

The Marlborough Express

Train steams through on journey south

By FRITHA TAGG - The Marlborough Express Last updated 12:27 14/04/2010

Steam train enthusiasts were evident at every level crossing and vantage point between Picton and Blenheim when the Wab 794 steamed through yesterday.

The train was travelling from Picton to Christchurch, on the first leg of its South Island journey.

The Feilding and Districts Steam Rail Society trip will travel to Christchurch, Greymouth, Hokitika, Westport and then return. It will be the first steam-drawn passenger train to travel the Greymouth to Hokitika and Greymouth to Westport lines since 1993 and 1994 respectively.

Owned and operated by the Feilding and Districts Steam Rail Society, the steam train has a full passenger complement making the 13-day trip, which started in Feilding.

Many of them are steam train enthusiasts.

Wab 794 was built in Dunedin in 1927 and is one of only two survivors of this class and the only one in running condition.

Wab 794 arrived at Feilding and Districts Steam Rail Society's depot in March 1997 and after seven years of dedicated restoration work from a team of volunteers, the steam train's return to its former glory was celebrated with a trip through the Manawatu Gorge in 2003.

The steam engine is used on a fairly regular basis.

The steam train will return to Picton for its return ferry trip on Friday, April 23, before heading to home base in Feilding.