

# Trip to Hamilton Gardens

By *Natalie Cox*

We all managed to meet at Matamata for our trip. Some of us, (meaning me), got up at the crack of dawn (meaning 7:30 am) and left a full cup of coffee (Meaning my happy drug) behind in the rush. Some others, who shall remain nameless, slowly rolled out of bed, infused themselves with food and drink, put Holly (their feisty little dog) in the car, and cruised the few meters down to the meet-up point. Just as well I adore them or I might be annoyed-envious. Once everyone had been given instructions, we headed off to Gordonton along some nice roads with some nice scenery, which Waikato seems to excel at, and arrived at Willowglen Cafe. Got a large coffee, (ahhh, got my fix) and enjoyed the conversation that flowed, in this lovely setting. It had different seating levels which was really pretty, especially the gardens. Then it was off to "The Tron".

We (just us) decided to go a roundabout way through Rototuna to see the farm I grew up on but couldn't see it hidden amongst the hundreds of houses and shopping centers. Oh how things change, and it was only 50 years ago. Hubby asked me for directions (remember, 50 yrs. ago), and we had a "conversation" before deciding to use our friend Mr/Ms. GPS, making it safely to the Hamilton Gardens just as others were arriving.



**Surrealist Garden**

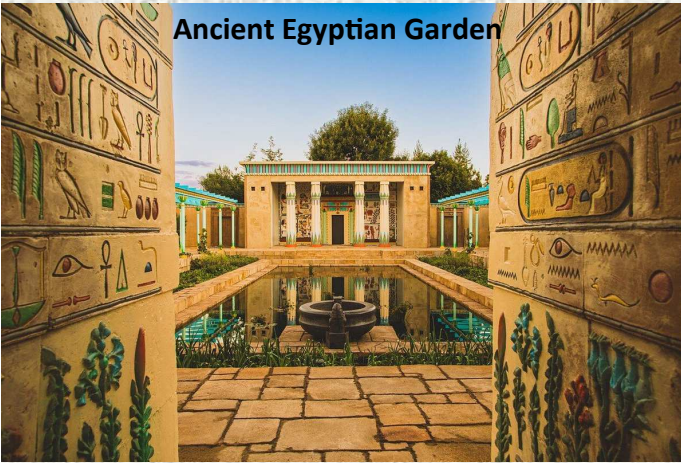
Because it was an exceptionally hot day we all parked the Jaguars on a bank that was shaded with trees. Got the sunnies and hats on and headed off to the entryway where after some suggestions from our leader, who had ventured here before, we kind of separated off on our own paths. We naively thought that we would methodically work our way through the different themed gardens but what fools we were, the place was a jolly maze.



We thought we'd go straight ahead and started off with the Surrealist Garden. Everything was made to an enormous scale, like a wheelbarrow, door, and deck chair.



## Ancient Egyptian Garden



The tree branches were formed in arm-like shapes which looked quite malevolent, especially when they started moving. After another one of our "conversations", because it's amazing how quickly we lost our bearings, we headed off and ended up in the Herb Garden. After medieval times, gardeners described anything useful as a "herb". This includes plants for food, medicine, disinfectants,

cosmetics, narcotics, and hallucinogens. So that leafy green stuff that's hidden away is okay, it's just a herb folks.

Anyway, on to the Kitchen Garden that had enough vegetables to run a restaurant (and I think it does). I'd never seen brussels sprouts growing before so that was interesting. Having no idea where we were going, we ended up in Mansfield Gardens. They had an old Model T car parked outside this beautiful Edwardian house. When we walked further on, we noticed it was only a facade, the cheats.



Chinese Scholars' Garden

A marquee was set up on the tennis court with an afternoon tea party (yummy you might say, but you'd be chomping on concrete and resin) that in the day would include 15 different types of sandwiches. Yep, 15! We strolled along the Picturesque Garden where



Italian Renaissance Garden

hubby found a throne to sit on. Think he had this distorted idea that I would bow to him and start obeying him or something, now that he was on a throne. When he realized he was wasting his time we walked on through this stone arch thing and ended up (without even trying) in the Concept Garden.





We saw a huge Steampunk Airship on the way which I loved. It was a Blimp, it was weird, it was complicated, and full of steam. See why I love it? After the Blimp, the squared gardens were a bit underwhelming so on we went. The Tudor Garden had a pavilion that used to host "fantasy plays". I'll leave that up to your imagination.

The knot garden reminded me of a maze for little, tiny people, and the mythical beasts watched over it, holding large crests atop the green and white poles (Tudor colours). We wandered through another wild garden and by sheer luck, came out to the courtyard where we met up with some people we recognized. It was such a hot day that we decided to head for the hills, or specifically, the one the Jags were parked on, and have lunch picnic style. Lovely to sit under the trees in the shade and chat away as we ate and drank. Even had the master give us his mandatory joke.



Tudor Garden

We decided the heat was too overwhelming to leave the shade and go in search of any missed gardens so we all packed up and headed off in different directions. When we go back, which we will do, it will be on a cooler day. Despite the heat, what a lovely day, nothing complicated, nothing stressful, just a good coffee, a stroll through the gardens, and a picnic lunch with good company. How absolutely wonderful!

*Natalie*

