

## AUSTRALIAN CENTURION DETAILS

- 18. Terry O'Neill (09/01/1956)**  
03-04 Nov 1979  
21:13:08  
George Knott Athletic Field, Clifton Hill, Victoria

Terry O'Neill, born 1956, started athletics with the Glenhuntly Athletics Club in the mid seventies.

He quickly improved on a diet of summer season track racing and winter season road racing with the Victorian Amateur Walkers Club (VAWC). But 1978 he was one of our top Victorian walkers and scored a number of State and National Championship placings over that year and the following.

1978 Victorian 15km Championship	3 <sup>rd</sup>	1.12.34
1978 Victorian 20km Championship	2 <sup>nd</sup>	1.36.48
1978 Victorian 50km Championship	2 <sup>nd</sup>	4.29.12
1979 LBG 20 Mile Championship	3 <sup>rd</sup>	2:41:06

It was therefore no surprise when he threw his hat into the ring to contest the 1979 Centurion qualifying event which was put on by VAWC at the Collingwood Harriers track in Clifton Hill. He was one of 5 serious starters and one of the 2 eventual finishers (along with Ian Jack) in what was a memorable race.

Clarrie Jack was keen to take the 50 mile record of his training partner Tim Erickson and powered through the first 50 km in 5:01:48 to be well on target. He continued on unabated to finish the 50 mile distance in 07:57:57 for a new Australian Record. Once Clarrie had retired, attention was redirected to his brother Ian Jack who passed the 50 mile mark in 9:09:50 and then started to speed up. Without any breaks, he just powered on in automatic mode. His 100 mile time was an incredible 17:59:30 for a new Australian Record, breaking the fine time set previously by Jim Gleeson. His second 50 miles had been done in 8:49:40, some 20 minutes faster than his first 50 miles.

Overshadowed but undaunted, 23 year old Terry kept his mind on the job, passing the half way mark in 10:14:29 and finishing in 21:13:08 to become Australian Centurion number 18.

Terry continued to compete on the local and national stage as a racewalker until the early 1980s when the combined pressures of a young family and a full time job meant that other priorities took over.

In 2006, Terry resurfaced for more serious walking, this time at the annual Centurion qualifying event in Coburg - he had not walked an ultra since he did his 100 mile in 1979 but he showed that he has lost little fitness - a diet of VFL football umpiring had kept his fitness up over the intervening years. He powered through the 50 mile mark in under 10 hours to be well ahead of the field and then suffered through to the 100 km mark which he reached in 13:19:08 to win the Australian 100 km championship. After a good rest overnight, he returned to the track in the dying hours to get a few more laps under his belt.



**Karyn Bollen (C 45) and Terry O'Neill (C 18) - winners of the 2006 Australian 100 km walk championships**

In 2007, he returned to Coburg for an even greater effort, winning the 24 Hour event overall with a fine distance of 169.741km and adding a second centurion badge to his trophy cabinet. The other centurion qualifier was Geoff Hain (C 49). Terry's 100 mile split was 21:48:35. Along the way, he defended his Australian 100km title with a time of 13:08:08.

That year, he and Karyn Bollen married, a most joyous occasion for their fellow centurions.

Come 2008 and Terry was raring for more. He won the Coburg 6 Hour championship in March with 52.983 km, a new Coburg Championship record and a new Australian M50 walk record. A month later, he fronted for the annual 24 Hour but had to be satisfied with a walk of 80km, the tank perhaps flattened by his recent endeavours.



**Terry in action in the 2008 Coburg 6 Hour Championship**

March 2009 saw him win the annual Coburg 6 Hour with an improved 53.191km to break his Australian M50 record. A month later, he contested a very closely fought Centurion event but perhaps paid the penalty for his early pace setting. He was well in control at the 12 Hour mark but soon flagged and lowered his sights, pushing himself through to the 100 km mark which he passed in 12:44:08 to win the Australian title for a third year running. His final distance on that occasion was 112.384 km.

Terry is now a regular on both the racewalking and ultra walking scene and we can expect to see further performances of note over the next few years.