

Hawke's Bay Bus Trip

April 13, 2025

On a beautiful Autumn day in April, Founders members were picked up from the four designated bus stops and proceeded to Riverslea, the property of Robert Flanders, on the Napier Road near Mangateretere. Robert Flanders is the 5th generation to own this property, which was initially purchased by John Flanders in 1897 from Thomas Tanner.

Thomas Tanner and William Rich in 1864/65 were the initial lessees of the Heretaunga Block, that included all the plains to the Ngaruroro River. It was several years later that a syndicate of 7 members (The Apostles) purchased the land from the local Maori. The entire Block was apportioned into 12 Lots. Thomas Tanner, who had first choice, chose the most Easterly Block of 19385 acres called Riverslea. Tanner built his home on what is now the Flanders property. Tanner had engaged a gardener from England to look after the three-acre garden, which surrounded one of the most magnificent homesteads in Hawkes Bay. The homestead was unfortunately destroyed by fire in 1896, and this together with other financial problems, led to Tanner selling his land in 1897 to John Flanders, who had worked as a gardener for Tanner on the Riverslea property for 17 years.

Robert Flanders property is currently a kiwi fruit orchard with five blocks of vines. Although the original Tanner homestead is gone, there is a vast amount of history preserved by Robert and his predecessors. The Founders members were privileged to access this historic property and listen to Robert's account of the early history. The gardens were planted out over 150 years ago and there are some magnificent specimen trees.

The group spent one and a half hours there enjoying the historic buildings and gardens before proceeding to Napier via Clive and Watangi Regional Reserve, to learn that William Colenso was gifted some Maori land there, where he built a home on poles above the swamp.

We had a lovely two course lunch at the Napier RSA then proceeded to the Faraday Museum of Technology in Faraday Street, where staff opened the Museum on a Sunday especially for our visit. Here, we learned about early Napier history.

There were several interesting exhibits and two of particular interest were the Tesla coil (although the noise was deafening when demonstrated) and the Fullagar Oil Engine. That was an important source of Napier's electricity, especially after the earthquake. It supplemented Napier's power from the national grid from 1925 to 1970. A visit to the Faraday Museum of Technology is strongly recommended, especially for the older generations that enjoy seeing and learning things from yesteryear. Napier City

Council is presently consulting on the method/cost of keeping the Museum operating, so an early visit is advised.

The Museum staff also provided a lovely afternoon tea. Then the Easter bunny farewelled the bus for the return home.

Mike S. was a guest on the trip and kindly agreed to write this report

The Fullagar Oil Engine, Faraday Museum of Technology



