The familiarization trip on the Taieri Gorge Railway to Pukerangi comprised of Christine, the new staff from I-Site, Cissy a fellow volunteer worker and myself.

Taieri Gorge Railway has daily trips to Pukerangi. Travelling time to Pukerangi is two hours. Trips to Middlemarch on the other hand are on scheduled days.

The railway began construction in June 1879, however due to economic depression, it never fully operated until after 1921. Moreover, it contributed tremendously to the development of Central Otago at the time. Tons of farm produce and fruit, and hundreds of thousands of heads of livestock were railed years to Dunedin and points north.

In April 1930, the Minister of Railway declared the line closed. Today, the railway is jointly owned by the Dunedin City Council and the Otago Excursion Train Trust.

We were scheduled for Wednesday the 10th, 2018. Of the 18 passengers’ carriages, we were booked on carriage C. Our carriage had a family, an old lady roughly in her early 70's and I presumed her two daughters with a total of six young children amongst them ranging between ages from 4 -10 and two Chinese couples.

The other two courage’s behind ours had about 10 to 15 people in each.

The train departed at 14.14pm to be precise destined for Pukerangi. Pukerangi is a quite farm hamlet situated 250m above sea level and - means ‘hill of Heaven’.

Off course the name speaks for itself - heaven it was. We travelled through spectacular scenery along the banks of the Taieri River, through several tunnels and climbing along the Taieri Gorge to the Strath Taieri. We crossed through some bridges, including the southern structure, and passed through ten tunnels. There were 13 areas briefly introduced throughout the trip. Full details can be found on page 12 and 13 of the Dunedin Railways guides.

Noticeable areas were; Salisbury Tunnel, the largest Tunnel (437m) and the natural soda springs near the tunnel mouth.

Parera, the former crossing station, the railway house marvellously isolated is now a holiday home.

After passing couple of areas, we reached Hindon Station where the first section of the Otago Central Railway was opened. We finally reached Purkerangi by 16.20pm where Middlemarch passengers were off loaded, and we returned to Dunedin at 18.20pm.

It was an amazing experience.

I would like to say a Special thank you to Sharon and Marcella and rest of the I-Site Team.