

# Whanganui River Road Run

Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> September 2025

Whanganui members Chris and Margaret McLeod organised this month's run up the river to Pipiriki. We had a fantastic number of cars, 19, who gathered just north of the Dublin Street Bridge on Anzac Parade, Whanganui for a 9.30am departure. The early departure from Whanganui meant an early start for our members from Manawatu, Rangitikei, Horowhenua and Kapiti. To facilitate an orderly arrival in Whanganui Robert arranged for our southern members to meet at the blo kart track in Sanson for an 8.30 convoy to Wangas.

Our first picture stop was on the River Road at the top of the first hill. Once parking on the narrow road was sorted, we enjoyed a fantastic view down to the river and beyond up towards Mount Ruapehu. Unfortunately, we had heavy cloud cover at this time and the mountain was nowhere to be seen.

There was a brief stop to view the flying fox taking residents and guests across the river to the 'Flying Fox Retreat' which is only accessible by the flying fox across the river. By this stage a gale force wind whistled down the valley and only the brave stepped out to view.

Moving on out, we wound our way to the Matahiwi Gallery/cafe for coffee and or lunch in the old school house where the gallery/cafe was housed. Whilst the café owner was aware of our numbers, as we were a large group, it still took quite some time to serve us all and our stop lasted closer to an hour and a half rather than the planned hour. We filled the café resulting in a few of us sitting outside, where the strong cold wind made for a chilly experience, however MGeers are a hardy breed, jackets overcame the chill.

Also on this site is the 'River Queen' which was used in the film of the same name from 2005, shot on the nearby Whanganui River.



A couple of Km's or so further on is the historic Kawana (flour) Mill, established in 1854. We stopped for a look. The mill operated until it was abandoned in 1913. It was restored in the mid 1970's, opening in 1980, the wheel and millstones are authentic but the building is a replica.

Our next stop up the river was to be the church at Jerusalem; however, access was closed to visitors because the old Nun's quarters were in the process of being renovated. What we would have learnt if we were able to visit was in the 1800's, Jerusalem was an isolated site where, in 1892, Suzanne Aubert (better known as Sister Mary Joseph or Mother Aubert) established the congregation of the Sisters of Compassion. They became a highly respected charitable nursing/religious order. Jerusalem was also the home of New Zealand poet James K Baxter, who is buried nearby.



The River Road is truly a unique isolated experience with amazing scenery as we continued on to Pipiriki. A stop for those with BYO lunch and a chat. By this time the weather had improved slightly and we were sheltered from the wind.

From Pipiriki we travelled the 28km to Raetihi where we were hosted by Ian and Sarah Moore in their Dinosaur House Museum ([www. Dinosaurhouse.co.nz](http://www.Dinosaurhouse.co.nz)). What a hidden history experience this was. We saw dinosaur skeletons, walked amongst life-size reconstructions such as 'T-Rex' and 'Spinosaurus.' There are interactive experiences and visual presentations to help educate us all on the world of dinosaurs. Who would have thought that in a small rural town, arguably in the middle of nowhere, you would find such an adventure. This museum is well worth the visit.



At this point most members left to travel back home via Waiouru and State Highway 1. The Whanganui contingent and a few Manawatu soles travelled back to Wangas via State Highway 4, (The Parapara's), to meet up at the Whanganui East Club for post run fellowship and an ale or two before heading home.

The trip was well organised by Chris and Margaret with plenty of stops for sightseeing and to stretch our legs. The road surfaces were in very good order given we are coming out of winter in an isolated area. It was good to catch up with members and our Whanganui folk who we have not seen for some time.

Thank you, Chris, and Margaret, for a great day out, very much enjoyed and appreciated. And thank you, Robert, for organising the convoy from Sanson.

For those interested Evert has posted a YouTube presentation covering some of our journey.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=feeZU8UuaU8>

Those on this run were:

Chris & Margaret, Evert & Liz, Russell & Julie, Rob, Mike with Les (Hillman), Mark (Stag), Craig, Jocelyn & Bruce, Robert with Glenn, Betty & Alec, Neil & Liz, Alan & Robyn, Helen with Catherine, John with friend, Roger with Warren, Anne & John, Bruce & Elaine, Paul & Josie, and ourselves.

Robyn & Steve