

“Wild South”- 12th to 27th February 2011.

41 Club Tour Report

When 7 Poms, 2 Scotties, 2 Tassies and 11 Kiwis get together and travel in 2 12 seater vans for 16 days around the Southern half of the South Island you would think that there would be all sorts of problems, but no the International flavour and quick banter among the group made for a wonderful tour together with no complaints apart from;

“Queen Janice” trying to break her leg on the first day then spending the rest of the trip on crutches and having the rest of the group looking after “Er Majasty”!

“Dame Moira” saying she hated me for taking her on such steep, winding, roads and then turning round and telling me she loved me for taking her to such wonderful places!

A great turnout for the Pre Tour meeting and meal with the Christchurch Club at Kaiapoi Golf Club, lots of speeches and banner exchanges which became a real feature of the tour.

Next morning we met near the Christchurch Airport where for some obscure reason “Lord Roughneck Ralph” of Sackcloth, Red Zone, Christchurch decided to Knight me.

We intrepid travellers then set off firstly in search of the new S bend in Telegraph Road heading towards Darfield. This is where the Canterbury Plains shifted in the September quake and the road shifted half its width sideways along with the water race and the shelterbelts on both sides. Coffee break in Darfield then on past the quake destroyed Deans Family homestead “Home Bush”, to “Washpen Falls” a volcanic vent in the foothills near Windwhistle.

Somehow the track that I had remembered so well from a previous visit had become much steeper and this is where “Er Majasty” slipped on the shoulder of the track and hurt herself. However after our lunch and the trampers return we continued through Geraldine to be met by the Timaru 41 Club in a supermarket parking lot where everyone went off with their hosts. A fantastic Pot Luck Tea was had at Bill & Shona Weir’s that night with a very strong showing from the Timaru Gang, more lies and lots of laughs.

As the Twin Bridges over the Waitaki at Kurow were closed due to flood damage we continued down the main road and then up the south side to Duntroon where we had a wee explore around the fossil trail before lunch, onward through Danseys Pass and scared the hell out of several vehicles coming the other way on the wrong side of the road!

“Bugger me” Bill and Anne Wade were waiting for us at the Danseys Pub and after a drink to settle the nerves we were guided to Naseby to see the indoor Curling Rink, St Bathens where it seemed appropriate to have another drink (not the drivers though) at the Vulcan Hotel, visit to Ophir and on to Clyde to meet our hosts for the next 2 nights. We had a lovely day being shown around this interesting area with its Gold history and massive dam, Bill is a great tour guide for his area. Had a barbeque meal with the Alexandra gang second night, the evening became chilly and blankets and coats were found so we all enjoyed the meal and fellowship.

Following morning we were piled into 6 4WD vehicles and taken through the Nevis, the highest public road in NZ, 1300m high at the pass, down through the valley and out at Garston. A wonderful day with brilliant sunshine that took its toll on the fair skinned Brits, fabulous wide open, huge country with much old gold mining history.

Two of the Alexandra ladies had brought our vans round for us so a quick sidetrack to Arrowtown and on to motel in Queenstown for night and hilarious meal at Pub on Wharf. Free morning having a look around, up on Gondola, lunch then off to Te Anau.

Next day Milford Sound and out on the "Milford Wanderer" Nature Cruise, absolutely beautiful day in magnificent scenery, of course with a dry week before the waterfalls were not working but it certainly was lovely and enjoyed by all, lots of sleepy heads on way back to Te Anau. Great bar and restaurant "The Moose" virtually next door to hotel we stayed at, great food, service and atmosphere for a gang like ours and not expensive either!!

Onwards to Manapouri next day and onto boat at midday to cross the lake to West Arm where the Power House is dug so deep in the mountain beneath the lake, onto bus and over Wilmot Pass in high mist and fog and down to Deep Cove, Doubtful Sound.

Our destination the "Fiordland Explorer" was awaiting and as soon as we all boarded away we went in a very different Sound and with such changed weather, I guess more what you would expect of this area, not so wet as to be miserable but not so good outside. We cruised right down the Sound and out to the open sea before coming back in and round into one of the arms to moor up for the night, kayaking or trips in the tenders for those who wanted then swim time for the brave or mad! Only 4 did, an English lady not part of our group, Cowboy Jordon, Tina and yours truly, we were told the water temp was 20° but think they were talking Fahrenheit, however we did ourselves proud with Cowboy putting on a great display of belly flops from the 2nd deck railing and I stayed in for the longest.

Lovely towels were ready for us as we climbed back aboard then hot showers and into the evening meal, good food and lots of fun.

Les Rogers thought he heard the motors starting up at 5 in the morning and told everyone rather loudly it was time to get up, not a popular move when get up time was 7. Explored more of the Sound and stopped everything on the ship at the head of an arm so everyone had to stand still and listen to the sounds of silence, quite eerie, with a huge fault line on the mountain beside us. Back to Deep Cove, over Pass and Lake had us back in Manapouri at lunch time.

Travelled on to Tuatapere where we met up with the Invercargill team who guided us to places called "Cosy Nook", Colac Bay then Thornbury where we had a look at museum and several drove a Traction Engine. Onward through Riverton to Invercargill to be greeted by hosts, a barbeque and pot luck meal at our hosts place near Winton.

One of the great things about this tour was being able to meet so many of the 41 Club members along the way who very rarely see other 41er's and to have such great fun and fellowship with them, hopefully this also gave them the enthusiasm to do more with their own Clubs.

Visited Museum, "E J Hayes" to see Burt Munro Bikes, out to Oreti Beach, lunch then Cycling Stadium, what was left of Stadium Southland and then Bill Richardson's Private Truck Museum, wow you wouldn't believe there could be so many plus so much paraphernalia from fuel and contracting. It's well worth a look and not just for blokes, so well done and looked after.

Next morning off again and down to Bluff where we boarded the ferry and crossed Foveaux Strait to Stewart Island, the rain stopped long enough for us to get to our rooms then bucketed down but cleared off so we could have a walk around and some took a bus tour. Meal in the South Seas Hotel, world's most southerly hotel where everyone had of course Blue Cod, many drinks and enjoyed Southern Hospitality to the max!!!!!!!!!!!!

I had chartered a boat and skipper for the next day, which dawned clear and calm, "a bit of fishing cause some of the gang had never caught a fish" I had told the skipper "but not much as we couldn't take fish away" so we came back ashore with a bucket of Blue Cod fillets as well as having a wonderful day exploring Patterson Inlet, lunch at Ulver island where I had to take another swim because it was the furthestest South I had been, water was as cold or colder than Doubtful Sound but I came out with an old whale vertebrae to show the gang.

Fabulous day only marred by news of the huge quake in Christchurch.

We had a fish feast that night cooked on the barbeque by the Fish Friars and chips from the local Kai Kart served by the Chip Monks, what could be better, fresh fish, plenty of wine and beer and great company. Pure Bliss!!!!!!!!!!!!

Back across the Strait to Bluff next morning to be greeted by Gore guides Lex & Jim who showed us the Lookout above Bluff then on to "The Coal Pit" for a look around the gardens there and lunch then toured to Waipapa Point and the Southern Catlins before heading to Gore and hosts for the night. Went out to the Mandeville Airport next morning and had a look at "The Croydon Aircraft Factory" where they lovingly restore vintage aircraft, particularly Tiger Moths, everyone fascinated, and then the museum there and lunch in the "Moth" restaurant and back to Gore where we looked and tasted at the Hokonui Moonshine Museum.

Not as bad as expected!!!

Barbeque meal with the Gore Members at Hotel where a great fun fine session was had and Chairman Drewe presented Rotary Banners as Gore 41 didn't have any!

Had morning tea with Alex McLellan (Ex Round Table National Pres) in his trucking firm office in Balclutha then went out to Nugget Point lighthouse (and a beautiful, wild and windswept place it is) before heading up to Dunedin, had an explore out on the Southern half of the Otago Peninsular on steep winding roads so reminiscent of Banks Peninsular before getting to our hotel and meeting up with Charlie Campbell who had arranged for us to eat at "Taste", yet another good evening.

Charlie showed us around his beloved city next morning (thank you again Charlie) before we headed North, stopping at the Moeraki Boulders for a wander along the beach.

Onwards to Oamaru and a walk through the old part of the town with it's lovely Oamaru Stone buildings and then a drink in the old Criterion Hotel before sending all away with their hosts who brought the gang out to Isbister's old homestead for a great final night for the tour.

Had morning tea with the Timaru gang back at Weir's, then headed up to Christchurch airport where we dropped off those who were meant to go and those had managed to change their flights due to earthquake damaged hotels being closed. Delivered others to hosts and took the Aven's home with us for another night.

A great trip that Tina and I would be more than pleased to do again, we caught up with a heap of old mates, all made a whole lot of new friends, had such a great time, saw so much, learned a lot and hopefully enthused our Southern Mates to head North occasionally to catch up with us.

Just what 41 Club is all about!!!!!!!!

In continuing friendship
Derek Johns