

19<sup>th</sup> April

Rangitata Diversion Race

Terry Heiler and Kees Beentjes



The Geo/Bot bus trip this month was to the Rangitata Diversion Race which takes water from the river for irrigation. It was built in the 1930s, dug by hand for 42 miles at a gravity fed rate of 1 foot of drop for every mile. It is 12ft deep and 12ft wide, so an enormous task but still working well to this day.

Farms along the way pay 2 companies for water. They used to get it by blocking the canal and letting it overflow onto their land, but now it feeds the big metal irrigators. They move across fields guided by a GPS system.

An interesting stop was at the new fish screen, bought for \$17 million. These big metal cylinders are lowered into the canal and have perforated sections to let the water through while the fish swim alongside down a

narrowing channel and are diverted back into the river.



Throughout the trip we had an excellent commentary from Kees, an employee charged with making a 100-year plan for the system, taking into account future climate changes. What a job!

