

## GORDON SMITH MEMORIAL AWARD

With the rapidly increasing number of ultra distance walking opportunities available in Australia, the Australian Centurion Executive decided in late 2005 to institute a new award to recognise the **Best Australian Ultra Distance Walking Performance of the Year**. This award is called the **Gordon Smith Memorial Award**, in recognition of our inaugural Centurion. The idea of this new award was floated by Centurion member Fred Brooks and the shield was purchased after donations from Fred and Tim Erickson.



This is one of 3 major awards that the Australian Centurions maintain

The Jack Webber Trophy	Best Centurion Performance in the annual Australian Centurion Race
The Farmer Trophy	Male and Female winners of the Racewalking Australia 100km Championships
The Gordon Smith Memorial Award	Best Australian Ultra Distance Walking Performance of the Year

All Australian Centurions are invited to vote on a short list of nominations. Only performances done in Australia are able to be nominated and the Award is based on the best single performance rather than on the yearly performance quality of the person concerned.

Winners of this trophy are	2005	Deryck Skinner (C 51)
	2006	Stan Miskin (C 23)
	2007	Terry O'Neill (C 18)
	2008	Deryck Skinner (C 51)
	2009	Peter Bennett (C 24)
	2010	Peter Bennett (C 24)
	2011	Michelle Thompson (C 58)
	2012	Barry Loveday (C 62)
	2013	Tim Erickson (C 13)
	2014	Michelle Thompson (C 58)
	2015	John Kilmartin (C 67)
	2016	Linda Christison

Full details follow

## 2005

The inaugural nominees in 2005 were

Jill Green(C 38)	Walking in the annual Australian Centurion qualifier at Coburg in April 2005, Jill completed her second Australian Centurion finish to become the oldest woman to achieve this feat in Australia. Along the way, she set new Australian W60 records for 50 miles, 12 Hours, 100 km, 100 mile and 24 Hours.
Deryck Skinner (C 51)	Walking in the Sri Chinmoy 24 Hour championship in Adelaide in October 2005, Deryck became Australian Centurion 51 with a wonderful walk that included new Australian M70 records for 100 km, 100 mile and 24 Hours.
Stan Miskin (C 23)	Walking in the Colac 6 Day race in November 2005, Stan set a new World M80 6 day record and new Australian M80 records for 100 Miles, 48 Hours and 200 km.

A number of centurions commented that all 3 nominees deserved to win and that it was very hard to separate them. This is reflected in the closeness of the final vote. The inaugural winner was **Deryck Skinner (C 51)**.



*Deryck Skinner (C 51) in action in the 2005 Sri Chinmoy event in Adelaide*

## 2006

The 2006 nominees were

Stan Miskin (C 23)	Stan started the year with a new Australian 12 Hour M80 walk record of 74.077 km. His distance also beat the Australian and World M80 running record held by Australian runner Ken Matchett. But this is not the event on which we are voting. It was just the appetiser. It was in our own 2006 Centurion event in April that Stan set an even tougher standard, completing 140.018 km in 24 hours to set a new Australian M80 walking record. This time also beat the existing World M80 running record held by the amazing Ernie Warwick. To complete 140 km at 80 years of age is astounding by any standards and it was done walking! Along the way, Stan also set new Australian M80 walking records for 50 miles (12:31:26) and 100 km (16:45:07). This wonderful achievement was completed while Stan battled the debilitating effects of prostate cancer disease.
Deryck Skinner (C 51)	Deryck started the year with yet another 100 mile qualifier at our annual Coburg event, completing the distance in 23:23:43 at 73 year of age, thus becoming probably the oldest person ever to complete the 100 mile walk within 24 hours. But. Like Stan, this was just the appetiser. We are voting on his performance in the Australian 48 Hour Championship in Queensland in August. In typically hot conditions, he came 3 <sup>rd</sup> overall with an absolutely fantastic distance of 257.877 km. This is an Australian best ever 48 hour walking performance (the previous best was 230.3 km, set by John Harris in 2002). What makes it even more amazing is that Deryck covered 162.8 km for the first 24 hours to record yet another centurion mark (100 miles in less than 24 hours). At the half way mark, he was only 3.3 km behind his current M70 Australian record for 24 hours. Deryck's 200 km and 48H marks also set Australian M70 walking and running records!

The 2006 winner was **Stan Miskin (C 23)**. Many of our members commented that it was virtually impossible to decide between the two nominations, such was the standard of the two performances. But vote they did. It seemed somehow only fitting that Stan should win this illustrious award only weeks after announcing his retirement from ultras.



## 2007

The 2007 nominees were

Andrew Ludwig (C 25)	Andrew took all before him in the walking section of the Gosford Coastal Classic in January 2007. Andrew became a Centurion in 1994 in Melbourne but his career as a rural dairy farmer in Queensland subsequently precluded him from all but the occasional foray into the ultra scene. With no real preparation under his belt, he went for it from the start and did a very fast first 50 km in 5:12:42. Although suffering mid race, he still passed the 50 Mile mark in 8:55:52 and held on for a winning distance of 103.335 km, easily beating Robin Whyte's race record of 99 km. His distance was a new Australian M40 record and was the 4 <sup>th</sup> fastest 100 km walk ever done by an Australian
Terry O'Neill (C 18)	Terry was nominated for his outstanding walk in the 2007 Centurions event at Coburg. His 100 mile time of 21:48:35 compared well with his 1979 time of 21:13:08, done 28 years previously. Terry also won the Australian 100 km walking championship en-route with a time of 13:08:08 making it two in a row (he won it in 2006 in his first ultra walk since 1979, in 13:19:08). Terry, aged 51, showed that you can come back after what can only be described as a very long break and can whip yourself back into top ultra walking shape if you have the determination and courage to do so.
Robin Whyte (C 29)	Robin, aged 65, had been racewalking since the 1960's and has been mixing it with ultras since his first successful centurion walk in 1996 (20:37:12). With 3 centurion finishes to his credit and a whole swag of Australian age group ultra records in the M50, M55 and M60 age groups, he showed in Queensland in August 2007 that he is not yet finished. While on a long touring holiday around Australia and with definitely very little preparation, he decided to have a stroll in the 12 Hour event at the Australian 48 Hour Championship and surprised both himself and the rest of us by setting new M65 Australian records for the 50 Miles (10:53:50) and the 12 Hours (88.301 km). This was without doubt a big walk in the humid sub-tropical conditions.

Voting was spread between the three but the final tally saw **Terry O'Neill (C 18)** win by a narrow margin.



*Terry O'Neill (C 18) in action*

## 2008

The 2008 nominees were

Peter Bennett (C 24)	<p>In the Caboolture 12 Hour Walk on 9-10 February 2008, Peter set new M50 records of 100.70 km for 12 Hours and 11:55:14 for 100 km on the 500m (certified) compacted decomposed granite surface. He and Andrew Ludwig (C 25) fought it out with the runners and their performances were acknowledged in the race report as follows:</p> <p><i>“We were all honored to a display of power walking or speed walking by Peter Bennett &amp; Andrew Ludwig for near 7 hours, till Peter slowly worn down Andrew. They walked shoulder to shoulder for hours starting at 9kph, continuing to only drop a 1kph. Peter went on to walk 101kms, while Andrew achieved 93.026. Gentlemen, you were a pleasure to watch.”</i></p> <p>This was our 6<sup>th</sup> best 12 Hour performance with the other five above him being done at significantly younger ages.</p>
Deryck Skinner (C 51)	<p>In the Caboolture 48 Hour event on 29-31 August 2008, Deryck new M75 records of 38:37:11 for 200 km and 238.811 km for 48 Hours and finished 5<sup>th</sup> overall amongst the field of runners. The course was the same 500 metre circuit that Peter Bennett had walked on in February and the race direction was reversed hourly. That Deryck was dissatisfied with his overall result says a lot about the high expectations that he places on himself. For someone aged 75+ to walk for 48 hours and achieve such a mammoth distance speaks for itself.</p>
Deryck Skinner (C 51)	<p>In the Sri Shinmoy Australian 24 Hour Championship in Adelaide on 4-5 October 2008, Deryck new M75 records for 50 miles (11:35:51), 100 km (14:49:42), 6 Hours (43.852 km), 12 Hours (83.229 km) and 24 Hours (143.033 km) to add to his M75 records set at Caboolture 5 weeks before. This gave Deryck the full set of M75 records up to and including the 48 Hour. It had taken a great couple of walks by Deryck to beat Stan Miskin's records which were something special themselves. It is astonishing to me that we had had two such outstanding walkers in such close succession.</p>

The 2008 Award was won by Deryck Skinner (C 51) for his performance in the Caboolture 48 Hour event. This is the second time that Deryck has won this prestigious trophy and it is well deserved.



*Deryck Skinner (C 51) – the 2008 Gordon Smith Award winner*

## 2009

The 2009 nominees were

<b>Clarrie Jack (C 4)</b>	Clarrie set a new M60 6 Hour record at the Coburg 6 Hour track championship on Sunday 15 March 2009, achieving a final distance of 52.504 km. For Clarrie, this was a record of some note as he only returned to ultra distance walking in 2007 after a break of some 30 years. His 2007 effort saw him win the 12 Hour walk with 88km and then in 2008, he came 2nd in the 6 Hour walk with 47km. This year, just 1 month shy of 64 years of age, he improved by a further 5km, showing that he has lost none of his competitive edge and is still a force to be reckoned with.								
<b>Geoff Hain (C 49)</b>	Geoff secured yet another Australian Centurion badge (his fifth) with his second fastest ever 100 mile time (23:24.50) at the annual Australian Centurions qualifying event at Coburg on 17-18 April 2009. In the 5 years that Geoff has been walking, he has 9 successful hundreds and has won 5 of the 6 different Centurion badges. What marks this year's walk is that fact that he struggled early and looked unlikely to finish, battling a sore hip and limping around the track for hours on end. But come good he did and he stormed home to the most unlikely of finishes. It is fair to say that it was his own self belief that got him over the line.								
<b>Peter Bennett (C 24)</b>	<p>Peter decided to enter the Australian 24 Hour Track Championship in Brisbane only a few days before and had no intentions of going the full distance as he was still in recovery mode after his Rouen 24 Hour classic win (213km) in France only 4 weeks earlier.. But complete the race he did, coming 4th overall and beating all but 2 of the male runners – his final distance of 186.533 km is the second biggest distance ever done in Australia and saw him set 4 new Australian M50 walking records</p> <table data-bbox="440 981 877 1113"><tr><td>M50 12 Hour record</td><td>101.120 km</td></tr><tr><td>M50 24 Hour record</td><td>186.533 km</td></tr><tr><td>M50 100 Km record</td><td>11:52:10</td></tr><tr><td>M50 100 Miles record</td><td>19:48:40</td></tr></table>	M50 12 Hour record	101.120 km	M50 24 Hour record	186.533 km	M50 100 Km record	11:52:10	M50 100 Miles record	19:48:40
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The 2009 award was won by Peter Bennett.



*2009 Gordon Smith Award winner Peter Bennett in action in Brisbane in July*

## 2010

The 2010 nominees were

<b>Michelle Thompson</b>	Michelle, better known as an outstanding ultra distance runner, has recently turned her hand to walking, with considerable success. She has initially restricted herself to 6 hour events, clocking up 44.29km in Moe in November 2009, 49.13km at Coburg in March 2010 (a W40 record), 53.56 km in Brisbane in June (new Australian residential and W40 records) and 51.58km in Moe in November 2010. We are nominating her Brisbane effort when she completed a distance of 53.560km, beating the Australian Residential best by 2km and finishing only about 620m short of Sandra Brown's All Comers record of 54.180km. We look forward to seeing Michelle test herself over the longer distances in 2011
<b>Peter Bennett (C 24)</b>	Peter contested his first ever 48 hour event in Caboolture, QLD, on 30 July – 1 August and he produced the goods, taking 4th overall (first Australian male) in the Australian 48 Hour running championship and setting new Australian Open and M50 walk records for 200km (30:49:08) and 48 Hours (280.203km). These two marks shattered the existing records and were indeed world class performances.
<b>Gerald Manderson (C 31)</b>	Gerald also competed in the 48 Hour championship in Queensland, setting new M65 All-Comers record for 200 km (40:38:41) and 48 Hours (230.350km). This is an especially good effort as Gerald effectively retired from ultra walking at the end of 2003 and has done little since. It was only in 2009 that he resumed training and the form has returned quickly.

The 2010 award was won by Peter Bennett for the second year in a row.



*Peter Bennett in action in Caboolture*

## 2011

The 2011 nominees were

<b>Clarrie Jack (C 4)</b>	Clarrie led the way in the 6 Hour walk at the Coburg Carnival in early March, winning the men's event with 52.290 km and setting a new M65 Australian Record. The previous record had been held by Robin Whyte with 50.400km so Clarrie was nearly 2km ahead of it. Considering that Clarrie became a member of our exclusive club way back in 1971 (40 years ago!), it is pretty incredible to realise that he is still walking so well so many years later.
<b>Michelle Thompson (C 58)</b>	Michelle was back at the Coburg track again in April of this year, but this time as a walker and was she good, powering through to set new W40 Australian records for 50 miles, 12 Hours, 100 km, 100 miles and 24 Hours and finishing with 172.593km, just short of her 172.906km which she recorded in winning the previous year's Coburg 24 Hour Run. Now that's an interesting statistic! She was awarded the Jack Webber Trophy for the most meritorious performance on the day. With this walk, she also became Australian Centurion number 58 with her 100 mile split of 22:03:37.
<b>Peter Bennett (C 24)</b>	tackled the eighth annual Coast to Kosciuszko - a 240km ultramarathon from Boydtown Beach to Charlotte Pass in NSW, which includes reaching the summit of Mt Kosciuszko - in mid December. One of 50 elite competitors, he stepped into the history books as the first racewalker to take part in the event. Peter set himself a personal goal of completing the race in 40 hours with no breaks and that he did, coming a very creditable 19th (against a field of runners) in a time of 38:06:38. That's 38 hours for 240km over very tough hilly terrain. And to really add to the torture factor, the last 12 hours are the steepest of the lot as you battle extreme fatigue, big hills and the altitude effect. As a matter of interest, he passed the 100 mile mark in just over 22 hours en route to his final destination.

The 2011 award was won by Michelle Thompson.



*Michelle competing in the Injinji 12 Hour in Canberra in February*



## 2012

The 2012 nominees were

<b>Michelle Thompson (C 58)</b>	<p>It was fantastic to see Michelle Thompson amongst the elite grouping at the front of the Injinji 12 Hour event in Canberra in February, coming 11<sup>th</sup> overall with a huge PB of 101.158km and taking third place overall in the women's section – all done as a walker! Along the way, she powered through the 100km mark in 11:51:22, a time that very few Australian men have ever managed to match.</p> <p>To put Michelle's walk in context, the previous 12 Hour best by an Australian was by Carol Baird who completed 97.550km in Melbourne in 2002. The only woman to have walked further on Australian soil in 12 hours is the great English walker Sandra Brown who completed 103.600km in Melbourne in 1999 (on her way to her 100 mile qualifier). Unfortunately for Michelle, our records are track based and, since this was a road event (it was an accurate 1km loop on the Mt Stromlo cycling criterium course), she could not claim any records but has to be content with 'best' status.</p>
<b>Barry Loveday (C 62)</b>	<p>Victorian ultra runner Barry Loveday tried himself out in the 48 Hour walk (his first ever walking race) in Caboolture in July, finishing second overall against the runners with 283.500km, the longest distance ever walked in Australia and some 3 km further than Peter Bennett's current Australian record. Along the way, he covered 163 km in the first 24 Hours to become Australian Centurion number 62. It was an amazing debut performance.</p>
<b>Peter Bennett (C 24)</b>	<p>The iconic Coast to Kosci event has been going since 2004 when it was first held informally with 3 runners, two of whom completed the full 240km route. It has now built up into one of the major events on the Australian ultra calendar and 2012 saw 34 entrants testing themselves out in this most daunting of events. The race started at 5:30am on Friday December 7th at Boydtown Beach on the NSW coast and proceeded inland, climbing over 2000m overall to Australia's highest point atop Mt Kosciusko. It is a mixture of road, off road and just outright ridiculous with competitors having to cross snow drifts in the final section on this occasion.</p> <p>Once again, we had one intrepid walker in action in Peter Bennett (C 24). Peter competed last year, coming 19th in 38:06:38. This year, he was even better, improving to 17th in 37:17:57. A truly awe inspiring performance.</p>

The 2012 award was won by Barry Loveday.



*Barry is presented with his award by Terry O'Neill and Tim Erickson*

## 2013

The 2013 nominees were

<b>Steve Jordan (C 64)</b>	In his previous 11 attempts over the last 8 years, Victorian walker Steve Jordan had never managed to put a full 24 hour walk together but this year he left nothing to chance, taking 7 months of long service leave, training and racing assiduously and shedding 5-7kg in preparation for this make-or-break attempt. And it paid off at the Sri Chinmoy event in Sydney in June as bettered his 6H and 12H PBs on his way through to his 100 mile time of 23:13:33. He then continued on to a final 24 Hour distance of 164.478 km.
<b>Justin Scholz (C 61)</b>	Last year, Wangaratta based ultra distance runner Justin Scholz became a Centurion with a 100 mile walk time of 22:09:03. This time around at the Sri Chinmoy 24H in Sydney, he was on deck primarily to help his wife Sharon in her centurion attempt but he obviously felt so good that he eventually went off the front in his own record breaking walk, passing the 100 mile mark in 19:43:21 and going on to record 189.678km, the second longest ever 24 Hour walk distance in Australia behind that of Jim Gleeson. This broke our oldest record - Gordon Smith's M35 24 Hour.
<b>Sharon Scholz (C 63)</b>	Last year, Wangaratta based ultra distance runner Justin Scholz became a Centurion. This year at the Sri Chinmoy 24H in Sydney, it was the turn of his wife Sharon who had competed in the Australian team in the World 24 Hour Running Championships in Holland only 4-5 weeks before. In the sort intervening period between events, she had been busy doing what must have been one of the shortest preparation periods ever. It was an extraordinary walk, passing the 100 mile mark in 20:06:00 on route to her final distance of 187.653km. and breaking Michelle Thompson's Australian records for 12 Hours, 100km, 100 miles and 24 Hours.
<b>Tim Erickson (C 13)</b>	Tim Erickson was also in action at the Sri Chinmoy 24H event in Sydney with his first ultra walk since he qualified as a centurion in 1976. He had entered the 12 Hour event and completed it with a final distance of 102.330km after passing the 6 Hour mark with 56.436km. Doing such a fast first half did mean that the second half was a very tough slog but he was able to keep on the track, even if he did slow. His performance shattered the M60 records for 6 Hours, 50 Miles, 100km and 12 Hours and his 6 Hour distance was the fourth best Australian performance overall.

The 2013 award was won by Tim Erickson



*Tim Erickson (C 13) competing in Sydney*

## 2014

With regard to the 2014 Gordon Smith Award, the Centurions Executive decided that, since Michelle Thompson's year had been so stellar, we should simply announce her as winner, based in particular on her walk in the Coburg 24 Hour Carnival in April 2014.

On that occasion, she was the leading walker, setting new Australian Open Residential and W45 records for 50 Miles (9:23:58), 100 km (11:43:11), 12 Hours (102.164km) and 100 Miles (19:53.19) and a new Australian Open All-Comers record for 24 Hours (190.984km). In fact, her 24 Hour distance was second only to that of the great Jim Gleeson (C 2) which still stands as our Open Men's record.



*Michelle in action in the Coburg 24 Hour in April 2014*

## 2015

The 2015 nominees were

<b>Robin Whyte (C 29)</b>	The 2015 Coburg 6 Hour Walk Championships, held at the George Knott Athletics Track in Clifton Hill on Sunday 9th March, saw 73 year old Robin Whyte (C 29) win the men's walk with an Australian M70 group record distance of 50.741km. Robin has set a string of age records through the younger age groups over past years but this was his first longer walk for a few years. He showed he has lost none of his stylish walking.
<b>Karyn O'Neill (C 45)</b>	Also walking in the 2015 Coburg 6 Hour Walk Championships, 60 year old Karyn O'Neill (C 45) completed a splendid 46.032km to set a new W60 record. She then went on in the Coburg 24 Hour event to set a new W60 12 Hour record and then had her best ever winter season of walking with the Victorian Race Walking Club. It has indeed been an excellent year for Karyn but her 6 Hour performance stands out as her finest.
<b>Michelle Thompson (C 58)</b>	Michelle Thompson (C 58) was in top shape at the annual Coburg 24 Hour Championships, held in Melbourne on 18-19 April 2015. She dominated the first 12 hours, powering through well ahead of anyone else and on record pace. She was rewarded with Australian Open/W45 records for 100km (11:38:04) and 12 Hours (103.209km), performances which only a small number of Aussie men have ever matched. She then stopped to have her feet checked and decided to retire on advice as the rain had wreaked havoc with her toes and it was a case of stop now or do some real damage. But it was already a case of a job well done as she had set some superb standards that are sure to last.
<b>John Kilmartin (C 67)</b>	If the first 12 hours at the annual Coburg 24 Hour race belonged to Michelle Thompson, the second 12 hours belonged to 63 year old Ballarat walker John Kilmartin. Attempting his first 24 hour walk, he powered through to his 100 miles with almost unbelievable consistency, never more than 1-2 seconds variation from lap to lap. His 50 mile splits tell the story: 10:33 followed by 10:38 for a final 100 mile time of 21:11:56, becoming Australian Centurion 68 into the bargain. He then walked a couple of extra laps for insurance purposes and called it quits, job done for the day. A very impressive first up effort indeed!

The 2015 award was won by John Kilmartin



*John celebrates his 100 mile at Coburg in April 2015*

## 2016

The 2016 nominees were

<b>Clarrie Jack (C 4)</b>	The 2016 Coburg 6 Hour Walk Championships, held at the George Knott Athletics Track in Clifton Hill on Sunday 9th March, saw 70 year old Clarrie Jack (C4) make short work of the current M70 6 Hour walk record of 50.741km (set by fellow Centurion Robin Whyte last year), powering through to 51.227km.
<b>Linda Christison</b>	The inaugural Canberra 48 Hour Carnival, held at the AIS track in Bruce in mid March 2016, saw a small number of walkers in action but one performance stood out, namely that of 55 year old Linda Christison. Linda had been a runner for many years, from a 2.09 800m to a 2.52 marathon, finishing 33rd in the Boston Marathon and winning the Adelaide, Traralgon and Sydney Cities Marathon. She was training to go under 2:50 in 2004 when she began to lose co-ordination and was diagnosed with early onset Parkinson's disease. She was eventually no longer able to run but walked well using a walking stick to complete 133km in the 2015 Adelaide 24H championship. In the above Canberra event, she walked with her sister Heather the whole way to a final distance of 219.496km. A discussion was held within the Australian Centurions Executive as to whether Linda's performance should be recognised as a new age group record, given her walking stick. It was unanimously agreed.
<b>Michelle Thompson (C 58)</b>	As usual, Michelle Thompson (C 58) chipped away at her Australian Open Residential records in her annual outing in the Coburg 24 Hour Championships in April, setting two new ones as shown below, before she showed down and enjoyed the second half at a more leisurely pace. She is now ever so close to the Australian Open records of the great Sandra Brown.
<b>Val Chesterton</b>	The other record breaker at Coburg was 75 year old Val Chesterton of ACT Race Walking Club in Canberra. Val last walked in our 24 Hour qualifier in 2009, setting a 24H PB of 115.578km. Now 6 years later and at 75 years of age, she bettered that distance with 118.696km. As no W75 woman had ever walked further than 6 hours, she set inaugural W75 Australian records for 50km, 50 Miles, 100km, 12 Hours and 24 Hours. The only W75 record she failed to beat was the 6 Hour distance of Ellwyn Miskin (38.756km).

The 2016 award was won by Linda Christison



*Linda in action in her record breaking walk in March 2016 in Canberra*