

**Monday, March 3, 2014**

After over 20 hours of flight time, we were rewarded with incredible views of New Zealand's South Island. Fifty shades of turquoise. That's how I would describe the water surrounding the South Island as viewed from the air.



New Zealand definitely has that WOW factor. After checking into our motel, we took a taxi to Christchurch center to visit the Cardboard Cathedral made of cardboard, wood and steel. Designed by Japanese architect Shigeru Ban, the Cardboard Cathedral replaces the original 1864 neo-Gothic cathedral that collapsed beyond repair in the February, 2011 earthquake. We met a Masonic Australian brother who



recognized Sam's Masonic pin. It turned out that his cousin was the liaison between the New Zealand government and Shigeru Ban. Next we went to Cathedral Square to view the remains of the Christchurch Cathedral and other physical destruction caused by the earthquake that killed 185 people.

We saw the nearby Chalice, a large piece of modern sculpture in the form of an inverted cone designed by prominent New Zealand artist Neil Dawson. There was also an on-going flower show with animals sculpted from shrubbery. We then walked along the 1924 memorial Bridge of Remembrance over the Avon River which recreates the bridge through which the soldiers marched on their way to war.



Further on we passed the City Council where we viewed a Maori sculpture. Finally we wound our way back to visit the Container Mall setup as an emergency solution to the devastation of the original shops. A City Host gave us a map and suggested places to eat. We ate wood-stove pizza for lunch before heading home.



We later found our way back to the Bus Exchange and by luck found the right bus back to our motel. *Judy & Sam Blango*



## Tuesday, March 4, 2014

Leaving Christchurch with Geoff Smith for the Tour of the South Island. We depart at about 8:15 AM. Destination for today is the Alpine Glacier Motel in located in Franz Josef, NZ. We travelled over Arthur's Pass to Hokitika, enjoying the change of scenery from the East Coast to the West.



At 10:30 AM we got stuck in traffic at the Grasmere Crossing. A large herd of sheep was being moved from one grassing ground to another further down the road and 100 of sheep took over the road. We had plenty of time to visit the Greenstone (Pounamu) craftsmen in Hokitika. Also Fran and I visit the Wool Store, looking for knitting wool. We spent too much time and almost missed lunch. Sorry to say the wool was too expensive, so we passed, hoping to

find a better deal somewhere else. We travelled south along some of the most spectacular coastline, forest and bush scenery to Franz Josef glacier. What impressed me most are the most magnificent ferns. I would like to have taken home a few. The weather was great, but a little too windy to get up in the helicopter to view the glacier. After checking into the Alpine Glacier Motel, we all went out to do some food shopping. *Val Bolan*

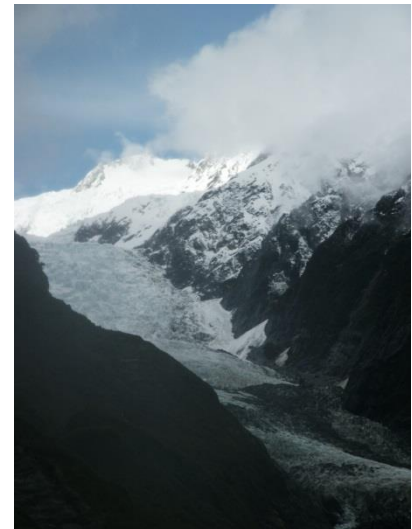


## Wednesday, March 5, 2014 Franz Josef, NZ, Hotel Alpine:

We had a very restful night at the Hotel Alpine in this very beautiful village of Franz Josef in the South Island of NZ. Franz Josef is tucked away in a valley surrounded by beautiful snowcapped mountains. After an early breakfast most of us went off for a helicopter ride to see the Franz Josef Glacier, only Mother Nature had other plans for us. Our ride was cancelled due to too much wind up on the mountains.



Feeling quite disappointed, we departed with our motley group of 10 and our tour guide and headed south along the western coast



towards Wanaka where we are spending the night. On our way, we visited the Fox and Franz Josef Glacier Valleys and took a 10-minute climb up the mountain to a look-out point to have a closer view of the





glacier. Further down the road we stopped to take pictures of their highest mountain, Mt. Cook. We stopped for lunch at Paringa Salmon Farm. There was a photo stop at Knights Point along The World

Heritage Highway. We had a rest stop at Pleasant Flat where we took a 5-minute forest walk, then an hour's ride to Makaroa where we had our ice cream stop.



Next stop was Lake Wanaka where we shopped for staples to cook for dinner since we knew the hotel had BBQ grills set up outside our rooms. Some of us cooked our dinner on the grills and ate under the stars with other guests of the hotel who had also cooked their meal on the grills. Others went walking or swimming before having their dinner. After a long day it was time for bed. *Fay Harrison*

### Thursday, March 6, 2014

The weather is magnificent. There is not a cloud in the sky. Leaving Wakanka we drove through the orchards and vineyards of Cromwell heading toward Queenstown. It is still very strange driving on the left hand side of the road with the driver on the right side of the car. The area looks very much like Arizona or New



Mexico with many herds of domesticated deer. According to Geoff, the deer were originally imported from Scotland to be used for hunting. In the 1960's the New Zealanders would shoot the deer from helicopters. Later Tim Wallace started breeding the deer for venison. He would catch the deer with nets

thrown from helicopters. This was a violent time in this area of the country. Captive deer became a big business. Later the deer were bred with wapiti which caused the animals and herds to grow larger. The new deer have four horns which tend to be soft and are covered with velvet early in the season. The Chinese and Koreans believe the horns to be an aphrodisiac and sell for \$125.00 a kg. Venison sells for \$5.00 to \$7.00 a kg. Tim Wallace was knighted for his venison experiment, became very wealthy and collected airplanes. Tim Wallace was severely injured and now sponsors an air festival. He is in his 60s.



We are now entering the ski area of New Zealand. As we ride along enjoying the scenery we were shocked to see an entire fence draped with colorful bras, yes I said bras... Probably 300 or more all sizes and styles. We asked Geoff to go back so pictures could be taken.

Snow comes to this area mainly in July. Because skiing is such a popular sport in this area, they have snow farms to make man-made until the natural snow arrives. This area is gearing up for their busy season of winter sports.

Our next quick stop was the Cardrona Hotel. The Dodge Brothers smuggled whisky through this hotel in the 1920's. Of course we also stopped for ice cream.

We are now entering gold country. There are now high rounded hills with rock outcroppings few flowers and mainly grasslands.



As we cross the Crown Mountain Range on our way to Queenstown there is a very winding road with many switchbacks. Signs actually say "Test brakes now." Good thing we trust Geoff. There was a short pit stop in Arrowtown known for its miner's cottages from the 1860's rush for Arrow River's gold. It was "Maori Jack" Tewa, a shearer, who found gold in 1862. Fifteen hundred miner's worked the river many of which were Chinese. Today it is known for the network of cycling and walking trails, scenic lookouts and golf courses.



As we head down the twisting road Lake Wakatipu comes into view. It is a clear blue lake under an equally blue sky. Queenstown lies in front of us. The town was named for Queen Victoria. The Skyline Gondola Ride was next on the agenda. There were six people to a gondola as we rose up the side of the mountain with a spectacular view of Queenstown. At the top there were numerous viewing platforms for pictures to be taken. After a lovely lunch outside, we then descended to our hotel room at the Heartland Hotel where we got ready for our boat ride on the lake.



At 6 PM we set out for a 45 minute ride viewing alpine scenery on the TSS Earnslaw, an antique steamship. It was a noisy ride if one chose to be inside since you heard the chugging of the steam engine, saw the stokers putting fuel in the fire boxes and smelled the burning coal. There were also historical exhibits in the gallery. When we arrived at the Walter Peak sheep station beautiful gardens greeted us on the shore. Since March is New Zealand's autumn the flowers of many varieties were in full bloom displaying a carpet of colors. We then settle in for a BBQ cooked on the outside rotisseries or grills. There were a wide variety of vegetables, fish, fruits, meats and



desserts. We were all a bit disappointed in the lamb since that is what New Zealand is known for. However, there sure was plenty of food. No one left hungry. After dinner we walked a short distance to the actual farm. Here our guide demonstrated his love and knowledge of sheep farming by shearing a sheep and showing us his skill as a dog handler for herding sheep.

The ride back on the water minus the sun was much colder but still enjoyable especially when accompanied by the sing-a-long at the end. We all had no trouble sleeping after this long day. *Fran Kinsey*

### Friday, March 7, 2014 Queenstown

While courageous Robbie and Fay opted to spend our free morning paragliding, the rest of us booked a terra firma adventure taking a 4-Wheel-Drive tour into Skippers Canyon. Although I planned an easy walk to the lake before the 4WD tour, I changed my mind and decide to follow signs for a



walking "track," which quickly became much steeper than I anticipated. The sidewalk to the beginning of the trail was so steep that it had steps and a handrail! My early morning solo hike became a challenging workout, but the view was magnificent.

Fortunately, our Skippers Canyon guide was an experienced driver since the narrow road into the canyon had many treacherous curves with no guardrails to protect us from the sheer drop-offs. Did you ever try to take notes while bumping along a dirt road? I'll have to paraphrase some from Wikipedia to help me make sense of my shaky handwriting!

Our guide said that Welshman William Gilbert Rees came to New Zealand to establish a sheep farm. Rees chose the Queenstown area in 1861, calling it, "the most beautiful place I've seen." (Ambassadors might agree!) He even thought Queen Victoria would want to live there.



By late 1862, the Shotover River area was considered the single biggest source of alluvial (found in a river) gold. After a year and a half of peaceful farming, Rees saw his property taken over by gold prospectors. He wondered how her Majesty would feel about "the rift raft."

At the edge of the river, our guides showed us how to pan for gold. Of course they knew the right spot to try, so we all found a fleck or two of gold!



From Queenstown to Te Anau, we had a two-and-a-half hour ride. We rode along scenic Lake Wakatipu to Kingston, Mossburn, and Te Anau.

“Like Disney only real,” said one of our guides before we ventured into the Te Anau Glowworm Caves, located in the Fiordland National Park. Surrounding the cave entrance is a cool temperate rainforest. These caves were lost in the legend of Maori name for the area - Te Ana-au- which means “caves with a current of swirling water.” In 1948 explorer, Lawson Burrows rediscovered these geologically young caves. Ah, that we could be considered young after 12,000 years!

We did have a magical underground experience riding *silently* in the small boat to view the mystical twinkling of the tiny glowworms. The grotto “planetarium” of “stars” was actually larvae clinging to the ceiling of the cave. According to the visitor information booklet the “glowworms “fish” for food by dangling as many as 70 “fishing lines” which are 20-150mm long and covered with thick sticky droplets of mucus. The glowworm's light attracts insects which then become trapped . . . in the

lines. When the glowworm feels vibrations on a line, it quickly hauls in its victim...” Yes, we managed to be quiet for a while captivated by the unique glowworms!

Mary Kinsey



**Saturday, March 8, 2014** The Village Inn, Te Anau, NZ

Geoff picked us up at 9 AM at the motel. This is a busy day on the road to Milford Sound, with many lovely stops along the way. Driving slightly north of west on Route 94 N and drove past many beech forests. All native trees are evergreens and some poplar trees. We stopped at Eglington Valley View Point for a rest stop and photos.

No toll roads and diesel is less money than gas. Gas is NZ\$ 2.10 a liter, about \$8.00 per gallon in American money. We follow Lake Te Anau and Lake Wakatipu on our way to Mirror Lakes. Mirror Lakes is famous for the mountain reflections. We saw small ducks and lots of moss on our walk. We take a rest stop at Knob’s Flat. The sun is shining and the mist is coming off the mountains. What a beautiful view!

On the road again – drive up and over the “Divide” to Lake Wakatipu and down to the Hollyford Valley (lower). We pass Lake Gunn, where some shots from *The Lord of the Rings* were filmed. Lake Gunn is part of Heritage National Park.



We drove on to Monkey Creek with views of the Upper Hollyford and Darren Mountains. At this stop we filled our water bottles from Monkey Creek – pure clean water.



We drove through Homer Tunnel – one way traffic. We had to wait for the green light for a few minutes.

At the Chasm, the Chasm River plunges through the narrow chasm 22 m. deep at the Upper Falls. We took a 25-minute walk through a true rainforest. A truly beautiful place!

We finally arrive at Milford Sound for our boat ride on the Milford Wanderer. As the boat progressed along the sound, the



water turned very dark green. Sea water is lighter than fresh water and stays on top, as fresh water comes off the mountains. We were told many stories and facts about the sound.

The highest mountain on the planet is in the sound because the mountain rises from the bottom of the sea. There are many waterfalls and we passed a true rain forest growing on the granite walls of the mountains. There is a divide in the mountains that was caused by past earthquakes.

When we reached the Tasman Sea, the feel on the boat is different, lots of rolling waves. There was an albatross flying along with us for a while.

You may not see a view like this - Milford Sound - anywhere else in the world. It

was a two hour boat ride and what a day!! We passed Mitre Peak so named because of its resemblance to a Bishop's miter. This spectacular mountain is believed to be one of the highest to rise directly out of the sea (1692 m.).

I forgot to write about the beautiful silver beech trees (towhai). This part of the world is one of the wettest. Geoff (our driver and guide) said this area gets about 10 meters of rain a year – about 330 inches! On



our road trip we also saw lichen on the rocks that made the rocks look like they had red flowers.

In 1952 Sir Edmund Hillary trained and practiced in this area of the South Island before he climbed Mt. Everest.



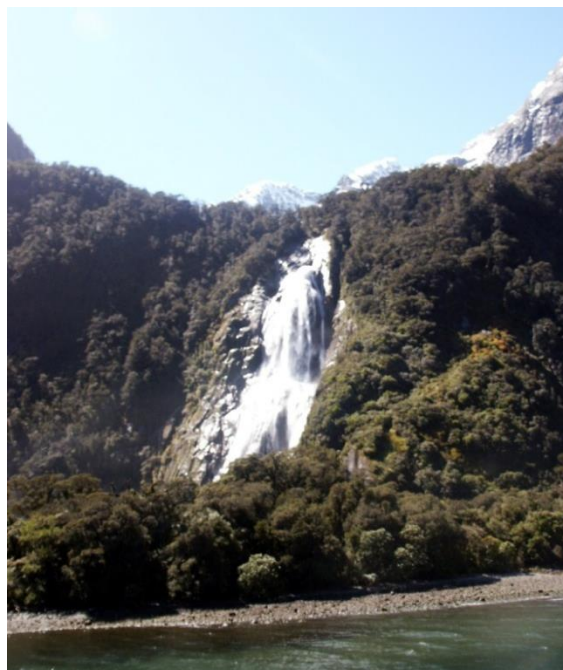
Our guide on the boat said goodbye by reciting this:

Go travelers unto others  
Boast of Venice and Rome  
Of saintly saints and majestic sights  
And Peter's lofty dome  
Of Paris and the mighty tower,  
The pyramids, Egypt's toast  
These may be grand, but give to me  
The wonder of the Milford Sound coast!

*Joan Markovic*

### **Sunday, March 9, 2014**

Up at 6:50, ate breakfast and out the door at 8:20, on the road at 8:35. Weather is sunny and partly cloudy. Today we are retracing the road north. Scenery is large rolling hills with mountains in the background. Rode thru Mossburn on Route 94 SE, then turned onto Route 97 N. Clouds were shrouding the mountain tops. We stopped at Five Rivers Café at 10:15 for about 45 minutes for coffee and potty break. Turned onto Route 6N; rode thru Kingston along Lake Wakatipu, which has tides, on the way to Frankton. During the long days' ride, Geoff told many stories and facts about the



areas we were riding through. Geoff spoke about the Maori people: They are represented by four seats in the House of Representatives. Most of the Maori live on the North Island and they are very integrated into society. Towns have never been built by them and they are a major part of the NZ Army. They love a very warrior-like type of life. The scenery is beginning to change to rolling mountains. Along the way we passed many kale

fields. Kale is used to feed live stock in the winter. Arrived in Frankton at 11:25 and stopped to get diesel fuel. All the stores were closed - it was Sunday; started off again at 11:35. During the ride north, Geoff told us about the welfare and health systems in NZ. At age 65 the Superannuation System begins (their Social Security). We continued thru Frankton on Route 6N and began to see wineries with grape vineyards covered with gauze to protect the grapes from birds. Pinot Noir is a specialty of the Gibbston Valley. We rode over the bridge from which



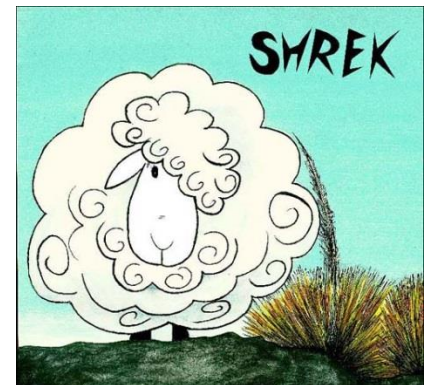


many people have bungee jumped. Geoff drove along the Kawarau River where lots of gold was found and mined from the river. He told the story about a Cypriot woman named Mrs. Jones who sold fruit from a small stand outside her home. To draw more people to her stand, she came up with the idea of adding toilets for her customers. Over the years, the store has been enlarged and a beautiful garden was added with roses, dahlias, geraniums that are surrounded with well cared for hedges. We spent about 25 minutes there enjoying the garden. In Cromwell we learned that the original town was flooded by the 50 km Lake Dunstan that was created by the building of a 300 foot dam. The new town of Cromwell, now 25 years old, was rebuilt on higher ground. Along with a copious amount of planting, a well-constructed road, 8A, was built along the lake. We followed it and then picked up Route 8 up to Lindis Pass. Geoff told the true story about a hermit merino sheep, named Shrek, who was found on Bendigo Station in 2004 that had not been shorn in 6 years. He was carrying 25 kg of fine



merino wool and gave up 22 kg for charity when finally shorn. We stopped at Bendigo Station where we “took a spell for lunch”. Most of us sat on the grass and ate blueberries, yogurt, bananas, crackers and Gwen’s mussels. Several of us bought the story books

about Shrek! We learned that rabbits were brought onto the islands and how they became major pests. They ate/killed



vegetation and harmed farmers and their property. In 1990, a virus was introduced by farmers (illegally) that had an amazing effect on the rabbit population by nearly wiping them out completely. Geoff told the story about Mackenzie Basin. Mr. Mackenzie who along with his dog walked around 1000's of acres and stole sheep from other farmers. He was found out, taken to Christchurch, tried and found guilty. He appealed the decision and won because of a language barrier. He spoke Gaelic and the trial was in English. We stopped at 3:00 in Omarama for half an hour – it was a lovely town and we could have spent 1 ½ hours there. We had a fast snack and potty break. The area is great for hang gliding because of wonderful thermal currents. We drove through Twizel where we were supposed to stay, but because of a sculling competition, the hotel was fully booked. We tried to see Mt. Cook, but it was shrouded in clouds. Irrigation on a huge scale has changed the landscape in this area a great deal. Canals dug from the lakes have provided the water for amenity lakes made to make the area look nice. We



came upon and stopped at Lake Tekapo created by a large dam. Group pictures were taken here. We drove along Canal road to the pumping station that moves the water through the different lakes; passed the Observatory for star gazing – there is no ambient light – very dark. Students come out from the Universities of Canterbury and California. We arrived at the Peppers Blue Water Resort at 5:15. Unloaded all of the luggage. Geoff complained to Mgt. because we were so spread out. They provided someone to deliver the luggage

to the rooms. All the rooms were VERY small, with 2 single beds (very soft) and very large showers. The joke was we could hold a party in the shower! We all walked to town and decided on Thai food at Thai Tekapo. Some of us had Ginger Chicken and rice. After dinner, we walked back to hotel. The guy who brought my luggage broke one wheel on my case. I asked him to give me the internet for free (Cost \$5) – he did. To bed at 11:30. *Sue Trout*

### **Monday, March 10, 2014** Lake Takepo, NZ - Christchurch, NZ

Awake @ 6:30 AM. Listened to Louise Hay. Gwen took a long shower. Me, I poked along. Gwen is a great roommate. I've laughed already so much today, especially after I showed her the green dog. Listened to Eric Benet on iPad.

Left Peppers shortly after 9 AM as some of group went to see a woman's car pulled out of the ditch at Peppers. Apparently she made a wrong turn.



We drove to the Church of the Good Shepherd. What a lovely little stone church sitting on a little rise overlooking the lake. Built in 1935. Unable to see lake due to fog. Purchased a small booklet(\$5) & a postcard (\$1) of church as seen w/o snow. Walked up to statue of the dog. It was dedicated in 1968 in honor of the herding dog.



Came out of the fog into Canterbury. Geoff decided to take us the long way to Christchurch, around the mountain. Geoff told of Richard Pearce (from this area) who was actually the first man to fly, ahead of the Wright Brothers. Due to a lack of world-wide communication at the time, the Wright Brothers got all the PR & fame.

Saw a chicken farm. These chickens are called Brown Shavers & lay brown eggs. Brown Shavers look a lot like Rhode Island Reds to me.

Passed thru a town of Fairlie where there were oak trees in memorial to soldiers who'd died in war. Turned onto Rte 79 here. Saw Lombardi poplar trees. Tall like sentries standing guard. 10:44 AM stopped in Geraldine, a small retirement area about 6 miles from the Atlantic Ocean & a few miles from Christchurch.

Went around the corner to a fruit stand and met Jacinda who sold Fran, Fay, & me fresh raspberries & strawberries. Jacinda plants, grows, harvests & sells her own fruit.

Mary, Sue & I went into Verde's Cafe for a flat white decaf. Mary had a mango smoothie, Sue date bread w/ cream cheese & butter which she shared with Mary.

Left at 11:45 AM making a left on Rte 72. Crossed the Opihi River which had a lovely river walk. Took picture of water reservoir for water storage, which is in process of being built. There was plastic to keep water from seeping into the ground. Passed through Mayfield. Passed over many one lane bridges throughout the South Island.

Passed near a small hamlet of Windwhistle with a gas station & a school. There were Magpie birds in the fields along the roads.

Passed thru the village of Hororata (Weeping Tree) where Geoff Smith grew up and saw the house where Geoff's parents lived. Also saw the house which Geoff built when he married on Substation Rd. Geoff said there are "blinking goats" on my land. We all had a good laugh. Geoff owned 500 acres there. Now lives on North island & has 1,000 acres which his son farms. Roads were long & straight with lots of large beef & sheep farms on the roadway to Christchurch.

Land now very flat vs the mountains thru which we'd travel in previous days. There are strong winds in area which caused many trees to become completely uprooted. Amazing to see so many large trees on their sides. Many were collected in very large piles which will be burned. Couldn't help but think they would make good fire wood. Waste not, want not.

Entered Christchurch via Yaldhurst Rd. Drove through town looking at the new building since the earthquakes. There are still areas which have

not come back after being demolished. Saw a Denny's restaurant. Drove down Colombo through Cashmere Hill where the wealthy live in homes costing 1 million dollars or more.

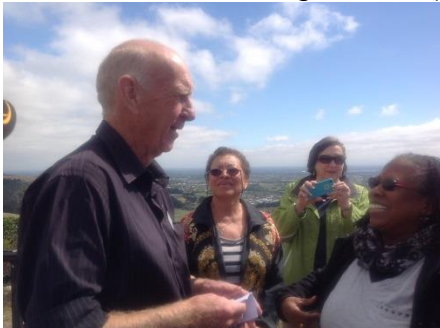
At the top of Cracroft Reserve took a group photo with Geoff. I presented Geoff with our token of gratitude (\$200) & a SNJFFI pin. We then drove down through centre

city. Geoff was often confused as to which way to go. So many of the landmarks had been leveled by the earthquakes. We passed a clock tower which stopped at the time of the quake. Unable to get photo as a large bus pulled up beside us. We then drove out to airport & arrived about 3:30 PM where check-in was uneventful. We all eventually gather in the waiting room chatting & laughing amongst ourselves. We boarded the plane, taking off about 5:40 PM and arriving in Auckland about

6:45 PM.

Inflight Fran, Mary & I played the trivia game which flashed on the overhead screen. We all commented on the free wine, cheese & crackers for a barely one hour flight. The Heartland Hotel was called by Gwen & we were told to wait across from door #2, which we eventually did. We had a nice chat with one of the shuttle bus drivers who told us we were "spot on" in where we were waiting. Very nice man.

We were delivered post haste to the hotel as it was only 5 minutes from airport. When we arrived into the lobby, the young man seemed a little overwhelmed by all the Americans arriving, however, he made short work of us. A man just walked up & interjected himself as if we, I wasn't there. He was asked by the young man if he were a part of our group. When he said he wasn't, he was asked to move aside until he was done with us. Yippee. The only rude person I've seen since my arrival. I went straight to our room and got busy making myself at home for the night. Gwen went back to the lobby to see which rooms everyone else was in.



Later she went to lobby again to eat. I stayed in room & ate strawberries, watched TV, played solitaire on my iPad. Gwen eventually returned & we went to sleep about 11 PM. *Robbie Thornton*

## Tuesday, March 11, 2014

The four ambassadors from the Friendship Force of Cheyenne, Wyoming stayed at the Auckland Airport Sudima Hotel, and walked over to the Heartland Hotel, where we joined 14 ambassadors from the Southern New Jersey FF club, which included two from the Thunder Bay, Ontario FF club.

A bus, driven by Steve, arrived with President Keith Burt and his wife Elizabeth, Graham Garden, Shirley Harland, and warmly greeted us and welcomed us to New Zealand. As we traveled, Keith Burt provided a narrative about the country, the area, and Auckland, including the history and cultural of the area. Graham provided information about various parts/sites of the tour along with Shirley providing a historical overview of the Waikato



Valley. During the bus tour of

Auckland including Manakau Harbor, and Mission Bay, we stopped at the Auckland War Memorial Museum for a tour and lunch, which was followed by a stop at the Parnell Rose Gardens and Village, and a visit to the Wellington Mountain or One Tree Hill to view an extinct volcano crater, which also provided a wonderful view of Auckland. Mystery or



"Goodie" bags were distributed by President Burt, which included the program for the exchange, gifts, and literature about the area. On the way to Hamilton, several brief stops were made to have ice cream and also visit the coal mining town of Huntly and the Turangawaewae House.

By late afternoon, we arrived in Hamilton for the Welcoming Reception at the home of Bev Morris, where we met many of the other club members and our home hosts. We were all treated to wine, juice, canapés, fruit, vegetable, and crackers, and, of

course, spirited and wonderful conversations. President Burt gave a formal welcome and the Exchange Director,



Margaret Garden, provided an overview of the forthcoming week. Judy Greenberg and Tony Adams joined their home hosts Margaret and Graham Garden, and Donna Logan and Jone Jones joined their home host Shirley Harland, for a wonderful evening meal and more lively conversation. *Tony Adams*

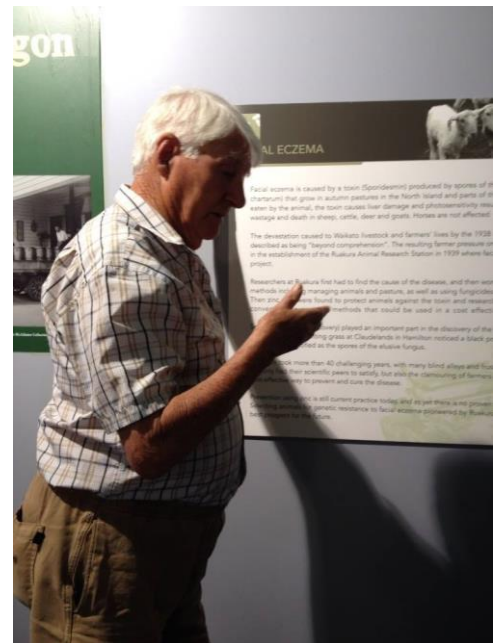
**Wednesday, March 12, 2014.**

We began the day with breakfast and then Jone and Donna joined us to travel to Mystery Creek to visit the Mystery Creek National Field Day Society founded in 1968. We met the rest of the group there. Our speaker was Jack Parle and he had quite a bit of interesting information to share. First of all, no one knows why the place is called Mystery Creek but he thinks it might relate to the creek of the same name in the area.



Just as an aside which I thought was cute..... Jack was giving his presentation and all of a sudden his wife popped up and literally put a throat lozenge in his mouth. He seemed nonplussed by the whole thing and continued on as if nothing had happened.

Mystery Creek National Field Day Society is a volunteer organization. The area is about 200-300 acres and is where different events are held. One of them, the annual field day is for farmers and there

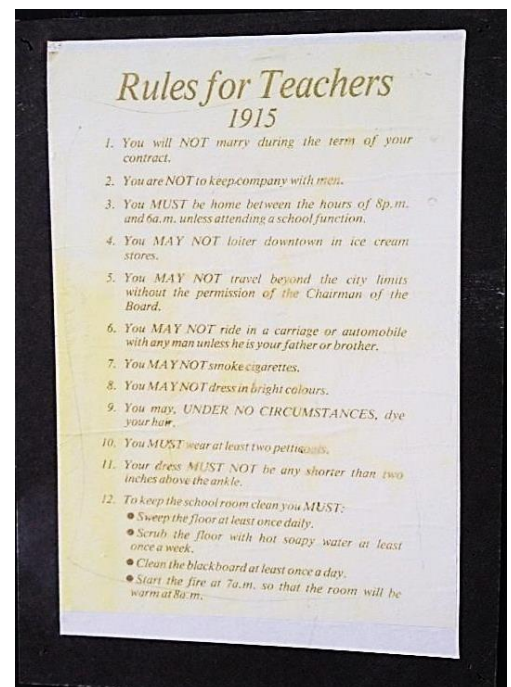


are usually 150-or more sites where people gather to view farm equipment, new inventions, a few animals. Exhibitors from all over the world come to this event. The Mystery Creek hosts competitions such as tractor pulling and fence building. The area also hosts a Christian Music Festival

There is also a convention center where there is also a Dairy museum, DC3 aircraft, and also a museum showing life of the farmer's years ago. Two men are presented here, Doug Phillips who invented the "unshortable" electric fence and also Ron Sharp who invented the herringbone milking shed. Jack knew both men and was very proud to speak about them.

Jack also told us that NZ markets 1/3 of the world dairy products and export 94%. Most of the dairy farming is done on the North Island. The South Island grows mostly grain but is not a large producer.

On the property, there is also a small reproduction of the village (I think what Hamilton was like many years ago)

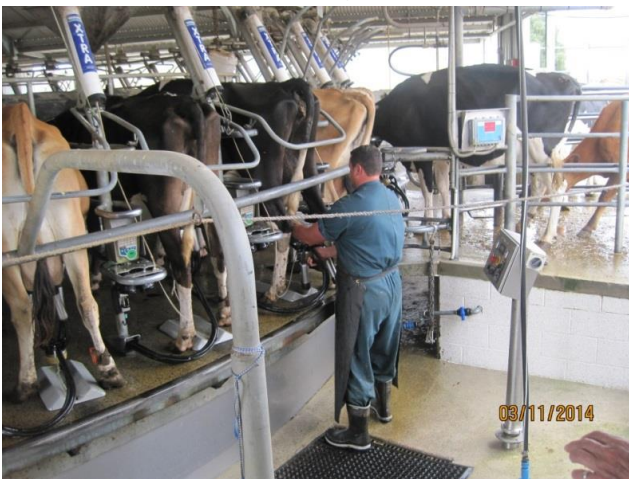


which had a jail, hospital (most of us were frightened when we saw the medical equipment that was used), petrol station, a blacksmith and a school house. There were tables set up in the garden area where weddings, teas etc, are held. Something was going on later that day.

Jone, Donna, Graham, Margaret, Tony and I left there and were taken to a wonderful restaurant called Wild Thyme. The owner heard our US accents and came over to talk to us as she was originally from CA. I had a vegetable frittata which I'd never seen before filled with all kinds of wonderfully fresh veggies. The Mortons also came in with Sandra and John Train.

From there we went to the village of Te Awamutu and walked around a beautiful rose garden and of course snapped lots of photos.

We then went to the Brown's farm where we watched cows with beautiful big brown eyes being milked in a very orderly fashion. The shed they used was the



Herringbone milking machine. The cows seem to know when it's their turn and they enter single file. They get very upset if another cow tries to butt in. The attendant hooks up the milking machines. The monitor on their legs records the cow and the amount of milk the cow delivers. The cows also feed while they are being milked so the monitors register this also. The farm has about 600 cows who are milked at 4:30 am and again at 2:30 pm. We were told to be very careful as we walked around but unfortunately one of us got sprayed. She knows who she is.

On our way home, we noticed a huge complex and were told that this is a Mormon

Church which was built in the 50's. The Mormons helped many of the Maori and as a result many converted to become Mormons.

Graham and Margaret live in a section called Huntington and this is in the Northeast section of Hamilton. They have a very nice 3 bedroom house. I find it interesting that the toilet is separate from the bathtub and sink area (very European). Their backyard is beautifully gardened and they are very proud of their home. We enjoyed meeting and staying with them.

That evening there were the host dinners. We went to Laurel and Brian Brookfield's home and feasted on a meal of fresh vegetables from his garden. We also had a meat dish but I was impressed by the array of veggies. Everything was delicious and homemade. Laurel even made 2 desserts. One, a Pavlova, yum, and the other a bread pudding, Tony's favorite.

All in all, it was a wonderful day as was our homestay. I am so glad that we were able to experience all that we did. *Judy Greenberg*



Our host, Alison Silcock left early in the morning for a garden tour in Auckland leaving us with all kinds of breakfast food. Bev Morris then picked us up for the day along with Robbie who was dropped off by her host, Joann. We drove to Mystery Creek center where Jack Parle explained how the facility is used for field day 4 times a year which is always quite a day for farmers. Their facilities are also used for education and many other functions. One large room was beautifully set up for a wedding reception. We looked at the historic displays in the museum section then checked out the historic buildings on the property - a church, school, blacksmith, jail, and gas station.



We then drove to the strawberry fields where we met Joann for lunch. We bought some of the last strawberries of the season to take home to Alison. After lunch we all met at the Pirongia pub where we had time to browse the craft and antique shops. We then drove to Brown's Dairy Farm, number 73738. It was fascinating to see how the cows stripped on the rotating platform to be milked.



On the way home we stopped at a supermarket for wine to take to dinner, then back to Alison's. Bill took a nap until Alison came home.

In the evening we enjoyed a small dinner party at the home of Diane and Jon Gras along with Robbie and her host, Joann. Jon cooked sausages, lamb patties, and chicken on a stick on the barbecue while Diane set out a

delicious assortment of sides and we ate outside on their lovely deck. *Janet & Bill McGehean*

### Thursday, March 13, 2014

Sandra and I enjoyed another terrific breakfast with Dick and Margaret Morton at their lovely country home. Fresh orange juice, toast with jam, marmalade or honey, various selections of cereal and tea or coffee. Mixed in with the above was the usual trading of stories and anecdotes.



The agenda for today is to see antiques at 2 venues and a picnic lunch at Hamilton Gardens complete with a tour. The first visit was at the home of Eileen Beach-Kelly in Hamilton. Eileen's home was a treasure trove of fascinating collectables. The first item she talked about was a silver tea pot that hung from a stand and tilted to pour the tea. Another of her collections was of rare posy holders - very unique, charming and costly. There was a story attached to every item which made for a very entertaining time. Her charming home was also decorated with original paintings and





creations made by our hostess. We were served morning tea with dainty cucumber sandwiches, tea biscuits and yummy muffins.

Following a tour of Eileen's home, it was on to Hamilton gardens where the whole group reassembled for a pot-luck picnic lunch. There was a wonderful array of delectables which was enjoyed by us all. It was also an opportunity to chat and learn more about each other.



We toured parts of the Hamilton Gardens including an Asian Zen garden, Italian Renaissance, Indian Char Bagh with temple and many more. It was so pleasant to see flowers and greenery everywhere after our long Canadian winter.

The remainder of the afternoon was spent at the home of Pat Mathews. She also had tales to tell about many items around her quirky home which was made up of nooks and crannies everywhere. Up a spiral staircase was her work-craft memorabilia area. She had



done some amazing scrap booking albums about her late husband who was still a huge focus in her life. Just in case we were becoming malnourished, more goodies were served with tea and coffee.

After a long trip back to our hosts out in the country in Te Awamutu, and a quick change of clothing we drove back into Hamilton for the Ambassador hosted dinner. Our unique dining spot called Gengy's on Victoria Street, was a Mongolian restaurant. Our party consisted of H/W members Dick and Margaret Morton, Jan Alderton and Kay Skidmore and we visitors including Mary Kinsey and Fran Kinsey.

The concept was that you chose the raw ingredients of your meal, meats, vegetables, oils and seasonings. You then presented your choice to a team of cooks who cooked it over a huge circular grill at 600 degrees as you watched. Then you added hot rice and/or noodles/ or fries to complete the dish. Afterwards there were hot pancakes and ice cream for dessert. All of the above, of course, interspersed with much lively conversation.

As it had been a tiring day, we called it quits and then headed home for a good night's sleep. *John and Sandra Train*

At Pat Matthews' home filled with wonderful antiques. The 18 acres was purchased in 1933 by her husband Jack's father and the property was high above the city. There was no water or electric source, just empty hills. Pat's talent for cleverness was fun to see – chandeliers with tea cups and tea pots, etc. There was a 120 year old tapestry chair – no sitting please, a desk with a learning paper roll that rotated grammar lessons, dishes, picture, silver service and much more. Her various garden features brought out Pat's talents: flowing water and seating areas at different levels. So cozy!

Pat's lifetime business was being a seamstress (creator) with upholstery and drapery. She also designs and sews her own wardrobe-pretty, sharp dresses, I must say! Then we were treated by the Hamilton Club catering



team to tea and a variety of local cakes. What fun these gals were. Isn't New Zealand food special? Our hostess Shirley treated us to her garden vegetables and relishes.



Thursday afternoon the club treated us to a picnic at Hamilton Gardens Park, then a tour of the gardens by Keith Burt. This is a busy large public park managed by the City Council and has themed areas. Next we toured Eileen Beach-Kelly's home, also filled with antiques. Her home was



originally settled in 1841. Her outstanding pieces were a large alabaster pillar and sconces from the Old Parliament building. A 120-year-old horsehair two-seater angled chair was prominent. It was used for ladies' teas as they sat on the edge of the cushions while the men had their evening cigar and drinks. Eileen paid 3 weeks wages for this unusual chair. She has spoon collections, some with jade and bone inlays. She was the owner of a flower shop for many years and has collected Victorian posy holders, lapel vases and buttonhole vases in vintage form. As a parting gift after tea and dessert, Eileen folded (precisely and quickly) pink ribbons into a perfect rose for each of us. Such a talented lady! *Jone Jones*



### Friday, March 14, 2014

We spent today in Rotorua City, the chief tourism draw on the North Island. We began with an early morning visit to a sculpture garden featuring works of wood, stone and metal. A dog named Puppy acted as our tour guide, happily leading us through the garden of sculptures. The main artist is Trevor Nathan who is currently contracted to create a major sculpture for Rotorua City.



Next we visited the Buried Village of Te Wairoa. This model village was founded by Rev. Seymour and Ellen Spencer in 1852. The Pink and White silica terraces attracted tourism to the village. However, June 10, 1886 at around midnight, the volcanic eruption of Mt. Tarawera resulted in four terrifying hours of rocks, ash and mud bombarding this peaceful town. Over 150 people were killed and the Pink and White Terraces were destroyed as well as homes and hotels. Today



the Buried Village of Te Wairoa makes the Tarawera eruption of 1886 come to life for tourists and archeologists.

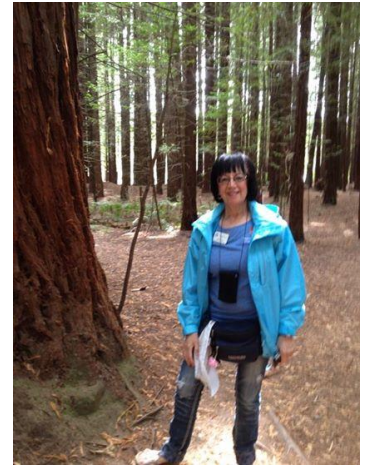
We then had a brief picnic lunch and walk at the Redwoods Forest before going to Te Puia to learn about Maori art and culture. At Te Puia we experienced a vibrant welcoming ceremony with warriors singing and dancing in the Marae, the Maori meeting place. With protruding tongues and enlarged eyes, the Maori warriors attempt to frighten their enemies. After that we went on a guided tour, including the viewing of geysers and hot mud pools. We got to see 2 kiwis, rare flightless birds that are New Zealand's national bird. We learned that because the Maori did not have a written language, carved wood was used to stimulate one's memory of persons and events and stories. We also learned that the Maori have 2 meanings of the word "my" that indicate in addition one's relationship to the possessed

object. We then went on to look at a carving and a weaving workshop. The tour ended with a delicious Hangi meal that was prepared on hot stones. We returned back to our hosts in Hamilton tired, but more informed. *Judy & Sam*

We met at the home of Graeme and Maureen Matthews and piled into three vans at 7:30. Someone almost got left behind because they were late. We went through some countryside with rich soil for farming and breeding horses. We stopped at a sculpture garden owned by Trevor Nathan. Most of the sculptures in the garden were made by him or other artists. Garden has been in existence since about 2003. We were fortunate enough to have snacks passed around by Margaret. Lake Rotorua is the home of black swans. Logging was done there where it was made into chips and sent to Japan.

We next visited a village buried by a volcano. Te Wairoa was established by the Christian missionaries in 1848. It survived for fewer than 40 years before it and the nearby Pink and White Terraces were obliterated by the eruption of Mt. Tarawara. On June 10, 1886

spewing rock, ash and mud killed more 150 people and destroyed the area. At one time this was regarded as the eighth wonder of the world. A village person had an omen and warning of the pending eruption. It was very eerie as we were escorted



about the area where some of the buildings have been unearthed. Seventeen people were recovered and the rest are buried in the land. They had a wood in one of the buildings we visited that does not scorch or burn.

We stopped at the Redwood Forest and had a lunch prepared by the catering crew. We even had coffee and tea. The rest rooms were

pretty fancy for a picnic area. They had a store there and purchases were made.

Our next stop was Te Puea where we witnessed a ceremony, dances and culture of the Maori Tribe. We had a guide who took us around the village and talked about the history. The geothermal area was used for cooking, bathing and heat. Guide told about times when he would swim in the

stream going into the geysers. Didn't realize or see any danger.

They had a kiwi bird in captivity; however, we weren't able to see it.

They can't fly and there are approximately 70,000 in the country now. It takes 80 days to hatch the egg and the male takes care of it. We visited an area of the village where they are teaching the younger people how to carve wood poles and weaving for the girls.

We then went and had a Hangi Meal. It is a meal cooked in the ground and consists of chicken, stuffing, potatoes, pumpkin, cabbage and spinach. We only

had a half hour to eat because they were closing. *Donna Logan*

### **Saturday, March 15, 2014**

Today is Saturday and we are having a free day. Our hostess is taking us to a spring meeting in Cambridge, NZ. We stop at the Red Church, which is converted into a coffee shop. We have a cup of coffee and a bun. Next we move on to the

Spring Meeting, where we were told that we might find some wool, since the spring meeting is for spinners and knitters. Lots of fun watching women spin and knit. After lunch we were dropped off at this incredible estate, where we watched the owner, Jan Alderton, show us how to do flower arranging. Since it rained that afternoon the touring of the estate was not possible. At about 5 PM we went home with our host and had dinner at home. *Val Bolan*





## Sunday, March 16, 2014, Hamilton, NZ

After a lovely breakfast of homemade Irish soda bread that our host Jack made for us and served with his homemade jams, Heather our hostess took us to pick up her daughter, Wendy who lives a few blocks away. We then drove into Cambridge to visit Travelling Threads for knitting and spinning supplies where we met Fran and Mary. Our knitters, Fran and Val were still searching for that special wool, which they happily found. Mary and I just tagged along. We then stopped for coffee at the Toccata Café which building originally housed The Trinity Church which was built in 1877. From there we stopped at the Town Hall, where their annual Autumn Festival was going on. There were belly dancers and clowns dancing around in the Plaza and

arts and crafts inside the Town Hall. Inside we met again with Cynthia (a wool spinner), whom we had met the day before while shopping for wool. She actually knitted a shawl for baby Prince George of the U.K. I bought a handmade wooden spatula made from local Kimu wood. We then drove home for a delicious lunch that was prepared by our host, Jack. He made us zucchini fritters with zucchini from his garden, served with more of his homemade Irish soda bread.

After doing some packing and spending a restful afternoon, we headed out for our 5 PM Farewell

Dinner. Although it was an on and off rainy, cloudy day, everyone turned out. After the regular speeches from our hosts and our EDs, we enjoyed a lovely buffet dinner and desserts. Then it was time for some entertainment. The Cheyenne Ambassadors gave their presentation and then it was our



turn. We performed our "Ode to New Jersey." Gwen was mentioned for best costume and I for best runway walk. It was then time to say goodbye to some friends that we would not be seeing the next morning of our departure to our next home stay in the Bay of Plenty on the east coast of the North Island. *Fay Harrison*



Larre and I arrived in Auckland before 6 AM, sat around in the Arrivals area until about 11 when we took the bus to a shopping mall where we transferred to the InterCity Bus to Hamilton. Our hostess, Beverley Crafar,



picked us up at the bus station and took us to her home where we had a brief rest before leaving for the Farewell party. We saw all our ambassadors, met the Wyoming group and John and Sandra Train, and reconnected with old friends from our visit in 2004. There was a buffet dinner with a great variety of delicious dishes. After the speeches Tony presented our gift to the man from the charity chosen by our host club – an organization called Shelter Box. Shelter Box is a disaster relief charity specializing in emergency shelter provision.



A big green box with all your basic needs supplies an extended family with a tent and essential supplies for those who have been displaced or left homeless. The talk was very interesting. Next we were entertained by



a wonderful musical men's barbershop group. After that our hosts sang and then Cheyenne sang and we did Ode to New Jersey. Pictures were taken and then we went home with our hostess. We talked with our hostess for a little while and went to bed after a very long day. *Sue Hoke*

### Monday, March 17, 2014

After a good night's sleep, we had breakfast with our hostess Beverley Crafar and she drove us to Margaret and Graham Garden's house where we said goodbye.

There was a rainbow over the house. Margaret drove us to Maureen and Graeme



Matthew's house where everyone met to be put with drivers for the trip to Matamata. Since Sue Trout, Joan Markovic and Larre and I were the only ones not going to Hobbiton, we all rode with Robyn Smith. It was a nice drive through the countryside. We stopped at the Matamata i-Site Visitor Information Centre which looks like a Hobbit House. Then we drove to the Firth Tower Museum. We were the only customers until just as we were leaving.

The Firth Tower was built in 1882 by Josiah Clifton Firth to provide a lookout over the country side and it was used as the estate office and as sleeping quarters for single

men. The museum displays and exhibits are the work of the Matamata Historical Society. Buildings in the museum included the Homestead, the Tower, a memorial cairn, Heritage Buildings, several sheds which house exhibits on, tractors, tree felling and blacksmithing, early recreational interests, the milk and cream industry and factories, a typical woolshed complete with yards, displays of shearing equipment, fleece sorting table and wool bales and the new exhibit "From Horse to Tractor" which takes you from post European Maori agriculture to the early motorized machine age.



The museum occupies the site of the headquarters of the Matamata Estate - 56.000 acres. The estate was established by Auckland entrepreneur Josiah Clifton Firth. The present homestead (1902) replaces the old station homestead (1879) that was razed by fire. In 1904 the estate was divided into 117 farms and the then manager, John McCaw gained the Tower Farm. The front rooms of the house and the kitchen, dairy and laundry have been furnished in the style of the late 1880's when the McCaws began their residence.



There was so much to see in the homestead and we triggered the audio when we entered rooms which told us about what we were seeing in the words of the residents of the house. The tower is one of the earliest reinforced concrete buildings in New Zealand. The building also had interesting displays on



the history of the station and Matamata and a great view from the top of the tower.

The Heritage Buildings included the **Firth Tower Church: (the old Matamata Methodist Church)** built in 1914; the **Okoroire Post Office** was built about 1928 and contains post office equipment spanning 100 years of communications development and there is a pre-loved book-shop in the back of the building, another function of a Post Office in days gone by; the **Gordon School** which opened in 1893; **The Jail** which was built in 1892 in Karangahake and moved to Matamata in 1920 where it served until 1950; **Settler's Cottage** furnished as a workman's home of the 1900's; and **The Barn**



where there are exhibits of the “drowned” Hora Hora Dam, Matamata’s doctors, dentists and hospitals, the history of movie going in Matamata and Waharoa, the Kaimai NAC disaster and late 19th and 20th century wars. There are interesting displays of horse transport, and delivery and passenger vehicles.

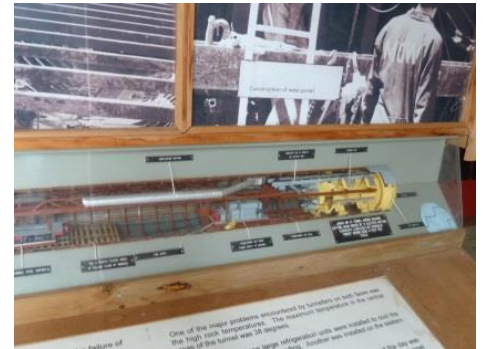


The Museum also has **The Potager Garden & Orchard:** a typical 19th century farm vegetable garden complete with the spare roses and other flowers from the homestead “front garden.”

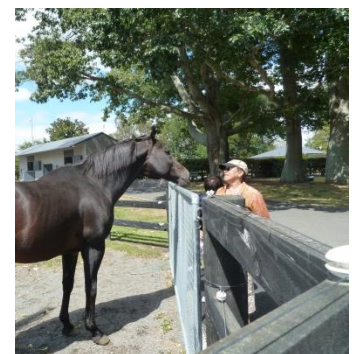
There is also an exhibit on the Kaimai Tunnel which is housed in one of a pair of railway goods wagons. One wagon shows the history of the excavation of the tunnel and of the men who worked on it through photographs and models. In the other goods wagon there are two model railway layouts owned and displayed by the Matamata branch of the Greater Waikato Railway Modellers Club. They have now completed a new diorama of the



Kaimai Tunnel and approaches with working trains.



We spent a few hours exploring the museum. Then we drove back to the i-Site because Robyn thought we were meeting the others there. When they didn't show up, we found the address for Waikato Stud where we were gathered to have a picnic lunch and a tour of the stud farm. It was just down the road from the museum. The members of the FF of Hamilton and Waikato set up tables and chairs in a big paddock and put out the food. We had a nice lunch and then we were taken around the farm. First we saw their famous stallions. Each one was in a separate paddock. Our





guide told us stories of all the stallions. We walked over one area and he told us that the bodies of their champions were buried there in unmarked graves. Waikato Stud is a world renowned thoroughbred nursery dedicated to the breeding, rearing and development of elite racehorses. The stud was originally purchased by American, Nelson Bunker Hunt in 1967. Its modern day reputation as a birthplace of champions began in 1993 following its purchase by Garry and Mary Chittick. Now owned and operated by their son Mark Chittick and his wife Lisa, the Matamata-based nursery has grown to 1258 acres and has an undisputed record as New Zealand's number one producer of international G1 winners

After lunch and the tour the bus arranged by Margaret picked us up and drove us to Tauranga. On the way we made a stop at the top of the Kaimais for photos. We were dropped at a parking lot of a club in Greerton where we were met by our hosts. Most people went to their homes but since our hosts, Brian and Helen Grimwood, live in Katikati, which is quite a distance from Tauranga, and Helen had to help set up for dinner, we went directly to the Settlers Hall at Omokoroa. It was really hot there. We had something to drink and visited with some of the people helping to set up. The ambassadors and hosts arrived and Don Barnes took photos of



each set of hosts and ambassadors. The hosts welcomed us and we were invited to get our food. They served chicken, potatoes, salads, lasagna and garlic bread for dinner. After dinner we were given bags with little gifts and information. Then we had Pavlova for dessert - fruits, whipped cream and meringue. Very refreshing! Because it was so hot in the building, the doors had been left open. A bird flew in and we couldn't get it to leave. It flew around the hall the whole time we were there. We stayed to help clean up. The club has some cupboards in the kitchen and can store their silverware, plates and glasses there. When they have events at other places, they go pick up the dishes at the hall. The bird was still there when we left.



We went home, sat and talked in the living room and had some tea and cookies and then went to our room to unpack and go to bed. *Sue and Larre Hoke*

## HOBBITON MOVIE SET TOUR

Farewell to Joanne & Malcolm. I did enjoy hem. Last night I could hardly sleep due to the excitement of going to Hobbiton!! We set out at 8:45 AM from Hamilton arriving just at 9:30 AM.. I was beside myself when I saw the road signs for Hobbiton. After a short wait after our arrival, we were loaded on a bus by our tour guide, Benji.

We were driven to another parking lot were we disembarked. I was so excited. We walked up a path and there was the view of the Hobbit village. I could see Frodo and his uncle before him running down the paths. The doors were just



as they appeared in the movies. There was small clothing hanging on the clotheslines. Small chairs, etc in Hobbit size.

We took many pictures of each other coming out of Hobbit doors. We laughed like children. When we climbed to the topmost house we were able to turn around & see the very large tree which appeared on the films as well as the country side.

There was a mill and a bridge which we walked across to the Green Dragon Inn. At the Inn we ate and more pictures were taken. In the gift shop tee shirts & other trinkets were bought. All in all wonderful though much too short of a time. I wanted to stay longer & do the tour all over again.



We had lunch at Waikato stud farm. A young man named Peter Retter spoke to us about the different horses. One horse, O'Reilly, age 20 years old, had service fees of \$50,000 NZ. He is the #1 stud in Australia-Asia. Last year between September & November O'Reilly made \$5 million in service fees. The #2 horse's service fees are 45,000. # 3 horse, Pins' service fees are \$35,000 each service. Mares carry a foal 11-13 months. Foals are weaned at 4-5 months. Ocean Park, another stud, was a great race horse. He cost \$14 million. This is his 1st year servicing. There are a number of studs & mares buried on the farm. No Excuse Needed (Rowdy), 12-13 years old was born in the northern hemisphere, had a sore eye, so he has a mesh over his eyes to defuse the light. Rowdy was walking in a circle in a dirt patch then he lay down & rolled in the dirt to scratch a itch.

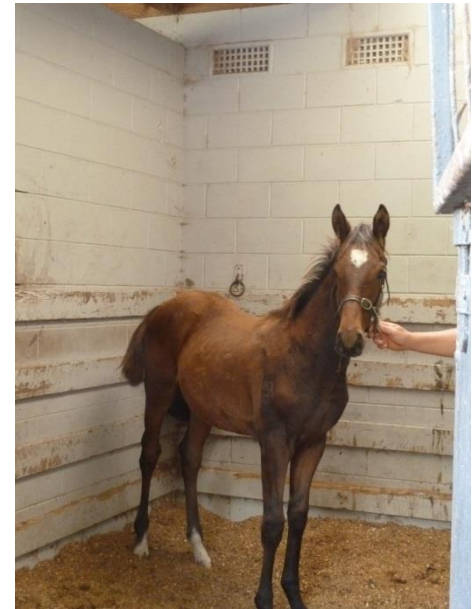


Went to the breeding shed. Boots are put on the mares to keep from injuring the studs when they are kicked by the mares. It's like a boxing gloves. A leather blanket is put on the mare's neck to prevent her from kicking the stud should he bite her on the neck.



Went the Yearling yard. Saw several 4-5 month old foals. Was able pet one. They are bought into the yard to be educated in having a blanket on & getting used to being handled.

*Robbie Thornton*



## **Tuesday, March 18, 2014**

Today started with breakfast with our hosts Sheryl and Rex Farrow. It brought back memories of when we were last here in October of 2011. We reminisced for a while and then we were off to Tauranga to City Hall and the mayoral meeting. It was a beautiful morning. City Hall is a nice, clean newish building and as we congregated everyone was exchanging pleasantries with both new and old friends.

Then we went upstairs to the council chambers for a brief talk by Mayor Stuart Crosby. He enlightened us on the development of Tauranga and of many of its accomplishments both new and old. Sue Hoke presented him with the South New Jersey pin explaining the meaning of its scenes. Our group also received Tauranga pins.



Then we had morning tea put on by the city. There was an excellent array of sweets along with tea or coffee. The mayor stayed for a while and chatted informally with many of us. It was a very pleasant start to the day.

Next we drove to the Elms and Redoubt Historical

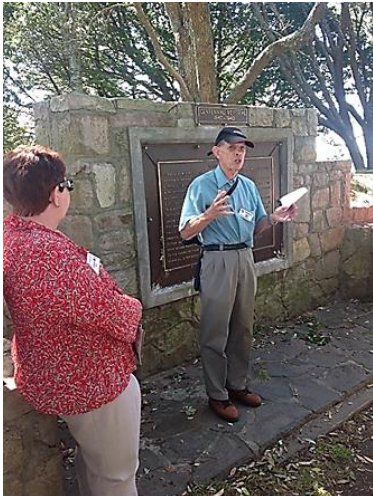
sites and gardens. Nigel Wilson gave a very informative discussion on the history of the Elms, its library and house. It was a former CMS Mission Station founded in 1835. The mission



house was completed in 1847 and is New Zealand's finest late Georgian home and has the country's oldest free standing library. This mission was started by the Rev. Alfred Nesbit Brown. It was named the Elms after over 50 elm trees growing on the site. Interestingly enough, this historic treasure is free to the public to tour. The rooms were nicely laid out and well appointed.



We then took a short walk to the Redoubt Park and Don



Barnes gave an interesting talk on the military establishment and importance of this area. We then looked over the harbor and finished our tour at an interesting greenhouse and Rose Gardens. It was then lunchtime and some of the group brought out a picnic lunch, sat on some benches and enjoyed the break. Others went off to various other locations for lunch as we did at a little cafe.



The remainder of the day was free time. Sandra and Sheryl went shopping to a quilting/fabric store as well as others. (Fancy that!) Rex and I went to an auto parts store and then to the Tauranga Citizen's Club for a coffee break. Afterwards, we picked up the ladies and returned home.



*John and Sandra Train*



My hostess, Shirley Penny and I drove downtown to meet the rest of ambassadors and hosts for a meeting with the Mayor of Tauranga. After a nice talk about Tauranga we had a nice tea with fruit and pastries and took pictures. There is one of me with the Mayor. All quite nice.

Dawn, Gwen, Shirley & I walked along the waterfront. Dawn & Shirley told about the different stores which were there when they were children. We went back to the car & drove a short distance to The Elms Mission House for a tour.



At the Elms we were given a talk by Nigel Wilson about missionaries who came to train the uncivilized people. The library was the first building to be built by Archdeacon N. A. Brown in 1839. The library is made out of kauri wood, a wood native to NZ. The next building was the house, then the laundry & so on.

Archdeacon N. A. Brown created a Maori Bible. There are 1000 books of all sorts bound in leather in the library. He traveled 500 miles in three months preaching and healing.

Think of the M's: Maori about 1200AD, missionary 1830's, military 1840's and Maxwell 1850's. The land was bought by the white people from the Maoris with blankets, nails, etc.

There were very bad land wars as not all the Maoris were in agreement to "sale" the land. The Maori were cannibals. Library had a trap door in the floor in which to hide from war parties. By 1850s more Maori people could read & write than whites.

The house was a Georgian house. Windows are originals. Kauri is the wood which the house is made out of. There is large one room on second floor. Main floor has three bedrooms, dining room and a parlor off the modest size entry hall. One can still see in the bedroom just left of the entry a good number of thing collected.



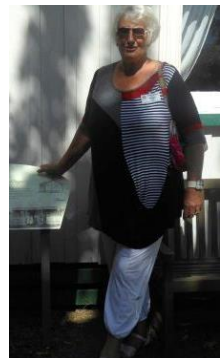
We left the Elms & walked down to the Monmouth Redoubt where Don Barnes gave us a talk about it. It was named after military person. The "King Movement" was started in Waikato. There was a treaty to stop the intertribal wars.



Don asked Alison Ham who had relatives here in very early days to speak. Her grandmother taught sewing & sewed the soldiers' uniforms. European women & children would camp on Redoubt when men were away. There were a few soldiers here. This was in letters to England. There was a lot talk about how vicious the Maori were.

Maori land wars started because of the sale of land to whites, which other Maoris didn't want to sell. A Maori man said "over my dead body" and the British soldiers fired cannon which started a forty year war.

After lunch, which we (Gwen, Dawn, Shirley and I) packed and ate looking out at the water, we went through the garden looking at the flowers. We later went home for a quiet evening. *Robbie Thornton*



**Wednesday, March 19, 2014**

As we got ready for today's journey the sun was just rising. We left our host home at 7:00 AM. Rise and shine! All of the other visitors from the states were on the bus. Mary and I were outliers staying in a different area, so we were like hitchhikers waiting in a gas station to be picked up. As the bus arrived we literally scooted from the car and jumped on the bus. Off we go!

We are in the Bay of Plenty where most plants will grow but not grapes. The wineries are here but the grapes must be imported from other areas of New Zealand. The soil is very fertile because of the active volcanoes and lava from long ago. We also passed a large kiwifruit orchard. This plant is also called a Chinese gooseberry and grows on a woody vine. A Californian based importer changed the name from Chinese gooseberry to kiwifruit after the kiwi bird, since both the bird and the fruit share a similar appearance, and both are associated with New Zealand.

Sheryl made the trip exciting by telling a few jokes along the way. "Friendship is like wetting your pants. Everyone can't see it, but you can feel it from within." Moving on...

In this area the foliage is lush green with large evergreens lining the road. We leave the water of Tauranga Bay on the right and the coast. Unfortunately, we came upon road repair - very bumpy with many men working. The road is now beginning to climb and we see many radiata pine. This tree is not native to New Zealand, but has become the core of the forest industry with the bulk of the timber being shipped to Asia for framing houses.

We drove through Waihi, an old gold mining town of the 1700s. There still is mining done here. The gullies have been filled in with the soils they bring from the mines. This is one of the wettest areas of NZ. The Karangahoke gorge is quite stunning stretch of the river and home to one of the busiest and most lucrative gold strikes. Unfortunately, the river was ruined by arsenic from the gold mining. The country is trying to reclaim the area.

We came to a tunnel through the mountain for the railroad. It was too difficult to maintain, but one can walk through it.

At the foot of the Coromandel Peninsula is a small town called Paeroa. It is known for its mineral springs and a drink called lemon paeroa or "L & P". It is a bubbly drink much like 7 Up or for "Tui", a NZ beer.

Some other interesting facts our bus driver mentioned:

There are 4.5 million people in NZ.

There are 40 million sheep in NZ.

There are 20 million dairy cows in NZ.

Therefore no one needs to starve in NZ. also

There are no snakes, bears, or poisonous spiders, but there are wild boars that could be dangerous in the bush (forest).

It is now 8:45 AM ....time for our morning tea or hot cocoa

and scones. (We have our tea break at a garden center and we are joined by members of the FF of Thames. They were very nice. )



On the road again .....we pass the city of Thames which had a Toyota assembly plant . Now second hand cars come to the plant and are overhauled. This helps NZ to afford good sturdy cars.

We now are heading up the hill to Coromandel Township. The pohutukawa tree an evergreen tree with red flowers was along the road. It does not bloom at this time of the year but has bright crimson fluffy flowers much like our mimosa trees in December. It is known as the Kiwi Christmas tree. As the road rises we have water on our left and a steep cliff rising on our right....not much room to pass.



On the left we see private oyster beds where people will stop and eat the oysters raw. Just don't get caught or you can be heavily fined. We also saw old train cars from bygone days that have been converted into long thin homes.

We have now arrived at Driving Creek Railway and Pottery Studios for a one hour round trip ride on New Zealand's only narrow-gauged mountain railway. Originally the area was settled as a gold mining town and Barry Brickle was hired in 1960 to teach science. Since he did not like teaching and discovered there was great clay for pottery, Barry decided to make a life doing pottery. He needed a way to get the clay (terra cotta) down the mountain. In 1973 this inspiring project started building 3km of tortuous narrow-gauge railway track over 22 ha of hilly scrub-covered land. Building the railway from scratch required the daunting task of surveying a route through very rough country. Trial surveys were made with a hand slasher and



home-made surveying instruments. The process had to be repeated until a suitably graded route could be found. Barry Brickle laid much of the track on which we travelled by hand. Local contractors were called in to help with the major parts such as bridges, three tunnels and five reversing points. The final destination of the railway is Eyefull Tower from which the view is magnificent.

In 1990 to meet his mortgage the Driving Creek Railway was opened to the public. In 2001 the last payment on the loan was paid and Barry Brickle proved most people wrong. He is 78 years old, lives on the land and has made a living using this clay. Another DCR project

is native forest restoration. The trains pass close to kauri and other native trees as well as ferns, all planted



since 1973. A native wildlife sanctuary with predator-proof fence has also been established on the property. The Queen Elizabeth Trust will manage this property when Barry Brickle dies.

Gwen and I decided to eat at a nice restaurant for lunch. Sitting outside at the Pepper Tree we enjoyed the beautiful weather. Gwen had the largest oysters I have ever seen. She had some in a tomato basil sauce and others in a garlic sauce. I tasted them and they were delicious. A steak pie which seems to be a signature food of New Zealand----not so good --- and I really like a good steak being a butcher's daughter.

As we head back down the mountain we see many rock walls held back by wire. They are called "gabions" and act as a retainer. Time for another Sheryl joke. "A wife walks into the pharmacy and asks for arsenic. The pharmacist says 'Why do you want arsenic?' The woman says 'I want to kill my husband.' The pharmacist says he can't give her arsenic because both the pharmacist and the wife would be put in prison. The wife pulls out a picture of her husband and the pharmacist's wife making made passionate love. The pharmacist says, 'You didn't tell me you had a prescription.'"

It is now time for afternoon tea. These Kiwis take their tea time very seriously. The bus arrives at Rapaura - a total experience and "damn good coffee". Sally, the owner met us and invited us to walk through the bush and then to tea. The bush had beautiful greenery and waterfalls. along with ferns, flowers and the calls of many birds. We then



had tea or coffee with biscuits, cream and jelly....also lovely conversation and an explanation of Rapauras's founding. After tea we then entered the manicured garden with delightful printed sayings. There were fountains, pools, statues. and hanging baskets of flowers. The benches along the way allowed people to sit and relax or meditate. Rapaura is an example of man in harmony with nature. To end this lovely day we

went to the McLoughlin's home for a fish and chips dinner and good company. From their back porch there was a beautiful sunset with a view of the Mount. Roses of every color were blooming in their extensive flower garden. It was Audrey's (hostess) birthday and we all sang "Happy Birthday" to her. Cake, tea, and coffee were the end to a lovely day spent with friends.

*Fran Kinsey*





**Thursday, March 20, 2014**

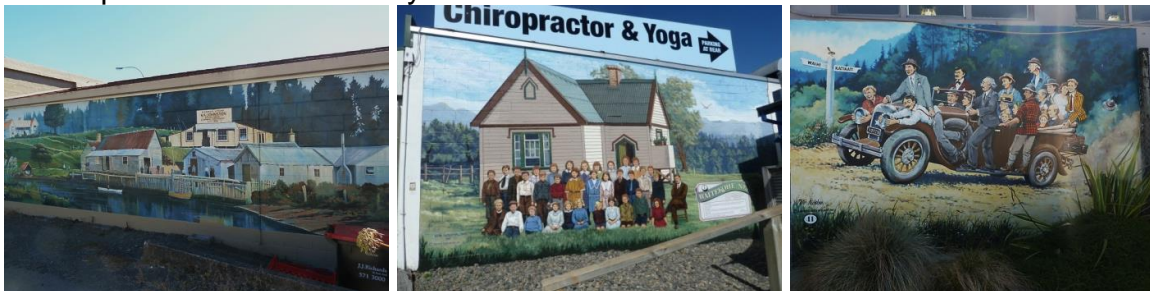
Our first stop was an avocado orchard. Did you know that avocados grow in the South African rainforest? The sloths eat and thus “transplant” the trees. This was just one of the interesting facts, Rorric, owner of the orchard told us. Before he purchased the farm, he didn't even eat avocados!



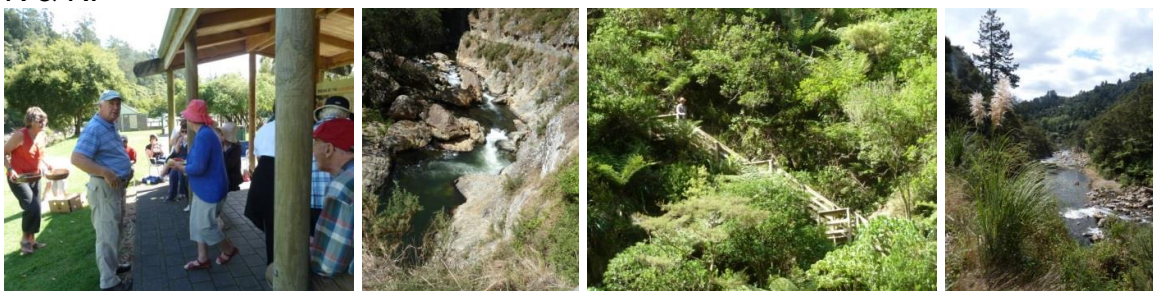
Pruning is very important for producing a profitable crop. Workers have to reduce trees to 12-15 meters since it costs \$30 more per hour to hire pickers for taller trees. They also prune out middle of trees to allow more sunlight to ripen fruit. Caring for 180 trees on 10 acres seems like a time-consuming business.

About 85% of the avocado crop is sold to customers in Australia but since they can't just rely on that market they also sell to the U.S. and Thailand. Now they're trying India as another potential outlet.

After our trip to the orchard we were served morning tea (more yummy treats, more calories!) at St. Paul's Church before a walking tour of the Katikati murals. The mural project was started in the 70s when there was a plan to build a bypass. Council delayed the project since they thought they would need something to pull in tourists if drivers wouldn't be going through the town. A committee formed and planned to have murals painted to tell the story of Katikati.



Our hosts treated us to a picnic lunch at the Karangahake Gorge. Some of us hiked through the area of the former gold mining site. We needed torches (New Zealand speak for flashlights) for the darkest part of the gold mine cave where we were able to see more glowworms. While there weren't as many worms as on our first glowworm venture, it was still interesting to see more. Walking in the dark was challenging since we had to turn off our torches for the glowworm section. Somehow we managed to trek through without slipping. Others took a shorter walk. Some stayed at the picnic area for R & R.



The evening was reserved for dinner hosting. More calories but we had a wonderful time chatting with our hosts and the other ambassadors. *Mary Kinsey*

**Friday, March 21, 2014** Tauranga, NZ (means safe anchorage)

Today is a free day in Tauranga. Tauranga is the Maori god of the sea. After breakfast Sue Trout, Claire Warren (our host) and I decided to walk up Mt. Maunganui. Claire drove us there and we met her friend, Alice, who joined us for the walk up the mountain (726 ft.).

The walk was 40 minutes up, 15 minutes on the top and a 40 minute walk down. The walk was strenuous in places with many steps. The view from the top was beautiful. At the northern end of the Mount you could see Pilot Bay and the south side is the Pacific Ocean.

Mount Maunganui is called "Mauao" which means "caught by the light of dawn."

Claire had some errands to run so Sue and I went to the beach, changed our clothes in the bath house to swim suits. We sat on the beach, had a light lunch packed by Claire, read and picked up some pretty shells. The sun was shining and the waves were high and rough. We put our toes in the Pacific Ocean.

Claire came and we went to New Zealand Gifts to do some souvenir shopping. At 3:30 PM we headed home to get ready for dinner.

Sue and I presented our gifts to Claire. She was pleased with her gardening apron, salt water taffies, an English - New Zealand dictionary and an LL Bean flashlight. Claire also gave us gifts.

We did several loads of wash and hung our clothes out to dry and then we got dressed for dinner. We joined Fran and Mary Kinsey at Pat Garner's home for wine and canapés. We left Pat's house and we all went to dinner at Restaurant Molo in Omokoroa. There was a piano player that was somewhat loud, but we all had a very pleasant dinner and good conversation. The food was excellent. On the wall in the restaurant was a very large picture of Sophia Loren.

Some of us ended our meal with a *flat white coffee*. We love our *flat white*. Sue and I had one every day! Joan Markovic



**Saturday, March 22, 2014**

Up at 7:30. Claire Warren, our host, was already up and we chatted for a while. About 8:00 there was a beautiful, full color double rainbow that lasted about a





half hour. We ate breakfast and left at 9:50 for Barbara Procter's home at 253 Oceanbeach Road, Papamoa. A group of 14 people from North Moreton FF Club from Australia who were on the cruise ship, Sea Princess that docked at the ship wharf in Tauranga, joined us for morning tea. Pat's home is situated right next to the Pacific Ocean and has an expansive view from the deck. Coffee, tea and cakes and cookies were served. We all got to know new friends and there was much lively conversation. We all left Barbara's' home at 11:30 to meet again at Rex and

Sheryl Farrow's home at 124 Crawford Road, Tauranga, for a lovely lunch in their back yard. Sheryl showed us her many beautifully designed (very creative) and exquisitely constructed quilts.

Sheryl then gave us a tour of the garden area describing how the yard looked when they first moved there and what had been done in the 40 years since then – her "wall" – made of broken pieces of concrete, and the ponds that were dug out by Rex making use of the stream that ran thru the property. There were raspberries, black, boysen, and logan berries, passion fruit and beautiful hanging baskets of flowers and other flowering trees. There also were very inventive steps made from placing tires, filled with concrete, one on top of another going up the hill side.



The day was also Rex and Sheryl's 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary which we all celebrated by presenting them with flowers. Sheryl read a poem regarding Christmas Cards and Friendship. Don Barnes then got everyone together – we all represented 6 different FF clubs, Southern NJ, West Bay of Plenty, North Moreton, Brisbane, Gisborne and North Bay Ontario – for a large combined group picture.



The adventurous people rode on the zip line in the back yard and then



walked back up the steep slope. The ride was so much fun! After everyone helped to clean up we all left about 3:00 to spend the rest of the



afternoon doing different things. Claire took Joan and me to the Te Puna Quarry Park where we walked among the different garden areas for an hour. The Park was converted from a disused rock quarry that was in use of over 50 years and consisted of walking



tracks, specialty plant areas, a native arboretum, cliffs, with beautiful views, sculptures, ponds and a butterfly terrace. After arriving back home, Claire made salmon and roasted vegetables for dinner and we sat for a while and just talked. The sky that evening was just beautiful with bright orange, red colors. We went out walking to view the night sky and enjoy the constellations – Southern Cross and the three sisters of Orion's belt and all the others which we could not name! It was a very restful finish for a wonderful day. *Sue Trout*

### **Sunday, March 23, 2014**

We had a leisurely breakfast. Then Larre and Brian took a trailer of stuff from a rental house the Grimwoods are remodeling to the dump in Waihi. Helen and I drove to Omokoroa, looked around the little town and went to Pat Garner's house to pick up Mary and Fran who were spending the day with us. Pat has a lovely home with a great view. We came back to the Grimwoods' house and Helen took Mary and Fran to see the house they are moving into the day after we leave.



When Larre and Brian came home, we left for Waikino Station. We stopped at Athenree



Homestead on the way. In 1878 Hugh and Adela Stewart, their 9 year old son arrived on sailing ship in New Zealand to help form the only planned Irish settlement in the world. They built their farm and Adela became an enthusiastic gardener and orchardist.

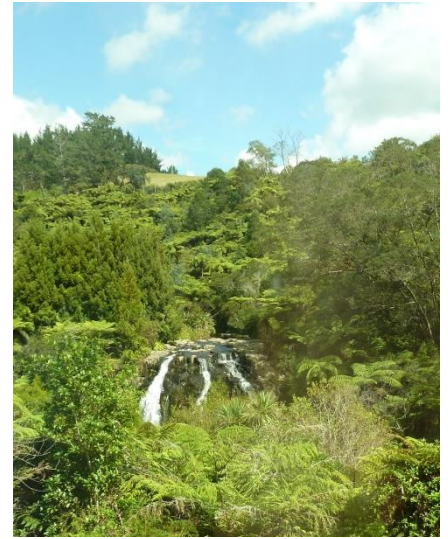
Athenree fell into disrepair and is now owned by the Western Bay of Plenty District Council. Volunteers are working to restore it to its former glory.

We drove past Owharoa Falls and had lunch at the



Waikino Station Café. The food was good and the atmosphere was quaint. A tourist train runs between the station and the town of Waihi, 6 km. away.

After lunch we drove to Waihi and parked across the street from the Information Centre. Helen stayed in the car and Brian said we were going



to visit the Cornish Pumphouse which stands overlooking the

town. We climbed the stairs and Brian explained how they moved the pumphouse 300 m to its current location in 2006 in a remarkable feat of engineering. Then he asked whether we would like to walk the pathway around the Martha open-pit gold-mining operation which began in 1987. Information boards provided interesting facts about gold mining, past and present. The open-pit operation today takes place over the underground Martha Mine, which was operated from the



1880s to 1952. There were great views and it was not a bad walk but we didn't know we were doing it so we didn't have hats or water. We didn't do the whole walk but went as far as the lookout platform, then walked back to the car through town. We walked over an hour and it was quite



warm. There were beautiful mural and sculptures and a roundabout displaying steel balls used in the Martha Mine for crushing gold and silver bearing quartz rock. The Visitor Centre had a mine interpretation center and lots of brochures and information.



We found Helen sitting in the back of the van with the door open. She had talked to lots of people who had seen the door open but didn't see her and were worried about the car. Next Brian drove us to Waihi Beach. We walked down to the nice wide and mostly empty beach. Helen, Mary, Fran and I took our shoes off and waded in the



water. Larre and Brian sat on a big log. We spent about 25 minutes at the beach then drove a short distance to Brian and Helen's old neighborhood. Their former neighbor is an artist and has a small gallery. We looked at her work and bought a few small souvenirs then Brian dropped us at home and took Mary and Fran back to Pat's and went to Marie Firth's to help set up for the Farewell Dinner. Helen brought us there a little later.



We saw Marie's angora goats and her lovely home with a beautiful view (it seems to be a NZ thing!) We

had a great dinner then there were short speeches and entertainment – songs by our hosts and *Ode to New Jersey* by us. We were each given a photo of our hosts and us and each female ambassador received a hand-made bag to keep jewelry in and the men got NZ key rings. We said our good byes and headed back to Brian and Helen's house. We had some tea and talked and watched a little TV before going to pack. It was a



wonderful day. *Sue Hoke*

First thing in the morning we took advantage of the opportunity to do some laundry and hang it out. Our host, Isabelle, took us to St. Paul's Presbyterian Church Sunday service then home for a quiche and salad lunch. In the afternoon we took a drive along the coast stopping at lookout points and taking short walks at a park, Waihi Beach, and a fishing pier. We stopped for ice cream in a small resort town before heading home to get ready for the farewell dinner.



At Marie's we were amused with the flock of goats grazing near the house then admired her beautiful skeins of mohair and hand knit sweaters which were displayed in her large work room. The food that Marie prepared for the dinner was most impressive, especially when we learned that, except for the dessert, she did it all herself. Along with the final good-byes,



Ode to NJ, and songs, we were amazed to be presented with lovely handmade roll-up jewelry travel bags. These were made by one of the hosts, Sheryl, who used bits to trim and decorations contributed by club members. The evening was a lovely end to a wonderful week. *Janet & Bill*

### **Monday, March 24, 2014**

Well, I cannot believe that the Pre-Tour, Hamilton & Western Waikato and the Tauranga Western Bay of Plenty Exchanges are over. It is sad to see our family of twenty (20) ambassadors peel away. Tony Adams, Jone Jones, Donna Logan from Wyoming and Judy Greenberg from New York did not come with us to Tauranga. It was nice to establish a relationship with the FF of Wyoming. And now there were sixteen (16).

John & Sandra Train from Canada leave us to go with their host Rex & Sheryl Farrow on a road trip together to the South Island. Janet & Bill McGehean got on a plane to Australia. While Gwendolyn Deas, Larre & Sue Hoke got on a bus to go to Whangarei to see Friendship Force members they had hosted last year. And now there were nine (9). These members of the Friendship Force of Southern New Jersey got on a bus and drove to the airport together. Val Bolan, Fay Harrison and Robbie Thornton got an airplane to Sydney, Australia. And now there were six (6). As they made the twenty (20) hour trip back to the United States, they remembered the wonderful experiences shared by all. I know that the cause of friendship, love and peace has been furthered. These exchanges have made a difference both domestically and internationally. *Gwen Deas*



### **Monday, March 24, 2014 Our Northland Adventure Begins...**

We had breakfast and Brian and Helen drove us to the bus stop in Katikati. Gwen had already gotten on in Tauranga. The early scenery was familiar. We had gone this way when we went to the Coromandel. We changed buses in Auckland and ran into a traffic jam quite close to Whangarei but we sat in very slow going and were about an hour late arriving. Brian and



Glenys Currie, whom we hosted in June 2013, and Lex and Peter Geange, who had been Gwen's ambassadors, were at the bus station to meet us. They took us to the Mt. Parihaka Lookout where we had a great view of the area and then we went home and had a wonderful dinner. *Sue Hoke*

**Tuesday, March 25, 2014 - Thursday, April 3, 2014 and It Continues**

Today we went to the Bay of Islands. We met Lex, Peter and Gwen in Kawakawa where we checked out the Hundertwasser public restrooms. Next we went to the Waitangi Treaty Grounds – one of New Zealand’s most historic sites. We visited the excellent Treaty House museum, the beautifully carved Maori Meeting House, walked the grounds, saw the huge war canoe and had lunch. Then

we stopped at Haruru Falls, then went to Flagstaff Hill Historic Reserve and Kororareka Point Scenic Reserve before going to Russell and spending some time there. New

Zealand’s oldest church, Christ Church still has musket ball holes from a battle in 1845. After we left the church we drove around town and then Brian took us on a drive on a road that is underwater at high tide. Since it was so late when we got back to Whangarei we decided to treat Brian and Glenys to dinner. We ate at Mozart Café Restaurant and then returned to our hosts for a relaxing evening.



Over the next few days we visited beautiful beaches, the interesting Marsden Point Oil Refinery, the Town Basin in Whangarei, the Waipu Museum which celebrates the lives of 940 Scottish Highlanders who emigrated to New Zealand from 1853 – 1854 and their descendants, the fascinating Clapham’s National Clock Museum, Kiwi North, Whangarei Falls and the Native Bird Recovery Center, where we saw a 1-legged kiwi up close and personal. We also visited friends and family of the Curries and had a dinner with Gwen and the Geanges before Gwen left.





On March 29, Marylyn and Wes Wordsworth, a couple we hosted in 2003 through a program called Seniors Abroad, drove over from Te Kopuru about 40 miles across the island and had lunch with all of us and then took Larre and me back to their house for 5 days. They also showed us many interesting places, including the wonderful Kauri Museum, beautiful scenery and giant trees. On our last day Wes and Marylyn drove us to Auckland to the home of a college classmate I hadn't seen in 50 years. We had lunch with Ruth and spent the afternoon with her until it was time for our flight home.  
*Sue Hoke*



**Week #4 in Australia with Val**

**Monday, March 24 to Monday, March 31, 2014**

This is just a synopsis of our week in Australia.



**Monday 24th:** After 3 weeks in NZ visiting both islands, Val and I took a 5:30 PM flight from Auckland to Sydney, and met with my two friends that live in Brisbane and Mackay. We stayed at the De Vere Hotel in Potts Point. Next day we took a bus ride to downtown Sydney and did a tour of the Opera House, had lunch and strolled around.



**Wednesday 26th:** My friends are leaving today and Val and I took a train from Kings Cross Station to Central Station to catch another train for a 2-hour ride that took us to Katoomba in the Blue Mountains where we stayed 2 nights at the Avon Leigh B & B and which is just a short walk to Echo Point Lookout.





**Thursday 27th:** Kay Price, a local FF member, who lives 2 towns over in Wentworth, picked us up at our B&B and took us sightseeing. We visited the local Cultural Centre, Three Sisters World Heritage Plaza and the Aboriginal WaRaDah Centre, where we attended a presentation. Kay took us to her home in nearby Wentworth for pizza lunch, fresh fruits, blueberry muffins and coffee. Very lovely lady and hostess.



**Friday, 28th:** Our last day in the Blue Mountains. After breakfast we took the short walk to Echo Point Lookout to try and see the Three Sisters. We were very lucky that as we approached the fog and clouds lifted for a few minutes so we were able to have a good look and Val could take a few photos of the three rock formation that makes up the Three Sisters. Later we took the 2-hour train ride back to Central Station, then another to Kings Cross and back to our

hotel.

**Saturday, 29th:** Bus to downtown Sydney and catch a ferry ride to Manly. Visited Tourist Information Centre and Art Museum. Lunched at the Manly Wharf. After 3 hours we ferried back to Sydney and visited a museum then back to Potts Point.



**Sunday, 30th:** After breakfast at our hotel, took bus to Hyde Park and visited St. Mary's Cathedral. Spent some time "people watching" and enjoying a beautiful sunny day in the park.

**Monday 31st:** Flight back to USA. *Fay Harrison*