

CENTURION FOOTNOTES

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DATES ... DATES ... DATES

What can we expect in 2021. I am hopeful that most of our ultra races will take place, but no one is expecting them all to make to the start line. Here are some of the most significant.

May 22-23, 2021	30 th OLAT Internationaal Wandelevenement (Continental Centurion 100 Miles Qualifier See https://www.olat.nl/iwe)	Weert, Netherlands
Jun 2-5, 2021	Paris-Alsace Classic	Across France
Aug 28-29, 2021	FANS Ultra Race (USA Centurions 100 Miles Qualifier) See https://fansultraraces.org/ and https://www.unitedstatescenturionwalkers.com/?page_id=1717	Minneapolis, USA
Sept 2021	Not Just a Walk in the Park (USA Centurions 100 Miles Qualifier)	Owego, NY, USA.
Nov 13-14, 2021	Sri Chinmoy 24 Hour Track Race (NZ Centurions 100 Miles Qualifier)	Auckland, NZL

The Australian Ultra scene has bounced back in 2021 with lots of events. As always, check the AURA calendar (<http://aura.asn.au/>) for the latest news.

CONGRATULATIONS TO PRAMESH PRASAD C81: 20:43:42



Pramesh Prasad (C81) reaches his 100 mile mark at Coburg last weekend, his time an impressive 20:43:42

33RD COBURG 24 HOUR CARNIVAL, MELBOURNE, 17-18 APRIL 2021

The Coburg 24 Hour Carnival has co-hosted the annual Australian Centurions 24 Hour qualifying race since 2002 and has provided the venue for 38 new members to be added to our club (C27, C36-C48, C50, C52-60, C67-80).

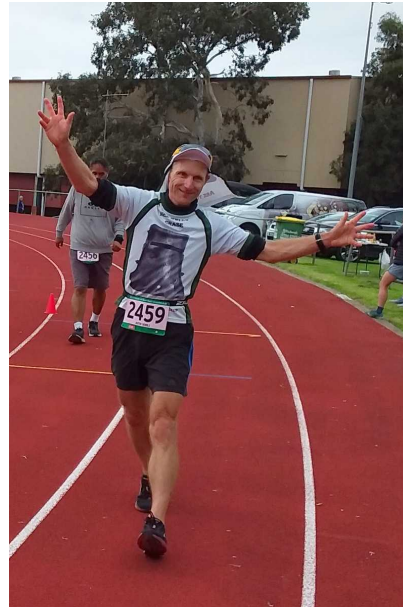
This year was no exception, with Melbourne based racewalker **Pramesh Prasad** adding his name to our membership list and earning Australian Centurions badge **C81** with a 100 mile walk time of **20:43:42**. Pramesh had been keen on testing himself out over the longer walking distances for some years now and was always on my radar as a potential centurion candidate. In September 2018, he won the Victorian 50km racewalking championship in a time of 4:56:55. The following year, in April 2019, he entered the 6 Hour Walk at our Coburg 24 Hour Carnival, winning with an impressive 56.512km. 2020 came and went with no further races, given the covid-19 pandemic, but come this year, he was ready for the next step and entered the 24 Hour Walk at our 2021 Coburg 24 Hour Carnival.

His walk in the 2021 Coburg Carnival 24 Hour walk was an impressive performance. He headed out fast, using the full racewalking technique, and powered through 52.693 km in the first 6 hours. Then he switched to an efficient strolling action that continued to eat up the miles. He passed the 100 km mark in 11:49:11 and reached the 100 mile mark in 20:43:42. From then he strolled a few laps to a total distance of 162.559km, his goal achieved. He had earned Centurion badge 81 for his efforts.

To add further icing to the cake, Victorian based ultra walker/runner **Justin Scholz (C61)** also covered 100 miles within 24 hours with a time of **21:32:28**.



Pramesh Prasad (C81) – 20:43:42



Justin Scholz (C61) – 21:32:28

The 2021 Coburg Carnival was the largest ever, with a bumper entry list of 139 athletes, of whom 18 were walkers, all from Victoria. With overseas travel not possible during this covid-19 period, our event was missing its usual mix of overseas walkers, so it was wonderful to see the local walkers step up to the line and produce the goods. The walk results read as follows.

24hr Walk Men

1.	Justin Scholz	VIC	165.756 km	C61 (21:32:28)
2.	Pramesh Prasad	VIC	162.559 km	C81 (20:43:42)
3.	Sim Beow Lim	VIC	122.998 km	
4.	David Isaacs	VIC	107.573 km	
5.	Mark Kani	VIC	103.468 km	
6.	John Timms	VIC	102.049 km	
7.	Anubhav Tewari	VIC	61.016 km	
8.	George Alexandropoulos	VIC	50.327 km	

12hr Walk Women

1. Elise Hess	VIC	49.823 km
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12hr Walk Men

1. Laurie Tinson	VIC	75.827 km
2. Albin Hess	VIC	73.470 km
3. Patrick Stiles	VIC	55.404 km
4. Ian Hoad	VIC	43.645 km

6hr Walk Women

1. Marnie Grace	VIC	45.421 km
2. Tracy Colbert	VIC	33.659 km
3. Donna-Marie Elms	VIC	20.000 km

6hr Walk Men

1. Tony Wilms	VIC	29.012 km
2. Ken Carter	VIC	20.882 km

Four of the walkers in the 24H division were first timers – **Pramesh Prasad, Sim Beow Lim, David Isaacs, Mark Kani** and **Anubhav Tewari** – and all kept at it for the full 24 hours, showing great G&D.

The carnival also hosted the Racewalking Australia 100km walk championships (sadly no women entered the 24H walk this year), with placings as shown below.

RWA 100km Walk Championship Men

1. Pramesh Prasad	VIC	11:49:11
2. Justin Scholz	VIC	12:43:46
3. Sim Beow Lim	VIC	19:38:04

Our perpetual trophies were awarded as follows

Jim Gleeson Trophy:

Pramesh Prasad (VIC)

Gordon Smith Trophy:

Pramesh Prasad (VIC)



Pramesh with his swag of medals and perpetual trophies – he cleaned up!

Pramesh set a number of Australian Masters M45 records. The only ones out of reach were the 50 Miles (set by Tom Daintry in 1956 – 8:46:02) and the 24 Hours (set by Justin 3 weeks ago in Canberra - 166.000 km).

Pramesh Prasad	6 Hour Walk	M45 Residential	52.693 km	Coburg	17-18/04/2021
Pramesh Prasad	12 Hour Walk	M45 All Comers / Residential	100.652 km	Coburg	17-18/04/2021
Pramesh Prasad	100 km Walk	M45 All Comers / Residential	11:49:11	Coburg	17-18/04/2021
Pramesh Prasad	100 Miles Walk	M45 All Comers / Residential	20:43:42	Coburg	17-18/04/2021

It was Justin's 15th centurion walk performance and came only 3 weeks after his centurion walk in Canberra. He now sits in second place amongst us Australians, behind Peter Bennett with a count of 21. Here are Justin's 100 mile walks

22:09:03	14-15 July 2012	Road 2200m circuit, Adelaide, SA	
19:43:21 (PB)	15-16 June 2013	Blacktown, NSW	
22:40:37	14-15 Sept 2013	Middle Park, VIC	
21:03:00	14-15 June 2014	Blacktown, NSW	
22:29:51	6-7 June 2015	Minnesota, USA	(USAC 76)
22:24:28	03-04 Oct 2015	Auckland, NZ	(NZ C 20)
21:45:13	14-15 May 2016	Schiedam, NED	(CC 437)
20:43:51	18-19 June 2016	Sydney, NSW	
21:04:54	5-6 Aug 2017	Bury St Edmunds, ENG	(C 1173)
21:48:12	2-3 June 2018	Campbelltown, NSW	
22:47:46	20-21 Oct 2018	Cape Town, SA	(SAC 32)
22:40:08	15-16 Mar 2019	Canberra, ACT	
22:43:53	9-10 May 2019	Balatonfured, Hungary	
22:50:00	26-27 Mar 2021	Canberra, ACT	
21:32:28	17-18 Apr 2021	Coburg, VIC	

Congratulations to Pramesh and Justin and to all the walkers and runners who tested themselves out on the weekend. It is always a privilege and an inspiration to witness their efforts.

A final note of thanks to the many people who deserve special mention

- Bernie Goggin and Brian Delaney who share the overall event management load with me.
- Heather Collyer who coordinates the canteen and so much else - what a superb job!
- The key Coburg Harriers members who were there for most if not all of the event and the other volunteers who helped with event setup or pulldown or who came for periods during the race to help out.
- Robyn and Brett Saxon of TrailsPlus for their event recording. They enhanced their chip system to provide 7 lanes of matting this year, thus doing away with overhead detectors, and it worked seamlessly for our lane 1, 3, 5 and 7 competitors. They also further customised their software system to allow enhanced displays and reports. Anyone who came for a look could not help but be impressed by their "Rolls Royce" setup. To have the results confirmed and printed out a few minutes after the final gun goes is an amazing thing when I think back to our old manual days, with Mark Kelly and Brian Delaney sweating it out behind the scenes.
- Australian Centurions Terry and Karyn O'Neill who helped look after the walkers and did all the vitally important split measurements for milestones like 100km, 100 miles, etc.
- Our first aiders Billy and Libby who always do a sterling job.

As can be seen, it takes a lot of dedication and enthusiasm to put on an event like this.

We are already planning for our 2022 Coburg 24 Hour Carnival which will be held in April next year.

BON VOYAGE TO JUSTIN AND SHARON



Now that Justin Scholz has completed his Coburg walk, he and Sharon are busy preparing at their home base in Wangaratta for their tandem bicycle circumnavigation of Australia which they expect to take round 6 months. The countdown is on – they head off in a week's time. I am so impressed. I would not even know where to start in planning such a challenging endeavour. I look forward to providing updates as their journey progresses.

INTRODUCING PRAMESH PRASAD – OUR NEWEST CENTURION

Members of our Australian walking community will already know **Pramesh Prasad**, one of our top masters walkers and a great ambassador for racewalking in Victoria. Now it's time for the ultra distance walking community to learn a little about our newest Australian Centurion.

Pramesh, who was born in Suva (Fiji) on 21st April 1974, had been a good runner in his younger years, competing over distances ranging from 800m to 10km. He was aged 13 when he won his first National Schools Championship, over 800m, and thought at that stage that his future lay in running.

However, that all changed in 1990 when Fiji was to host the Oceania Athletic Championships. The Games were scheduled for July of that year and would include a 20km racewalk. Although he would be only aged 16 at that time, his coach (who was also the National Athletics Coach for Fiji) asked him to try the walk. He had only a few months to work on his race walking technique and get ready. It was no easy task. As the only racewalker in Fiji, he was the subject of derision, with people calling him out as he was training at the track or on the road. But he persevered and duly represented Fiji in the Oceania Games 20km walk at 16 years of age.

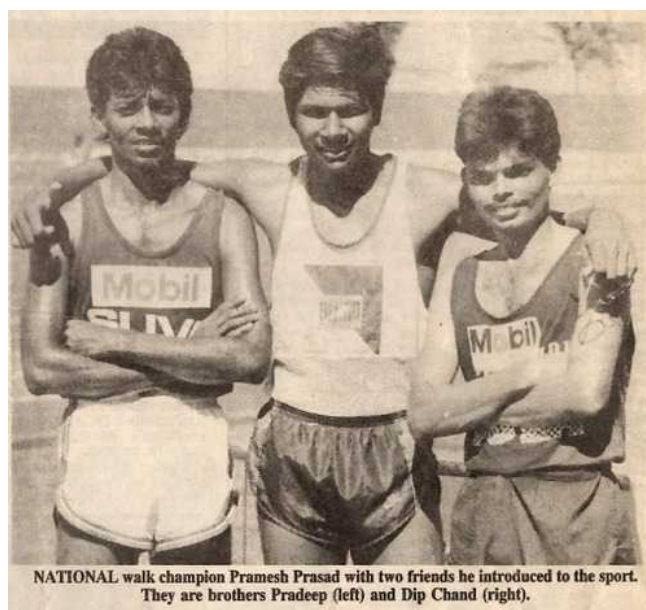
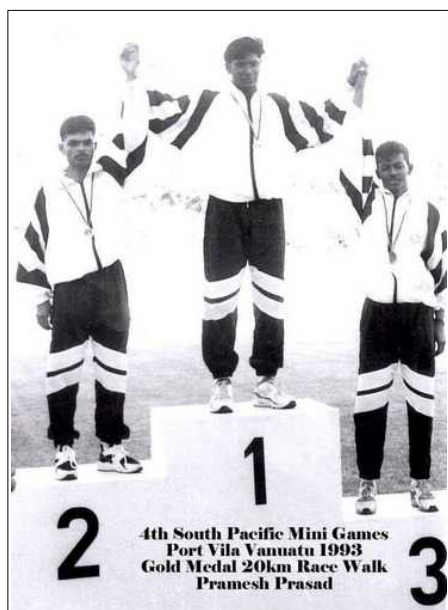


16 year old Pramesh competes in the 1991 Oceania Athletics Championship 20km walk

Opportunities started to flow as he improved in the sport. His next major achievement was a silver behind Brisbane based team mate **Caleb Maybir** (also one of our centurions) in the 1991 Pacific Games 20km walk in New Guinea, his time a PB of 1:55:50. He was also working at that time to promote racewalking in Fiji, gradually building up a squad of racewalkers, including medical students **Dip and Pradeep Chand**.

With the South Pacific Mini Games to be contested in Vanuatu in December 1993, the Fijian Athletics Federation funded a number of athletes to live and train in Melbourne during the 1992/1993 period. Pramesh was one of the recipients of this largess, basing himself in Melbourne and joining Collingwood Harriers. He was billeted with Judy Mason in Epping for few months before moving in with the other Fijian athletes in Thornbury. His time here proved just the tonic he needed and he quickly set new Fijian 10km and 20km records (his 20km PB of 1:50:07 was done in the 1993 Victorian 20km Championship).

He was selected in the Fijian team for the 1993 South Pacific Mini Games, along with proteges Dip and Pradeep Chand, who had been runners before being talked by Pramesh into giving walking a try. For the record, Pramesh won gold in Vanuatu, while Dip took silver and Pradeep bronze.



Pramesh takes gold ahead of Dip and Pradeep Chand in the 1993 South Pacific Mini Games

The next question was - Could Fiji be talked into sending a walks team to the 1995 IAAF World Team Championships in Beijing? At least three 20km walkers would be needed and, by this stage, Pramesh had around 7 walkers in total in his squad.

With a lot of hard work and lobbying over the next year and a bit, it came to fruition when Fiji selected Pramesh, Dip and Pradeep to represent the country in the 1995 IAAF Racewalking World Cup, to be held in Beijing on 29-30 April of that year. Pramesh was the youngster of the three, having just celebrated his 21st birthday a week before.

The 1995 World Cup was one of the largest on record, with 330 walkers in total (226 men/104 women) from 36 countries. And Fiji was there as one of those 36! There was a strong Oceania team, with 8 Australians, 3 Fijians and 4 New Zealanders in the mix, a grand total of 15 walkers. Here is how they fared:

IAAF Racewalking World Cup, Beijing, China, 29-30 April 1995 ¹

20km Walk Men

15	Nicholas A'Hern	Australia	1:23:05
53	Dion Russell	Australia	1:28:25
71	Craig Barrett	New Zealand	1:31:52
81	Brent Vallance	Australia	1:34:44
95	Graeme Jones	New Zealand	1:39:08
99	Tony Sargisson	New Zealand	1:40:26
106	Pradeep Chand	Fiji	1:52:30
108	Pramesh Prasad	Fiji	1:54:59
109	Dip Chand	Fiji	1:56:16
—	Scott Nelson	New Zealand	DNF

50km Walk Men

41	Michael Harvey	Australia	4:05:58
68	Mark Thomas	Australia	4:22:28
73	Duane Cousins	Australia	4:31:29
77	Dominic McGrath	Australia	4:36:29
—	Mark Donahoo	Australia	DNF

20km Walk Women

5	Kerry Saxby-Junna	Australia	42:58
24	Anne Manning	Australia	45:26

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1995_IAAF_World_Race_Walking_Cup

40	Teresa Letherby	Australia	46:23
53	Wendy Muldoon	Australia	47:56
54	Jane Barbour	Australia	47:58
84	Rachel Gibbon	New Zealand	51:02
96	Lynley Mathieson	New Zealand	57:13
—	Jenny Jones-Billington	New Zealand	DNF



Pradeep, Pramesh and Dip at the 1995 World Race Walking Cup in Beijing

Fiji was keen to build on this initial success on the world stage and decided to further fund walking development. VRWC President and senior Australian coach Harry Summers was seconded as the inaugural Fijian National Walks Coach and travelled to Fiji to give a series of coaching seminars and guide the walkers to further improvement.

Pramesh was now back living in Melbourne and had decided to retire and pursue his career. Dip and Pradeep were keen to kick on and moved to Melbourne to race, while they completed their medical training. They were regulars at our VRWC competition at Middle Park during the next few years and I had many friendly races against them.

Fiji sent walkers to the next 4 IAAF Racewalking World Cups (1997, 1999, 2002 and 2004) but the required improvement was not forthcoming and the funding dried up. Sadly, since 2004, there has been little racewalking action within Fijian athletics. Oceania Athletics was never able to build on the initial successes in 1995 and 1997 and it all spluttered out over the ensuing years.

20km Walk, IAAF Racewalking World Cup, Podebrady, Czech Republic, Saturday 19 April 1997 ²

131	Dip Chand	Fiji	1:50:29
132	Pradeep Chand	Fiji	1:50:31
133	Caleb Maybir	Fiji	1:55:07

20km Walk, IAAF Racewalking World Cup, Mézidon-Canon, France, Saturday 1 May 1999 ³

119	Pradeep Chand	Fiji	1:58:47
120	Selwyn Shaniel Singh	Fiji	2:08:50

20km Walk, IAAF Racewalking World Cup, Turin, Italy, Saturday 12 October 2002 ⁴

—	Pradeep Chand	Fiji	DQ
—	Manohar Maharaj	Fiji	DNF
—	Selwyn Shaniel Singh	Fiji	DNF

20km Walk, IAAF Racewalking World Cup, Naumburg, Germany, Saturday 1 May 2004 ⁵

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1997_IAAF_World_Race_Walking_Cup

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1999_IAAF_World_Race_Walking_Cup

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2002_IAAF_World_Race_Walking_Cup

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2004_IAAF_World_Race_Walking_Cup

That should be the end of the story, but luckily there is a very nice addendum.

Pramesh had been living in Melbourne since 1995, had a good job, was married with a growing family and was probably long forgotten by those of us still racewalking. And no wonder - after a break of 20+ years, he weighed in at a massive 125kg on his 41st birthday in April 2015.

This was a turning point for him - he decided to get fit again, with his first run on that fateful birthday - well, if you could call it a run. He tells me it took several stops to reach his target of one kilometre. 11 months later, in March 2016, he returned to racing, winning the M40 division of the Victorian Masters 5000m track walk in 30:21, and looking just like his old self.

He quickly improved, setting PB after PB in his first season back. That year saw him win 3 golds in the Australian Masters Championships in Adelaide in April. He followed with second place in the Victorian 15km roadwalk championship in May, finished the 10 Miles walk at the LBG Carnival in Canberra in June, won his division in the VMA 20km roadwalk later that same month, won silver in the Victorian 30km roadwalk championship in August, won the M40 division in the AMA 20km roadwalk championship in Adelaide a few weeks later, competed in the World Masters Championships in Perth in October (taking 4th, 5th and 10th placings in the walks) and then won 3 golds in the Pan Pacific Masters Games in Queensland. Not a bad first year back after 21 years away from the sport.

Since then, he has been a regular on the Victorian and Australian scene, and is now walking faster than ever.

He holds 4 Fijian National Records, more than anyone else, and was able to wear the Fijian colours again when he represented that country in the 2017 Oceania Area Championships in Suva, Fiji, and in the 2019 Oceania Championships in Townsville, Queensland.

That is a long way from the unfit plodder who couldn't run one kilometre in 2015!

Pramesh was also keen on testing himself out over longer walking distances. In September 2018, he won the Victorian 50km racewalking championship in a time of 4:56:55. The following year, in April 2019, he entered the 6 Hour Walk at our Coburg 24 Hour Carnival, winning with an impressive 56.512km. 2020 came and went with no further races, given the covid-19 pandemic, but come this year, he was ready for the next step and entered the 24 Hour Walk at our 2021 Coburg 24 Hour Carnival.



*Left: Pramesh finishes his first 50km in September 2018 at Middle Park in Melbourne
Right: Pramesh in action in February 2020 at the Mentone Athletics Track*

His walk in the 2021 Coburg Carnival 24 Hour walk was an impressive performance. He headed out fast, using the full racewalking technique, and powered through to 52.693km in the first 6 hours. Then he switched to an efficient strolling

action that continued to eat up the miles. He passed the 100km mark in 11:49:11 and reached the 100 mile mark in 20:43:42. From then he strolled a few laps to a total distance of 162.559km, his goal achieved. He had earned Centurion badge 81 for his efforts.

His PBs as of 2021 read as follows: 13:41 (3km), 23:50 (5km), 49:23 (10km), 1:44:14 (20km), 2:46:51 (30km), 4:56:55 (50km), 3:04 (Marathon Run), 11:49:11 (100km) and 20:43:42 (100 Miles).



Pramesh finishes his 100 mile walk at Coburg, his time 20:43:42

Pramesh is still working on ways of promoting race walking in Melbourne and in Fiji and is part of a great training group which meets each Monday at the Casey Fields track.

Of course, this comeback was a big ask for Pramesh, given he and his wife were already busy with their family of 4 children and with their own work commitments. So well done to all the family for all their support – he wouldn't have got back to where he is without a big family effort.

Keep up the good work, Pramesh! We expect to see many more fine performances from you over the next few years.

REMEMBERING THE GREAT NORMAN WISDOM

I start with a trivia question: Have any feature films ever featured racewalking pieces? The answer is definitely yes.

One of the best known was the 1966 Hollywood film *Walk Don't Run*⁶, which was set during the 1964 Olympics in Tokyo and featured Carey Grant (in his final role) as a matchmaker, trying to flame the fires of romance between an expatriate English girl with one of the US Olympic team competitors. You don't find out till late in the film that the American athlete in question is a 50km walker, and the film features a wonderful segment in which Grant strips down to his boxer shorts and a T-shirt so he can pretend to be a fellow competitor and talk to the American during the Olympic 50km walk and try to heal the breach between the young lovers. It's well worth a watch.

But you can go further back to one of my favourite film sequences, set in the 1955 English film *One Good Turn*⁷, starring the famous **Norman Wisdom**⁸. Norman plans a train trip to Brighton, as he has never seen the sea. Alas, he loses his trousers on the train. On leaving the train, he disguises his appearance by stripping down to his boxer shorts and white t-shirt (identical to what Carey Grant did 11 years later in his movie) and joins the final stage of the London to Brighton walking race. Due to his advantage in joining so late, he wins. I remember seeing the film as a boy and I still remember the sequence so well.

6 See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walk,_Don%27t_Run

7 See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/One_Good_Turn_\(1955_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/One_Good_Turn_(1955_film))

8 See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norman_Wisdom

Check out the movie at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-P08fidoFI>. Forward to the 35 minute mark and start watching. I still love it.



I grew up in the 1950s going to the local picture theatre every weekend and watching many of the classic movies of the time. English comedies featured highly on the menu and Norman Wisdom was at the peak of his comedic talent at that time. Wisdom, who had been born in London in 1915, often played the part of the hapless onscreen character Norman Pitkin. This was one of those occasions.

Wisdom's career revived in the 1990s, helped by the young comedian Lee Evans, whose act was often compared to Wisdom's work. His films for Rank were playing to new audiences via television screenings, with young fans in the United Kingdom and abroad. The high point of this new popularity was the knighthood he was awarded, for services to entertainment, in the 2000 New Year's honours list. During the ceremony, once he had received his knighthood, he walked away and again performed his trademark trip, at which the Queen smiled and laughed.

Somewhat surprisingly, Wisdom features on the cover of the August 1998 edition of the prestigious Race Walking Record⁹, one of the few occasions when a non-walker has featured. The occasion was the 1998 Parish Walk on the Isle of Man and Wisdom was amongst the starters.



9 See <http://racewalkingassociation.com/Archive/ViewArchive.asp?mm=August&yy=1998&m=670&p=1&t=16>

The article reads like this:

A record 595 entrants, including competitors from as far away as Australia, Netherlands, Denmark, US and Isle Man, of whom some 525 actually came under starters orders, made the 1998 Parish Walk, sponsored by Clerical Medical, the best ever.

Its popularity ensured the participation of local celebrities, Noel Cringle, Speaker of the House of Keys and Manx Hs President, Robin Oake the chief Constable, and Norman Wisdom.

The first two covered the veterans distance of 32.3 miles, from Douglas to Keel. Norman. whose team was called the Grimsgdales, was seen at some point en route, but officially, he just vanished.

Wisdom was actually a local, having lived for many years on the Isle of Man. When he died in 2010, aged 95, he was buried in Kirk Bride Churchyard in Bride, Isle of Man. It is worth reading the excellen Guardian newspaper obituary.¹⁰

UNTIL OUR NEXT NEWSLETTER

It's been a busy month for me, but a satisfying one in which we have welcomed a new member to the Australian Centurions. I am even going for a celebratory walk this afternoon, newsletter completed.

I wish all our readers a wonderful 2021. Enjoy your walking and take care.

Tim Erickson (C13)
Secretary, Australian Centurion Walkers
Victoria, Australia, 3044

¹⁰See <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2010/oct/04/norman-wisdom-dies-aged-95>