



The Methven Walkway

A bit of history. The Methven Walkway was originally opened in 1979 as an initiative of Methven Lions Guy Goldsborough and Ray Barlass, working with the Dept of Conservation. George Currie was the custodian for many years. Latterly, the Methven Lions Club has taken responsibility for the construction of new sections and maintenance of the entire walkway, and now it is some 12 km long overall, divided into sections of varying lengths to accommodate walkers of all capabilities. Much of it is wheelchair-friendly. It is intersected by various country roads so that it is possible to arrange transport to avoid retracing one's steps. The walk from beginning to end will take 3 to 3 ½ hours.

The Walkway is a popular option for both walkers and mountain bikers, with a 12km loop (refer to start/finish on map). There is an additional 11km return to the Ashburton River North branch from the Methven ihub. Mt Hutt Bike Park is close by, offering many options for biking in this area.

To begin. Starting at the Methven ihub, proceed down Methven Chertsey Road to Methven Cemetery, through the iron gate and to the right of the cemetery, where you will cross a small foot bridge over the creek. You may be lucky enough to see the New Zealand Falcons, Karearea, who live here.

Follow the Walkway around farmland to Barkers Road, then along the footpath to Holmes Road. Here, it enters a reserve planted with evergreen exotic trees including the Wellingtonia Sequoiadendron giganteum. The trees form stands dense enough to encourage birds to nest there, and there is some undergrowth. Keep an eye open for Fantails, Piwakawaka.

As you cross Mt Hutt Station Road you'll see the Methven Racecourse, a popular trotting centre and also the Ōpuke Hot Pools.

Enchanted Forest. Next, you'll pass through The Enchanted Forest. It is said that fairies live here.Having crossed the dry creek twice on footbridges, the Walkway leaves the trees as it reaches the Rangitata Diversion Race canal, the bank of which is followed all the way to the finish beside the North Branch of the Ashburton River.

Options galore. Where the Walkway crosses Mt Harding Road, there's the sign-posted option to head back into town. Along this route you'll see widespread plantings of native tussocks, shrubs and trees. Or you can stay on the RDR canal bank through farmland to the road bridge at Pudding Hill Road.

Here, there's another option. You can head back to town via Hobbs Road and South Belt, or continue to the Ashburton River along the RDR. Being on the plain, the walkway is on virtually level ground and out in the open apart from the stretch within the drain reserve, although groups of trees planted along the canal and clumps of native toitoi, Cortaderia richardii soften the lines of the banks.

Birdlife. The canal attracts many kinds of ducks. Mallards abound. Canada Geese and Paradise Ducks may be seen along the Ashburton River. You might see Herons, Plovers and Oystercatchers and of course there are Magpies aplenty. You may hear Bellbirds. Along the way there are unimpeded views of the Southern Alps including, as well as the Hutt Range, Mt Taylor range, and the Pudding Hill range in the foreground, Mt Winterslow (Ōpihako), Mt Somers (Te Kiekie) and Mt Hutt (Ōpuke). Midway to the Ashburton River road bridge the Walkway crosses to the opposite banks (west) side of the canal before entering the picnic area at the river where the walkway ends.

About Methven. Robert Patton's Methven Farm on Back Track was a convenient halt for coaches travelling between Alford Forest and Rakaia. Methven township was created in 1878 at its present site to take advantage of the branch railway line from Rakaia that ended at the crossroads. The town was named after Patton's original home in Methven in Perthshire, Scotland. A farming centre, Methven has benefitted from the development of Mount Hutt Ski Area. It provides amenities for farmers and skiers as well as fishermen or fishers and hunters. Many varied and beautiful reserves of mountain landscape, lakes and native bush lie within reasonable distances of Methven.

The Rangitata Diversion Race canal provides irrigation water in summer, power in winter. Designed in conjunction with the Ashburton County Irrigation Scheme, the foundations of the 25,000kW Highbank Power Station were laid in 1939, but World War II delayed the completion of the station until 1945.

The 66 km canal carries water from the Rangitata to the Rakaia River, inverted siphons taking it beneath the intervening rivers, with gates along the way controlling irrigation water out. A trap near the beginning of the race collects sand that would build up downstream and reduce Highbank's output. And fish screens at either end prevent fish entering the machinery.

The rules. Walkers are asked to observe the gazetted by-laws for New Zealand Walkways. Particularly relevant to the Methven Walkway are:

- All wildlife, plants and natural features are protected.
- Rubbish or litter must be removed from the walkway by the person concerned.
- No unauthorised vehicles are allowed on the walkway.
- Dogs must be on a leash. Horses are permitted along the canal section of the walkway only. All other animals are prohibited, as is the carrying of firearms.
- Mountain bikes are permitted. It may be necessary to lift them over some fences.
- Staying on the Walkway as it crosses farmland

Much of the walkway is over land used for irrigation and is mainly adjacent to private farmland. Please respect these properties and do not interfere with or damage livestock, crops, fences or the irrigation installations.

Classification: Walk or cycle

Time: 3 hours (Excluding walk to Ashburton River)

Distance: 12 kms

Location: On the outskirts of Methven, 94km west of Christchurch between the Ashburton and the Rakaia rivers.

Start/finish: Methven ihub

Facilities: Parking at beginning and end of Walkway and at points between, where roads cross the canal. No facilities on the walkway.

There is no charge for using the Walkway, however if you'd like to make a contribution towards upkeep, please do so at the ihub. It will be passed to the Lions' fund.

Walking Options: APPROXIMATE TIMES - (Steady Walking)

- 1 hour: Start Methven ihub, Chertsey Road, Cemetery, Barkers Road, Holmes Road, return along Main Street to Methven ihub.
- 2 hours: Start Methven ihub, Chertsey Road, Cemetery, Barkers Road, Holmes Road to Rangitata Diversion Race returning to Mt Harding Road then on to Forest Drive.
- 2.5 hours: Start Dip Road, RDR canal bridge to Ashburton River and return.
- 3 hours: Start at Methven ihub complete full circuit as marked..... (excluding walk to river).
- 3 hours: Start Pudding Hill Road Bridge over RDR Canal to Ashburton River along canal and return.
- 4 hours: Start at Methven ihub via South Belt – Hobbs Road to Ashburton River and return.

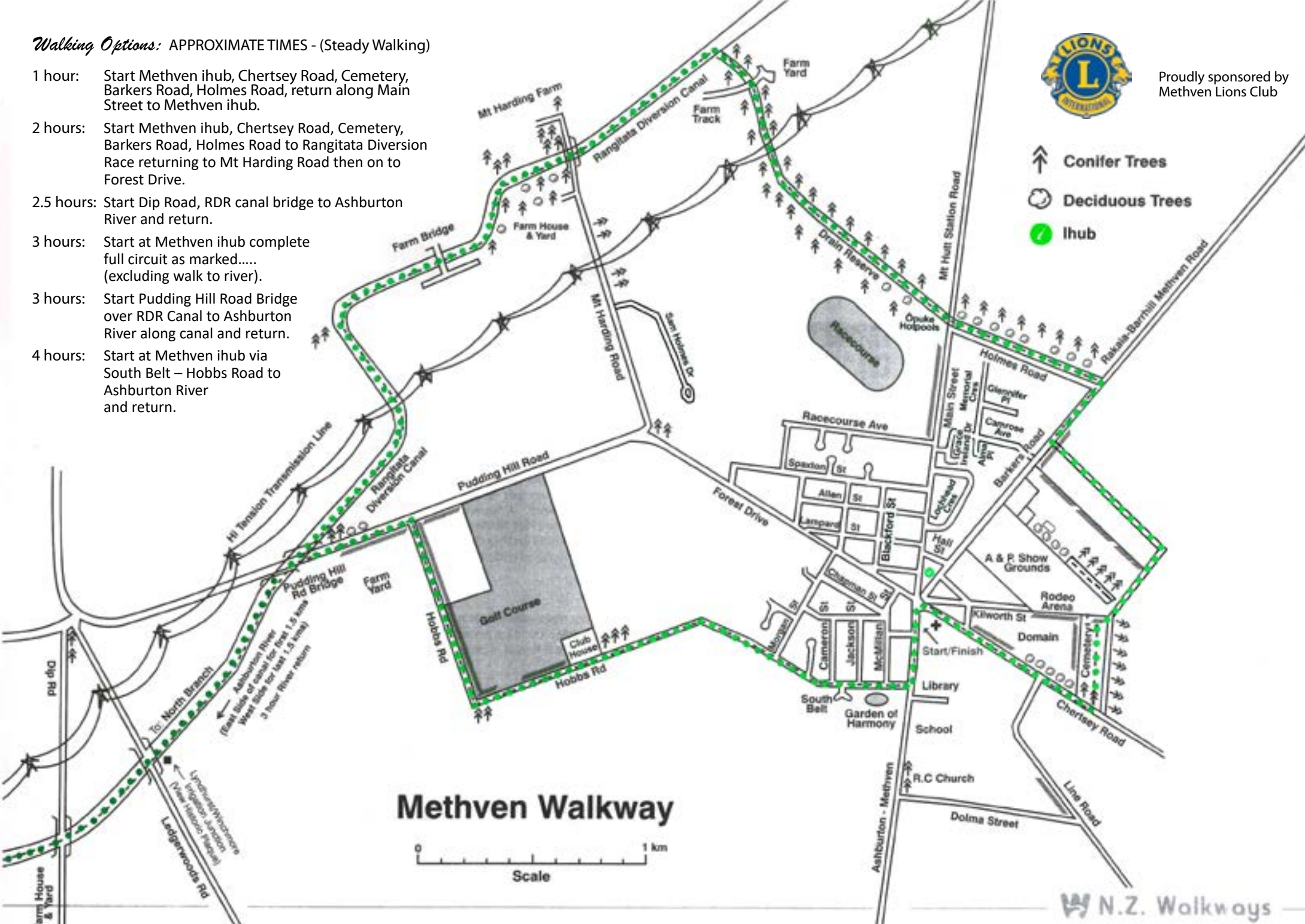


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