

NEW PLYMOUTH NATIONAL RALLY—DAY 2

By Gary Bexley

Day 2 of our epic weekend dawned bright and clear, again, and I pulled up OK after a massive night at the Scottish themed Dinner and Dance where everyone got into the spirit of the evening. I must say, however, the sight of Sandy and daughter Trish with dessert spoons hanging from their noses is a sight indelibly ingrained in my memory banks now forever.



Met up with Steve, Natalie and her sister Tracey who, being a local, was our tour guide for the day and she showed us the way out to the Stratford Horse Racing Club track for our Gymkhana event. Along the way I noticed that Mt. Taranaki was completely clear of any clouds (and snow) and just had to stop and capture the sight on camera. It doesn't happen very often but it was also in the clear blue sky on Friday as I travelled down so was a sign of the good weather to come.



The Gymkhana had four different challenges and my results were a bit average. First event was to drive down a line of traffic cones and have your passenger place a tennis ball on top of each then reverse back picking up the balls along the way. Perfect – I had a cunning plan! I lowered the roof so Steve, my co-pilot, could kneel on the seat and reach further and to give me more vision on the return. I think we did OK. Second event was to hold onto a string line secured onto a centre pivot and had a ball hanging from the centre. Challenge was to drive around the pivot without the ball hitting the ground. As I took off, I thought I was driving around the circumference but alas no – I drove towards the centre a bit and the ball hit the ground – fail. Third event was a slalom and more time / speed focus. I think we did OK. Fourth was Circle and Gate challenge, again with a speed focus. We did OK but didn't stay stopped at the end – fail.

After the Gymkhana we took the 60km drive out to the Whangamomana Hotel for lunch which is on The Forgotten Highway and was well worth the trip through rural NZ. On the way back I witnessed the only piece of insane driving that I saw in four days and hundreds of kilometres. We were travelling along in a bit of a convoy at a good clip when an F Type flew past myself then Steve and pulled back in - fine. Then a s- t for brains idiot in a 4x4 Toyota Hilux absolutely flew passed us all going up hill into a blind corner. That's the first time, and hopefully the last, that I see a Hilux pass an F Type!



Sunday evening was yet another great dinner, this time combined with prize giving. Unfortunately, Bruce Macdiamid and Jo Spry had to return home in the afternoon so it was up to me to go up onstage to collect his prize on his behalf. Not once, but three times! Most embarrassing. He entered an immaculate S Type R into the Concours and quite rightly was recognised as such. As did Francis Kay with a beautifully restored E Type and Bruce Jamieson with his really special XKR Silverstone. Thanks guys (and girls) – you did our Club proud. During the evening it was announced that the next Rally will be held in Christchurch Easter 2024. Bring it on!

Monday morning had everyone gathering again at the Devon Hotel for breakfast and gave us our last chance to review the weekend and bid our farewells, Congratulations must go to the Taranaki Jaguar Drivers Club for organising and hosting a very enjoyable event.

Gary