

Ngatea Water Gardens & Maritime Museum - 11th July

By Blair Wingfield

The Bowater's stayed overnight with us at Katikati and the decision was made to go straight to Matamata. Well blow me down, as we turned right at Moffat Road to head up over the Kaimai's we joined tail end Charlie from Marist Club meet-up. After a smooth trip over the Kaimais we joined the Pit Stop at the Gull Station. Hopping out of the car made for a Brrrrrisk start as the temp was approx. 7degs.

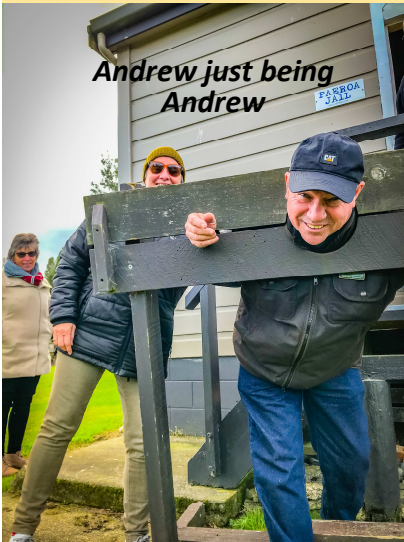
We proceeded to Ngatea on the back roads via the outskirts of Te Aroha. On the few rallies we have driven, Jean and I have been amazed at the quality of the roads off the State Highways. We were not disappointed this time either. The long smooth straights of the Hauraki Plains took us past beautiful, well maintained homes, farm sheds and lush pastures. The temptation to hold back a distance and let out a bit of shaft on these long straights was very tempting, but, at the end of the day, discipline came through! Boohoo.

At Ngatea most of us stopped at Glory Café for a coffee and some sustenance. We then carried on to the Water Gardens which were well past their best and needed a little TLC. I'm sure they would look great in Spring with all the bulbs flowering.

The Maritime Museum at Paeroa was a



revelation. It has been uplifted to an inviting venue by enthusiastic and, well organized volunteers. A grant from the Provincial Growth Fund, \$1.2 million was very welcome and enabled them to carry out restoration and expansion plans. A new walkway, restored vessels, and adjoining



floating pontoons to ferry prospective passengers to and from Paeroa should provide a healthy income for the Museum. They are about to start the landscaping with the remainder of the grant and by summer it should be well worth another visit.

We did not make our way back with the rest of the pack having made the decision to return home via the Karangahake Gorge. Big Mistake, as there had been a vehicle v pedestrian accident in the Gorge and the road was closed for several hours. By that time we had lost the Peloton and sulked our way home over the Kaimais back through Matamata.

As an aside, I cannot believe the performance of our 10-year-old XF V6 3.0 petrol, Ford Duratec motor Jaguar. A delight to drive this 'Grace, Space with Pace' car.

Blair