

# Waikato Founders to Thames

September 21, 2025

September's meeting for Waikato was walk about month and a look at one of the world's first goldfields from 1850 and still going in Waihi was the learned desire.



12 members meet and for the first time a van was hired and with an early start of 9.30 the Founders Team headed for Thames. The first stop being the Thames Museum. After an hour and a bit of travel a warm cup of team and biscuits greeted the team with a bunch of enthusiastic volunteers to show us around. A marvellous display of anything pre 1970 and a good indication of the family's and businesses that saw Thames grow. A feature exhibit must have been the wooden replication of pollen street buildings. After spending a good hour looking around the tummies were starting to rumble so it was down into Pollen Street.

We headed to the Melbourne café. The coffees were great the cabinet food even better and we also had the chance to look around a few shops including a tasting of Coromandel Distillery's Gold medal gins. One started blue and by adding a nice soda turned pink, so what can I say other than pigs do fly.

The after-lunch walk gave a good perspective of how Thames was – The retail building hadn't changed since 1900 or before and the Hospital precinct and older public buildings had recently been manicured and looked smart. At the back of the café was what was left of the foundry business of A & G Price. Home to the manufacture of boilers, steam engines and America Cup Keels.

The next place of interest was the "Bella Street pump house" or the Thames Institute of Technology. Once again, the volunteers made the visit so homely and welcome and the models of the mining technology were amazing along with the photographs.



Imagine this picture – a mine a thousand feet deep (3500 meters) water being pumped at 4,000litrs a second – 8 of 10 boilers in operation – 70 men working pushing 24 tons of coal by hand a day. The coal being bought by horse and cart from the barges tied up at the Thames wharf being emptied by hand. Unfortunately, after going down into the depths of the pump house, it was time to leave and head for home.

Members turned down world famous fish and chips from the wharf in Thames but elected to break the journey at Turua for some big ice creams in a cone. The van Buzzed with excitement of a wonderful day and socialising on a common interest when arriving back at Flagstaff shopping centre. Our thanks go to Ron and Rae for occupying the front two seats of the van our guide and driver.