

On a High Country Heritage tour in January 2010 we had Dick and Diana Hubbard travelling with us. Below is a copy of "Clipboard" Issue 111 which went out with all the Hubbard's cereal products about April this year.



Issue 111

Clipboard

Hubbards

GOODNESS YOU CAN TASTE

Into the South Island Heartland

I'm still on a high and must share this with you. During the Christmas holidays Diana and I went on a 4-wheel drive trip through the South Island high country. It was an absolutely amazing trip for a variety of reasons. Let's indulge as I tell you about it.

Our trip was organised by an enterprising and entrepreneurial couple, Malcolm and Nancye Langley of NZ Adventures Ltd, who are based in Greymouth (www.nzadventures.co.nz). They have been leading these trips for a number of years and, boy oh boy, have they got it down to a fine art!

We started off in Blenheim and six days and 1500 dusty and muddy kilometres later we ended up near Queenstown after travelling back country through about 23 high country stations down the spine of the South Island. Our own little, somewhat lightweight, 4-wheel drive didn't quite cut the mustard on one of the more rugged tracks and ruptured a critical hose on day three. We had to limp to Tekapo where we had to abandon the car and hitch a ride with some fellow travellers. However that is another story.

I thought the trip would just be about experiencing some off-road driving. It was much more than that. We saw some absolutely magnificent South Island backcountry scenery that you normally never see from the main road. Many of the tracks were over private farms and you saw first hand the hardship of farming in the isolated and rugged hills. Each day we stopped at a high country station for lunch. Not only were we treated to a lunch that in itself would have lasted a musterer or a shearer for a month in the high country but we were also privileged to hear the farmers talk about the practicalities of farming

in these isolated areas. When you get snow on your front lawn on Christmas day you are in a different world to what most of us New Zealanders know! Three things struck me.

Firstly, the vastness of the South Island high country. For a small country it is big scale. What a national treasure! It is hugely important that we protect it and keep it appropriately for future generations.

Secondly, stewardship. All the farmers we met talked passionately about the land and the need to be good stewards of the land. It is certainly largely in good hands. You could sense time and time again a love for the land and a realisation that it was not just about the maximum dollars from farming.

Thirdly, the camaraderie of fellow travellers. Almost all of our group were farmers, retired farmers or related to farming. We were the only "city folk". We had lots of fascinating discussions about all aspects of farming – from bees to carrots to beef. We must never ever forget that farming is still the backbone of New Zealand.

We hear so much of the need to explore New Zealand before going overseas. That is so right – and it is all here in spades. We felt enormously privileged to have seen what we saw on this trip. Even at my age I feel that I now know New Zealand better.

Dick Hubbard

Dick Hubbard