

A long haul down memory lane

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A truck driver who first hit the road 70 years ago returned this week in a restored version of his last ride.

Doug Gray became a driver for Transport Wairarapa soon after it was founded in 1940 by Bill Hargreaves, and stayed until his retirement in 1984.

Now a group of restoration buffs have brought back the glory days by turning a farmer's run-about into a redeemed version of Mr Gray's last ride, Number 36.

The truck even comes complete with Transport Wairarapa colours, not seen since the company was bought out by Farmers Transport in 1993.

The idea for the project came about in a conversation between Mr Gray and Rod Garrity, one of a group of keen restorers of vintage vehicles.

"He said, 'wouldn't it be good to get a truck in the old Transport Wairarapa colours?'" Rod's brother Ian Garrity recalled.

"We decided on Number 36; we thought it would be good to get a Ford.

"A group of us together restore these old trucks; a lot of hard work goes into it."

Mr Garrity said Transport Wairarapa "was a huge outfit in Wairarapa" and worth commemorating.

"We did it for Doug and the Wairarapa community."

The Garritys had worked alongside Mr Gray and other



SHE'S BACK: A restored Ford Transport Wairarapa truck, Number 36. Richard Herrick, (left) Ian Garrity, Rex Gallon, Doug Gray, and Rodney Garrity.

PHOTO/CHRIS KILFORD

Transport Wairarapa drivers on busy stock sale days in times past, and still keep in regular contact.

Garrity Bros sourced the Ford from a farm where it was used with a runabout complete with small crane on the back.

Former Transport Wairarapa engineer Rick Cottle removed the crane and fixed up the deck, while others including Richard Herrick, a former Transport Wairarapa mechanic, spruced up the working parts.

A cab from the mid to late-70s

was added to the early-80s engine that the Garritys had uncovered.

Rex Gallon of Spraycraft, Mr Gray's son-in-law, applied the iconic paint job.

For the icing on the cake, a driver spotted Number 36's old stock crate in a North Wairarapa

paddock — in use as a calf pen — and that will soon be back to its old duties, at least in form.

The truck had its maiden voyage late last month, and this weekend headed out on the highway — the Forbidden Highway near Taumarunui.