

## THE EARLY HISTORY OF RACEWALKING IN AUSTRALASIA: 1890-1930

I am indebted to Athletics Australian statistician **Paul Jenès** for much of the information in this potted history of the early Australasian Track and Field Championships. His monumental tome *Fields of Green Lanes of Gold*<sup>1</sup>, published in 2001, tells the story in great detail. My short piece focuses on the racewalks and tries to place them in the wider context.

All results are taken from the website *A History of Athletics in Australia*,<sup>2</sup> compiled by and maintained by Paul Jenès, Peter Hamilton, David Tarbotton, Fletcher McEwen.

The earliest record of athletics in Australia occurred in 1810 in Hyde Park, Sydney, where Dicky Dowling, the acknowledged fastest runner in the colony, ran 50 yards carrying 14 stone (89kg) whilst his opponent ran forwards and backwards over the same distance.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century belonged to professional athletics (pedestrianism), the early years dotted with incredible feats, wagers and 'stories'. The meetings were a mixture of events which included backwards running, carrying weights coach rolling, running with sacks of potatoes and greased pole climbing, to name a few. Large crowds watched and much money was wagered.

Races between runners or walkers were common, with money on the outcome. Professional running boomed with the 'Gold Rushes' of the 1850s in NSW and Victoria. The Stawell Gift, first held in 1878, is the oldest professional footracing meet in Australia, and is still contested in the Victorian country town of Stawall each Easter weekend, with races still handicap based.

Many people objected to the commercialism of athletics, especially the betting, and as the 19<sup>th</sup> century drew to a close, amateur athletics started to gain in popularity. Amateur Athletics Clubs started to pop up in the major cities. In NSW, the first club to be formed was the Sydney Amateur Athletic Club in 1872, but it was not until 1887 that the Amateur Athletic Association of NSW (AAANSW) was formed, to take over the management of amateur athletic sport in that colony.

The next colony to form an association was Victoria. The first club to be formed there was the Melbourne Harriers in 1890. The following year, the Melbourne Harriers, Melbourne University, Hawthorn Harriers, Melbourne Grammar School and Wesley College met and formed the Victorian Amateur Athletic Association (VAAA). From 1892, Victorian held annual Track & Field Championships which included 1 Mile and 3 Mile walks.

Across the Tasman, the New Zealand Amateur Athletic Association had been formed in Canterbury in August 1887.

### Inter Colonial Meet - 1890

#### Moore Park, Sydney, 31 May 1890

The Inter-Colonial meeting held in 1890 is in some ways the first unofficial Australasian Championship. Certainly, winners came away recognised as Australasian champions. The meeting was held at Moore Park, Sydney, on 31 May, on a dull day and soft track. The Colonial Governor and a good crowd attended whilst the Naval Volunteer Artillery Band performed throughout the afternoon. The NZ team won 7 of the 11 events, with **E. McKelvey** taking the honours in the 1 Mile and 3 Mile walks.

#### 1 MILE WALK - Men - 31 May 1890

1	E. McKelvey	NZL	6:59.0	
2	A. Bullock	NSW		6 inches
3	W. Spring	NSW		
	J. Ranger	NSW	DNF	

#### 3 MILES WALK - Men - 31 May 1890

1	E. McKelvey	NZL	24:18.8	
2	J. Giltiman	NSW		440 yards
3	R. Smyth	NSW		

1 Fields of green, lanes of gold : the story of athletics in Australia / Paul Jenès, Caringbah, N.S.W. : Playright Publishing, 2001

2 See [https://athletics.possumbility.com/aust\\_tf/index.htm](https://athletics.possumbility.com/aust_tf/index.htm)

**Australasian Championships - 1893-94**  
**Melbourne Cricket Ground, Melbourne, 9 & 11 November 1893**

It became obvious that an Australasian Championship was required, so in 1893 a Memorandum of Agreement was entered into by the Amateur Associations of NSW, New Zealand and Victoria to hold 'Australasian Championships' every two years, the venue being rotated between the three associations.

These first championships were unofficial, as no overall governing body existed to sanction them. But they did serve two historic purposes. They brought the best athletes of Australia and New Zealand together in friendly rivalry. In addition, the championships were the seedbed for the formation of the Amateur Athletic Union of Australasia which was to do so much in nurturing talented athletes, giving them the opportunity to compete locally and internationally.

The first unofficial Australasian Championships were held at the MCG on 9 and 11 November 1893. With 7 victories, NSW finished ahead of Victoria and New Zealand. One of the notable winners was [Edwin Flack](#) who won the mile in 4mins 44.0secs. Flack was to become Australia's first Olympic competitor and double gold medallist at the 1896 Olympic Games.

Honours in the walks were shared, with [A. Bullock](#) of NSW winning the 1 Mile event and [Arthur Barrett](#) of Victoria winning the 3 mile event.

<b>1 MILE WALK - Men - 11 November 1893</b>				
1	A. Bullock	NSW	7:13.4	
2	G. Galloway	NZL		20 yards
3	T. Challinor	NSW		
	E. Miller	NSW	DNF	
	H.R. Burton	NSW	DNF	
	Arthur Barrett	VIC	DNF	
	Francis Garner	VIC	DNF	
	G. Wilkinson	VIC	DNF	
	H.H. Pounds	VIC	DNS	
	G.F. Elkington	VIC	DSQ	
<b>3 MILES WALK - Men - 9 November 1893</b>				
1	Arthur Barrett	VIC	24:00.2	
2	G. Galloway	NZL		220 yards
3	G. Elkington	VIC		150yds
	E. Miller	NSW	DNF	
	H. Burton	NSW	DNF	
	A. Bullock	NSW	DNF	
	G. Wilkinson	VIC	DNF	
	T. Challinor	NSW	DNF	
	H.H. Pounds	VIC	DNS	
	H. Vere-Hodge	VIC	DNS	
	Francis Garner	VIC	DNS	

**Australasian Championships - 1895-96**  
**Lancaster Park, Christchurch New Zealand, 2 & 4 January 1896**

The second unofficial Australasian Championships, held in January 1896 in Christchurch, New Zealand, saw the host nation winning 11 of the 15 events. **Frank Creamer** won both walks, with significantly faster times than in the 1890 Championships.

<b>1 MILE WALK - Men - 4 January 1896</b>				
1	Frank Creamer	NZL	6:58.8	
2	Harry Goodwin	NSW		50 yards
3	Arthur Barrett	VIC		80 yards
<b>3 MILES WALK - Men - 2 January 1896</b>				
1	Frank Creamer	NZL	22:51.4	
2	Harry Goodwin	NSW		350 yards
3	Arthur Barrett	VIC		
	J. Holt	VIC	DNF	

As an addendum to these championships, the first modern Olympic Games were held in Athens between 6 and 15 April 1896. In those days, athletes simply entered themselves and Edwin Flack, then working in London, entered the 800m, 1500m, marathon and tennis. He was the only Australian to compete there. History shows he won the 800m and 1500m, failed to finish the marathon and lost to Greek players in both the doubles and singles tennis. His own family in Australia was surprised at his victories and most Australians were unaware that he was in Athens because very little was reported in the press.

**Australasian Championships - 1897-98**  
**Sydney Cricket Ground, Sydney, 2 & 4 October 1897**

The third of the unofficial Australasian Championships were held at the SCG in October 1897. During the meet, representatives of the Amateur Athletics Associations of NSW, Victoria, Queensland and New Zealand held a conference at the Amateur Sports Club in Sydney and signed Articles of Agreement to form the Amateur Athletics Association of Australasia.

Victorian **Arthur Barrett** had won the 1896 Victorian 1 Mile Championship in an Australasian best of 6:42.0. He and New Zealand walker **Dave Wilson** battled out the 1 Mile walk at the 1897 Australasian Championships, with Wilson winning by 1 yard and breaking Barrett's Australasian best with his time of 6:41.5. He then backed up for a win in the 2 Miles walk.

<b>1 MILE WALK - Men - 2 October 1897</b>				
1	Dave Wilson	NZL	6:41.5	
2	Arthur Barrett	VIC		1 yard
3	A. Golding	NSW		
4	Peter Corrigan	QLD		
5	A. Greig	NZL		
<b>3 MILES WALK - Men - 4 October 1897</b>				
1	Dave Wilson	NZL	22:37.2	
2	A. Greig	NZL		50 yards
3	Peter Corrigan	QLD		50 yards
4	A. Golding	NSW		

**Australasian Championships - 1899-1900**  
**Bowen Park, Brisbane, 9 & 11 November 1899**

The actual formation of the Amateur Athletics Association of Australasia occurred at the conference at the Carlton Hotel in Brisbane during the first official Australasian Championships in November 1899. At this conference, the constitution was adopted and regulations for competitions were passed.

The top walkers were absent so the winning times of **C. McAffar** (6:59.0) and **Peter Corrigan** (23:28.0) were slower than in past championships.

<b>1 MILE WALK - Men - 9 November 1899</b>				
1	C.McAffar	NZL	6:59.0	
2	Peter Corrigan	QLD		
3	Reg Purbrick	VIC		
	C.Field	NSW		
	A.Wilcox	QLD		
	D.Corrigan	QLD		
<b>3 MILES WALK - Men - 11 November 1899</b>				
1	Peter Corrigan	QLD	23:28.0	
2	C.Field	NSW		
3	C.McAffar	NZL		
4	Reg Purbrick	VIC		
5	D.Corrigan	QLD		
	A.Wilcox	QLD		DNS

The 1900 Olympics came and went, with only 1 Australian athletics representative in the person of sprinter Stanley Rowley.

January 1<sup>st</sup> 1901 was a hugely significant date for the Australian colonies as they collectively became states of the Commonwealth of Australia. Before this date, those who lived in the colonies could identify at 'Australians' at a conceptual level. Now they could state with certainty that they were Australians.

This did not spell the end of the Australasian Championships which continued until 1930, at which time Australian and New Zealand athletics finally went their own separate ways.

### **Australasian Championships - 1901-02** **The Domain, Auckland, 20 & 21 December 1901**

The Australasian Championships went across the Tasman in 1901, being held in Auckland in December of that year. The second Biennial Conference of the Athletics Union was held concurrently at the Auckland Sport Club (between 16 and 23 December). Amongst the agenda items was the need to establish formal rules to govern the walk. Arthur Barrett, the 1893 3 Mile winner, together with fellow Victorian [R. H. Croll](#), submitted a series of propositions which were adopted as the formal rules governing racewalking.

1. *That a racing walker must have contact with the ground with one foot during a stride, and with both feet at the end of a stride.*
2. *That the heel of the front foot must touch the ground before the back foot leaves it.*
3. *That as the heel of the front foot touches the ground the leg must not be bent, its knee must be locked.*
4. *That the body and head must be kept upright*

These rules stayed in effect in Australia for the next 55 years and the current racewalking rules have changed little in essence from this initial interpretation.

New Zealander **Dave Wilson**, the 1897 walks winner, set a new standard of excellence in the walks, setting a new Australasian record of 6:38.2 in the 1 Mile and winning with a meet record of 22:21.0 in the 3 Mile event. Again, his main opposition came from Victorian **Arthur Barrett**. They were clearly the top two Australasian walkers.

<b>1 MILE WALK - Men - 21 December 1901</b>				
1	Dave Wilson	NZL	6:38.2	
2	Arthur Barrett	VIC		
3	J.Dickey	NZL		
4	Reg Purbrick	VIC		
	C.Barr-Brown	NZL	DNF	
<b>3 MILES WALK - Men - 20 December 1901</b>				
1	Dave Wilson	NZL	22:21.0	
2	Arthur Barrett	VIC		
	C.Barr-Brown	NZL		
	Reg Purbrick	VIC		
	J.Dickey	NZL		

### **Australasian Championships - 1903-04** **Melbourne Cricket Ground, Melbourne, 30 January & 1 February 1904**

No further Australasian Championships were scheduled until 1904, but athletics continued throughout the country. Victoria had the most regular state championships, which were held annually and alternated between the Melbourne and St Kilda Cricket Grounds.

The 1904 Australasian Championships in Melbourne saw local Victorian walker **Arthur Barrett** finally break through to win both the 1 Mile and 3 Mile walks. Barrett retired from active competition in 1905, leaving an enviable record, with wins in the 1894 3 Mile and the 1904 1 Mile and 3 Mile, second placings in the 1897 1 Mile and in the 1901 1 Mile and 3 Mile, along with third placings in the 1896 1 Mile and 3 Mile - 8 championship medals in total.

<b>1 MILE WALK - Men - 1 February 1904</b>				
1	Arthur Barrett	VIC	6:43.8	
2	Francis Ross	NZL	6.53.0	
3	J. Penny	NSW		100 yards
	Peter Corrigan	NSW	DNS	
	L. Pomeroy	NSW	DNS	

	Harry Sanneman	VIC	DNS	
<b>3 MILES WALK - Men - 30 January 1904</b>				
1	Arthur Barrett	VIC	22:53.6	
2	J. Penny	NSW		550 yards
3	Francis Ross	NZL		
	L. Pomeroy	NSW	DNS	
	Peter Corrigan	NSW	DNS	
	Harry Sanneman	VIC	DNS	

The 1904 St Louis Olympic Games were a disappointment, with only 13 countries in attendance and 85% of the athletes from the USA. Australia's only two athletics entrants were hurdlers Corrie Gardner and Leslie MacPherson.

### **Australasian Championships - 1905-06**

#### **Sydney Cricket Ground, Sydney, 11 & 13 November 1905**

The Australasian Championships of 1905 were held at the SCG in Sydney and saw **L Pomeroy** of NSW win both walks.

<b>1 MILE WALK - Men - 11 November 1905</b>				
1	L. Pomeroy	NSW	6:45.0	
2	Harry Sanneman	VIC		40 yards
3	Francis Ross	NZL		
	J. Penny	NSW		
	F. Allen	NSW		
	B. Harrop	VIC	DQ	(2nd)
	C.R. Allen	NSW	DNS	
	E.C. Ryan	VIC	DNS	
<b>3 MILES WALK - Men - 13 November 1905</b>				
1	L. Pomeroy	NSW	22:22.4	
2	Francis Ross	NZL		10 yards
3	Harry Sanneman	VIC		
4	J. Penny	NSW		
	B.E. Harrop	VIC	DNF	

After the disastrous Olympics in 1900 and 1904, the IOC agreed to hold an Interim Olympics in Athens in 1906 to revive the movement. The decision to send a team was taken at the 1905 conference, held alongside the Australasian Championships in Sydney, but only 3 athletes (Nigel Barker of NSW, Greg Wheatley and George Blake of Victoria) and 1 swimmer went.

1905 also saw the formation of the South Australian Amateur Athletics Association and September 1906 saw South Australia holding its first state championships. But no South Australians competed at the Australasian Championships until 1914.

### **Australasian Championships - 1907-08**

#### **Hobart Cricket Ground, Hobart, 29 February & 2 March 1908**

The 1908 Australasian Championships were held in Hobart in February of that year, with some 2000 people in attendance on the first day. The two athletes who would become the first New Zealand Olympians as part of Australasia's team in 1908 were **Harry Kerr** who won both walks and **Henry St Aubryn Murray** who won the 440 yards hurdles.

Born at Waipuku in 1879, Kerr was regarded as an exceptional athlete, excelling at shooting, rugby and most track and field events. However, he was particularly attracted to walking, a sport he pursued as a professional. He competed at major professional events such as the New Year's Day meet in Dunedin, where his reputation caused him to concede massive handicaps.

Deciding to turn amateur at the end of the 1904 season, Kerr was required to stand down from all competition for two years and he spent that time building the strength of his 1.93-metre (6ft 4in) frame, clearing bush on his family's farm at Tariki. Returning to the track, he won both the 1 Mile and 3 Mile walks in Hobart, thus confirming his Olympic selection.

**1 MILE WALK - Men - 29 February 1908**

1	Harry Kerr	NZL	7:23.6	
2	P. Stubberfield	NZL		10 yards
3	H. Smith	NSW		
4	C. Rose	TAS		
	F. Rose	TAS	DNF	

**3 MILES WALK - Men - 2 March 1908**

1	Harry Kerr	NZL	23:55.6	
2	P. Stubberfield	NZL		
	C. Rose	TAS	DNF	
	H. Smith	NSW	DNF	

The 1908 Olympic Games, though successful, were punctuated by controversy over the officiating, which was all done by local officials. Australasia had a combined team, with 9 athletes competing in Track and Field.

Family historians say Kerr's athletics were a considerable drain on the family farm. Very much the gentleman, his travel and accommodation during the six-week sea journey to the Olympics, as he pursued his strictly amateur Olympic goals, were at his quite considerable expense. Despite almost missing the start of his race at the Olympics, he strode in a comfortable third, followed two places back by fellow Kiwi Arthur Rowland. For his efforts he received a tiny bronze medal, about a third the size of a modern Olympic medal, presented in a small box engraved "*Olympic Games, third prize 3500 Metres Walk, London 1908*". Although he qualified easily for the final of the 10,000m race, he was forced to withdraw because of bruised feet, caused by the cinder track which many grasstrained athletes were unused to.



*Harry Kerr – 1908 Olympic silver medallist for Australasia*

Kerr returned to New Zealand a national celebrity and kept faith with his supporters by winning the Australasian one and three-mile titles again in 1909 at Brisbane and in 1911 at Wellington. He won three New Zealand titles in 1911 and 1912 and his time of 21:36.6 for the three-mile race at Wellington remained the national record until 1946.

**Australasian Championships - 1909-10****Bowen Park, Brisbane, 18 & 21 August 1909**

The 1909 Australasian Championships in Brisbane saw New Zealander **Harry Kerr** win both walk events again, with championship best times of 6:33.8 (and I suspect this was probably an Australasian record) and 22:02.4.

**1 MILE WALK - Men - Saturday 21 August 1909**

1	Harry Kerr	NZL	6:33.8
2	J. Harley	NSW	6:49.0

3	H. Winters	NSW	7:03.0
4	W. Corben	NSW	
5	D. Corrigan	QLD	
6	R. Brown	QLD	
<b>3 MILES WALK - Men - Wednesday 18 August 1909</b>			
1	Harry Kerr	NZL	22:02.4
2	J. Harley	NSW	22:33.6
3	H. Winters	NSW	
	D. Corrigan	QLD	
	R. Brown	QLD	
	W. Corben	NSW	

The first Australasian Cross-Country Championships were held in Hobart in September 1910.

### **Australasian Championships 1911-12 Basin Reserve, Wellington, New Zealand, 26 & 27 December 1911**

The 1911 Australasian Championships in Wellington were dominated by the local team, with NZ winning all the track events. Australian athletes did at least win all the field events to prevent a clean sweep. **Harry Kerr** retained his two walk titles for the third time in a row. His 3 Mile walk was a championship best of 21:36.6 (just outside Arthur Barrett's Australasian best of 21:36.2, set way back in 1896) and his winning 1 Mile walk time of 6:32.8 broke his Australasian record.

<b>1 MILE WALK - Men - Tuesday 26 December 1911</b>			
1	Harry Kerr	NZL	6:32.8
2	William Murray	VIC	
3	D. Cashman	NZL	
4	J. Harley	NSW	
	W. Ellis	TAS	DQ
	J. Bennett	NZL	DQ
<b>3 MILES WALK - Men - Wednesday 27 December 1911</b>			
1	Harry Kerr	NZL	21:36.6
2	D. Cashman	NZL	30 yards
3	W. Ellis	TAS	
4	J. Harley	NSW	
	J. Bennett	NZL	DQ
	William Murray	VIC	

Victorian walker **William (Bill) Murray** finished in second place in the 1 Mile walk. Murray was a late starter to the sport of racewalking, coming to the attention of people in 1911 with wins in the Victorian 1 mile (6:40.8) and 3 mile (22:38.6) walks. He followed his second placed finish to Kerr with repeat wins in the 1912 Victorian 1 Mile and 3 Miles championships with truly astonishing times of 6:22.8 (a World Record) and 20:56.0 (an Australasian record).

These 2 performances were so ahead of their time that they withstood all challenges over the next 36 years. When the last Victorian 1 mile and 3 mile walk championships were held in 1948, they still stood as championship records. George Knott walked 21:29.0 to win the 3 mile in 1940 and walked 6:23.2 to win the 1 mile in 1948 – close to but not as good as Bill's 1912 performances. On top of that, his 3500m walk time of 14:49.4 in another race had bettered G. E. Larnar's 1908 Olympic and world record.

The 1912 Olympic Games in Stockholm were well organised, with a record 28 countries participating. The Australasian athletics team was once again a very small one, with 1 New Zealander and 4 Australians. **Bill Murray** was one of those Australians, and went in as one of the favourites. For whatever reasons, Kerr did not compete in Stockholm and he retired in 1912 from athletics.

History shows that Murray was disqualified in his Olympic 10,000m walk heat but there is more to the story, as he elaborated in later years

*The Australian team struggled from the time it landed in Europe. We had to fend for ourselves and were not properly fit. We were not there long enough to become fit. There were no Olympic Villages. You had to find your own accommodation and eat in cafes.*

There was even more to the disqualification than he acknowledged. He was one of 3 walkers disqualified in his heat, and in the final only four walkers finished, three being disqualified and another three retiring mid race. Judges had the right to unilaterally pull anyone off the track without previous warnings and the overall standard of judging was almost certainly overzealous.

Racewalking, in only its second Olympic Games, was being issued with a red card. After further controversies in the 1920 and 1924 Games, the Olympic fraternity finally lost patience with this troublesome sport and the International Amateur Athletic Federation voted to exclude walking from future Olympic programmes (9 votes to 8), the French representative expressing the hope, in view of the difficulties experienced by judges at former Games, “*that the event would be omitted for ever from the programme of the Olympiad*”.

**Australasian Championships 1913-14**  
**Amateur Sports Ground Melbourne, Victoria, 24 & 26 January 1914**

The 1914 Australasian Championships, held in Sydney in January of that year, were to be the last for 6 years. The First World War would take centre stage in August 1914, putting paid to the careers, and in many cases, the lives, of our top athletes. NSW walker **Alfred Pickard** won both walks, holding off title holder Bill Murray in each race, winning by 12 yards (1 Mile) and 3 yards (3 Miles) respectively. This was the only time his name appears in Australian championship results. He was a new walker on the block and his budding career was cut short by the coming war.

<b>1 MILE WALK - Men - Saturday 24 January 1914</b>				
1	Alfred Pickard	NSW	6:54.8	
2	William Murray	VIC		12 yards
3	Lloyd Cox	VIC		20 yards
4	R. Stokes	SA		
5	C. Cockett	NSW		
	Len Matthews	SA		
	N. Dooley	VIC		
	D. Cashman	NZL	DQ	
<b>3 MILES WALK - Men - Monday 26 January 1914</b>				
1	Alfred Pickard	NSW	22:16.8	
2	William Murray	VIC		3 yards
3	Lloyd Cox	VIC		
4	Len Matthews	SA		
	C. Cockett	NSW		
	D. Cashman	NZL		
	R. Stokes	SA		
	N. Dooley	VIC	DNS	

World War I cost the lives of many athletes as well as many potential athletes who had yet to make their marks on the sporting world. Competition did continue in Australia during the war years although it was more about school meetings and local carnivals. There were no championships in Victoria after 1915, South Australia after 1913 and NSW after 1916.

**Australasian Championships 1919-20**  
**Sydney Sports Ground, Sydney, NSW, 31 January & 7 February 1920**

Athletics resumed in 1919 and the ninth Australasian Championships were held in Sydney in January 1920. The effects of the First World War were starkly highlighted by the letter from the West Australian Association to the Biennial Conference, advising that 95% of its members had enlisted in the Great War and nearly all of them had been either killed or wounded.

With the Olympics to be held later that year in Antwerp, athletes were looking for good results. The top two Australian racewalk contenders were 29 year old **Ernie Austen** and 23 year old **George Parker**, both Sydneysiders.

George (Geo) Parker had only taken up amateur athletics in 1918, joining the Western Suburbs A.C.C. He showed promise as a distance runner, performing prominently in a 5 mile run from Bondi to Sydney. As a high jumper he cleared 6' 6" which would have earned him a place in nearly any championship. He exuded power in everything he did. At 6 feet in height and weighing in at 12 stone 10 lbs when fully fit, he physically intimidated his rivals and could have excelled at most sports.



In the latter part of 1918, he joined the N.S.W. Walking and Field Games Club and started his career as a racewalker. He soon came to the attention of Austen who took him under his wing. At the 1919 Metropolitan Championships at the Sydney Sports Grounds, he was runner-up to Austen in both the 1 mile and the 3 mile walk events.

Parker and Austen were both selected as NSW representatives to compete in the 1920 Australasian championships but Austen was expected to dominate proceedings. Parker proved the surprise of the championships with wins in both walks. On the opening day, he won the 3 mile event in 22:45.4 and, on the final day, he demonstrated his marked superiority by winning the 1 mile in 6:49, his nearest opponent being 60 yards away.

**1 MILE WALK - Men - Saturday 7 February 1920**

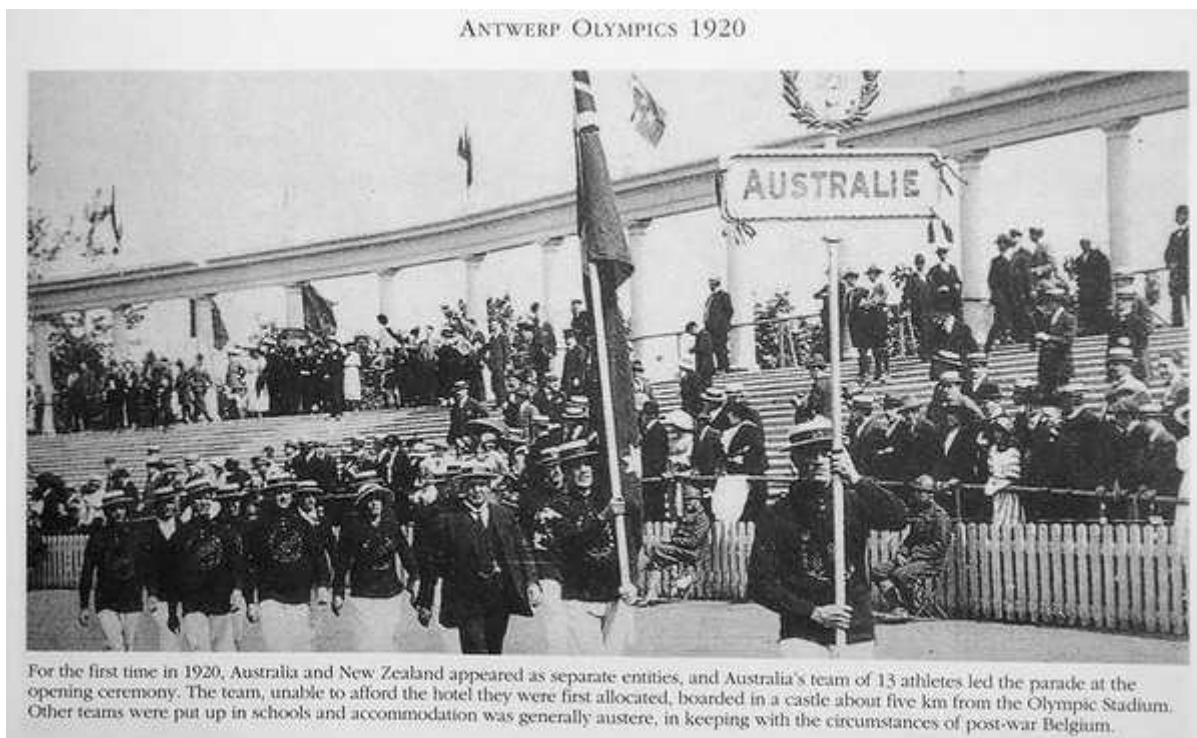
1	George Parker	NSW	6:49.0
2	Ernest Austen	NSW	
3	R. Stokes	NSW	
4	A. Sievwright	NZL	
	Joseph Mackay	VIC	
	A. Sievwright	NZL	

**3 MILES WALK - Men - Saturday 31 January 1920**

1	George Parker	NSW	22:45.4	
2	R. Stokes	NSW		140 yards
3	A. Sievwright	NZL		400 yards
4	P. McNamara	SA		
	Ernest Austen	NSW	DNF	
	W. Pitt	Qld	DNF	
	Thomas Terrell	SA	DNS	
	Joseph Mackay	VIC	DNS	

For the first time, Australia competed separately from New Zealand in the 1920 Olympics. On the basis of his performances, Parker was selected in the small Australian team but Austen missed out. His turn would come in 1924.

At the opening ceremony, where the Australian team led the procession of 26 nations, per alphabetical order, Parker was the flagbearer. He was also best performer in the small Australian team, finishing second in Antwerp to the famous Italian walker [Ugo Frigerio](#) in the 3000m walk in an estimated time of 13:19.6. He also competed in the 10,000m walk, failing to finish in the final after qualifying third in his heat, which was a lap short.



*George Parker was the flag bearer for Australia in the 1920 Olympic Opening Ceremony.*

*For the first time in 1920, Australia and New Zealand appeared as separate entities, and Australia's team of 13 athletes led the parade at the opening ceremony. The team, unable to afford the hotel they were first allocated, boarded in a castle about five km from the Olympic Stadium. Other teams were put up in schools and accommodation was generally austere, in keeping with the circumstances of post-war Belgium.*

It was to be another 40 years before Noel Freeman won Australia's next Olympic walking medal, a silver in the 20km at Rome 1960. It was then a further 44 years before Nathan Deakes and Jane Saville won the next Olympic walking medals, both bronzes, at Athens in 2004.

These initial years of Australasian racewalking had produced a series of wonderful champions which included

Dave Wilson	NZL
A. O. (Arthur) Barrett	AUS
Harry Kerr	NZL
William (Bill) Murray	AUS
George Parker	AUS

Many more would follow in their footsteps in the next 100 years.

Tim Erickson  
Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> April 2020