

AUSTRALIAN CENTURION DETAILS

31. **Gerald Manderson (11/11/1943)**
 21:37:31
 19-20 September 1998
 George Knott Athletic Field, Clifton Hill, Vic

Gerald Manderson, a native of Palmerston North in New Zealand, took up the sport of long distance walking in 1995, aged 51, initially under the tutelage of NZ Centurion secretary Dudley Harris. After less than one year of training, he had already done his first centurion walk and what followed over the next couple of years was a flurry of high quality long distance walks on the local NZ front.

Feb 1996	166 km in 24 hours
April 1996	157 km in 22:01 before retiring
Nov 1996	100 miles in 22:34:28
Aug 1997	107.3 km in 13:42:05 in the Rotarua 100 km event
	202.46 km in 28 hours
Oct 1997	175.6 km in 24:00:37
July 1998	176.97 km in 24 hours

In September 1998, he was one of a number of NZ walkers who travelled to Melbourne to compete in our annual qualifier, held at the George Knott Athletic Field in Clifton Hill. He was definitely the gun walker in the field and he went straight to the front with NSW walker Frank Overton, setting a cracking pace.

They kept it up for the first 50 miles with both passing that mark in just over 10 hours. At that stage, Gerald was some 2 laps in front of Frank. However, Frank was feeling the pace and within another 2 hours had been forced effectively out of the race and off the track. That left Gerald on his own and he made the most of it, walking right through to the 100 mile mark with only a couple of breaks of a few minutes duration. His 100 mile time of **21:37:31** was a PB as was his 24 Hour distance of **177.665 km**. The 5 new centurions that day were

C31.	Gerald Manderson	54	21:37:31
C32.	Norm Morriss	57	22:32:47
C33.	Yiannis Kouros	42	22:55:23
C34.	Roger LeMoine	58	23:04:51
C35.	Susan Clements	44	23:58:40

Fellow New Zealander Norm Morriss was amongst the finishers, coming second behind Gerald. That same year, the NZ Centurions were created and Gerald and Norm were retrospectively granted NZC badges 2 and 3.



The 4 NZ walkers who contested our 1998 qualifying event - Dudley Harris, Robert Radley, Gerald and Norm Morriss

In September 1999, we saw Gerald back in action at Coburg in our next qualifying event as part of a high quality field that had attracted a number of overseas walkers. The pace was evident early with Sandra Brown of England

setting a cracking 2:30 per lap. Gerald was keen to take up the challenge and shadowed her for the first 2 hours before he was forced to slow.

The 50 mile splits told the story for the first half of the race with overseas competitors filling 5 of the first 6 places at that stage. Sandra's 50 mile time was a new Australian Open Record (9:08:52) and Gerald himself was in second place and under 10 hours for the first time (9:58:28).

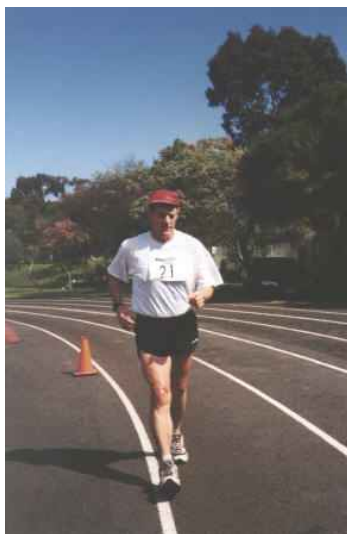
Sandra's final 100 mile time of 19:14:56 saw her with an unassailable lead but, behind her, attention was focused on Gerald, Jill Green (England) and Herbert Neubacher (Germany). Gerald was eventually caught by the more evenly paced Jill and a great battle developed between these two with Herbert only 3 laps adrift. For many hours, all three lapped consistently until Herbert finally caught and passed the other two at about the 15 hour mark. Then he powered away and Jill and Gerald were left to fight it out for third place. At the 19 hour mark, Gerald paid the penalty for his aggressive early walking and faded. Jill came home strongly for a clear third place while Gerald came home in fourth spot. Herbert, Jill and Gerald all produced personal best times for 100 miles. Gerald's time was **21:36:09**.

In mid 1999, he walked 1014 km from Cape Reinga to Palmerston North in New Zealand in 14 days, camping by the roads and sleeping in his survival blanket when necessary. Gerald was nothing if not one tough cookie!

He had heard about the annual Colac 6 Day Race so, with his long solo trek under his belt, he returned to Victoria in November 1999 to try his luck. He was more than competitive against the 20+ runners in the field, finishing in 6th place overall (out of 17) with an aggregate distance of **622 km**. This beat the walk distance of 540 km which Peter Waddell had achieved in this same event in 1997. Of course, as usual, Gerald did it tough with no support crew and very little in the way of spare clothes or shoes or prepared food supplements, etc. His daily totals were 120.8, 98.4, 111.6, 94.8, 74.4 and 122.4 km. He saved his last till best with a great final day and finished full of energy.

10 months later, in September 2000, he was back at Coburg again for our next centurion qualifier which saw a field of 13 walkers. Right from the gun, Michael Harvey went to the front and was already 3 laps ahead of the next placed walker after the first hour. Michael, after a long and illustrious international walking career, was keen to challenge the Australian ultra walking records and set out at the pace required to break Clarrie Jack's long standing 50 mile record of just under 8 hours.

A group of 4 walkers soon formed in second place behind Michael – Gerald, Carol Baird, Robin Whyte and Kelvin Marshall, walking together at a very steady 20 laps per hour. Late in the afternoon, Gerald dropped off the back, almost certainly showing tiredness from the heavy ultra racing program of the previous 12 months. He struggled through the 50 mile mark in 11:08:56 but continued to slow. Doing his calculations, he realised that he was too far back to reach the 100 mile mark so he retired early on the Sunday morning at 141 km.



Gerald in action in the 2000 Australian Centurions qualifying walk

14 months later, in November 2001, he returned to try his luck again in the Colac 6 Day Race. It was his first outing after a very quiet year. He matched his 1999 daily totals for the first 5 days and was just over 500 km at the end of day 5 when blistering forced him to back off. His final distance of 551.6 km was short of his 1999

distance of 622 km.

A year later, in November 2002, he was back again at Colac but finished well back in 20th place with 410 km.

He now saw the writing on the wall. His 8 years of heavy training and racing had taken their toll, both physically and mentally. While still an active centurion member, he no longer had the desire to race and it would be some years before he would challenge himself further.

After 7 years out of the sport, finally retired from full time work and with his path clear, he decided to make a comeback. Shedding 15 kg, he whipped himself into shape and targeted the 2009 Centurions walk at Coburg. He walked well for someone who had been out of the sport for such a long time, passing the 50 mile mark inside 12 hours and eventually finishing with 126.499 km.

Soon after his walk at Coburg, he caught a lift to Warnambool in western Victoria and then walked the 282km return journey back along the Great Ocean Road with a back pack, taking a leisurely 5 days.

He was back in Australia in July for another long walk, but this time one of much greater significance - a solo walk from Melbourne to Brisbane with a target of 40 days. Not surprisingly, he completed the 2000+ mile journey, finishing in 33 days 6 hours, including a three-day break. Just to remind everyone, this was a completely solo attempt, carrying all his own goods and sleeping under the stars unless some better offer came along. Here is his report that he emailed to me in mid August of that year.

I finally got to Helidon near Toowoomba in 28 days 2 hours 5 mins at 9.05pm blister-free (taped my feet success). I then stayed with Mary's mum for three days and dug over her garden for spuds. Actually my heart rate went higher doing this than walking up hills. From there, I took 2 days and about four hours to do final 107 kms to Brisbane through Ipswich after a late breakfast and a week up my sleeve to finish.

I got talked into going to Yarra Glen way to see the bush fire damage and I talked to several people who lost homes. Some had no insurance. One lady said she had two losses - her house now being rebuilt because of replacement insurance, and she lost 45 kgs from taking up walking as a hobby. Another man aged 73 saved his dog and wallet, but had no insurance and his 100-yr-old house of 40 squares was burnt. He just has the 100 acres of land left.

My packs took my weight on the chemist scales to 110-116 kgs depending on how much extra water I needed between towns. 140 kms was the longest stretch without shops. On the first night of the walk, I passed a hospital that had taken in a swine fever victim. I found a lot of water in puddles and zapped it with my sterilisation tablets and I had no health issues on walk.

The sides of the roads varied a lot, and sometimes I walked in ditches and over rough ground for many kms as the freight trucks were too dangerous with only a small edging on road. But generally, the roads kept getting better as the days lengthened out and I did less and less night walking. I don't know the exact distances I walked as sign posts and maps varied a few kms here and there, and I walked a lot of places in Brisbane.

I asked to fill up my water bottle at Kindon state primary school, and they "traded water for talking to the children". I enjoyed that as the kids had seen me walking down the road earlier in the day when they were on the school bus. The children were full of questions and I told them about Hokitika in NZ where the average rainfall is 708 inches per year (and it does not rain every day) - also referred to as 18,000mm plus or 19 metres of rain. The water hits the 12,349 feet Alps and runs back to the sea. By comparison, only 18-23 inches of rain fall on other side of Alps.

I gained 4 kgs on the walk but I can't have eaten more than 4,000 calories a day. I must have been burning up 9,000 calories a day, especially as on odd days I walked for 17 hours to get my target.

Many motorists were going back and forth in the district, and would stop to say they have been watching my progress over a few days. I talked to dozens of farmers and local people who filled me in on the history of the areas. I had never seen cotton plants before.

I was pleased to finally see Dubbo and I walked an extra 18 kms backtracking to the Zoo.

I finished the walk on my third pair of shoes.

Kind regards, Gerald

It was not only a fantastic personal achievement but one with many facets.

Gerald is not finished with long distance walking by any means and we can expect to hear of more adventures over time. Perhaps if we are lucky, we might even see him in more of our own centurion events.



Gerald with his packs on his walk from Melbourne to Brisbane