



# The Squeaky Wheel



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## OUR LATEST MOTAT SOCIETY EXCURSION CRUISING THE KAIPARA HARBOUR

*On Saturday, 21 March 2020, The MOTAT Society held another of our successful Society Excursions. This time we took to the water...*

Since we were facing the rumours of a National Lockdown we felt fortunate to be able to venture out on the Kaipara Harbour for a scenic and historical tour aboard the veteran voyager "Kewpie Too". I say fortunate because we embarked under COVID-19 Alert Level 1 cautions and disembarked under COVID-19 Alert Level 2 restrictions. Understandably numbers were reduced due to health concerns for some of our older members, nevertheless 10 hardy souls spliced the main brace and enjoyed a delightful day both on-board and ashore for a tasty luncheon at Shelly Beach.

Originally booked for 20 confirmed members, covering a cross-section of disciplines – active Volunteers, MOTAT Alumni, Staff and spouses - we decided that the recently announced COVID-19 cautions enabled us to proceed, although those who had booked and considered themselves aged or immune-compromised were advised to consider their participation and were able to withdraw without penalty. With appropriate social distancing, sanitisation and a supply of Minties from David Kannu, we departed M2 in our regular coach and arrived in Parakai in time for group photos,

to find a queue of friendly souls from local environs with whom we shared the trip.

The harbour sea was calm and our journey around the Kaipara was as smooth as silk. The commentary, in laconic style by Captain Terry, was as informative and easily paced as any on a world-class attraction. After a morning of learning the history of the harbour - fishing, timber, ship-building, sand dredging etc - we were deposited at the jetty and enjoyed a short walk to the Shelly Beach Cafe for lunch a la carte (I can thoroughly recommend the FnC). The boat stood-off the wharf to allow locals who were fishing to resume their snapper seeking.

After lunch a few took the chance to explore the surrounds on foot, whilst others engaged with the day's most successful fisherman who had landed a whopper snapper.



Back aboard our historic ship we cruised leisurely back to Parakai on the high tide with an excellent sun on our backs and great views of the Helensville coastline including those of the sculptures at Gibbs Farm, a park owned by Alan Gibbs, a kindred soul with an intense interest in technology and innovation. (A trip to Gibbs Farm Sculpture Park is on the agenda for a future MOTAT Society excursion.)

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# MOTAT VOLUNTEERS' AUSSIE ADVENTURE

In October 2019, with financial assistance from the MOTAT Society and MOTAT, five active Rail/Steam Volunteers headed to Melbourne, Australia on a trip to gain ideas and information to assist in making the MOTAT collection a better experience for visitors and Volunteers alike. Our intrepid venturers' account of their activities continues from Squeaky Wheel Issue #36 and will conclude in Issue #38 in October.

## DAY THREE

We headed off from Geelong to Ballarat with the aim of meeting up with a group of traction engines and steam trucks on a road run to Lake Goldsmith Steam Rally. Arriving at Ballarat early we investigated the 1860's train station with its preserved semaphore signals and operating crossing gates, which swing out like the British design to fully fence off the track from the road. We then went to look at a collection of Victorian Railway locomotives outside an old maintenance depot. Owned by Steamrail these were in varying states of dereliction. They may one day be restored but for now they are studies in rust and peeling paint.

While waiting to find out where the convoy was, we went antiquing, a perilous activity as the shop was stacked with old bottles and other fragile items with very narrow passages between them. After giving up and heading to check-in to our accommodation, Marty got the phone call he'd been waiting for. We pulled over quickly at a Bakery to take the call and this is where fate stepped in as we found ourselves next to the replica Sentinel steam truck we had been looking for. After getting the weekend's accommodation sorted we tracked down the convoy of steam engines making their way to the rally. Alex got to have a go on the Steam lorry and the rest of us met and chatted with the support crews.

Arriving at Lake Goldsmith we were fortunate to see the large Bucyrus rail steam face shovel in action. Originally working at a gold mine, this shovel later found a home at Australian Portland Cement where it worked in the quarry until being modified to become a crane. It survived there until as recently as 10 years ago and was then moved to Lake Goldsmith where a replacement lower boom and shovel were faithfully manufactured to replace the missing parts. This shovel really throws around its weight and you could really feel the force of each movement, in the machine and the ground, particularly when the bucket was dropped. Though it could be difficult to operate this machine smoothly, the operators quickly found their rhythm and were able to achieve some graceful excavations. This model was a 60 ton model, while the ones on the Panama Canal were 90 tons. Strangely enough there was a little family dog running around the footplate totally unconcerned by the noise and thrashing engines. Some of our NZ group were lucky enough to be allowed up in the house to see first-hand how it all worked.

A quick dinner stop at the Airbnb and we were back to Lake Goldsmith to meet and chat with some of the crews getting ready for the weekend for the public. While we were there we also got to see a massive

20 HP Marshall and a large crawler steam face shovel in action, made even more impressive by the showers of sparks cascading into the night sky from the chimney.

## DAY FOUR

The day started with rain which came and went until the evening, turning the grounds to mud. We immediately started wandering the grounds. The city of sheds is vast and confusing with surprises around every corner. There were far too many displays to describe, however some of the highlights included belt driven vintage workshops, numerous oil engines both very large and small, boiler houses, dairy equipment, motorbikes and bulldozers.

While some of us were looking at Gypsy caravans we heard a large crash followed by screams and shouts. Turning around we saw that while slewing, a disaster had halted the rail Bucyrus in its tracks. Both large face shovels had been operating and the face shovel had somehow overturned towards its side, coming to rest at a 45 degree angle, its bucket preventing it from toppling completely. Volunteers quickly came to the rescue helping shocked crew members down and working to vent the steam and shut the boiler down. The cause appears to have been a massive failure of the foot on

## JIM SWABEY

We regret to advise that MOTAT Society Member and MOTAT Alumni volunteer, Jim Swabey passed away on 13 July 2020. Jim was a much-admired member of the Print Shop team.

Graham O'Keefe, Print Shop Manager, tells us that Jim initially wanted to join MOTAT as an Aviation team volunteer due to his great love of the WWII Spitfire fighter aircraft. However, Graham (who has known Jim for many years) convinced him to join the Print team.

Jim had extensive experience in letterpress printing having managed several businesses that ran Heidelberg platen machines and he made a significant contribution of the Print Shop during his time at the museum. Those who knew him and worked with him speak of lovely, patient man who would encourage you to try things or yourself and to find your own way under his expert tutelage whilst working alongside you.

Jim had retired in recent years with his wife to Morrinsville and he was farewelled at a memorial gathering there on 1 August.

The MOTAT Society extend their condolences to the wider Swabey family



ABOVE: H220 'Heavy Harry', a Victorian Railways locomotive that at 260tons was twice the weight of K900





*Above: Bucyrus Rail Steam face shovel at Lake Goldsmith Steam Rally*

After we had seen everything we could, we headed off to the Ballarat Vintage Tramway Museum where we were offered a ride on one of their four wheel trams. This tram had a long history, working in both Melbourne and Geelong prior to Ballarat. When the tramway was closed in the Early 1970s a large part of the fleet and the track beside the Botanic Gardens and lake were preserved, making it a similar run to MOTAT's Western Springs Tramway. Though parts of the track were quite rough, they had recently fully rebuilt several hundred meters at a cost of \$700,000 dollars.

While on the Tram both Charles and Tony were offered a drive, with Charles impressing the driver so much that he was asked to drive the last trip of the day while the driver collected the many signs from the road. After this we were given a full tour of their fleet and current

projects. One of these was the first electric tramcar in Ballarat, which was converted from a cable tram. This was rediscovered in the 1990s when the house it had been built into was demolished for a highway. Their workshop is well equipped for body work but all heavy engineering is outsourced to the Bendigo Tramway Museum.

Another interesting thing was the success of their dining tram. This is operated on a charter basis with catering supplied by either the guests or by one of a list of recommended caterers. Two volunteers serve dinner while another drives. The service has proven to be quite profitable for the museum as well as helping them engage with the community and its leaders. Maybe something to consider for MOTAT's Western Springs Tramway? Currently the small museum built into a tramcar helps tell visitors the story of Ballarat's trams, but in future they hope to build a proper museum building next door to the cost of up to \$1 million dollars.

Another day over and we headed back to Tony's in Geelong.

*- by Alex Smith and Martyn Radford*

*To read about the final leg of our three part MOTAT Volunteers' Aussie Adventure keep a look out for Squeaky Wheel Issue #38 due out in October 2020.*

the outrigger, causing the whole thing to collapse through the styie it rested on. Fortunately nobody was injured and the scene was roped off and made safe, with recovery to be attempted after the weekend.

With this mishap behind us the other scheduled demonstrations continued. These included the demonstration of an American Civil War era canon, the firing up of a US Airforce 1930's radial engine and the demonstration of a belt driven portable sawmill, with both braking down and finishing saws run by a Marshall portable steam engine, a similar size to MOTAT's Marshall. The day ended with dinner back at the farmhouse Airbnb and an evening spent having a final wander around the Lake Goldsmith grounds still meeting new friends and contacts in the Steam community.

## **DAY FIVE**

After packing up our Airbnb we headed off to Ballarat to visit Sovereign Hill, a replica historic gold mining village demonstrating the life and times in Ballarat in the 1850s and 1860s. On our way we stopped to look at a plinthed locomotive outside the local railway workshops.

Entering Sovereign Hill you find yourself in a period Main Street with shops, a hotel, businesses, dirt road, stage coach and gas lamps. The overall effect is thoroughly convincing, and if not for the tourists like us wandering around you'd believe you were in the past. We promptly headed to the Mine to book ourselves a tour and check out the steam pumps and

boiler house. Like the rest of the village the whole mine area looked very authentic, with a poppet head, winding house, pump house and boiler house with two Cornish boilers to power the equipment. Also present was a steam powered stamper battery and lastly, a gold casting house completed the collection of mining

From there we investigated the Soho foundry where sheet metal workers were turning and spinning copper, brass and steel into frying pans, gold pans, lamps, dishes and candle holders and a miscellany of other items, all of which were for sale. It was fascinating to see the steam driven belt drive equipment in action and the way craftsmen shaped the metal into pans. Next up was the mine tour where we boarded replica trolleys on an incline to take a tour of some of the last and shallowest workings at Sovereign Hill. Here we had the mining process explained to us and the air drill demonstrated. We then exited via a twisting underground railway and the incline back to the 'surface'.

Other points of interest were the replica mining camp, roaming State Troopers accosting the gold panners and explaining their purpose to the visitors, period cottages with animals, and the wheelwright shop where the party were able to see a coach wheel being made and assembled. One of the most impressive and scary pieces of equipment was the hub mortice machine, which attacked the hub with two stabbing chisels. The steaming workshop was also interesting as it demonstrated how the wheel rims were shaped.



Continued from Page 1...

Arriving back at the bus we were greeted with news that NZ had moved to COVID-19 Alert Level 2 which focussed our minds on what a wonderful day out we had been able to enjoy in Godzone. With a move towards Lockdown imminent nobody quite knew when we'd next be able to enjoy such a day again, a reminder to make the most of every opportunity as it presents itself.

We're currently working on the details of future excursions so keep an eye out for our Events & Announcements Newsletters for our announcement of our next excursion which are free for MOTAT Society members.

- by John Tutchen

Visit our website at [www.motatsociety.org.nz](http://www.motatsociety.org.nz) for more photos from the Kaipara Cruise excursion.



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## WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Scott Pilkington (Volunteer: Printing)

Winnie Edgar-Booty (Staff: Library)

Richard Wesley (Former Volunteer) or contact the Administrator.

## WALSH MEMORIAL LIBRARY NEWS

### *"Best Reached by Rail"*

#### *The new exhibition within the MOTAT library*

This colourful event is a rolling twelve month display of iconic posters relating to NZ Tourism and featuring advertising posters produced by NZ Railways Tourism & Publicity Department. The posters form part of a collection donated to the Walsh Memorial Library by MOTAT Society member and Rail Section Volunteer, Richard Croker, greatly enhancing our historical understanding of the NZ rail 'story'. Richard was the recipient of the Society's Lush Award last year for his long-term contribution to the Rail Section and his foresight in preserving numerous items of historical Rail paperwork.

Preparation for display of the posters included strengthening and mounting with assistance from Auckland Art Gallery and MOTAT's conservation staff. The first pair of posters featured promote tourism to Rotorua and Mt. Cook.

There will be a different pair of posters on display bi-monthly over the coming year so make sure you visit the library each time you enter MOTAT1 to avoid missing out on some great vignettes and delightful retro art pieces, together with their background stories.

Repro-copies of these posters have sometimes been available via Trade Me. Keep an eye out should your inner rail-art needs be 'stoked up' after viewing the exhibition.



## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

# POSTPONED

In view of restrictions on numbers at gatherings under Alert Level 2.5 in Auckland, we are unable to proceed with our AGM on 9 September 2020. This is in-line with advice from NZ Charities Services.

As soon as we can reschedule we will advise a new date to members.

Thank-you for your understanding. In the meantime, please stay safe.