

AUSTRALIAN CENTURION DETAILS

21. **Jim Turnbull (05/06/1936)**
13-14 December 1986
23:38:53
Kingsley Reserve, Wanaroo, WA

Jim Turnbull, born 1936, was a regular racewalker in Western Australia but his entry into the Centurion ranks was accidental at best.

Bronwyn Salter was a well known runner / walker in Western Australia who had already completed the 100 mile run within 24 hours. In 1986 she decided to try to complete the run/walk double and organised a 24 hour walk/run endurance race to be held on a grass 400m track at the Kingsley Reserve in Wanaroo on 13-14 December of that year. As well as a small number of runners, she cajoled Jim to accompany her to help her through. Jim had completed a number of 50 km events and was the current WA 50km champion so was reasonably experienced over the longer distances. With judges in place from the Western Australian Walkers Club all was set.

As it turned out, Bronwyn had leg problems and was forced to retire so it was left to Jim to come through for an unexpected finish. He had done little preparation for the event but his 50 km background obviously saw him through in a fine solo performance. His time of 23:38:53 left little to spare but it was within the required 24 Hours so all was well.

Some 18 months later, on 28-29 May 1988, this story was to have a sequel.

George Audley took up fun running in 1981 at the age of 45. By 1988 he had already amassed an enviable record of ultra-distance runs. He was now an experienced and well known ultra-distance exponent who had succeeded in most of the big ultra challenges including the ultimate for an ultra runner, finishes in the 1987 Sydney to Melbourne run of 1060 km (6th over the line and 2nd Australian – 08:01:34) and 13th in the 1998 event (07:21:16).

In 1987, George ran the 100 mile distance in a brilliant 16 hrs 45 mins and now he had his sights set on something that would set a new standard. He wanted to walk 100 miles within 24 hours to match his 100 mile running achievement. Once Jim heard about the attempt, he decided to line up also, but this time as a runner. Since he had already done the walk and George had already done the run, it remained to be seen who would finish first and claim the title as the first Australian to do a run/walk double.

The venue was a grass loop of 1 km at McGilvrey Oval at Perry Lakes in suburban Perth. History tells us that Jim finished his run in 21:54:36 while George finished his walk in 23:28:48. It was a personal success for both athletes. Jim had done little running in preparation for this event while George had limited walking in the legs.

Both Jim and George forwarded details of their performances to the Australian Centurions President but unfortunately, no action was taken until 1994 when we retrospectively verified and confirmed their performances and awarded them badges number 21 and 22.

It was only years later that George and Jim learnt that they had been beaten to the run/walk double by Claude Martin who had done his walk in 1975 and his run in 1987. So Jim became the second Australian and George the third to achieve this unique double.

George subsequently continued on with a successful ultra-distance running career in which he regularly placed in the Colac 6 day race, the Albany to Perth (560 km) and the Geraldton to Perth (434 km). He can be truly regarded as one of the legendary hard men of ultra-distance running. George confided to me some years back that he regards his 100 mile walk (done on the grass track) as one of the hardest events he has contested.

Since then, Jim and George have been firm friends.

A reunion of sorts took place in March 2002 when they walked together the 963.1 km Bibbulman Track in West Australia. It stretches from Perth to Albany and is a bushwalking trail with magnificent views. The walk took some 6 weeks - it did not have the urgency of their centurion efforts - and I am sure it was a wonderful experience.

Jim and George have now both hung up their walking/running shoes and still live in Western Australia.