

FFSC Exchange Report

Exchange No: #13434

Location of exchanges: Wairarapa and Hamilton & Waikato, New Zealand

Dates: 3-16 November 2016

A two phase exchange to New Zealand, from 3 to 16 November, was enjoyed by 16 ambassadors – nine from our club, two each from Brisbane and from Gold Coast, one from Sydney, one from Murray Bridge and one from Adelaide.

From 3 to 9 November we were hosted by FF Wairarapa, then we journeyed by chartered bus from Masterton to Hamilton, where we were hosted by FF Hamilton & Waikato.

In a busy itinerary, we visited a rail museum, two car museums and a WW1 aircraft museum; enjoyed driving through the lush, rolling NZ countryside and visiting some rugged coastal areas; visited a woolshed where we learnt something about sheep shearing and wool spinning; inspected one of the largest model railway layouts in New Zealand; had high tea overlooking an ornamental lake; were introduced to New Zealand's version of Stonehenge; met some unique New Zealand birds, including the kiwi; visited a special bi-lingual school, where we were treated to some beautiful singing in Maori; had a tour of the themed Hamilton Gardens and enjoyed walking through the magnificent rose gardens; spent a day in Rotorua, where we attended a sheep show and a Maori concert (dancing, haka, singing), and had a guided tour of the Maori village built amid the steam and boiling waterholes; and indulged in a little wine tasting.

Both exchanges were very well organised by the respective EDs. Many members of each club participated in the exchanges, and all made us feel very welcome. The ED for Hamilton did not host (except for a dinner with our hosts at his home) – a decision which I think was very wise; we stayed with the Wairarapa ED, and saw how hard she worked combining hosting duties with the administrative and organizing responsibilities of an ED.

This was my tenth visit to New Zealand, yet I learned so much about – and enjoyed – two areas of a country which I thought I knew pretty well. My advice to members of our club would be: don't discount an exchange to a place to which you've been before; you might be very pleasantly surprised. I'm sure that the ambassadors who went with us to New Zealand would agree; they all seemed to have a good time and learned a lot.

Tony Sayer ED