

Dispatch for Thursday March 9, 2017: Morning
By: Jenna Hakun

On Thursday, March 9, the fourth day of our trip in New Zealand, we left Taupo and the Finlay Jacks Hostel for New Plymouth and the west coast. We drove for about an hour around the Lake Taupo and had some great sites of the volcanos that border the south edge of the water. We stopped shortly to discuss the Tokaanu Power Station on the side of the road. This facility was built in 1966 and it uses water that is drawn from the Whanganui and Tongariro rivers. It outputs this water into Lake Taupo. Pictured below is the Tokaanu Steam Diversion which was created to preserve the river there due to the important fact that the river is a trout sprawling stream. The Tokaanu Power Station has a capacity of 240 MW however we This is an example of a pumped hydro station. While we were here, there seemed to be little going on with the diversion stream and it appeared to be off. (It was pretty funny how it seemed like every energy place we went to was turned off.)



We then began our long drive to New Plymouth through the Stratford Oil Field. Derek told us to be on the lookout for anything having to do with oil. After driving for ten minutes, Susan had the great idea of looking for a gas station because that had to be easier to locate than a well head. We found one pretty quickly but ironically, there were only two places that we saw a gas station!



Finally, we got to travel on an expanse of road called the Forgotten Highway! It was a running joke throughout the car until we actually understood why. For about 30 miles, we actually had to travel on a gravel road that at some points seemed to be one way. We saw a few large trucks on this road and I can't imagine driving those large vehicles.

We stopped the Tangarakau River point of the highway to use a bathroom and actually ran into some Americans from Wisconsin. Morgan's Grave was located here and I actually ran into the woods to find it while we were waiting for everyone to use the bathroom. Morgan was an explorer who actually pioneered the road we were driving on and died in the process of making it. It actually seems kind of sad that Morgan is buried on the Forgotten Highway. Only people traveling on this road will ever know his name.



We finally reached the town of Stratford in the afternoon and ate lunch in a small fast food like place in town. It was awesome to see the Mt. Taranaki, one of the most perfect cone-like volcanoes in the world. After lunch, we drove on to see the Methanex Plant and the Maui Gas Field.