

## Return to the RRRR 2017 (22 Dec 2017)

After running (and walking part-way) for the full 31.1km distance of the Round Rarotonga Road Race in 1979 (the 2nd year), and being Race Director in 1980 (see *my recollections of that year elsewhere in News*), I returned for the 40th event in 2017. Not quite as young as I used to be, I entered the 10km Walk.

One woman started very fast and was soon lost ahead among the slower runners. At 2 or 3 kilometres another woman caught me up, and we were together for a little way. I told her that there was another woman ahead, so she set out after her and ultimately passed her to be the first woman walker to finish. At about 8 kilometres I was caught by another woman who kept going and finished third.

To my surprise I won the Men's division by almost 4 minutes, in 1:19:05 – local walker Dave Rangī was second. I know that my time is not the record for a man in this event, but I think that I'm probably the oldest to have won it – at the age of 81!

Some HMC members were in a group of women who completed the 31km race, including Helen Baldock (4:01:45 – 2nd Woman, 4th overall, and she was 1st woman, 2nd overall in 2015), and Faye Kett (4:28:17 – 6th woman, 9th overall).

After being a runner until about 1991, I started being "only" a walker when I joined HMC in 2001. I've been pushed since then by Barb Wilson, who I first beat in a half marathon in 2002, passing her near the finish and staying ahead. I hadn't beaten her again until the Hamilton Half in 2015. After that race we were talking. "You must be getting on a bit now" she said. "Yes, I'll be 80 next year." "I'll be 85" (she's 86 now). I managed to beat her again this year in the Hamilton Half Marathon two weeks after the RRRR – but she beat me at Morrinsville.

Never grow old – rather, just grow older.

- Neal Utting,

