

## GERTRUDE ACHTERBERG C80: 23:36:28

When 48 year old Dutch walker Gertrude Achterberg completed her Australian Centurion qualifier at the 2019 Coburg 24 Hour Carnival on the weekend of 18-18 April, she added yet another centurion badge to a list that is now nearly complete.

2016	African Centurion, Cape Town	C17	23:42:50
2017	Continental Centurion, Weert	C458	23:52:15
2017	English Centurion, Bury St Edmunds	C1186	23:49:28
2017	New Zealand Centurion, Auckland	C23	23:29:45
2019	Australian Centurion, Coburg	C80	23:36:28

In fact, if she had successfully completed the 2018 USA Centurion qualifier, she would now have all 6 available badges. But more of that later.

Gertrude tells me that she played hockey, tennis and did cycling in her younger days and only started walking in 2014 while recovering from a knee injury. She has not looked back since.

Her first serious walk was in Schiedam in June 2014, as part of the Continental Centurions walk weekend. She targetted the 50 Miles (80.467 km), finishing in an impressive **11:15:30** and gaining her KennedyFriend badge.

Over the next couple of years, she did a number of the long distance non-race walks that dot the landscape in the Netherlands.

Her Kennedymars walk in Sittard in March 2016 is worth mentioning. On that occasion, she walked the full 80km option in a time of **11:48:00** and was one of 100 finishers, all under the 12 hour limit. That gives some idea of the popularity and depth of the sport of long distance walking in the Netherlands.

She was now ready to have a go for her first centurion badge, targetting the Continental Centurions qualifier in Schiedam in June of 2016. Alas, she was not quite ready, being forced to stop after completing 113.702km in 16:25:55. She was on target from a time perspective, but the body was spent.

Not to be put off, she travelled to South Africa in October 2016 as part of a small Dutch contingent to participate in the inaugural African Centurions qualifier on Robben Island, Cape Town. This time she was successful, finishing the 100 miles in **23:42:50** and becoming African Centurion 17. She was one of 19 successful walkers overall.



*Gertrude walking in the African Centurion in October 2016 on Robben Island*

2017 was a huge year for Gertrude with 3 further badges. She started her year with two Kennedymars walks, both in April – first in Helgelo (80km in **11:03:20**) and then in Sittard (80.467km in **11:42:30**). With these walks under her belt, she felt ready for her next attempt at the Continental Centurion badge.

This time she was successful, finishing the 100 miler in Weert in a time of **23:52:15**, becoming Continental Centurion number 458. Two months later, she gained her English Centurions badge C1186 with a time of **23:49:28** in Bury St Edmunds. Fast forward a further two months and she ticked off her New Zealand Centurions badge (C23) in Auckland with a time of **23:29:45**.



*The 2017 New Zealand Centurion qualifier in Auckland:  
right to left Gertrude Achterberg, Arie Kandelaars, Marco Bloemerts, Antione Hunting and Damien Wood*



*The 2017 Centurion qualifier in New Zealand – the camera captures Gertrude Achterberg, Arie Kandelaars and Rob Robertson around 9PM on the Saturday evening*

If 2017 was a year of consistent success, 2018 was the opposite, with failed attempts at her two remaining centurion badges. Her form in the Kennedyamars at Sittard in late March was excellent (80km in **11:17:00**) and she travelled to Australia 3 weeks later with high expectations. She passed the half way mark at Coburg with 85.146km and looked set for a big total. Alas, she slowed in the second half, eventually retiring at a little over 20 hours, having covered 138.040km.

Six weeks later, her USA Centurion badge walk also went off the rails as she struggled to 123.115km. Overall, it was a year to forget.



*Gertrude with Arie Kandelaars at the USA Centurions walk in June 2018 – her one remaining badge!*

April 2019 saw her return to Coburg for a second attempt at her Australian Centurion badge, and this time she was successful, walking 87km in the first 12 hours and then completing a controlled second half to reach the 100 miles in **23:36:28**, thus earning Australian Centurion badge number 80.



*Gertrude in action at Coburg in April 2019, earning her Australian Centurions badge*

Only one badge remains, namely the USA Centurion badge, and I expect to see Gertrude making that trip across the waters to complete unfinished business either later this year or in 2020.

Final words to Gertrude:

*I enjoy the centurion walks because of the great journeys, the beautiful nature, culture and people I have met on the different continents.*

Well done Gertrude and welcome to the Australian Centurions!

Tim Erickson  
14 May 2019