

ASSOCIATION OF ROVER CAR CLUBS INC. NORTHLAND, NZ EXPLORER RALLY

2-9 MARCH 2019

(report by Eve McCormack)

At the National Rove in Shepparton last April there were some folk from New Zealand who joined us and mentioned that their next rally would be in Northland, New Zealand in March 2019. We had not been to Auckland and the Northland, so we were interested in planning to attend and were delighted to learn that several other Aussies were also keen to go.

Our flight over on Friday 1 March was smooth and uneventful, just how we like it. We were met at the airport by Noelene and Paul Billing, who then drove us to a car park to collect our car, which had been very generously lent to us by Ivan Sisson, and indeed, Ivan said we could continue to have use of the car for the extra week we had planned on touring. So we took delivery of a green MGZT – about the same age and style as our 2002 Rover 75, but with only 80,000kms. The ride was stiffer, the seats firmer, but all in all a very nice vehicle for our 2 week stay.

After a drive thru Auckland Friday afternoon traffic, all the while keeping Paul in our sights in his Orange Rover 2200TC, we arrived at our motel a bit after 4pm. We managed to find a supermarket for milk etc then a nice Thai restaurant for our usual entrees and a spicy lamb dish. Home for an early night with our body clocks 3 hours behind local time.

Saturday 2 March

After a good nights sleep we awoke to a fine sunny day. Mid morning we went off to the local shopping centre for a coffee and wander, then back to motel for a relax before setting off at 3.30pm for the MG Rover, New Lynn workshop owned by Robert Chamberlain (think Craig and James Barraud but slightly bigger with many more Rover/ MG/Range Rover wrecks). Robert was very knowledgeable about all things Rover/Land Rover and generous with his time in allowing us to wander all over his workshop.

From there in the late afternoon we set off on the Auckland motorways to Ryders – a place set up with old vintage buildings etc and included a cinema, so after much chatting and a buffet meal we wandered into the little Westwind cinema and saw a film – ‘Plots with a View’ – quirky Welsh film starring a young Brenda Blethyn (Vera) - it was very enjoyable. 9.15pm saw us negotiating our way back on motorways to motel - GPS and Google maps working overtime!

Sunday 3 March

Its a bit stressy driving around Auckland, with an early 8.30am start to Lloyd Elsmore Park for annual British and European car display. WOW!! 1100+ cars, all makes and models and then some (apparently this is the largest car display, with free admission, in the southern hemisphere). One of the oldest cars on display was a 1904 rover.

Alongside the Park was Howick Historical village which was a wonderful display of well preserved buildings from the era of the ‘fencibles’ (early settlers in this part of New Zealand) – google it. We then enjoyed a nice lunch and much chatter and catch up with other rally participants.

Late afternoon we headed to our motel for a nap then to Howick RSA (RSL) for a buffet meal and home to gird our loins for big day of driving north tomorrow.

Monday 4 March

Monday dawned bright and clear but OMG trying to negotiate Auckland traffic 9am, trying to keep up with the Rover in front - over the Harbour Bridge, down to the waterfront, still we

managed to make our way to the Michael Savage memorial park. Very scenic and beautiful. Savage was first prime minister of NZ and instrumental in integrating the Maori into white society.

From there we negotiated our way north, out of the city thru lots of roadworks, never losing sight of the car in front. Morning tea at Puhoi pub was great- tea, coffee, scones, jam n cream. We then drove 83km to Paparoa Hotel for lunch – sandwiches, pizza, chips all good.

Ross and I then decided to bail and miss the Kauri museum and Dargaville museum and drove another 80km to our bed for the night – Opononi. It was 40km of windy road thru Kauri forest so we saw the trees anyway. Opononi is a pretty place on Hokianga Harbour.

Dinner was at the Copthorne Hotel, Omapere – again, a very beautiful site overlooking Hokianga Harbour.

Tomorrow we are hoping for a quieter day, less driving - getting further north.

Tuesday 5 March

We awoke to a beautiful day and after breakfast and morning tea, left Opononi and headed to Rawene to catch car ferry across the Waihou River to Kohukohu. From there we drove 62km to our stay for 2 nights at Kaitaia.

After a bit of admin and a walk up main street we gathered at Te Ahu arts centre for our evening meal.

We are very much looking forward to tomorrow – 4WD bus trip to very tip of North Island. Weather fine still.

Wednesday 6 March

With a pick up from motel at 8.30am in our 4WD bus, off we went. Our driver, Selwyn had Maori, German, Polish heritage and grew up in this area, so we learnt a lot about the local history and Maori culture, his early life and the avocado industry now taking place in Northland, all very interesting.

First stop was Houhora Heads then on to Te Kao where Selwyn's family run a cafe so we all indulged in ice cream – delicious. Stopped at Te Paki for lunch and photos, we then made our way to Cape Reinga, just about most northerly point in NZ. It is believed when a Maori person passes on their spirit comes here and travels 54km underwater to Three Kings Island before having one backward glance then departing for afterworld. It is a belief I am inclined to cling on to.

Then it was time to get on to Ninety mile beach for the trip home. This was a magic trip with the Tasman Sea on one side and great sand dunes on the other (Selwyn helped some of the group clamber up the sand dunes to slide back down – quite the adrenalin rush, I believe). We arrived back at motel 5pm feeling tired but girded our loins for our evening meal at Kaitaia RSA and spent a pleasant evening in good company.

Thursday 7 March

We woke to a wet morning and a downpour as we assembled at the Pick n Pay carpark. Got underway by 10.30am and headed to Matthews Car Museum at Taipa. This was a very eclectic mix of (old) stuff from wood planes to old gramophones to a dentist chair and dental

instruments including teeth - oh yes and some veteran and vintage cars. They also gave us a very nice lunch.

From there we headed to Kerikeri via Keo and stopped for an icecream (we were told to do this!). Our motel is set in beautiful parklike grounds. The scenery has been great and driving around not really difficult. Dinner for this evening was at the Kerikeri Homestead Sports Bar and Bistro.

Weather had fined up and is still quite warm. The MGZT is behaving and our GPS is working well.

Friday 8 March

The weather forecast was for rain, but we set off for the Makana Chocolate factory via the Woodworking Workshop - purchases made in both shops. Ross bought a takeaway coffee (but was impressed that they had liquid chocolate on tap). We headed off to Waitangi Treaty Grounds. This looked very impressive but we were restricted to time so did not pay the \$50 to get in. However we found some Maori carvings and an historic building a short distance away. The carvings were quite graphic – no other comment offered. From there we drove to Haruru falls then back to lunch stop at RSA in Paihia via some civic markets but by then the rain had started.

After lunch, in quite heavy rain we made our way to the ferry to Russell, so disappointing but we were undeterred. Ross made his way to Duke of Marlborough hotel for a cider and quiet time. Eve and Jane (our passenger for the day because of car issues with the 2200TC of Paul and Noelene Billing) found the Russell museum with its very interesting display of the history of the area. It was pelting down rain by now and much cooler so we made our way to the ferry and so back to motel to dry out and get ready for farewell dinner at the Kerikeri Homestead Sports Bar and Bistro

Again, we had a very pleasant evening, Ross presented Noelene and Paul each with a Rover coffee mug, as a thank you for their hospitality in picking us up from the Airport and delivering us safely to our motel and to Ivan for his generosity in lending us his car for the Rally.

Final day of Rally

8am Saturday saw us at The Rusty Tractor Cafe, for farewell breakfast, much chatter and last minute car catch up. But then we headed, pretty much in convoy, for Hans Compter's place at Hikurangi. Here was a Car enthusiasts dream! Very, very many unique and rare, some one off, mostly European vintage and veteran cars. Everything from a 1901 Albion from Scotland to Eva Peron's Lancia and lots in between. We have copious photos.

Ross and I thoroughly enjoyed our time on the Rally, it was wonderful to see the sights of Northland and in and around Auckland. We also enjoyed catching up with Rover enthusiasts from Victoria and NSW who also attended. (David and Glenys Williamson, Jane Petryszyn, Joy and Darien Cassidy, Peter and Sue Cass, Howard Billing – from Victorian Rover Car Club; Ray and Dorothy Garrett, Ed McKenna and Rita Taylor – from NSW Rover Car Club; Ross and Eve McCormack (Qld Rover Car Club)

Thank you to Robert Gibbins and his committee of organisers who did a wonderful job of ensuring that we were armed with our 'bible' a folder full of daily run sheets, detailed instructions and maps and brochures so that we were always fully aware of where we were going and fully informed of the activities for each day. The next NZ Rally will be in Nelson in March 2020.

P.S.

Ross and I then spend a further week travelling south from Auckland – we took in the sights of New Plymouth, Mt Taranaki, Waikanae and the Kapiti Coast via Southward Car Museum, Hawkes Bay (where we had a delightful lunch with Rover friends, Mary and Peter Fama at the very scenic Elephant Hill winery) then on to Napier, Lake Taupo, Rotoroua and back to Auckland.

NORTHLAND EXPLORER RALLY—PICTURE GALLERY



2002 MGZT—OUR CAR FOR 2 WEEKS ON LOAN FROM IVAN SISSON

One of the Rangies in the MG/
Range Rover workshop of
Robert Chamberlain



Ryders Village Museum



Rovers on display at British and European Car Display Day, Lloyd Elsmore Park



Minis



Morgans





Morning Tea at Puhoi



Scones Jam & Cream at Puhoi



View over Hokianga Harbour from Copthorne Hotel, where we enjoyed a nice New Zealand rose wine.



Lined up waiting for Car Ferry



Rawene from Car Ferry to Kohukohu



Enjoying the famous New Zealand Ice Cream at Te Kao

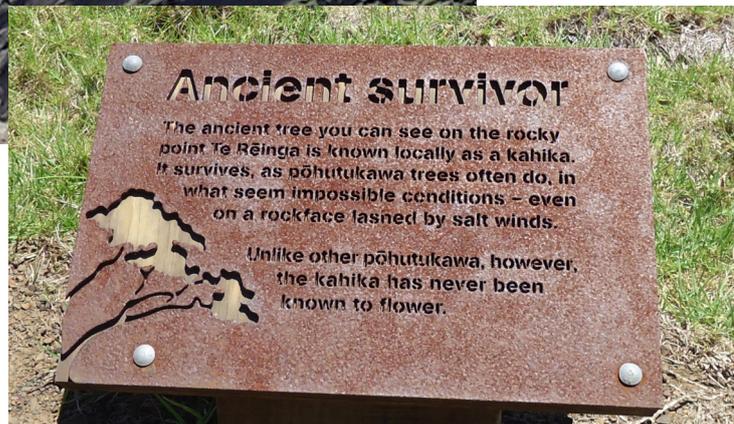
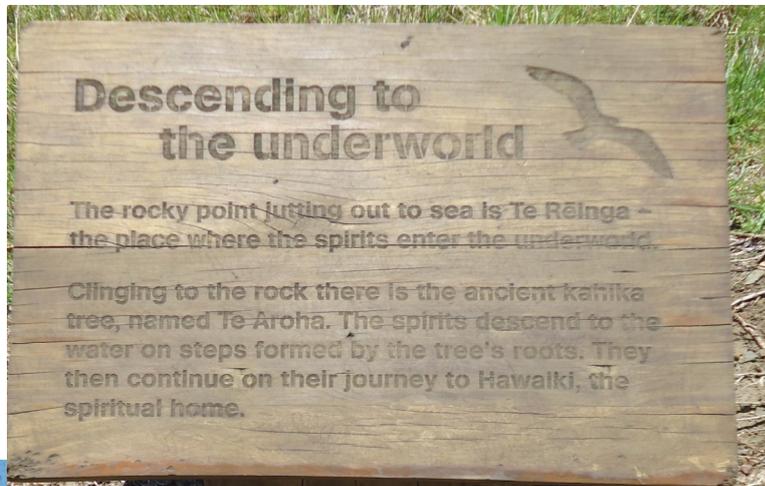
Not a Rover, but our very comfortable 4WD coach for trip to Cape Reinga





Where Tasman Sea meets the South Pacific Ocean

The Story of Cape Reinga



Braving the sand dunes on Ninety Mile Beach



Jane was excited to be at Waitangi



Joy and Darien Cassidy at Waitangi



Hikurangi Falls



Matthews Car Museum at Taipa



Buffet Breakfast at Rusty Tractor Cafe



A very small selection of rare and unique European vehicles owned by Hans Compter at Hikurangi





Car Heaven—Southward Car Museum, Paraparaumu