

Oxford's adventure shatters to a halt

By Sally Kidson

It survived 50 years of motoring in England and 27,000km of "hairy roads" in England, Africa, India, South East Asia, Australia and New Zealand, only to shatter on a road near Nelson.

The windscreen of Tim Nicholson and Joanne Bowlit's 1954 Morris Oxford was replaced in Nelson yesterday after breaking on the Nelson side of the Hope Saddle on Tuesday.

The couple have driven their car called Florence from Oxford in England to Oxford New Zealand to raise money for the Red Cross.

They were on the return leg of their journey, driving from Christchurch to visit friends in Mapua, when a stone from a passing truck hit and shattered the windscreen.

"We couldn't see, so Jo put her head out of the window and guided me to the verge," Mr Nicholson said.

The pair pushed out the window and continued to Mapua wrapped in their glasses, hats and gloves to shield off the early evening cold and insects.

They were concerned they would not be able to find an original windscreen as a replacement.

"It was 50-years-old and even had the original sticker on it.

"I was really worried we had got to the point we would have to have a plastic one fitted," Ms Bowlit said.

Nelson's Smith and Smith Glass accepted the challenge of finding an original windscreen.

A replacement was eventually sourced from an car enthusiast, who ironically lived near Oxford in Christchurch.

Smith and Smith paid to transport the windscreen to Nelson and installed it free of charge.

Ms Bowlit said aside from gear problems, which saw them drive around Australia minus first gear, the smashed windscreen was the first major problem the car had encountered.

The couple have so far raised about \$27,000 for the Red Cross while experiencing many adventures.

They will spend a few days in the region, before driving to Auckland where Florence will be shipped to Australia.

The couple's adventures are related on their website www.oxford2oxford.co.uk.



PANE RELIEF: English couple Tim Nicholson and Joanne Bowlit have a new windscreen fitted to Florence, their 1954 Morris Oxford, by Smith and Smith Glass automotive technician Kerry Martin, during their visit to Nelson. MAIL PHOTO / COLIN SMITH 95192