

NEW ZEALAND 2025 - PART XV

MĀRAHAU - TĀKAKA - NELSON - PICTON

We headed inland from the west coast for the north coast of New Zealand following along Buller River and Buller Gorges (Lower Buller Gorge and then Upper Buller Gorge).

Immediately the weather turned sunnier, warmer and drier.

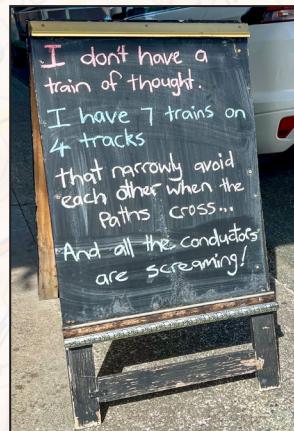
A hungry sandfly or two followed us up the Buller Gorges a fair distance until we were able to loose them on the bendier bits of roadway.



Murchison, as well as most places in New Zealand, had a nice collection of entertaining "A" boards to read as we strolled the streets.



We stopped for lunch in an interesting little town called Murchison (originally named Hampden in 1865 and then renamed Murchison in 1882). A Hampden Hotel attests to the town's original name. The world's earliest non-military suicide attack is believed to have occurred in Murchison (July, 14 1905). A long-standing dispute between two farmers resulted in a court case, and the defendant (Joseph Sewell) had sticks of gelignite strapped to his body. When Sewell excitedly shouted during the court sitting, "I'll blow the devil to hell, and I have enough dynamite to do just that", he was ushered out of the building. Sewell detonated the charge when a police officer tried to arrest him on the street, and his body was blown to pieces. No one else died from the explosion, ending as all situations of attempted murder (attempted) - successful suicide should.

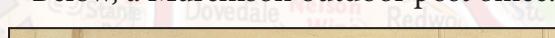


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I have found that a general insight into some of the character of many small towns and neighborhoods can be acquired by reading the postings on public bulletin boards in those areas. Sometimes I feel welcome and sometimes I run. In Murchison I felt very at ease... but I still had questions... **PERFECT!**



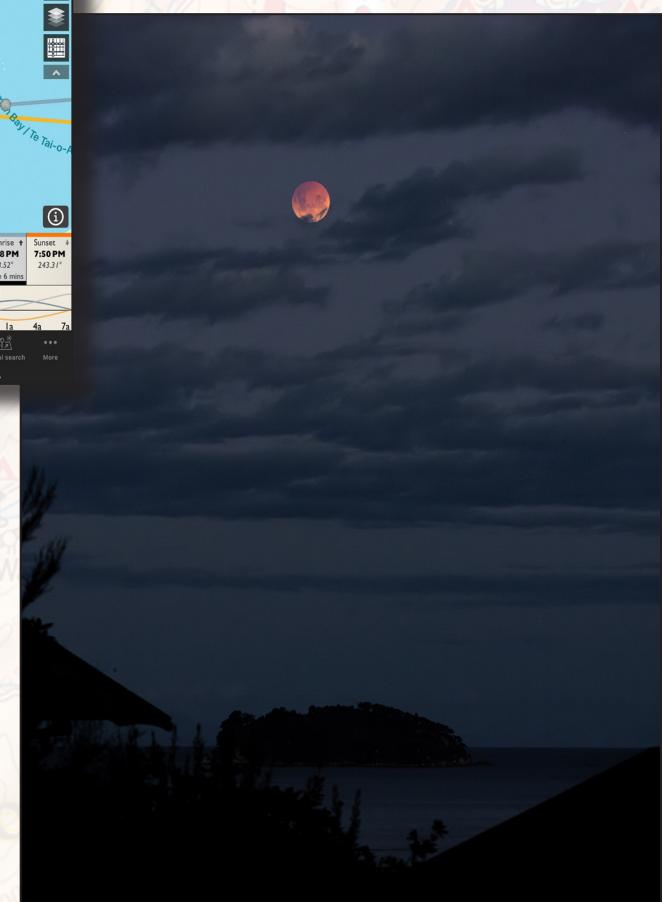
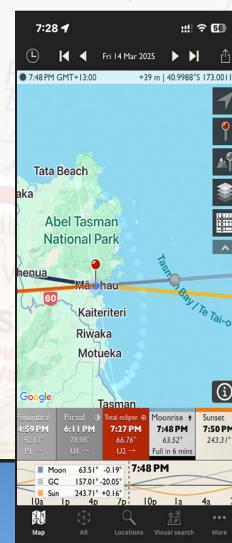
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Our next stop was Mārahau, on Tasman Bay and Sandy Bay, at the end of the drivable road and adjacent to the Abel Tasman National Park.



One of the nights we were in Mārahau there was going to be a full lunar eclipse. With the help of an iPhone APP, some computer software and mapping tools, I calculated that there was reasonable chance to see it from the outdoor balcony of our room out over Sandy Bay. It was all accurate enough that with some real-time adjustments to my estimations we got good views of it.



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People access the Abel Tasman National Park from Mārahau by hiking, kayaking and water taxi. Accessing Abel Tasman National Park by water taxi seemed the most popular.

They will come to your lodging or one can board at taxi stops, then they tractor out into the bay to launch the taxi boat for the water portion of the journey.

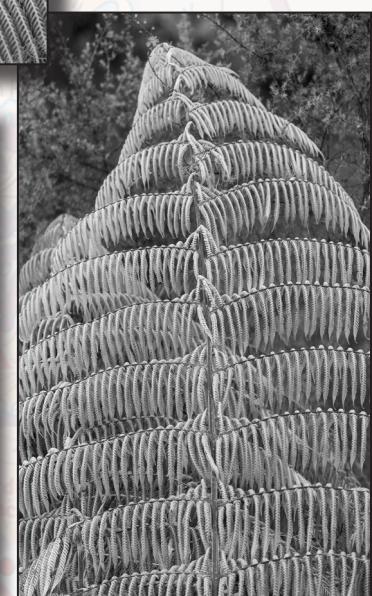
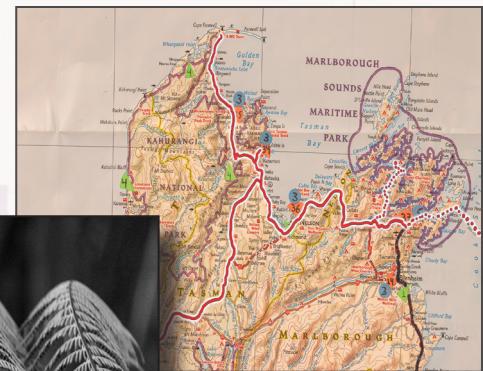
We chose to walk into the park, doing some birding along the way. The trails we used were well traveled wide and smooth. We didn't expect that to be the case further into the park, although we did not go far enough to find that out.



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Another night or so in Mārahau with more grand views from the deck of our small cabin and then we back tracked a bit to take the famous Tākaka Hill Highway to Tākaka. The zig-zagging highway isn't scary (although Wendy may disagree), but it is a very steep, very bendy and very winding road with 257 corners, some almost 320-degree hairpins and at times a 13% grade. While only about 30 miles (50 km) to transverse Tākaka Hill, it takes at least an hour on good day with good weather, no traffic issues or stops to admire all the views (or to catch one's breath as newcomers to the road sometimes experience travel sickness).



Tākaka is another cool eclectic town that was fun to visit and explore. It is small enough (about 1,500 in population for the entire area) to have a very distinct character. In large part we felt it *new-agey*, friendly, safe and very community oriented.



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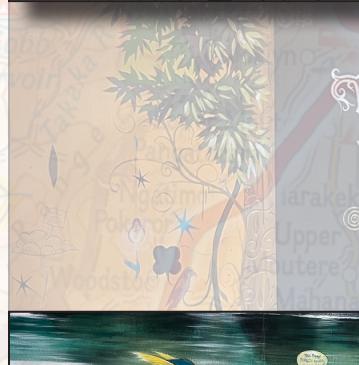
Our original reason for staying in Tākaka was to take a tour and do some birding at the very northwestern point of land on the South Island, Farewell Spit. While the tour did not work out, we explored and did some birding on our own on Farewell Spit and in Collingwood, an even smaller place than Tākaka and where the tours to Farewell Spit normally leave from.



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The Dangerous Kitchen had walls painted with New Zealand bird humor that we enjoyed, (some local bird knowledge might be necessary here).



© Cafe • Restaurant • Pizzeria
→ Garden out the back →
We love Local & Organic food!



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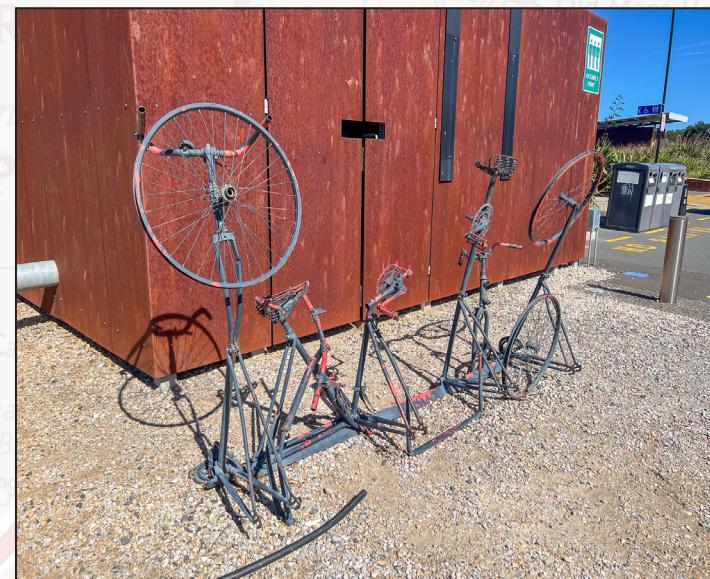
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Backtracking over the famous Tākaka Hill Highway we survived the second traverse of Tākaka Hill on our way to our next stay, Nelson. We stopped along the way to do a little exploring.



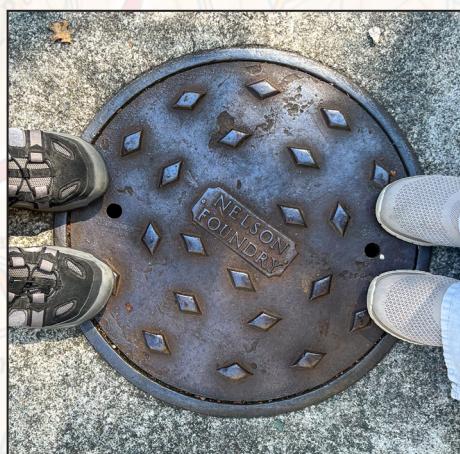
A cool bike rack made from recycled bike parts.



We would have had lunch here but the wait for a table was longer than we had so we continued on to Nelson.



Nelson had street side humor "A" boards too.



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Nelson had a great classic car museum of it's own too. We spent a few hours exploring it.

There is a fast two minute tour on YouTube. This is the link or you can just click on this text box: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GOAt-CrnEjg>



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The swastika on this car, a Krit, caught my attention. When I researched it I found that the K-R-I-T Motor Car Company (or more simply KRIT) was a small American car company in Detroit, Michigan from 1909 to 1916. The swastika they used was not yet associated with Nazism, Nazi Germany, Adolf Hitler, or antisemitism and was popular at the time, thought to be a good-luck symbol. Another lesson that things don't always mean what one would think.



MARLBOROUGH



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From Nelson we headed to our last stop on the South Island, Picton. When we got to a town called Havelock, we diverted off the faster route and took a more scenic route along the Mahakipawa and Grove arms of the extensive network of sea-drowned valleys called the Marlborough Sounds. We spent a few days here exploring a small part of the area.

As we came into Picton we stopped at an overlook of the port and where in a few days we would take one of the ferries below back to the North Island.



Our lodging had a nice view out over Picton and to the head of the Queen Charlotte Sound.

We took a tour of the Picton area with Kent on this a three seat custom made Longhorn Trike. Kent grew up in Picton and his tour included a lot of local flavor not easily seen or heard otherwise. Kent and a couple others make many cool variations these custom trikes and ship them worldwide.



More about Longhorn Trikes and photos of many others are on the company web site at: <https://www.longhorntrikes.com>





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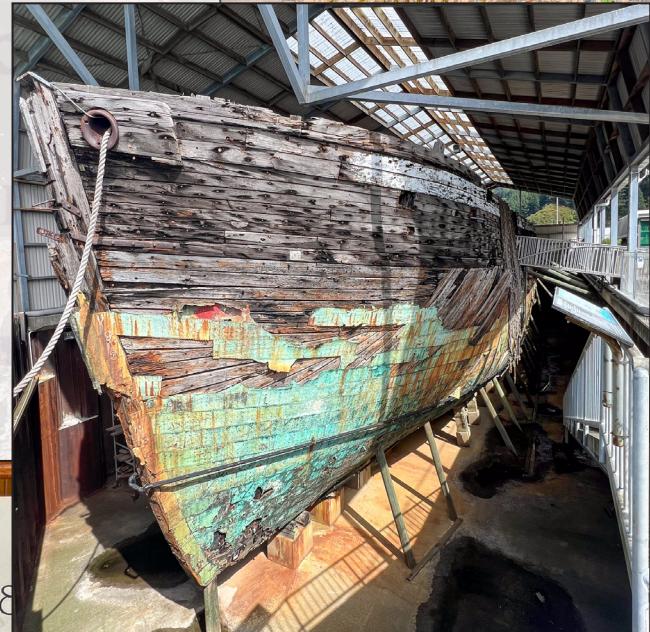
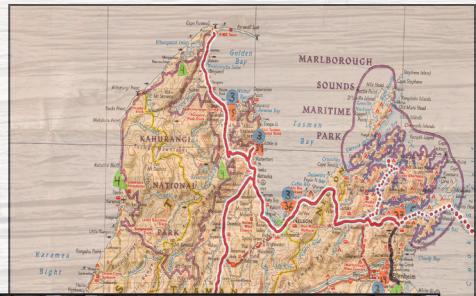
Next to the ferry terminal is The Edwin Fox Maritime Museum. The Edwin Fox is one of the world's oldest surviving merchant sailing ships. It is also the only surviving ship that transported convicts to Australia and a lot of the museum was devoted to that aspect of the Edwin Fox. It is also unique in that it is the only intact hull of a wooden deep water sailing ship built to British specifications surviving in the world outside of the Falkland Islands.

The Edwin Fox was built of teak in Calcutta in 1853 and her maiden voyage was to London via the Cape of Good Hope. The ship then went into service in the Crimean War as a troop ship, and later carrying passengers and cargo.

In February of 1856 she began her first voyage to Melbourne, Australia, carrying passengers, then moved to trading between Chinese ports. In 1858 she was chartered by the British Government as a convict ship bound for Fremantle, Western Australia.

In 1867 it was converted from a full-rigged ship to a barque, and from 1873 served on the emigrant route to New Zealand. Conditions on board for the three-month voyage were harsh and several voyagers did not survive to see their new home.

By today's standards and in most societies, the sentences of the transported convicts would be pretty extreme.



Convicts Transported To
Western Australia ~ 1858
~~ Edwin Fox ~~

Master: Captain Joseph Ferguson
Departed: Plymouth 12 September 1858
Arrived: Fremantle 29 November 1858

NAME	AGE	SENENCE	CONVICTED CRIME
ANDERSON, James	39	Life	CCourt 1857
ATKINS, Thomas	34	Life	Warwick 1856
BRANT, Thomas	40	Life	Stafford 1859
BROMLEY, Thomas	31	15 years	Leicester 1857
BURTON, Tobias	23	14 years	Leeds 1857
CARWELL, John	34	8 years	Derby 1856
CHAPMAN, Bedford	24	6 years	Nova Scotia
CHECKELDY, Joseph	25	6 years	Clerkewell 1857
DAY, Thomas	35	15 years	Cambridge 1857
ELKINS, Thomas	24	14 years	Birmingham 1857
HINCH, Edward	20	20 years	Bedford 1857
GOLDEN, Frederick	20	15 years	Clerkewell 1857
HAMILTON, Charles	28	Life	Gibraltar 1857
JANSEN, Hans	28	10 years	Maidstone 1853
KELLY, Timothy	18	Life	Guernsey 1856
LEECH, William	31	25 years	Lincoln 1857
MCCORMACK, James	32	7 years	Malta 1857
MESSINGER, William	17	4 years	Wigan 1854
PARKER, James	34	6 years	CCourt 1859
STOTT, James	23	10 years	Manchester 1852
WALSH, James	25	6 years	Birmingham 1857
WEIR, William	28	7 years	Malta 1857
WHITE, Philip	48	Life	Aylesbury 1857

~ This is a sample list of the 279 Convicts who spent most of the 89 day voyage confined below decks. ~



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One day we took a small mail boat out of Havelock for the day.
There are several routes which vary from day to day and boat to boat.



Rocks at the end of the breakwater celebrating the famous Green-Lipped Mussel industry that Havelock is center of. We didn't eat any of them... that we know of.

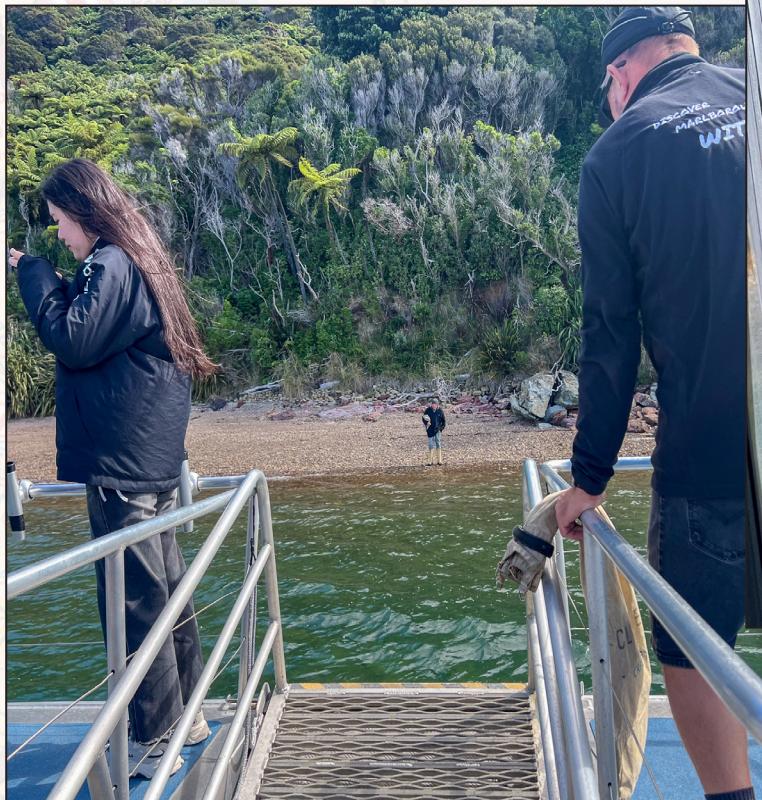


They have trained terns to stand guard on every single Green-Lipped Mussel bed float.

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Mail boats have a landing plank system in the bow of the boat. At their stops they nudge the boat onto shore (or as close as possible), lower the plank and then exchange goods and mail with the person on shore.



After finishing our mail run and returning to Havelock in the late afternoon, we took a walk to get our land legs back and found an interesting monument to local hero, William Hayward Pickering. Pickering was born in Wellington but attended school in Havelock. He was an aerospace engineer who headed the Pasadena, California's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) for 22 years, retiring in 1976. He was a senior NASA luminary and pioneered the exploration of space. Pickering was also a founding member of the United States National Academy of Engineering.

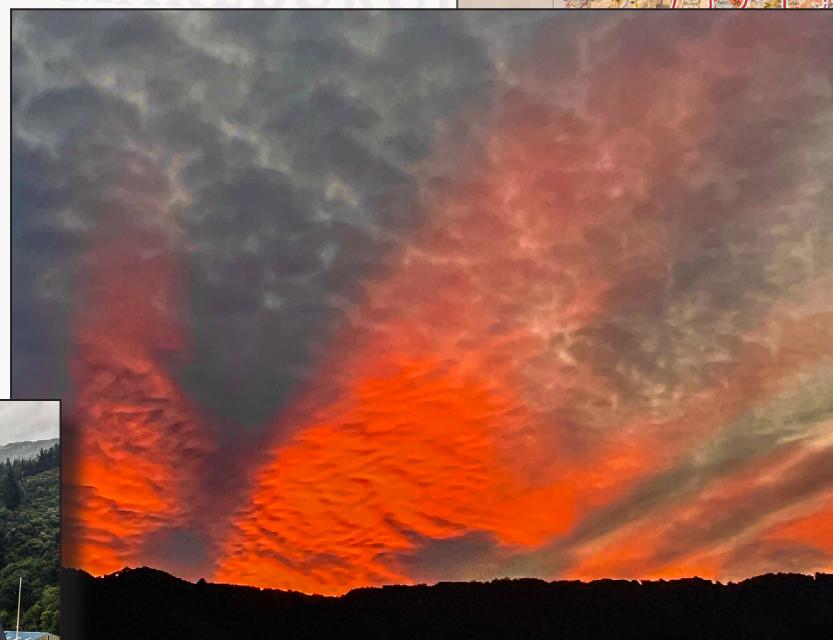
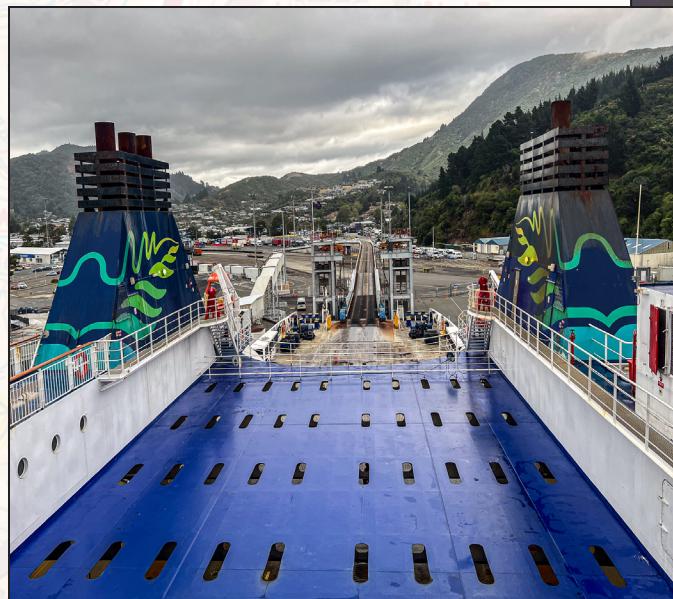
Havelock only has a population of about 2,000 these days and it was probably less back when Pickering was here. Modern school student counts are less than 60. Never discount people based upon the size of their school!

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One more grand South Island sunset and the next day we checked our bigger luggage, boarded a ferry with our hand carried luggage and headed back to the North Island. We had our own private little corner of the ferry to sink into and ready ourselves for acquiring yet another rental car, traverse Wellington again and head up the west coast of the North Island to our next stay.



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