them. Amongst others I have two sets, one from 1957 and an earlier set.

Ok, there was another shed as well and it housed the Valiant and some Zephyr's as I recall and an extensive collection of models, many of them Fun Ho. Another weakness of mine, models!

It was also here that Andrew Larsen and I took matters into our own hands and doing an "Ed" ordered all drivers out into the paddock then directed them into position just before the drop off, something to focus their attention! This resulted in our cover photo and many others being taken by the assembled masses. And it was from here we headed back to Ascot Park for our AGM and dinner.

The AGM is covered in Peter Venning's minutes. Frankly, I don't seem to recall much about the dinner other than it must have been good as I don't recall any complaints either. Maybe we were distracted by the unusual address to the members from a local man, Nigel no name he calls himself (I don't recall his actual name either) His little talk was fascinating, almost awe inspiring.

From nowhere to one of the top five travel agencies in NZ (in Invercargill) in five years against all the odds and advice, his story shows how some individuals with the right drive, belief in themselves and damned persistence can truly prosper. And he was funny with it. He claims to have never made a travel booking himself to this day. He did tell us he once had a better job in the Greek Islands selling watermelon on a nudist beach. Can't top that can you! Sadly he had to leave us wanting more but his mum's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday took precedence, fair enough I say.

We haven't really had such an address at a previous AGM and some of us wondered about the merit of it but having been there I can say it was well worth it and his fee goes straight to charity.

This isn't necessarily setting a precedent!

After a few more drinks it was off to bed, we had a big day out and a lot of fun, even if we were racing around in a Yaris!

After a good sleep and a hearty breakfast in our unit we again joined the convoy out of Ascot Park, this time venturing into inner Invercargill to the corner of Tay and Anglem Streets to visit the Richardson Truck Museum. I will include one or some photos depending on space, but words fail me. Sonya agreed with me that I should explore this place on my own but soon returned to me taking photos in the entrance hall, insisting I walk with her through the expanse of the place just to appreciate how big it is. She was right in doing this, the place must cover acres of space, all under cover. Much more than my camera battery would tolerate! About 200 trucks, mostly restored, countless model trucks in cabinets and all that goes with such an exhibit. Petrol pumps and signs, work benches, badge collections, grills, a mezzanine floor with a further range of displays. Just go there! Two things disappointed me, I couldn't stay all day and they didn't have any model trucks to buy after such inspiration and expectation on my part.



I complained constructively as one must, offering them some ideas as to what brands of model they would sell to visitors.



From here we went to a totally different sort of display at E Hayes and Son Ltd on Dee Street, home of the World's Fastest Indian. Entering a Mitre 10 and leaving through an almost Kirkcaldie and Stains Department store we saw many famous motorcycles and as you move through into the furnishings there are Mustangs and other such finery. Amongst the linens was a Morris J van of the sliding door variety, an absolute beauty. Remember I had no camera at this stage. The collection of bikes and cars scattered throughout this big store was fascinating and could be copied to great effect all over New Zealand — yeah right!

The instructions said to walk a short distance to the Global Byte Café for lunch and to say our goodbyes for some members. It is also the start of another story yet to arrive with me.

The Global Byte Cafe was small and justifiably crowded, what great food. The story I alluded to in part 1 is still to come to me but it involved an elderly couple who came in and asked Ken McKenzie if it was alright to photograph some of the P76's as they had owned two years ago and loved them both. Of course it was fine to do that and so they proceeded to tell Ken and others the story. I'm still hoping they get in touch even after all this time as it was an endearing and entertaining story full of respect for the P76.



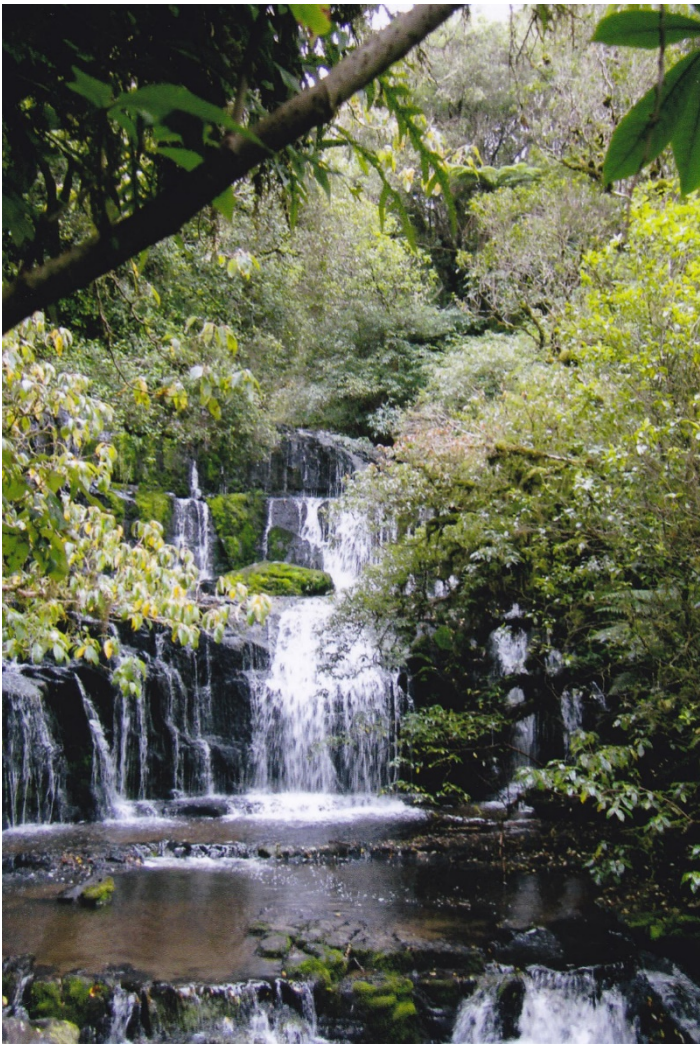
Anyway, we departed as did many others and headed the Yaris south to Bluff where it was blustery and cool. Sonya took me to the lookout where photos were not possible due to the drab conditions, but the views were fantastic all the same. The tower illustrates your surroundings by having a map of the views around the rim. A great idea. You can see the smelter, and bridges, mountains, sea and inland as well. But it got cold up there. So back down into the town we went. A sad, worn looking little town complete with that famous signpost where Sonya took my picture and it will not be published here, a few second hand shops that didn't extract any dollars and a lighthouse where of course we visited! And lo and behold a maritime museum with a bunch of P76's in the car park, so in we went. This was an interesting place and included an old oyster boat out the front that one could explore and knock your head on! There were several P people already here playing with the old engine that went and marvelling at those old rough sea photos.

Tough people lived here and probably still do, although the old lady looking after the museum was very knowledgeable and happy to talk about the local history. One thing some of the visitors may not have done was visit the men's toilet. In there on the wall was a marvellous painting of a wharf scene from days gone by, the 50's or 60's going by the fleet of Leyland and Commer trucks shown. I asked to buy it but that was a no go! As everyone but us had left I took Sonya into the toilet to see the painting. It was impressive. She was embarrassed!



From here we wandered by road back to Ascot Park where we had to vacate our unit and move to the flasher (but smaller) hotel unit and we then joined John and Frances and Roy and Paula in the sports bar to try out the different menu in there, and the Old Dark on tap. Good food and great beer. I hope I didn't forget anyone; I think there was just us six.

Monday dawned fine and clear and we said goodbyes as people left and we went driving around the Catlins. We gave ourselves plenty of time to see and do whatever we discovered along the way and to ensure we made it to Doug Buchan's place at Kaka Point at a reasonable hour to deliver his front struts, bought many months before and somehow delivered to us in Masterton. I was looking forward to meeting Doug as I'd dealt with him by phone for some years but had never met yet. From his front step we could see Nugget Point lighthouse, another stop on our list. Doug was a pleasure to meet, his house contains many seafaring photos of interest and proudly on display in a much flasher frame than originally fitted is his 20-year membership certificate. He enjoys great sea views and his gardens belie his years. He took us down to the shed and showed us the P76 and an extensive range of good parts for it as well.



It was time to move on to the lighthouse, a spectacular walk and view of the coast, sea and seals awaited us, and a couple who noticed Sonya's Xero t shirt and asked her if she knew XXX who worked there. She did, small world again, but worse, they came from my hometown as well! There was a viewing platform beyond the lighthouse from where I got this shot of the slowly disintegrating Nugget Point. The wave action through the rock formations below was awesome to watch. There were plenty of seals but all a safe distance away from my camera. Somewhere further along the road we took a short walk into the bush to see a beautiful waterfall, along with lots of other tourists, but it was beautiful, even if we had to follow all the campervans afterwards! The point and waterfall follow.



From here the weather started to deteriorate a bit and it was getting darker, but we managed a quick stop in a small town antique shop where we thought we were lucky not to have the P76 boot with us! And not enough for us to stop to look for the water spout out to sea, well a huge expanse of ocean actually. You look for the signposts as you drive along and find these attractions even if while you are looking the rains did finally arrive. On the next page you can see such a vantage point on a headland, not the same one we sat at but very



similar as found by Mike and Annette King driving Don Sutherland's P76 earlier and on a finer day.

Endless ocean framing a lovely car - is that a mermaid on the rock!



So we headed home to Invercargill after a great drive and looking forward to tomorrow as it was off to Stewart Island early in the morning. Slept well!

To the airport, return the hire car, jump on the little aeroplane with the boy pilot and take a cool trip to the island. One Tiger Moth and one Cessna are the only

planes I've been on smaller than this 9? seater. But we arrived in fine fashion to be greeted by a hot still day in the land of almost continual rain supposedly. We had trips planned so almost immediately trekked over the hill (and far away) to the dock on the other side to catch a small boat to another small island, Ulva Island where we could walk

around in the bush and along beaches with numerous others.

It was lovely. We encountered some funny birdlife, big starfish and fascinating plants like we don't see at home and simply spectacular scenery. Sonya was accosted by a curious Robin.

Her and birds sometimes don't mix. She was accosted by a big black swan on our honeymoon while in Wanganui!

We went to Boulder Bay where this photo (see left) opportunity arose. The Beauty of Boulder Bay.



From here we walked to another beach and a lookout above the bush before returning to the jetty to be returned to Stewart Island where we had time for a delicious lunch before heading off on a guided tour of the main island. Below is a shot from said jetty looking at Ulva Island.

As we walked into the pub, I pointed out a patron to Sonya and asked "isn't that Barbara?" It was, our friend from a couple of k's away in Masterton having lunch on Stewart Island!!

Having enjoyed our lunch and seeing Barbara we adjourned



to the pickup point for our tour. Having enjoyed our lunch and seeing Barbara we adjourned to the pickup point for our tour.

I managed to get a couple of truck photos for Paul, not too special but with unusual names painted on the doors, like Halfmoon Bay Transport. Soon enough we were in our HiAce heading for the hills. I always seem to end up as the front seat passenger on these trips which adds to the experience and the view.

We saw bush, fish farms, game reserves, some flash houses and expensive property with a well-informed local guide making for an entertaining trip giving us the history and legend surrounding the areas we visited. There is a great chain link sculpture signifying the link (both electrical, communication and cultural) between Stewart Island and the mainland.

Sadly, it was just too sunny to allow me to photograph it. Apparently, the other end of the chain surfaces somewhere across the Strait. All too soon it was time to return so we went back town to drop off / pick up some people and head to the airstrip where it turned out we were to be picked up by an even smaller plane but with a pilot at least a year older than the previous chap. Being the gentleman I let everyone else board before me until it became obvious there was only the front passenger seat left for me! This should be fun I thought as Sonya laughed!

Clamber in the from the other side, nestle in, place feet here and there and don't move so they don't interfere with the rudders, all good so far and a great view.

The Stewart Island airstrip is on a high razorback ridge and the plane is fully loaded with passengers and freight. We roar off into the distance which is rapidly approaching, or running out, we must lift soon, we'd better bloody lift soon, there's no more strip! Oh hell!

I swear that plane didn't lift off until the last 10 yards if that. Have you seen those movies where the plane drops off the end of the carrier before lifting into the air? It was like that! Absolutely like that and there is that point where you can see virtually nothing in front of you.

Happily, we did lift and land safely on the other side. I had a photo of the plane, but I cannot find it anywhere, sorry. Here we collected our luggage and awaited our next flight up to Christchurch not many minutes away. We were on a tight schedule. We did see Mayor Tim at the airport but didn't get his autograph.

Invercargill and Stewart Island were great fun and we have barely scratched the surface. The Leyland Club weekend was great, lots of new faces, P76's and experiences to remember.

For us this wasn't the end. We stayed in Christchurch for two more nights and did the Tranz Alpine Express trip to Greymouth, a long-awaited experience well worth the investment.

A non-scheduled highlight was the trains not being able to take passenger's through the Otira Tunnel. Some Aussies complained about missing out on 7 km of darkness! I told them to hold their breath until we had gone down the Otira Gorge in the buses supplied. I picked the oldest bus in the fleet to ride in a told Sonya just to wait and see. Well, one of the new buses broke down but our old manual bus rumbled down in low and sounded magnificent and the tone of the Aussies changed completely. A fantastic little bus trip. Pulling into Otira offered some funny moments too. Out on the front porch of one of the cottages was two old dears in rocking chairs still in their nighties. Behind the fence with locked gate at the next cottage was two big horses just watching the world go by and mowing the lawn.

The rest of the trip you will have done / seen or should do for yourselves.

Leaving Christchurch the following day on the Coastal Pacific Express which we enjoyed (and missed out on the way down) we arrived in Picton to catch a shuttle to the local airport and took the little Sounds Air plane back to Wellington and the next day I returned to Masterton by train so you see we did cover practically the entire travel spectrum during our all to brief trip. We travelled by the Interislander, buses, planes, boats, trains, taxi, car and van and walked a fair bit as well.