

# THE RUN TO OKERE FALLS CAFÉ (or "let's do lunch" )

*By Natalie Cox*

Hello everybody, I'm back. Yeah okay, I can hear those groans all the way from my place but I'll ignore them anyway. I haven't done this for a while, but here we go.

We, most of us, met at the Rugby Club at the very civilized time of 10:30am on a windy Friday morning. Was so nice to see Ngaire and Phil and Linda and Ted. You guys should get out more often, we do enjoy your company. And then there was Andy, poor physically disabled (crippled, challenged, impaired, handicapped etc. etc.) Andy. He's got two straight legs now and is getting around, albeit with the help of crutches. Does that mean he'll be back to normal soon? Was Andy "normal" though, even before his injury? Worth pondering. His long-enduring wife, the lovely Gaylene, took Gary and Estelle's dog for a walk, because Holly the dog had got sort-of attached to her. Also, she had to wait for the lads to stop comparing cars, motors, speed, and anything else they had to compare. Gary won that morning because when Gaylene came back, she handed him a wee bundle in a plastic bag from the dog. Oooh, a present.

When we eventually got in to our beasts (or cars as some would say) and headed off down the usual Pyes Pa Road (Highway 36). It was a good run, my Steve-in-front mastering the art of going slower (so proud of my man), and there was not too much traffic on the read, except for one annoying campervan. Got out of suburbia and the countryside provided us with the usual panoramic outlook of paddocks, trees, hills, flash houses I could never afford, (and anyway, think of all the cleaning), cows in paddocks and sheep in more paddocks. Turned on to Te Waerenga Road, which is a bit longer but a more scenic route. Most importantly it's the abode of Georgie and Alan Judd. Some went the shorter route, obviously feeling hungrier than the rest of us. They ended up missing out on seeing two squashed possums along the road. Ha, that'll teach them.

We arrived at Okere Falls Store + Craft Beer Garden, which shall in future be referred to as "the café" as their name is too long. No parking so I naturally went in to my default mode of fear and panic but the afore-mentioned lovely Gaylene had already sorted it, and we ended up with a row of Jaguars parked along the roadside. A bonus sight for those lucky motorists driving past in their below-par vehicles.





Once everyone was assembled, we ordered our drinks and meals and before we had a chance to settle in and have a chat, our drinks were all brought to the right tables. Next thing you know, go on, you'll never guess, but.... our food was placed before us. I've never, or very rarely, come across a cafe that was so on to it considering there were approximately 25-30 people. They got every meal to the correct recipient and it all looked good, and hope it tasted good too. I had

Seafood Chowder and it had so much seafood in it I couldn't finish it, although I made a good effort. The cafe was so lovely, had a really rustic atmosphere to it and we had a choice of two levels so we could chase the sun.

When I told them how awesome they were they said they loved having us there and hope we come back. Me to! After filled stomachs and energetic conversations, we all went back to our cars. Most meandered off home but a few of us headed off to Okere Falls.

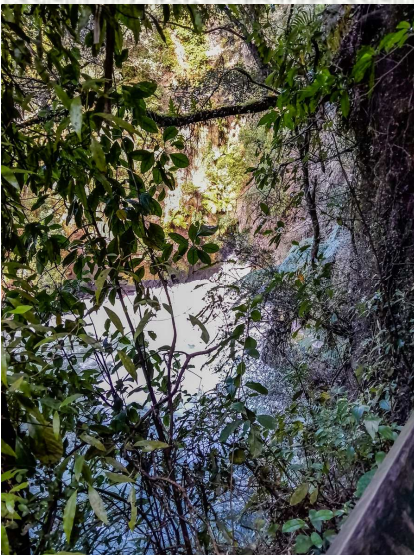




This is my kind of place, quiet, in nature and exciting seeing the water. Me and the lads went down these steep steps and stood right beside the water rushing past at a deafening speed. I then ~~ran~~, ~~strode~~ crawled up the steps, trying to pretend I was fine. Think my doubling over and gasping for oxygen gave it away.

The ladies joined us and we went up the track, stopping at another viewing point where there were rusty remains of the old pumphouse. We carried on and headed along the path towards the cave (or THE CAVE) meeting Linda and Ted on

the way. The cave was down some, lots and lots and more lots, uneven steps but I was determined (Definition: stupid, insane), to get there. The ladies (no, not me, I'm no lady) waited up at another lookout area while the rest of us descended into the depths. This man greeted us with "Don't touch the walls, there's spiders." Just adorable, big spiders crawling all over me. Steve (the crazy husband) and Daryll found these narrow tunnels that just had to be explored and they vanished in to the darkness, never to be seen again. Ha! Just kidding, they came out around the corner looking very pleased with themselves.



I passed on that one, probably would've got part way then wedged myself in and I would never be seen again. We headed back up. I should've realised that if you go down, you have to come up again. I "stopped to look at scenery" along the way and finally me and my rickety, arthritic knees made it to the top. We all made it out alive and wandered, or in hubby's case, strode at a fast pace, (bless him, the sweetheart) back to the carpark. The day was at an end. And what a day it was. We had no rain, a delicious meal, great conversation, great company, and I got to climb 500 steps. Probably only 100 or so but allow me to exaggerate, I'm no spring chicken you know. Anyhow, all in all it was an excellent day. And yes Blair, you will get some cake!

*Natalie*