

CENTURION FOOTNOTES

JULY 2006 – VOL 13 NUMBER 5

The Official Magazine of Australian Centurion Walkers Inc
Founded 1971, Incorporated 2000, No. A0040301S
<http://www.vicnet.net.au/~austcent/index.html>

President	Bill Dyer (C 15)	03-98174349
Vice-President	John Smith (C 16)	02-96361500
Secretary	Tim Erickson (C 13)	03-93792065

DATES...DATES...DATES

11-13 August 2006	Australian 48 Hour C'ship and Queensland 24 Hour C'ship	Gold Coast, Qld
19-20 August 2006	British Centurions Qualifier	Douglas, Isle of Man
30 Sept – 1 Oct 2006	Sri Chinmoy Australian 24 Hour Championship	Adelaide, SA
7-8 October 2006	New Zealand Self-Transcendence 24 Hour Track Race Incorporating NZ Centurions 24 Hour Walk	Auckland, NZ
14 October 2006	British Centurions Annual Dinner and AGM	Picadilly, London
6 Nov 2006	Victorian 6 Hour Track Championship	Moe, Victoria
29-25 Nov 2006	Australian 6 Day Championship	Colac, Victoria

Note that the 2006 New Zealand Centurion date now seems to have been set for 7-8 October.

The Mysore Multi-day race that was scheduled to be run in India this September has been postponed for this year. The Indian organisers remain confident that there will be a 24 Hour race in December 2006 and the projected multi-day race will now be scheduled for September/October 2007. That's all I know at the moment.

NEWS ON OUR MEMBERS

Geoff Hain (C 49) and his wife Annie are soon to head off to England for the British Centurion qualifier event. He emailed me recently to let me know what he has been up to:

We are in the counting down stages before flying off to UK on the 15th August. I am looking forward to the next challenge and am quite happy with my preparation so far. Did I tell you that 3 weeks after the Coburg 24 hour, I did my 13th Coffs Harbour to Grafton 85 km (the event that Steel Beveridge organises). I managed to run/jog about 30/35km and then resorted to Centurion style walking to get home in 10.40 - it is a very hilly course. I now have 13 starts and 13 finishes and so hold the record in that regard. Also did the Gold Coast Marathon 3 weeks ago and for the first time I walked the whole way and was very pleased with my 5.02 time. This is the fastest I have ever walked so hopefully things will go OK on the Isle of Man.

Jill Green (C 38) sent this press release to me recently. She is part of an Isle of Wight initiative and will lead a 50 mile walk around the designated heritage areas of the island. There's no stopping Jill!

50 for 50 Walk - 12th August 2006

Having enjoyed the Round the Island walk with Jill Green, we thought you may be interested in a unique 50 mile walk that Jill is very kindly leading for us.

This year is the 50th Anniversary of The Gower Peninsula in South Wales, being designated as the first Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Since then 50 AONBs, including the Isle of Wight AONB have been designated in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

To mark this event John Brownscombe, AONB Lead Officer and Jill, have devised a walk almost entirely in the Isle of Wight AONB. Whilst we were unable to cover all the different AONB areas (we may have to wait for the 100 for 100 walk for that!), the walk does encompass a variety of different paths, tracks and trails and we are confident that it embodies the sheer diversity of the Island's finest landscapes.

As a taster, here is an extract of some of Jill's comments on her reconnaissance of part of the walk earlier this year

"Amazingly I walk for 2 hours without seeing a single person, I'm almost into Brighstone before I meet anyone, in fact, I love the solitude. A big brown hare comes towards me, he is just so close - we look at each other for a full 30 seconds, quite silent and still, except for the larks singing their heads off. The celandines are opening their hearts to the warm spring sunshine, the banks are buttoned with primroses, overhead two buzzards circle in the clear blue sky ... the view from Idlecombe Down is so beautiful, I have all day to enjoy this scenery. Little jenny wrens are very much in evidence, but above all it's the day of the skylarks."

If this has tempted you in joining Jill on this special celebratory walk and you would like to walk the full 50 miles then please contact me here at the AONB Unit on 01983 823855 or 01983 550364. Alternatively, why not join in on one of the stages as detailed in the enclosed flyer.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Fiona Hanna

AONB Communications Officer

On behalf of the Isle of Wight AONB Partnership

Jill tells me that it has been so hot there that they have been sleeping outside in the garden - just wake up and see the black sky studded with stars. On a different note, her husband Dave is hobbling about on crutches after rupturing his achilles tendon. Jill tells me that the doctors have sown the broken Achilles tendon together and he is wearing an amazing pneumatic boot that is inflated each morning and let down when he goes to bed. He has to wear it in bed so he also is not sleeping well and is not enjoying the experience! I can sympathise with that!

One combination that you can't keep down for long is that of **Stan Miskin (C 23)** and **Fred Brooks (C 42)**. Fred's heart condition has improved greatly and he can now discontinue his heart medication and start light training again. As you can imagine, he is delighted. Stan is in hard training for the Australian 48 Hour Championship next month on the Gold Coast. He is after more of those M80 records and I can't see anyone or anything stopping him at this stage! Stan has this to say recently about his hopes for the 48 Hour event

At Runaway Bay although I shall be walking I shall be trying for both walking and running records for 100 miles, 200 km. and 48 hours. Although I have trained well and reduced weight by about 4 kg since Coburg, I doubt that I shall achieve that level again at 24 hours. However, given good weather and freedom from injury the longer distances should be achievable. Wish me luck!.

Deryck Skinner (C 51) and **David Billett (C 50)** will also be in action in the Queensland 48 Hour event. Deryck will be walking and David will be running. Gosh, I feel tired already! Good luck boys!

Tim Thompson (C 6) and his wife Bev are enjoying their trip around Australia. I received an email recently from them in Darwin where they were planning to stay for a couple of weeks. A few snippets from the email:

We were lucky with the weather, leaving the South west of WA and heading north before the weather got too cold. Did find it quite cold though when we camped a couple of places on the Gibb River Road. My health has been pretty good with a lot more good days than bad days. Car and Caravan have been going OK, other than blowing a tyre on the car, and the Air Conditioner running out of gas. We had the AC fixed earlier today, and boy it makes a difference while travelling around Darwin. Our friend Wilf got a new Ride-on-mower for his 65th birthday, so he christened it by starting to cut a fire break in 4ft high grass on a 1 acre paddock on his property. Trouble is that while he was mowing he must have hit a rock because the grass caught on fire. I surprised myself with the amount of 'physical' effort I was able to put in fighting the fire before the Fire Brigade arrived, but boy, I paid for it over the next few days!!!

Herbert Nuebacher (C 37) and Cornelia came to visit Jill and Dave Green recently. Here is what Jill Green had to say about Herbert's bad luck

Herbert Nuebacher came to visit Jill and Dave with his wife Cornelia, We were all rather cramped in the Green's caravan at Chertsey near the river Thames.

Herbert decided to leave his trainers outside under a bush, it was very warm weather, and he wanted to keep the smell outside the hot caravan. In the morning the trainers had vanished. Was it a fox who had taken them? We don't know. This is quite serious as this was a special pair for the British Centurion race on the Isle of Man and the orthotic insoles cost a lot of money, Since my husband Dave has just snapped his Achilles tendon and can't walk, Herbert wore his trainers for the day. The following night Herbert put a pair of dirty socks out under the bush, the next morning the socks were still there and had been poo'd on. I ssume foxes don't wear socks.

Bob Lee (C 47) continues to get around. Currently he is working in Townsville and expects to be there for the rest of the year. He says he hasn't been able to do much in the way of exercise lately as he is due for another knee op - the left knee - to cleanup some cartilage damage. I'm sure that Bob can hardly wait to get on the road to recovery.

Tim Erickson (C 13) - yes, that's me!. Just a quick note to let everyone know that I am recovering quickly from my hip surgery of 2 weeks ago. I am now the proud owner of an expensive metal hip socket/ball joint and walking without pain for the first time in several years. I have to wait some 3 months before I can resume high impact activities but I am in no hurry - it will be so nice to be able to do the occasional stroll once again.

ISLE OF MAN PARISH WALK RECORD, 24-25 JUNE 2006

the 2006 Isle of Man Parish Walk was expected to be fought out between four walkers. A pre-event poll confirmed the following as favourites

- 43% think that six times finisher and four times winner **Robbie Callister** will win. Robbie is the second fastest of all time. He has finished every year since 2000 and his average time for the past three of 15:38:30 is faster than Parish Walk legends such as John Cannell, Graham Young or Henry Harvey ever achieved in a single event.
- 26% of voters think that **Steve Partington** will win on his debut. One of the Island's all time greatest athletes, Steve retired from Commonwealth Games competition this year after his six games. Steve is the Manx record holder at virtually every distance up to 50km but can he keep going for more than twice as far than ever before?
- **Sean Hands** is the British National 100 miles race walking champion yet only 18% of voters think he will win the CMI Parish Walk - that clearly demonstrates the enormous competition he faces. Sean has four finishes under his belt, has been second for the past two years and is the fourth fastest person ever to walk the course.
- **Peter Kaneen** has won the Parish Walk by more than 30 minutes in his last two attempts (2000 & 2003) and is the third fastest of all time. Since then he has improved at every distance but only 13% think he will win - a dark horse if ever there was one! In his only London Marathon performance in 2000, Peter ran sub 2.40 (hand timing) and no Manx athlete has run faster since.



Race Favourites - Steve Partington Sean Hands Robbie Callister Peter Kaneen

Now read the race report to see if the pundits got it right!

I can still scarcely believe the magnitude of Sean Hands' achievement in last weekend's Parish Walk on the Isle of Man - one of the truly great performances in the history of Manx sport. He beat Derek Harrison's 27-year-old record by a quite staggering margin of 33 minutes and 15 seconds. He made it all look so ridiculously easy that it made you wonder why everyone can't walk 85 miles in 14 hours 47 minutes and 36 seconds! After dealing with all the handshakes and the interviews from Sky TV and Manx Radio, he then embarked on a warm-down that took him up towards the Sea Terminal and back (I thought for a minute he was off on another lap, and he certainly looked fresh enough to have done so!). He then returned to more handshakes and pats on the back, all of which were greeted with the same beaming smile that he had been wearing for most of the previous 15 hours!

I wasn't alone in wondering whether he and Robbie Callister had done the first 32.5 miles to Peel a little too fast, but far from it as it turned out, as I'm pretty sure he recorded a big 'negative split' - i.e. a faster second half.

Another perspective is this - his pace for every 10 kilometres (the distance that regular walking competitors can relate to through the Winter League) was just under 65 minutes - but Sean kept this pace up for almost 14 times that distance. And most of the Winter League 10k races are on basically flat courses, whereas the Parish Walk route is anything but flat. Whichever way you look at it, it was a quite incredible achievement, and one of genuine world class. I definitely think his performance ranks alongside those by those other world-class Manx sportsmen Mark Cavendish and David Knight in their sports in recent times.

And what about Robbie Callister? I must admit that I wondered last year whether Robbie could possibly improve any more, or whether he had reached the limit - especially since he is now the wrong side of 50 years of age! Yet he took over 8 minutes off his previous best, another stunning achievement.

And another unbelievable performance came from the man whose record was finally beaten this weekend, the great Derek Harrison. At the age of 71 and having suffered a serious stroke a few years ago, Derek completed the full 85 miles in a time of 26 hours. What an amazingly determined man!

Full reports, results and photo galleries from a record breaking event are at <http://www.parishwalk.com>



Sean Hands and Robbie Callister (www.parishwalk.com)

Sean's progress in the Clerical Medical Parish Walk has been continuous since his first attempt in 2001.

Year	Distance	Time	Improvement
2001	Maughold	17:26:00	
2002	Finish	20:42:28	
2003	Finish	17:57:07	02:45:21
2004	Finish	16:03:05	01:54:02
2005	Finish	15:37:00	00:26:05
2006	Finish	14:47:36	00:49:24

I got out the trusty calculator which told me that his 85 mile time of 14:47:36 converted to a 100 mile time of 17:24:14. Now that makes you really appreciate the quality of the performance.

Perhaps this event can best be put into perspective by considering that, for a person to walk 100 miles in 24 hours, the 85 mile mark would be passed in 20 hours 24 minutes. The first 60 finishers all bettered that time on a tough hilly road course. The vast majority of these people were not professional walkers but rather Manx residents. The performances of these first 60 finishers are reproduced here.

Pos	No	Surname	Forename	Time	Parish	Distance
1	3	Hands	Sean	14:47:36	Finish	85.0
2	1	Callister	Robbie	15:16:03	Finish	85.0
3	5	Pitts	Ray	16:17:00	Finish	85.0
4	4	Biggart	Sue	16:23:14	Finish	85.0
5	11	Harkin	Eammon	16:31:48	Finish	85.0
6	17	Cowin	Alan	16:39:13	Finish	85.0
7	9	Readshaw	Mike	17:05:48	Finish	85.0
8	125	George	Michael	17:12:31	Finish	85.0
9	25	Titley	Andrew	17:12:45	Finish	85.0
10	10	Crellin	Rosemarie	17:16:44	Finish	85.0
11	733	Partington	Steve	17:18:02	Finish	85.0
12	18	Shimmin	John	17:21:37	Finish	85.0
13	20	Lowey	Catherine	17:34:07	Finish	85.0
14	16	Doyle	David	17:35:17	Finish	85.0
15	27	Moffat	Terry	17:38:40	Finish	85.0
16	8	Flint	Chris	18:09:02	Finish	85.0
17	13	Cain	David	18:14:50	Finish	85.0
18	60	Shipsides	Michael	18:17:46	Finish	85.0

19	52	Cale	Chris	18:24:56	Finish	85.0
19	90	Waddington	Jock	18:24:56	Finish	85.0
21	12	Cox	Simon	18:37:19	Finish	85.0
22	907	Gibson	Jane	18:38:02	Finish	85.0
22	708	Melvin	Thomas	18:38:02	Finish	85.0
24	21	Meban	Dave	18:38:37	Finish	85.0
25	529	Bellando	Maurice	18:46:13	Finish	85.0
26	41	Sille	Stan	18:49:49	Finish	85.0
27	1371	McGowan	Elizabeth Mary	18:51:53	Finish	85.0
28	35	Hughes	Ray	18:53:21	Finish	85.0
29	36	Duncan	Tony	18:54:39	Finish	85.0
30	47	Gilbertson	Marie	18:59:40	Finish	85.0
31	376	McClafferty	John	19:04:51	Finish	85.0
32	29	Kneale	Anthony	19:15:39	Finish	85.0
33	40	Oates	Anne	19:16:42	Finish	85.0
34	66	Churcher	David	19:20:06	Finish	85.0
34	67	Churcher	Gill	19:20:06	Finish	85.0
36	91	Cain	Dave	19:25:42	Finish	85.0
36	92	Cain	Kate	19:25:42	Finish	85.0
38	75	Blair	George	19:32:34	Finish	85.0
39	28	Holgate	Mick	19:36:16	Finish	85.0
40	104	Callister	Selwyn	19:36:34	Finish	85.0
41	109	Allen	Janet	19:37:17	Finish	85.0
42	504	Winrow	Daniel	19:39:43	Finish	85.0
43	37	Wood	Peter	19:41:07	Finish	85.0
44	76	Ryder	John C	19:58:12	Finish	85.0
45	51	George	Monica	19:58:46	Finish	85.0
46	22	Chambers	David (Lon)	19:59:39	Finish	85.0
46	1385	Moffatt	Maureen	19:59:39	Finish	85.0
46	78	Newton	Malcolm John	19:59:39	Finish	85.0
49	589	Cretney	David	20:08:01	Finish	85.0
50	50	Coole	Colin	20:08:21	Finish	85.0
51	72	Campbell	Jackie	20:13:38	Finish	85.0
51	113	Motley	Lisa	20:13:38	Finish	85.0
53	101	Graham	Kevin	20:16:16	Finish	85.0
54	39	O'Toole	Dermot B	20:18:34	Finish	85.0
54	1458	Salmon	Terri	20:18:34	Finish	85.0
56	81	Butt	Dudley	20:19:28	Finish	85.0
57	141	Devlin	Bernadette	20:21:38	Finish	85.0
58	155	Atkinson	Antony	20:21:42	Finish	85.0
58	84	Suddards	Fintan	20:21:42	Finish	85.0
58	716	Moore	Colin	20:21:42	Finish	85.0

In fact, 162 walkers completed the gruelling 85 miles within the required 24 Hours and the course was kept open so that Derek Harrison could finish in 26:15:50. The field was the biggest ever and the number of finishers also created a record. This event just gets bigger and better each year.

The 2006 British Centurion qualifier will be held in Douglas on the Isle of Man and I can hardly wait to see the results.

MORE ON GORDON SMITH'S 1938 100 MILE WALK

Everyone knows that **Gordon Smith (C 1)** is recognised as Australian Centurion Number 1, on the basis of his 1938 24 hour walk. But details of this famous walk have always been a bit sketchy. It is with great delight that I am able to now provide further details. Recently I took possession of the walking archives of the late Peter Waddell. Amongst this extensive collection, I found photocopies of sections of two newspaper cuttings describing this event. Armed with this, my mate Rick Keam went to the Victorian State Library in Melbourne and reviewed the microfiche collections for the Sydney Morning Herald. Sure enough, he found the entire articles and I can now reproduce for everyone the full story of that famous walk.

Oct 15-16 1938 NSW Amateur Walking Club 24 Hour Walking Trial, Bankstown Oval

Five men and a girl started walking the event at 10:37 a.m. on Saturday 15 October. All were members of the NSW Amateur Walking Club. The girl, Miss Mary Stoddart, a stockily built 22-year-old, had a reputation as a bush walker and hoped to establish a record for a 12 hours walk. Amongst the men, S. Sheedy was expected to drop out after 20

miles, it being his intention to establish a new NSWARWC record for that distance. The other contestants, all of whom hoped to stay on the track for the full time, were – G. A. Smith who won last year, D. D. Stead who was third last year, H. W. Barrett, an English walker who had previously competed in the London-Brighton walk and other events, and E. Mitchell.

Only a handful of officials and relatives and friends of the competitors were present to see the start. The men were initially bareheaded but there was a call for panama hats at around 11.30 a.m. from Mitchell and Stead. Sheedy and Barrett distained the head protection. They were refreshed at intervals with cups of tea, cocoa and glucose. Timekeepers and recorders worked in relays. Sheedy completed the first 5 miles in 45 min, 43sec with Smith and Barrett 4 laps back. Walking strongly, Sheedy reached his 20 mile mark in 3 hours 6 mins. 32 secs. to break the club record by over 2 minutes and then retired. Smith began to draw away from the 48 year old Barrett while Stoddart walked her own race at the back of the field. Stead dropped out in the 143rd lap and Mitchell in the next, after covering about 38 miles. At a steady pace, Stoddart went round and round the track until she reached the 50 mile mark in 12 hours 16 minutes 45 seconds. Not surprisingly, she suffered from blistered feet and fatigue.

Barrett began to suffer from an ankle that was becoming worse with every step. He rested about 11.45 p.m. and had his ankle massaged with methylated spirits. He had then covered 58 miles and Smith was approximately 5 miles ahead of him. He made a gallant effort to continue, although in considerable pain, until he was persuaded to give in when he had done 78 miles. This left Smith on his own for the remainder of the race.

There was a large crowd at the ground at midnight, after the closing of the Bankstown picture theatres, and when the public realised it was illegal to charge for admission on Sundays. There was also a large number present at the finish. After the race, Smith paid tribute to his masseur who he said was a key factor in his success.

1. Smith, Gordon 113 miles 1309 yards (New Australasian Record)

The following newspaper report summarises it nicely

Mon 17.10.1938
WALK RECORD IN 24 HOURS TRIAL
G. A. Smith's Effort NEARLY 114 MILES

Gordon A. Smith, of Summer Hill, set what officials of the New South Walkers Amateur Walking Club claimed to be the first official Australian record for a 24 hours road walking trial during the weekend by covering 113 miles, 1309 ½ yards at Bankstown Oval.

Apart from tiredness and several blisters on his feet, Smith showed little sign of his gruelling experience and finished his walk strongly. Smith averaged more than four miles an hour. Last year he covered 110 miles, 871 yards on the Centennial Park Circuit.

There was a large crowd at the ground at midnight, after the closing of the Bankstown picture theatres and there were a large number of people present at the finish yesterday morning.

Smith continued on his lone walk through the night and was given an ovation when he passed his previous best distance of 110 miles at about 9:45 am. He had then walked round the track 450 times in 23 hours, 12 mins 45 secs. He was suffering from the heat and frequently placed a panama hat filled with water on his head. He was given a great reception at the finish.

Smith attributed his fitness to careful massage treatment. He had three-quarters of an hour's massage by his trainer, Mr Victor Revelle, before he started, and said that his muscles were in fine condition. After the event he was again massaged on the limbs.

What is even more exciting is to learn of **Miss Mary Stoddart** who walked 50 miles in 12 hours 16 minutes 45 seconds. This is the first female amateur long distance walk in Australia that I have come across. At a time when women could only race over 880 yards and 1 mile, this was indeed a ground breaking performance that must have shocked many of the men.

Fantastic stuff!

EARLY COLONIAL EXPLOITS

The above information was one of a couple of different items that Rick Keam found for me on his ramblings through the State Library of Victoria. He also drew my attention to the book *Australian Etiquette*, published in 1885, which listed in an appendix the most notable pedestrian events from the year 1810 to 1884. This list reads as follows:

WALKING, COLONIAL

1 mile, F. Woodhouse (Victoria) 6 min. 40 sec.

7 miles, F. Woodhouse (Victoria), 55 min. 30 sec.

1869 – 21 miles, G. Davis, 2 hours 54 min. 34 sec.
 1881 – 50 miles, Raynor, 8 hours, 44 min. 26 sec.
 122 miles, Hogarty (NZ), 24 hours
 1880 – 113½ miles, W Baker (N.S.W.), 24 hours
 1883 – Scott (N.Z.) beat Edwards in a 24 hour match, by 7 miles, at Wellington, N.Z., October 4.
 Scott beat Edwards in a 48 hour match by 1½ miles; distance covered 192½ miles.
 1880 – Baker beat Taylor, 24 hour match, easily.
 1881 – Willie Frank (12 years old) won one hour's handicap
 Raynor won 50 mile walking match.
 Assenheim beat Weanor, 50 mile match.
 Swan beat Edwards, 48 hour match, £200.
 Willi Frank (12 years old) did six miles within one hour.
 1882 – J. Assenheim won 48 hour match, doing 174 miles, Sydney.
 Edwards won six days' tournament, 432 miles, Melbourne.
 Assenheim beat Wright, £30 to £20, 12 hour match, N.S.W.
 Miss Phillips beat Mrs Wallace, 6 days, £200, doing 281 miles.
 Assenheim beat Raynor, 2 miles; time 15 min. 15½ sec.
 Bradley beat Lambert, 7 miles, £100 and championship N.Z.
 Murphy beat Willi French, £50, one mile; time 7 min. 42 sec. Melbourne.
 W. Swan beat Miss Phillips, giving her 30 miles start, in six days' go-as-you-please, 12 hours a day;
 321 miles 6 laps to her 321 miles.
 1883 – W. Edwards beat D. O'Leary, six days' match, £400, Sydney
 J. Ormes beat W. McLaren, 2 miles, £20, Sydney.
 W. Edwards beat three men, 6 days' match, doing 472 miles, N.Z.

I had known of a few of the 6 Day events but the sheer volume of events is mind boggling. We might think that our modern ultra scene is fairly healthy but, boy, was it healthy in the 1880's. The world wide craze for long distance walking and running was to be found alive and well in the Australian Colonies.

Rick and I did discuss the fact that there does not seem to have ever been a full analysis of this period of Australian sporting history and that this seems a thesis going begging. Perhaps one day when I retire....

While these events were not strictly judged and while some of them were specifically advertised as go-as-you-please, some were specifically walking events. While we cannot verify the veracity of the performances, they form part of the rich sporting history of Australia.

Note also the number of events which featured women. There is nothing like a monetary purse to get people to the start line!

ERIC SUNDERLAND

Les Mudge, a former member of the Melbourne Harriers and stationed at Mildura, wrote this upon seeing Eric Sunderland's 1 mile walk in a Mildura carnival in December 1925:

“As one who was connected with amateur athletics in this State for many years....I declare, without any fear of expert contradiction, that both in style, pace and general brilliance, E. S. Sunderland, the young Victorian champion, stands in a class by himself. I have watched this boy's meteoric rise to fame with great interest, and I feel that Sunderland is certain to break even W. Murray's wonderful figures in the not too distant future. At the last Mildura carnival, Sunderland's 6min. 44sec. was a mere exercise stroll. Provided he is fit and well when the Australasian championships come on for decision, you will find that George Parker and others will be outclassed by E. S. Sunderland, the best walker the world has ever known.”

That's what you call a huge wrap and might have gone to the head of a lesser walker. But Eric (Mo) Sunderland was a huge talent and it was not long before he had people wondering if Mudge's prediction was in fact true. His few years in the sport make for fantastic reading and one can only wonder what he could have done if circumstances had been different and opportunities more prevalent.

Short and slimly built, he was initially considered a sprint walker. With a particularly long stride for his size and great hip flexibility, his easy tireless action was reminiscent of A. O. Barrett. Yet with training, he developed into a wonderful long distance athlete.

He showed great promise in his first ever walk in 1922, beating J. B. Merrifield, then an experienced walker, by 100 yards in a one mile event. He won this event after running a mile and only took part in the walk to please his Melbourne

team mate Mudge. He preferred running but it was evident to Mudge that he was ideally suited to walking. It took him two further years to convince Sunderland that he should abandon running and dedicate himself to walking.



Eric Sunderland – an easy tireless action

After a promising first season on the road, he was selected in the Victorian team to contest the inaugural 1923 Australasian Walking Clubs' 7 Mile Championship and came a gallant sixth in 58:55, only 90 seconds behind NSW winner Ernie Austen. But he did not build on this solid start, preferring instead to mix it with the runners.

It was not until the start of the 1924-25 Track season that Sunderland's walking career really started to blossom. By then he was a regular competitor in the 'A' Grade mile and was the only walker capable of matching N. R. (Norman) Asker, the current Victorian champion. It must have looked incongruous to see the 5'3" Sunderland matching it stride for stride with the 6'6" Asker. The honours were evenly split over the summer with the same pattern continuing at the Victorian Track and Field Championships. Asker, a St. Stephens walker, won the One Mile Walk championship in 6:58.5 with Sunderland taking second while Sunderland won the Three Mile Championship in 22:49.0 after shadowing Asker for most of the race and applying continuous pressure until Asker finally cracked and was disqualified. Tumultuous applause greeted his first Open Championship win.

As the 1925 Winter season rolled on, Sunderland was unassailable on the Victorian front, winning the opening VAWC 5 mile handicap in 38:08, capturing the VAWC 5 Mile Championship from scratch over the same course in 37:56 and then winning the 6 Mile Championship in 45:17. He also recorded a remarkable 5 mile time of 36:42 but it could not be submitted for record purposes as the event was run by VAWC rather than VAAA. Surprisingly, he then opted to bypass the trial walk set by the Victorian selectors and he was controversially left out of the Victorian team for the 1925 Australasian Walking Clubs' 7 Mile Championship to be contested in Adelaide.

The 1925-26 Summer season saw him back in action again after a break of many months. The early season highlight was his One Mile walk in December 1925 in Mildura (see comments above). Paced early by Victorian Junior champion Bert Gardiner, Sunderland was soon well in front and obviously in a class of his own. His beautiful walking style and faultless heel-and-toe action so intensely interested onlookers that almost complete silence reigned around the arena while he was walking. His finish, in a time of 6:44.0, was loudly applauded. This was one of a number of startling performances in the first half of the summer (including a leading time of 21:42 for the 3 Miles) but surprisingly, he chose not to contest the Victorian and Australian Track championships. This was probably tied to the fact that around this time he relocated to Mildura and joined Mildura Harriers, where his former coach Les Mudge was secretary.

Under the watchful eye of Mudge, 1926 was a year to remember. He foreshadowed his intentions with a 6 mile walk at the Mildura Recreation Reserve. His time of 43:42.4 was well under the current Australasian record but was not ratified by VAAA due to the nature of the meet.

Then in March, he produced one of the greatest walks ever seen in Australia when he won the Victorian 10 Mile Track Walking Title in the new World Record time of 1:14:39.6. He was some 6 minutes ahead of second place getter Bert Gardiner and well below the current world best of 1:15:57.4, set by George Larner in London in 1908. In fact, his walk

smashed all Victorian and Australasian records for 5 Miles onwards. This winning time would not be beaten on the local front until 1952 when Ted Allsopp won the title with 1.14:37 – it took 26 years for a Victorian walker to match his time.

He showed in August 1926 that this walk was no fluke when he travelled to NSW to contest the NSW 7 Mile Walking Championship at the Sydney Showgrounds. 1920 Olympic silver medallist George Parker was expected to win but Sunderland beat him on his own home ground with a time of 55:45.2. Then later in the season, he won the annual Australasian Walking Clubs' 7 Mile Championship in 55:16.6 ahead of fellow Victorian Bob Osborne.



Sunderland wins the 1926 Australasian 7 Mile Championship and the 1927 Frankston to Melbourne events

1927 saw him testing himself over the longer distances. First he won the annual Frankston to St. Kilda 25 mile classic in an Australasian best time of 3:53:16.4, beating Bill Murray's record by 5 minutes. Considering the appalling weather conditions, this was a remarkable feat, yet it was accomplished by training for three nights a week for three weeks. He then followed this up with a win in the VAWC 20 Mile Championship, becoming the first Australian walker to break 3 hours. His time of 2:57:06 was well ahead of Murray's best time of 3:06:36.

Yet, he chose not to defend his Australasian 7 Mile Walk title. Such was his seeming ambivalence towards walking. With his discipline excluded from the 1928 Olympics, what was left for a man of his ability to pursue. It is not surprising that he looked for other ways to make the papers. Perhaps the most astounding was his dance of 50 Miles from Geelong to Melbourne in 1928. The following newspaper article sets the scene.

**DANCING FROM GEELONG TO MELBOURNE
Man Starts Off In the Rain**



50 MILES OF DANCING!!

ERIC SUNDERLAND
(Holder of 37 Australian
(Walking Records))
WILL DANCE
from
GEELONG to MELBOURNE
TOMORROW

MR ERIC SUNDERLAND will commence his dance at Geelong tomorrow morning. He will be assisted by the resources of the Green Mill. Music for the dancing will be provided from a travelling car. Relays of Partners will be carried. Mr SUNDERLAND IS CONFIDENT HE WILL CREATE A WORLD'S RECORD FOR DISTANCE DANCING.

SEE THE FINISH AT THE GREEN MILL



Geelong to Melbourne at a foxtrot!

With relays of girl partners, he started from the Geelong Town Hall at 9.30 a.m. Today. He expects to arrive at Green Mill, Melbourne, at 9.30 tonight. Sunderland is a champion walker,- world's champion in fact –

over seven, eight and nine miles. He began by dancing at six miles an hour over the granite road that leads to Separation Bridge. He might have enjoyed it but his partners certainly did not. Their shoes and stockings were quickly worn out and the pace was all right for a champion but breathless for a girl used to polished floors and gliding steps.

And the wet road and intermittent rain did not improve matters. He danced to gramophone music broadcast through amplifiers a from a car which followed him. Legions of boys on bicycles were out with him as far as the Ford works.

Striking a fairly fast pace, Sunderland danced the first mile in ten minutes, two miles in twenty minutes and four in forty minutes. At 10 o'clock, he had passed the Ford Factory at North Shore.

Needless to say, he was just as successful in this endeavour as he was in all personal challenges that he set. By way of an interesting byline, his dance was discussed at a meeting of the council of the Victorian Amateur Athletics Association. A letter had been received from the Walkers Club asking for a ruling regarding his amateur status. Mr. L. Nichterlein (University) had said that the affair was likely to injure amateur athletics. Mr. W. Billsborrow said that dancing was not forbidden by the rules of the association. If money had been paid to Sunderland, objection might be taken to the performance, but until it was discovered whether Sunderland had been paid for his performance, it would be useless to argue about the matter. The chairman (Mr. A. C. Dredge) commented that if a man received 1000 pounds a year for dancing, no slur would necessarily be cast on his amateur status. It was decided to refer the matter to the executive for inquiry. No action was taken against Sunderland.

The last time he was mentioned in the papers was later that same year when the following was published

Eric Sunderland wants to do something extraordinary. This is what he writes: "I see in The Sporting Globe that MacLeod and Opperman have been breaking the Adelaide-Melbourne and Sydney-Melbourne cycling records. I would like to be in on a little record breaking myself. I think you know me. I hold 37 Australian and 3 World's records and I have danced from Geelong to Melbourne. I also won the Frankston to Melbourne walk in the Australian record time of 3 hours 53 minutes. I knocked one minute 20 seconds off the world's record for 10 miles. Well, I want to have a chance of running from Sydney to Melbourne or from Melbourne to Sydney. I don't care which. I am certain I can do it. The further the better is how I like it. If you can interest anyone, I will be ready to go right on with the task."

There were no takers. In fact, it would be nearly 50 years before someone would complete the run between Sydney and Melbourne.

Sunderland was a pork butcher at a time when people worked hard and leisure time was non-existent. His job meant early hours and long days and, from our modern perspective, his training was intermittent and minimal. He flitted into and out of the sport and never really put more than 6 months of training together at any one time. Yet his performances stand out in their brilliance. He was indeed one of our greatest walkers and we can only wonder what he could have done as either a short or long distance walker if he had experienced the opportunities that are on offer in the modern era.

FINANCIAL NEWS

Incoming	Fred Brooks – Donation	50.00
	Stan Miskin – Donation	50.00
	Jill Green – newsletters subs 2006 & 2007	40.00
Outgoing	Farmer Trophy – 2006 engraving	12.50
	Postage and Photocopying	15.30
	Alpha Lewis Signs – Honour Board update	60.00
Final Account Balance as at 02/08/2006		276.06

UNTIL OUR NEXT NEWSLETTER

Another newsletter finished and some interesting historical information for us all to wonder at. We follow an old and honourable pursuit – walking is the most natural of activities and one of the most enjoyable.

Yours in Centurion walking
Tim Erickson (C 13)
Secretary, Australian Centurion Walkers Inc.
1 Avoca Cres, Pascoe Vale, Victoria, 3044