

**ARIE KANDELAARS C85: 23:28:07**

When Arie Kandelaars became our newest Australian Centurion in April 2023 at the age of 59, it marked the end of a long road.

Arie, who became the 11<sup>th</sup> Dutch walker to qualify for our centurion badge, did it in fine style at our annual qualifier at Coburg with a time of 23:28:07. Now it's time to drill down and investigate further.



*Arie in action at Coburg in April 2023, when he earned his sixth Centurion badge*

Arie, born on 7<sup>th</sup> February 1964, played football as a youngster but, like many others, gave it away when he moved into the senior ranks.

After many years of working on the major electrical systems of power stations, he went to the doctor in 2010, weighing 120kg and feeling his age, and was told that he had high blood pressure, was at risk of diabetes and needed to turn his life around if he wished to make old bones.

He went on a strict diet and reduced his weight to 85kg (a loss of 35kg) and now looked for some long term way of maintaining his new body weight and was drawn to longer distance walking. *“To do a 50 miles was on my bucket list for a long time and I thought this was the right time to start training for my first 50 miles in 2011.”*

12 years later, he now has all 6 Centurion badges to his credit:

2016	African	C19	23:52:00
2017	English	C1185	23:49:27
2017	NZ	C24	23:36:29
2018	USA	C92	23:52:14
2021	Continental	C491	23:21.40
2023	Australian	C85	23:28:07

But all that was in the future when he completed his first goal and walked 50 miles in 2011. In 2012, he upped the ante and went even further, completing a walk of 105km and doing what he regarded as his first real long distance walk.

In 2012 he did his first Nijmegen 4 Days Marches, completing an event that quickly became his favourite yearly outing. In 2016 he was invited to participate in the walk of honour during the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary Nijmegen walk, so on one particular day he walked 100 km instead of the required 50 km. Next month, he will hopefully complete his 10<sup>th</sup> Nijmegen and earn his gold badge.

Within a couple of years, he was a regular on the Dutch walking scene. For instance, in 2015, he walked the 80km Nacht van Loon op Zand in a time of 11:34:48. 2015 was also the year he first walked at the Continental Centurions 100 mile qualifier in Weert, but he was an entrant in the 50 miles, rather than trying for the full distance. On that occasion, he walked 10:58:26 to earn Kennedyvriend badge 433 (50 miles within 12 hours).

By 2016, Arie felt he was ready to attempt the classic 100 mile distance. He fronted for the annual Continental Centurions qualifier in Schiedam in May but failed to finish, stopping after 107.8km. He rectified this 5 months later in South Africa, earning his African Centurion badge as the last of 19 qualifiers, with a time of 23:52.00. Fellow Dutch walkers Remy van den Brand, Marco Bloemerts, Antoine Hunting, Frans Leijtens and Gertrude Achterberg were also amongst the qualifiers. He found it a wonderful experience.

Also in 2016, he became the long-distance champion of his club OLAT. To win this championship, he had completed 27 long distance walks in that one year: 4 x 60km, 12 x 50 miles and 11 other long distance walks.

He returned to try his luck for the Continental Centurion badge in Weert in May 2017 but failed again, reaching only 144.841km. But he did have successful centurion finishes in August in England (23:49:38 in Bury St Edmunds) and in October in New Zealand (23:36:29 in Auckland). Arie now had 3 centurion badges.



*Arie completes the NZ Centurion walk in 2017*

He now had his sights firmly set on the remaining centurion badges and attempted 3 further qualifiers in 2018. First to April in Melbourne when he travelled over for our Australian qualifier. He had entered the race with an injury but was hoping for the best. Unfortunately, it flared and he was forced out after 77.406km. He was one of 4 Dutch walkers in attendance. Jantinus Meints (C73) and Adrie Ros (C74) both qualified but Gertrude Achterberg, like Arie, fell short with 138.040km.

The following month, he fronted for a third time in the Centurion Centurion qualifier in Schiedam but fell short once again with only 113.705 km recorded against his name. But he wasn't too worried as this was more of a training walk as he prepared for his next serious attempt which would be in America in June at the FANS 24H. And complete it he did, with a time of 23:52:14. That ticked off a fourth centurion badge – 2 to go!



*2018 USA Centurion finishers David Holmen (USA), Rob Robertson (USA), Andrew Titley (IOM), Marco Bloemerts (NED) and Arie Kandelaars (NED)*

A new year and a new goal as Arie travelled to Australia once again. This time, he was one of 6 European walkers in attendance in Melbourne. Alas, the other 5 all qualified: Kim Janssens (C76 22:19:38) of Belgium, along with Dutch walkers Marco Bloemerts (C77 22:42:30), Jurgen de Waart (C78 23:13:03), Martin Vos (C79 23:20:17) and Gertrude Achterberg (C80 23:36:28). For his part, Arie was forced off the track in the middle of the night, with nausea and dizziness. To his credit, he did eventually rejoin the race, walking to a distance of 128.151km.

Like the rest of us, Arie lost 2020 to the Covid pandemic, but he donned his long distance shoes again in 2021 and finally earned his Continental Centurion badge in Weert, walking his fastest 100 mile time of 23:21.40 in Weert on his fourth attempt. He now had 5 badges, with only Australia remaining.

Naturally, he returned to Melbourne in 2022, hoping to finally put his bad luck behind him. This time, he was one of 2 Dutch walkers in attendance. The other, Remy van den Brand, successfully negotiated the 100 miles, becoming C83 with a time of 21:04:52, but Arie succumbed to the conditions once again and retired after 73.931km.

2022 wasn't all bad as Arie did tick off one of the walks on his bucket list, completing the 85 miles Parish Walk on the Isle of Man in June, with a time of 22:47:08. He found this a wonderful weekend.

Come 2023 and Arie returned to Australia for his fourth visit. Would this be the year when he finally earned his remaining badge?

He had left no stone unturned in preparing for this last race. In the early months of the year, he has completed over 1300km (more than 185 hours) on the feet, plus another 60 hours training his body. He travelled here alone and came 2 weeks before the event. He based himself in an inner city hotel and refrained from any sightseeing or touristy things. He had one thing only on which to focus – the race. He sourced all his own food (chicken, pasta, rice, yoghurt, granola, white bread with jam, etc) and ate in his room. He was in bed by 10PM every night, ensuring a good night's sleep until rising the next morning between 7 and 8 am. In the first week he had training sessions on The Tan on Wednesday and Friday 19.3 km and Sunday 27.2 km. In the last 4 days, he only went twice to the supermarket and the rest of the time he stayed resting on his hotel room. With such a prep, he felt very strong physically and he was completely focused to doing the job this year.

Out 2023 Centurion qualifier was one of the toughest for many years, with rain for most of the event and with a huge downpour of 30-40mm (just short of 2 inches of rain) in an 8 hour period from around 4PM till around midnight. The downpour was unrelenting and the track was so inundated that runners and walkers were walking through veritable rivulets of flowing water.

The weather was not an issue for Arie, such was his focus in 2023. He started out conservatively, passing the 6 Hour mark with 43.6km, passing the 12 hour mark with 85.51km and maintaining his pace superbly in the second half to reach his hundred in 23:28:07. It was his second fastest hundred and earned him Australian Centurion badge C85.



*Arie completes the Australian Centurion walk in 2023*

Since his first tentative training walks in 2010, Arie has done over 50 long distance walks of 105km or more and 75 Kennedy marches of 50 miles. Those are impressive stats!

Currently, he is thinking about 2 trail walks in Belgium - the Great Escape 160 km in September and the Bello Gallico 160 km in December. That sounds like a plan to me.

We welcome Arie to our little club and will follow his ongoing campaigns as he looks for new challenges and continues to hone his walking skills.

Tim Erickson  
Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> June 2023