

CENTURION FOOTNOTES

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DATES...DATES...DATES

Sadly, our Australian ultra walking year has been completely put on hold. I am not aware of any races going ahead in the immediate future, either in Australia or in the wider world.

You should regularly check the AURA calendar (<http://aura.asn.au/>) to see what is still on and what is cancelled on the Australian front and you should also reference Kathy Crilley's *Centurions Worldwide Community* fixture page at <http://www.centurionsworldwide.org.uk/race-fixtures.html> for the latest on the international front.

Apr 25-26, 2020	Rond des Ducs (24Hour Walk), Dijon (FRA)	CANCELLED
May 9-15, 2020	EMU 6 Day Run, Hungary (postponed till 24-30 September 2020)	POSTPONED
May 30-31, 2020	2020 Continental Centurions Qualifier , Schiedam, NED	CANCELLED
Jun 3-6, 2020	Paris Alsace (4 day stage race), FRA (postponed till 2021)	POSTPONED
Jun 20, 2020	Parish Walk, Douglas, Isle of Man	CANCELLED

While the 2020 calendar still shows some distance walks, it's anyone's guess as to how many of them will occur. The English Centurions qualifier at Colchester is currently under review so stay tuned for news on that one.

Aug 8-9, 2020	2020 English Centurions Qualifier – Colchester 100 Miles Enter at https://www.entrycentral.com/Colchester2020Centurion	Colchester, England
Aug 14, 2020	Dodentocht /Death March (100km challenge event)	Bornem, BEL
Aug 16-22, 2020	6 Jours de France (6D/48H/24H track race)	Privas, FRA
Aug 29-30, 2020	Wadelincourt 24H	Wadelincourt, BEL
Sep ??, 2020	28 Heures de Roubaix	Roubaix, FRA
Sep 19-20, 2020	Nijmegen-Rotterdam 160 km https://www.rotterdamsewandelsportvereniging.nl/index.php?page=nijmegen-rotterdam-160-km	Nijmegen, NED
Sep 26-27, 2020	2020 USA Centurion Qualifier - Just A Walk In The Park See https://raceroster.com/events/2020/15288/not-just-a-walk-in-the-park-v30	Owego, NY, USA
Nov 14-15, 2020	2020 NZ Centurions Qualifier - Sri Chinmoy NZ 24H	Auckland, NZ

UPDATE ON THE COBURG 24 HOUR CARNIVAL

This weekend was to have seen the Australian Centurions 24 Hour Qualifying event at Coburg. I paused for a few minutes at midday on Saturday, when the starter's gun should have been fired, to ponder the lost opportunity for all our entrants, both from Australia and from overseas. We aren't the only race effected of course, and for many race organisers, the cancellation of their event will mean a severe financial loss. Luckily, we pulled the plug at Coburg in time to prevent significant financial outlay.

The great news is that 50 of the 77 entrants chose to roll their entry over to 2021, so next year's event is well on the way to being huge. We have pencilled in the weekend of **17-18 April 2021**. Stay tuned.

OUT AND ABOUT

Thanks to **Anyce Melham (C65)** for pointing me to this fine article which discusses the early USA based Sri Chinmoy 24-Hour Races, covering the years from 1980 to 1993. It's ultra running rather than walking but still a great read at <https://us.srichinmoyraces.org/files/us/Scanninghistory/SriChinmoy24Hour.pdf>.

Congratulations to Northern Territory based Australian Centurion **Colin Heywood (C75)** who won the 2019 AMA Award for Outstanding Male, compliments of his M65 World Best 50km Walk time of 5:05:34, done at Fawkner Park in Melbourne last December. His walk bettered the current M65 record by nearly 6 minutes. Sadly, it could not be put

forward for world record consideration as the mandatory 3 watches were not used to record the finish time. Colin vows to come back and do it again and tick all the boxes.



Colin Heywood in Darwin last week with his 2019 AMA Outstanding Male award

C599 ANN SAYER MBE: 1936 - 2020

When Ann Sayer passed away on Wednesday 15th April 2020, aged 83, another victim of the COVID-19 coronavirus, the ultra distance walking world lost one of its legends. Ann had been living in a nursing home and her health was failing, but that does little to lessen our loss.



Ann at the 2011 LDWA walk

Well done to Kathy Crilley on what must be the definitive bio, published only 2 days after Ann's passing. You must start with that read - <http://www.centurionsworldwide.org.uk/ann-sayer-mbe.html>.

Ann, born on 16th October 1936, had been a champion rower in her younger days, part of the small group of women who – almost entirely at their own expense, which included buying boats and blades – were responsible for there being GB women's international eights and fours in the early 1960s. In the face of dominant Eastern Bloc crews, their and her

'finest hour' was at the 1962 European Women's Rowing Championships in Grunau, East Germany, when they came second in the repechage to qualify for the final, eventually finishing fifth.

There are two wonderful appraisals of Ann's rowing history at these links - again, compulsory reading.

<https://rowingstory.com/people/ann-sayer/>

<https://rowingstory.com/2020/04/16/in-memoriam-ann-sayer/>

She was a powerful rower, standing 183cm (six feet in the old terminology) in height and weighing in at 68.5kg.



Ann is on the left of the GB eight at the 1962 Women's European Rowing Championships. Behind her are Frances Bigg, Daphne Lane, Marg Chinn, Jill Ferguson and Marrian Yates (photo <https://rowingstory.com/people/ann-sayer/>)

Ann got into rowing in an unusually calculating way. "When I went to university [Bedford College, part of the University of London], I thought, 'I want to do something a bit energetic,'. I'd hated sport at school so I wanted to take up something where I wouldn't be at a complete disadvantage because other people had done it, whatever it was at school... so I looked at three sports. I thought of swimming, and fencing and rowing. I went swimming a couple of times... but I didn't like the chlorine up my nose and it was cold! And I went to the rowing and gradually got drawn in. I never got to the fencing."

By March of her second year, 1957, Ann had gained her purple and in 1958 she was in the university's first eight. Within a few years, she was a core member of the British Women's Rowing Team and was part of the British women's eight in the Women's European Rowing Championships in 1960 (4th), 1962 (5th) and 1964 (6th). When GB only sent a four to Prague in 1961, she went as a supporter, and she went as GB Team Manager in 1965 to Amsterdam.

After 1965, she remembers, "I didn't do anything much at all. I got unfit. I also got ill at the same time and I couldn't distinguish much between being ill and being unfit but I didn't like it, whatever it was! But I got my health sorted out and the very next year I went on an alpine mountaineering holiday. And that was the start of the mountaineering, mountain walking and rock climbing which I did."

She described her entry into long distance walking thus: *"I drifted in via mountain walking. The Long Distance Walkers Association had been started in 1972, and I was told about it and the second event that I did with them was the annual 100 mile event (their website records her as finishing their 1974 event in 35 hours 26 minutes, the fastest of the three women who completed the distance and 19th overall). And I went from there, and I used to do a lot of LDWA events of 20 miles, 30 miles, 50 miles, that sort of thing."*

She continues, *"And then a couple of years later I did another of the LDWA 100 miles, and I think it was after that I thought, 'What shall I do next?' I'd heard of these people who walk 100 miles in 24 hours – I'd read about them in a Sunday newspaper... so I found out about them and I discovered, of course, that women don't do that sort of thing. But that didn't stop me."*

The rest is history!

The July 2005 edition of the Essex Walker had the following article on Ann and it is timely to reproduce it here for all our Australian Centurion readers.

In May 1977 experienced fell and cross country walker ANN SAYER appeared in the second Dutch 100 Miles race at St. Oedenrode, in her race walking debut over the distance. **21 hours and 46 minutes** later Ann had become the first British 'Continental Centurion' and also the first British female Centurion.

So when the 3rd BRISTOL 100 MILES, was staged over a 10 laps course at Winterbourne in October, Ann (of Essex Ladies) submitted an entry. So did another lady – DIANNE PEGG of Medway A.C. Dianne nowadays resides in Milton Keynes and is known as Dianne Bullard. The Bristol race had already attracted controversy, as the R.W.A. were thought to be insisting that no tracksuit bottoms be worn during the event. Overnight in the Bristol suburbs during October is a very cold place, and the organiser – the late and much respected CHARLIE SHELLEY (Centurion No. 356) – threatened to withdraw the entire promotion if the rule were to be strictly applied. Much vitriol could be heard and abrasive letters appeared in the Record. The rule was relaxed during the hours of darkness and the race went ahead – started by His Grace The Duke of Beaufort. Also among the starters was a Member of Parliament, Lieutenant Colonel DICK CRAWSHAW (Labour M.P. for Liverpool Toxteth), who had made a name for himself by completing endurance walking stunts. He went well, but didn't quite have the speed to complete the full distance in under 24 hours.

Ann (20.37.14) and Dianne (22.05.30) both finished, but they were not permitted to be listed on the main result sheet. A separate 'Ladies Result' was published with Ann and Dianne listed as 1 and 2 respectively.

Seven went sub-20 hours including ED. SHILLABEER (4th in 19.31.31) and the victor – Manxman DEREK HARRISON (17.43.00). Among those completing the distance for the first time were JACK THOMAS (22nd in 21.57.19) and Enfield's PETER EMERY (53rd in 23.41.17). JACK raced in the host club's colours (Bristol R.W.C.) in his first ever race in excess of 20 miles. "*I didn't do any overnight training sessions in preparation. I'd never walked more than 20 miles before, and in this race, I just kept going*" recalls Jack. In race walking terms Jack is still active (representing Welsh Veterans last year at Luton) and he's just been appointed Joint Chief Judge for the upcoming 100 Miles race at King's Lynn – Congratulations!

Of course, that's not the whole story. The following is taken from 'The Centurions – A History'.

The third edition of the Bristol 100 was held on 14th -15th October, when 84 walkers faced the starter, His Grace The Duke of Beaufort. The winner for the second year in succession was Derek Harrison No. 466 in 17 hours 43 minutes. For the first time in British 100 mile history, two women were allowed to compete on equal terms with the men, they were Ann Sayer and Dianne Pegg. Both of them duly completed to number amongst the 56 finishers, but their performances were recorded separately at the end of the race results. Is this equality? They were also qualified along with 27 others to be eligible for membership of the Centurions!

At the A. G.M. held a week after the race, the subject was discussed at great length. Assistant secretary Frank Jarvis No. 258 who was against women becoming Centurions alongside the men put forward a motion that a women's section of the Centurions with numbers W1, W2 etc. should be formed. The motion was not seconded. George Halifax No. 580 put forward a more severe motion 'that women should not be admitted to the Centurions'. This also failed to find a seconder. As there was no substantive motion that could receive a negative amendment, the opposite motion was put and properly seconded 'that qualified women should be admitted to the Centurions'. This was agreed on a majority vote. It was pointed out that these two women complied with rule 2 of the 'Centurion Society', i.e. they were amateurs and had walked 100 miles within 24 hours. It was then proposed and seconded that women should be awarded Centurion numbers in chronological order of their performance as per rule 3. This was agreed on a majority vote (three against). Finally it was proposed and accepted that all those walkers, having complied with the Centurions definition, be elected to the society. The three objectors could have voted against this final motion and therefore rule 5 would have applied as in the case of James Aldred, but fortunately common sense prevailed, and so Ann Sayer and Dianne Pegg became the first female Centurions, being awarded numbers **599** and 608 respectively. When the allotted numbers were adjusted to include the two ladies, it was noticed that Geurt Reeringh No. 412 had been allotted number 620 and so another mistake was narrowly avoided.

As NZ historian Dudley Harris wrote in 2006

Ann Sayer had the misfortune to be not only a competitive walker at a time when women were decried as athletes, but also she chose to take on men at ultra-distance. Not that she wanted to race only against men, but rather because women were shunned from competing at distances of over 12 km. And shunned not merely by men. In the late-1970s, it was the Women's Amateur Athletic Association that still had rules preventing women race-walking more than 12km.

Ann now threw herself into long distance walking, looking for even tougher challenges. One of her first was the **British Three Peaks event**, where the aim was to reach the top of each of the highest mountains in England, Wales and Scotland in the shortest possible time. The rules were, shall we say, lax, as they were set by whoever wanted to 'have a go', whether running or walking., but it was never an easy task.

When Ann decided she would try the Three Peaks, for her it would be a continuous walk; and unlike some of her predecessors, Ann would have a support team. Starting on 8th September 1979 at sea-level in Scotland, Ann reached the top of Ben Nevis during her first day; thence via Hamilton, Lockerbie and Stonethwaite, to ascend England's Scafell Pike; then down again and on via Lancaster to Caernarvon, for a night ascent of Wales's Snowdon and back to sealevel. Ann went to bed for about 7-7½ hours for the first six nights, after which she stayed awake until her record-breaking journey of 424 miles (682 km) was completed on the 15th September 1979. Her overall time broke the existing men's record at the time.

What would Ann do next? She had demonstrated her ability to walk (with overnight rests) for some sixty miles a day for a week. Why not stretch the challenge to two weeks and walk from SW England to NE Scotland: **Land's End to John O'Groats** - somewhat over 800 miles? In reality, there is no one 'authority' to decide on the route, which changes as new roadworks are completed; but many people have 'done it' by a variety of methods ... on foot, bicycle and various kinds of motor-transport.

Ann warmed up with two outstanding walks on the continent. In May 1980, she completed the Torcey 200km in France, finishing as first lady with a distance of **189.900km**. Then a month later, she completed her second Continental Centurions 100 miler in St Oedenrode (Holland), her time a superb **19:32:37**.

Fast forward 3 months to September 1980. Ann's aim was to complete the LEJOG walk within 14 days. Among the problems was certifying that she had been seen by people other than her support team at frequent intervals along the way. This put a considerable amount of additional work on her team, which included the redoubtable Lilian Millen (who had also supported Ann on the Three Peaks), but they managed. Ann succeeded in reaching her objective on 3 October 1980, having walked the entire **840 miles in an elapsed time of 13 days 17 hours 42 minutes**.

The 'Guinness Book of Records' people were so impressed with the support-crew methodology (of confirming the route and times frequently every day) that they not only put Ann in their Book, but they also decided to cancel every other claim lodged before Ann's triumph.

Another one of Ann's most memorable races was in April 1982 when she competed a 48 hour track walk in Nottingham, setting new track records for 100 km (**13:42:09**), 100 miles (**22:43:58**), 200km (**29:23:54**) and 48 hours (**294.114km**).

It was not always about long distances, as Ann also took part in shorter racewalks. She recorded her 20km PB of 2:02:49 in April 1983 at Battersea Park in London. She also travelled to Puerto Rica in 1985 for the World Veterans games to compete in the 10km walk - pictured left with a couple of Colombian walkers.



Ann in Puerto Rica at the World Veterans Championships in 1985, seen here with two Colombian walkers after the 10 km walk, looking every inch of her height of 6 feet (photo from Lilian and Boyd Millen)

1992 saw Ann finally compete in the Paris-Colmar classic. She had qualified in Bazancourt in March that year by walking 172km in 24 hours and she duly received her invitation for the big event for which the women's distance was 333km. She was following in the footsteps of Richard and Sandra Brown who had competed the event in 1989-1991 and who were also in the 1992 field. The race took place on 17-20 June 1992 but it saw Ann retire after 200km, one of her very few non-finishes. She also competed in the Paris-Colmar in 1995, retiring at 266km.

April 1994 saw yet another milestone for Ann, when she completed the 200km/24hr event at Bazancourt (France). Her third place finish with a distance of 164km earned her a place in the Guinness Book of Records, as her selection at the age of 57 made her the oldest British female GB representative athlete. In recognition of this feat, she was invited to the official launch of the 1996 Guinness Book of Records.



Ann with Guinness Book of Records Norris McWhirter at the launch of the 1996 Guinness Book of Records

Even nowadays, her ultra walk performances, many of them nearly 40 years old, continue to rank near the top in the British Rankings (see <http://www.gbrathletics.com/uk/wh99.htm>)

Category	Rank	Performance	Venue	Date
100 Miles Road Walk	3	19:32:37	Sint-Oedenrode, NED	01 Jun 1980
24 Hour Road Walk	2	190.700km	Torcy, FRA	4 May 1980
100 km Track Walk	2	13:42:09+	Nottingham	11 Apr 1982
100 Miles Track Walk	2	22:43:58+	Nottingham	11 Apr 1982
24 Hours Track Walk	2	186.730km	Timperley	20 Jun 1982
200 km Track Walk	1	29:23:54+	Nottingham	12 Apr 1982
48 Hours Track Walk	1	294.114km	Nottingham	12 Apr 1982

After Ann's racing days were over, she continued her involvement in the sport, turning up in all weathers to lap record at both local race walks around the London area and further afield at the Centurions 100 mile races, sitting out for the whole 24 hours.

Ann was awarded an **M.B.E.** in the 2005 Queen's Birthday List, a fitting tribute to one who has given so much to our sport. She was at that time the Honorary Vice President of the Long Distance Walkers Association, a Vice President of The Centurions and a member of Loughton A.C. It was one further accolade for a woman who had broken one of the many glass ceilings for women and had led them into the world of ultra distance walking.

In 2013 Ann was elected President of the Centurions - the first woman to hold this office. This was somehow fitting for the first female British Centurion. During her 3 year period as President, Ann presided over the Committee with considerable calm and common sense. After stepping down from the Presidency at the 2016 AGM, Ann remained on the Committee as one of the Vice Presidents.



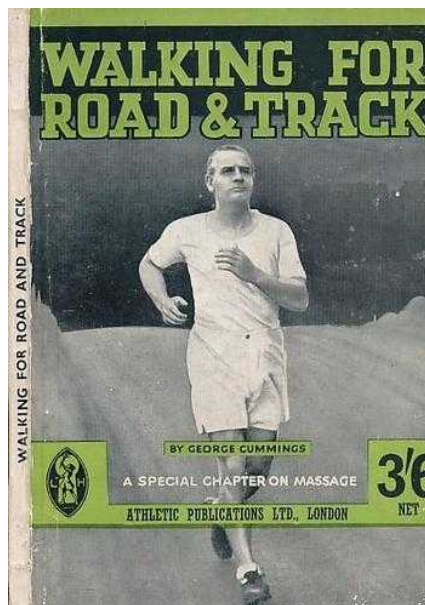
2013 - Ann, Sandra Brown, Sue Clements and Bill Sutherland at the grave of CI JE Fowler Dixon in London

I think Chris Flint, Past Hon. Secretary Centurions, summed it up nicely

It's probably not possible to say in a few words that would do justice to a quite remarkable athlete who scaled the heights not just in her walking exploits but also as someone who led from the front. She was a most respected President of the Centurions 1911 who guided its committee with invaluable advice, she was a campaigner to allow females to take part in the 100 miles events, and was one of the founders of the LDWA. Personally, Ann's passing is a great sadness as we have lost a lovely lady and remarkable friend. RIP.

GEORGE CUMMINGS – THE LAST OF THE PROFESSIONALS

Amongst my many walking related books is a small 86 page hardcopy book, written by an English walker named George Cummings and published in 1924.¹



¹ Second hand copies of this book can still be sourced. See <https://www.abebooks.com/servlet/SearchResults?sts=t&an=&tn=walking+for+road+and+track&kn=&isbn=&sortby=93>

Cummings is noted in Egon Rasmussen's and Palle Lassen's 1980 Race Walking World Statistics handbook² as having set a new world best for the 1 Mile Walk (6:22.0) in London on 4th August 1913. The 'p' annotation next to his entry indicates he was regarded as a professional athlete, hence his performance could not be recorded as a World Best Performance (WBP) or a World Record (WR).

One mile					
6.48,0	WBP	Thomas Griffith	GBR	6.8.	1870 Leeds
6.36,0	WBP	Harry Webster	GBR	12.7.	1879 Preston
p 6.23,0		William Perkins	GBR	1.6.	1874 London/Ll.Bridge
6.33,4	WBP	Eric Merrild	USA	15.10.	1880 Boston
6.29,6	WBP	Frank Murray	USA	27.10.	1883 New York
p 6.27,25		Mike Cann	AUS	26.12.	1886 Melbourne
6.27,6	WBP	Frank Creamer	NZL	20.11.	1897 Auckland
6.26,0	WBP	George Larner	GBR	13.7.	1904 Manchester
6.00,0 (1)		Albert Yeomans	GBR	1.9.	1906 Swansea
6.25,8	WR	George Goulding	CAN	4.6.	1910 Toronto
6.23,0	*	George Goulding	CAN	10.6.	1911 Toronto
6.22,8	*	Edward McDonald	CAN	7.7.	1911 Toronto
6.22,2	*	William Murray	AUS	24.2.	1912 Melbourne
p 6.22,0		George Cummings	GBR	4.8.	1913 London
6.22,0	*	Colvin Patrick	TRI		1928 Port of Spain
6.21,2	WR	Pauls Bernhards	LAT	25.7.	1936 London
6.18,2	WBP	Athol Stubbs	AUS	25.2.	1939 Sydney
6.15,2	WBP	Athol Stubbs	AUS	17.2.	1940 Sydney
6.15,2	WBP	Valdemar Grandy	LAT	28.8.	1943 Riga
p 6.04,9		William Mihalo	USA	17.2.	1953 St.Petersborough
p 6.03,8		William Mihalo	USA	21.2.	1954 Detroit
6.10,4	WBP	David Romansky	USA	2.5.	1970 Quantico
6.09,0	WBP	Roger Mills	GBR	13.9.	1974 London
6.05,3	WBP	Roberto Buccione	ITA	25.3.	1976 Ostia
5.59,2	WBP	Todd Scully	USA	7.6.	1977 Seattle
5.56,3	WBP	Reima Salonen	FIN	12.6.	1977 Naantali
5.55,3	WBP	Roberto Buccione	ITA	4.4.	1979 Ostia
5.49,9	WBP	Erling Andersen	NOR	26.8.	1980 Lisleby
5.45,15	WBP	Martin Toporek	AUT	11.9.	1982 BsZ Züdstadt

1) Doubtful. Not accepted. In 1906 Albert Yeomans also made 6.15,0 and 6.19,6, but both had been doubtful as well.

By way of comparison, the fastest ratified amateur time was then by George Goulding³, Canada's Yorkshire-born Olympic champion of 1912, who had walked 6:25 4/5 in 1910. Cummings's time was not beaten until Pauls Bernhards, of Latvia, improved it marginally to 6:21.2 in London in 1936.

There is a lot more to be said about Cummings apart from this one record listing. I am indebted to Bob Phillips, editor of the National Union of Track Statisticians (NUTS) quarterly newsletter *Track Stats*⁴, for passing on this 1946 article, written by Alan Hoby (1914-2008), who was for 37 years chief sports writer for the "Sunday Express".⁵

Far from the crush of the crowds and the tumult of the tracks By Alan Hoby

One day 33 years ago – when beer was three pence a pint and fresh eggs a halfpenny each – a man went walking. He walked so fast that when he stopped he had smashed a 39-year-old record. The crowd cheered. The sun shone ... and so it went down in the record-books that at Weaste, Manchester, on August 4 1913 the World's wonder walker, George Cummings, had done a mile in 6 minutes 22 seconds. Today that wonderful time still stands. It has withstood the assaults of all the champions

But the man who made it is old and bent. Victim of a stroke which has paralysed the iron legs that once brought him fame, he can barely hobble along with a stick; The sun no longer shines on George Cummings. When I saw the great old-timer who was already 36 when he walked the famous mile, he told me, "I had only switched from running the year before. I got £50 for becoming World's professional champion. I trained on steak, ham, eggs,

2 Danish statisticians Egon Rasmussen and Palle Lassen published many racewalking related books in the 1970's and 1980's. Their contributions included yearly world statistics almanacs, all-time best lists, ranking lists and world record progression lists. Lassen was also an IAAF racewalking judge and a member of the IAAF Race Walking Committee for many years.

3 See <http://www.vrwc.org.au/tim-archive/articles/wo-george-goulding.pdf>

4 See <http://www.nuts.org.uk/trackstats/index.htm>

5 Bob Phillips advises that the article by Alan Hoby was one he found in the scrapbook belonging to the late Norman Graves, of Wirral AC, and passed on to him by Maurice Morrell.

butter and malted milk".

Now, far from the crush of the crowd and the tumult of the tracks, this ex-boilermaker, ex-Guardsman, boxer and runner lives in a modest room in Maida Vale, West London, managing somehow on his rations.

He was 23 when he set out on his first long-distance walk, Hartlepool to Hull, which he completed in 32 hours. Yet when he was 51, the "old man" was still breaking records. He covered almost 8¼ miles in the hour, beating the previous record, held by the American, Meagher, by 43½ yards. On that pioneering "hike" to Hull, George arrived "broke". Chancing on a boxing-booth run by the English lightweight champion, Frank Guest, he accepted a challenge to go four rounds for £1 and went the whole way with Will English. Afterwards, he travelled with the booth.

In 1921, on the hottest day in 30 years, George did his most notable trek, London to Edinburgh. Despite the heat Cummings, who in the Great War was gassed, blinded and had trench fever, arrived in Edinburgh in 82 hours of actual walking, averaging some 42 miles a day. He thinks modern athletes are "wonderful" but believes that climate has a lot to do with the record-breaking feats of Swedish streaks Hagg and Andersson. "*I was lucky*", he said. "*I could maintain speed for hours at a time and the crowds used to line the routes to see me pass*".

Salute, then, George Cummings, still at 68 the champion of champions!

Born around 1875 in Yorkshire, Cummings has been put forward as the last of the professional footmen; ie the last to earn his living from his prowess as a walker. Part showman and part athlete he was shunned by the amateur sporting organisations of the time and operated outside the formal athletics channels, walking for wagers or to advertise products for his sponsors.

For this reason, he could never become an English Centurion (by walking 100 miles within 24 hours in one of their events like London to Brighton and return)⁶. Professionals could not compete against amateurs in those days of strict amateurism.

His 1924 book (see above) contains sections on training, foot care and self-massage (the biggest section) and finishes with personal anecdotes from his various walks. It lists his records as follows

- Walked 1 Mile in 6 mins. 22 secs (1913)
- London-Edinburgh, 420 miles in 82 hours 5 mins (1921)
- London-York, 200 miles in 37 hours (1923)
- Walked 8 miles 345 yards in 1 hour at age of 51 (1926)
- London-Burton, 135 miles in 23 hours 50 mins (1930)
- London-Leeds, 202¼ miles in 39 hours 30 mins
- Walked 14½ miles in 2 hours age age of 56 (1931)

His career could be split into two periods – pre WWI and post WW1. His first significant walk was in 1913 when he recorded his exception 1 mile walk. It would not be until 1921, after his time as a soldier, that he returned to the spotlight, with the first of his long distance walks, done at 46 years of age.

While his 1 Mile, 1 Hour and 2 Hour walks were obviously continuous efforts, his long distance walks were not, but you have to read between the lines of his book to confirm this. For instance, when talking of his London to Edinburgh walk on page 82, he comments: "*Incidentally, I did my walk to Edinburgh on 82 hours of actual walking, an average of just over 5½ miles an hour.*" In other parts of the book, he talks of his overnight stays at pubs, etc, when en route.

This becomes obvious when you consider some of these performances which were impossibly good for that era. His 200 miles in 37 hours would probably be a world best, even today. Similarly his 135 miles (217km) in 23 hrs 50 mins is not far short of the current world best.

⁶ See <http://www.centurions1911.org.uk/index.html>



16th May 1924: Cummings in training for his 200 mile race against a man on horseback. The horse is allowed to trot or gallop, but Cummings must walk. He hopes to prove that a man is capable of greater endurance than a horse over a long distance. (Photo by Kirby/Topical Press Agency/Getty Images)

What is not in doubt if that he was a fine walker who kept competing to an advanced age.

There are a number of newsreel sequences of him in action from the 1920s onwards in the British Pathé website, including an amusing 1929 video in which he is teaching 3 elegantly-robed West End stage actresses the art of “Heel and Toe”. By then he was rather more portly in girth and aged 54 years.

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|---|---|
| 1923 London to York (200 miles) | https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Evyl2XKsFrY |
| 1930 London to Burton (135 miles): | https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rk6ZerL9DOQ |
| 1929 Teaching some actresses to walk: | https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_gsiwXxyTE8 |
| 1931 20 Miles in 3 Hours at Paddington: | https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Yf3f3yOmH0 |

Viewing the 1931 film indicates that Cummings would not have passed muster at that time in a properly judged walking race. Early on, his form is very questionable. Footage of him in the latter half of the race shows good form, albeit at a slower pace. Not surprisingly, Rasmussen and Lassen do not acknowledge any of his later performance. By that stage of his life Cummings was promoting various milk-based food products, whiskey and other products or racing horses over long distances, and his performances, although impressive for his age, were not serious athletic endeavours.

There are also plenty of photos on the web, but all are from the 1920s and onwards, when he was an older walker. Interestingly, most are now owned by Getty Images and on sale for \$200 (small) / \$650 (large). Ouch!

- <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/04/21/the-queen-at-90-britain-in-1926-in-pictures/walking-champion-george-cummings-in-training-for-a-1000-mile-wal/>
- <https://www.gettyimages.ae/detail/news-photo/george-cummings-the-worlds-professional-walking-champion-at-news-photo/106889478>
- <https://www.gettyimages.ca/detail/news-photo/mr-george-cummings-the-worlds-professional-walking-champion-news-photo/106889485>
- <https://www.gettyimages.ca/detail/news-photo/walking-champion-george-cummings-sets-out-on-a-135-mile-news-photo/3163520>
- <https://www.gettyimages.ca/detail/news-photo/walking-champion-george-cummings-teaching-three-actresses-news-photo/3397291>

His feats did attract a lot of attention in England at the time. The following photo shows a large crowd gathered to

witness the start of his walk from London to Burton.



13th November 1930: Walking champion George Cummings sets out on a 135 mile walk from Trafalgar Square in London to Burton, with no sustenance other than beer, in order to prove its sustaining properties. (Photo by J. A. Hampton/Topical Press Agency/Getty Images)

If Cummings had been walking 50 years earlier, in the heyday of pedestrianism, he would be much better known and would have had the ability to set himself up for life financially. Alas, amateurism had taken centre stage in the post WWI era and people like him were forced to chip around the edges to earn a few bob here and there.

Gone but not forgotten.

LILLIAN SALKFELD AND G.O. EDWARDS – FORGOTTEN WALKERS



There are two potentially forgotten long distance walking performances that deserve our attention. Both date from the early 1920's and both are by youngsters. Luckily for us, they have been captured for posterity in the British Pathe newsreel archives. There are 3 videos to review so let's take them in order.

The first is a prelude, dated 06/06/1921, which shows 15 year old **Lillian Salkfeld** winning a 15 Miles Championship Walk for Girls in Manchester. See <https://www.britishpathe.com/video/girls-walking-race>. In fairness, the newsreel only shows the girls for the first 20 seconds (Lillian is wearing number 5). After that, it swaps to a display of Master G.O. Edwards walking in the Manchester to Blackpool race. It seems a case of improper editing when the newsreel was created or recreated.

The second newsreel is dated 01/10/1921 and is titled: *Wonder Boy Walker. Master G.O. Edwards aged 10, establishes World's record in walking 52 miles in 11 hours 43 minutes Manchester to Blackpool. Lancashire.* It shows the same boy who features in the second half of the first newsreel walking from Manchester to Blackpool, a distance of 52 miles.. The second half of this newsreel is titled *Lillian Salkeld, aged 16, gave up after going 38 miles* and shows Lillian as she walks towards the camera and takes a drink from a bottle. Check it out at <https://www.britishpathe.com/video/boy-walker-1>.

The third newsreel, dated 04/05/1922 is titled *Wonderful Girl Walker - 16 year old Miss Lilian Salkeld accomplishes London to Brighton walk in 12 hours 20 minutes.* That is a 53 mile walk, done in a little over 12 hours, not a bad effort in anyone's measure. See <https://www.britishpathe.com/video/lilian-salkeld-aka-wonderful-girl-walker>.

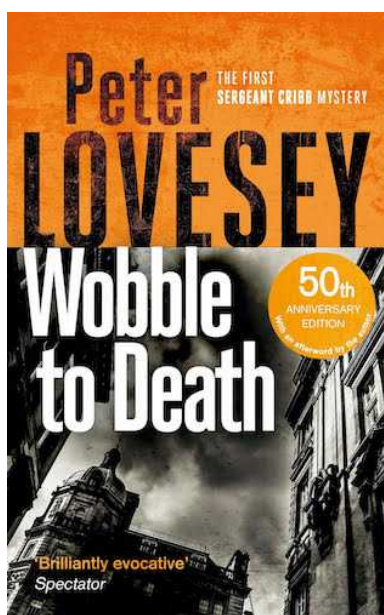
I have never found their names in any further results or newsreels so these two long distance performances seem to have been once off efforts. Two great performances indeed.

A RIPPER YARN

I have a couple of comprehensive athletics books by the great English author Peter Lovesey, namely [The Kings of Distance](#) (1968) and [The Official Centenary History of the Amateur Athletic Association](#) (1979), and they are books that come down from the bookshelf on various occasions.

But my favourite Peter Lovesey book is his 1970 novel [Wobble to Death](#) which follows the investigation into a murder that takes place during a 6 Day Pedestrian race in 1879. It's a ripping yarn that is celebrating its 50th birthday this year.

It has also been reproduced as a BBC radio show (you can listen to it at <https://archive.org/details/WobbleToDeath>) and as a BBC TV show (you can watch it at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VBNvYMWkqQ>, but nothing beats the book read. Check out your local library or better still, purchase the 50th anniversary special edition from UK publisher, Sphere. This edition includes an afterword from Peter Lovesey recalling how the book changed his life and turned him from a modest teacher into a professional author.



Peter Lovesey is writing as prolifically as ever and his latest book also has a running theme - see details in his latest newsletter at <https://mailchi.mp/c886079370c0/ihxaprorzm-3857025?e=3b9e07e8c6>. I can't think of a better way of outlasting the COVID-19 than with a good book.

FINANCIAL NEWS

With our annual event cancelled, no expenses this month.

Income	Bank Interest	0:21
Expenses	Nil	<u>0:00</u>
Bank Balance		2443.63

UNTIL OUR NEXT NEWSLETTER

It's a quiet time for us all around the world now, but luckily we are still allowed to exercise. And what better way to exercise than to take a deep breath, step outside and go for a walk.

All truly great thoughts are conceived by walking Friedrich Nietzsche

Finally, I was sent a video this morning that moved me considerably. It's a superb reflection on surviving our coronavirus lockdown, as seen through a series of wonderful paintings. I have popped it up onto our Australian Centurions website. You must check it out at <http://www.centurions.org.au/documents/Quarantine%20in%20Art.mp4>. It runs for just under a minute but will have you holding your breath.

Stay safe

Yours in Centurion walking

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