

JOHN KILMARTIN – C67: 21:11:56

When 63 year old Ballarat walker John Kilmartin qualified as Australian Centurion number 67 in April 2015, it was a dream performance and one that made the feat look easy!

This was John's first attempt at the 100 mile distance and he made no mistakes, powering through with a time of **21:11:56**. The consistency of his pace was exceptional: consider the distance walked each hour in his race

Hour 1	Hour 2	Hour 3	Hour 4	Hour 5	Hour 6	Hour 6	Hour 8	Hour 9	Hour 10	Hour 11	Hour 12
7.880k	8.294k	7.323k	7.880k	7.880k	7.465k	7.050k	7.465k	7.050k	7.464k	7.465k	8.294k
Hour 13	Hour 14	Hour 15	Hour 16	Hour 17	Hour 18	Hour 19	Hour 20	Hour 21			
7.464k	7.465k	7.050k	7.465k	7.879k	7.465k	7.464k	7.465k	7.465k			

If he had kept going, I am confident he would have achieved 180km or more within the required 24 hours. He was showing no obvious signs of fatigue when he passed his 100 mile mark – he had simply achieved his goal and hence stopped. In retrospect, he admits he should perhaps have continued on. But there is always next time! In any case, his 100 mile time was a new M60 record by a big margin.



John celebrates his 100 mile at Coburg in April 2015

It is hard to believe that John has been training for this event for less than 2 years and that he started from scratch with his first walking race in September 2013. Here are the bare bones of his preparatory long races

8 Mar 2015	Coburg 6 Hour Track Championships, VIC	6 Hours	50.479km
3 Jan 2015	Narabreen All Nighter, NSW	12 Hours	86.030km
15 Nov 2014	Athletics NZ 50km, Auckland, NZ	50km	5:51:25
26 Oct 2014	Ned Kelly Chase 50km, VIC	50km	6:16:35
4 Oct 2014	VRWC 6 Hour Road Walk, VIC	6 Hours	50.567km
14 Sept 2014	VRWC 6 Hour Roadwalk, VIC	6 Hours	49.141km
8 June 2014	LBG Carnival 20 miles fitness walk, ACT	20 Miles	3:40:00
23 Feb 2014	Coburg 6 Hour Track Championships, VIC	6 Hours	26.12 km
27 Oct 2013	Ned Kelly Chase 50km, VIC	50km	6:11:08
15 Sept 2013	VRWC 6 Hour Endurance Walk, VIC	6 Hours	47.973km

John's approach has been very thorough and his successful centurion performance comes with a lot of hard work and planning. Along the way, he has shed around 15kg to get himself down to what he regards as fighting weight. He is an example of how to prepare for and how to conquer this demanding challenge.

And now onto a few questions.

John – what is your background? Did you play lots of sport as a young bloke?

I was definitely a late starter to the world of ultra walking. Never terribly athletic, although I did like cross country at school and in my early post school years in Hawthorn I did a bit of fitness running/jogging with a work colleague. For the last 30 years my interest in pure bred Samoyed dogs saw me do heaps of walking. In October 2012 after being inspired by a neighbour who had ran Comrades in South Africa, I walked my first marathon, dog lead in hand....the result was a great sense of achievement but at a price...an injured sacro-iliac joint necessitating about 6 weeks of Bowen treatment....42km holding onto a pulling dog is not good for your body!

Tell me about your first few ultra walks.

I upped the training and decided to have a walk at the September 2013 6 Hour....that seemed an awesome task as it was unknown territory, having only walked 2 marathons prior! This was my first exposure to see the tortures of 24 hour walking...ie Karyn's blisters and the obvious pain that Peter Crump was experiencing in those last few hours. To me all those finishers seemed super human, way beyond my comprehension! Naturally I was "street" walking at that stage and also at the first NKC a month later and in my training on the 55km Ballarat to Skipton rail trail.

Realising that there was a more efficient style of walking.. ie Race walking..I purchased a number of books online including the excellent Tim Seaman volumes in November and from that point on I taught myself the basics. No easy task, especially in the shins and arm swinging.

From there I joined the local Ballarat race walkers...instruction from Daryl Biggin...a few short local races then onto to the VRWC events in Middle Park. I also had my first Coburg 6 hour and after a good start (26km in 3 hours) had to retire with a massive shear blister. It has taken till now to really get toughened feet after podiatry care, shoe and sock experimentation and orthotics.



John competes in his first endurance walk in September 2013 – 6 Hours at Middle Park

After dipping the toes in during 2013, you got serious in 2014?

2014 was a busy year, building stamina, improving technique with a number of long training walks and races, the most memorable was the Athletics NZ 50km non-championship in windy Auckland in mid November resulting in a win and a new PB of 5:51:25.

Centurionship was a growing aspiration all along but the impetus to make it happen really started with Centurion Steve Jordan telling me at the Centurion 6 hour in October 2014 that, in his opinion, I had what it takes to be the next Centurion qualifier...those words resonated well with me considering Steve's mammoth quest to succeed, and in his ailing health would most likely have been spoken with conviction.



John powers to a 50km PB of 5:51:25 in Auckland in November 2014 – in howling gale force winds

How did you alter your training in the last few months to get ready for your first centurion attempt?

Its a long step up to 24 hours from 6, so after longer training walks in Dec 2014, I walked the Narrabeen 12 hour early Jan this year, managing 86km - that gave me confidence that I was over the half way mark. A good Coburg 6 hour then followed and I completed my prep with a very long effort - Ballarat to Skipton to Ballarat...16.5 hours, 112km, walking through the night, suffering hallucinations just before dawn. This was a real confidence booster... I had now endured 2/3rds of a 100 miler a month out from the Coburg 24 Hour.

I went into Coburg confident I had put the work in, had the endurance and had tackled the mental hurdles. It was really a matter of sticking to an even paced race plan...this I learnt from those successfully walking the recent Chateau-Thierry 24 Hour in France. I was surprised as to how well the plan went and how even the pace turned out... a comfortable first 6 hours and then locking it in for the next 15 hours! I did have Sue crewing, yelling out lap times from her stop watch intermittently, keeping me focused, and her best advice was "don't stop".

This year I have covered an average 360km per month in training and events, walking most days with some recovery rest for shin splints, tight hamstring and ankle tendonitis issues ,and when walking was not the best choice I would be on the bike, however that proved hard on the knees.

Where do you normally train?

Typically I train on an undulating 8 km bush track circuit where the two dogs can run free, speed work on local sealed roads and long walks along our rail trail into Ballarat, lap of the lake then home.

What's next for you?

In January I entered the British Centurions annual qualifying walk, to be held on the Isle of Man in August, paid the airfares and resolved that I was not turning up without my Australian Centurion badge! As this will be a street 2 mile looped course I have lately selected a similar length training route with a good measure of elevation, gravel and bitumen surface, food and drinks table set up, walking up to 15 laps, often starting 2 hours before dawn.

The Lake Burley Griffen 20 miler in June and the Adelaide Yumigo 12 Hour walk in mid July should be a good lead up to Isle of Man 100 miler 4 weeks later.

I'm also making arrangements to compete in NZ at the Sri Chinmoy 24 Hour in Auckland on Sept 26... and I'd like to set my goal at beating Peter Baillie's NZ 24 hour distance walk record of 182km, set in 2005...I think he was M55 at that time. I realise that being a non- Kiwi, a successful result won't go into the record books but it's the personal challenge that's important.

Well done to John on a fantastic centurion performance and welcome to our exclusive club.

Tim Erickson, 27 April 2015