

## MELBOURNE AMATEUR WALKING AND TOURING CLUB

A. O. BARRETT, Esq  
Founder of the Melbourne Amateur Walking and Touring Club, 1894  
First Club Secretary, 1894-95  
Vice-President, 1899-1918  
Elected Life Member, 1918

Mr A. O. Barrett attributed the founding of the Melbourne Amateur Walking and Touring Club to his winning of the amateur walking championships at the Old East Melbourne Cricket Ground in 1892 and 1893. Being elated with his dual success, he said his “youthful whiskers fairly swept the sky” and he became most enthusiastic about the formation of a club for racing walkers. Later he gathered together a few of his athletically-minded friends, and on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> October 1894, a meeting was held at the Port Phillip Club Hotel in Flinders Street, and there the Club was formed.

In addition to his many successes in local walking events, Mr. Barrett was the holder of several Australian and Australasian records.

The first race conducted by the club was held on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> November 1894, starting at St. Kilda at 11 a.m., and finishing at Brighton, “or as the members wish”. But it was not until 1896 that any syllabus of club outings was printed. A copy of the club’s first fixture card was as follows:

### PROGRAMME OF FIXTURES, 1896-97

Date	Locality	Place and Time of Meeting
Nov 8, 1896	Werribee Gorge via Maddingley	Spencer St. Station, 11.15 a.m.
Nov 22	Warrandyte, via Ringwood	Princes Bridge Stn., 11 a.m.
Nov 28	Werribee	Spencer St. Stn., 1.53 p.m.
Dec 6	Christmas Hills, via Yarra Glen	Princes Bridge Stn., 11 a.m.
Dec 20	Mathinna Falls, Healesville	Princes Bridge Stn., 11 a.m.
Dec 26	One Mile Handicap Walking Race, Hibernian Society Sports, Exhibition Bldg.	Exhibition Oval.
Jan 31, 1897	Saw Pit Creek, Healesville	Princes Bridge Stn., 11 a.m.
Feb 13, 14	Toolangi via Yarra Glen	Princes Bridge Stn., 11 a.m.
Feb 28	Frankston	Princes Bridge Stn., 10 a.m.
Mar 14	The Lerderderg, via Maddingley	Spencer St. Station, 11.15 a.m.
Mar 20, 21	Stony Point to Sorrento	Princes Bdge. Station, 1.10 p.m.
Apr 11	Jack’s Creek, via Whittlesea	Spencer St. Stn., 11.05 a.m.
Apr 16, 21	Easter tours to be arranged (probably Marysville and Woods Point	
Apr 24	Ten Mile Walking Road Race (Handicap)	Locality to be fixed

The above programme will be adhered to as closely as possible, independent of the weather. Members, however, are requested to watch the notice board at MacLachlan’s, Tobacconist, Fink’s Buildings, corner Elizabeth and Flinders Street.

For excursions, extending over over one day, members must be properly equipped with knapsacks, etc. Members will bring provisions for the tours, except tea, etc., which will be provided by the Club. All means partaken to be out of doors. Sleeping accommodation only will be sought. Additional tours may be arranged, if desired.

Handicap walking races will be held during the season when opportunity offers. Members are requested to wear the Club badge during excursions.

The early years of the club was largely devoted to competitive walking, speed over given distances being the objective of many fixtures.

By the beginning of the century, however, it was noticeable that there was a growing appreciation by Club members of the beauties of the countryside, and of the great scope which the State had to offer for more leisurely and contemplative outings off the beaten track. A few years later, racing events had entirely disappeared from the Club syllabus, and competitive walkers had to look elsewhere for their races.

The following article was written by A. O. Barrett in later life.

#### JUDGING A WALKING RACE

##### How Should It Be Done?

On being appointed judge by the Council of the V.A.A.A. after my retirement from racing in 1905, I found myself in a quandary, having never seen a race before. When a multitude of walkers started off it became perplexing to pick out the sheep from the goats, so something had to be invented speedily to prevent the field getting out of hand. The solution came, and it was as follows: Watch a, heel, a knee, a leg, a body - do not try to look at the whole of the frame of a walker at once. By this means judging is simplified.

In our rules a judge is allowed to caution a contestant once during any lap except the last one. Any infringement of the laws in this one brings disqualification.

Here I would like to say that in my opinion judging would be easier if spiked shoes were banned in walking races. They tend to produce a lift off the back foot in order that the spikes shall not drag along the surface of the track, and this produces a movement so near to a run as disgusts me and brings derision from the spectators. In addition, they must surely prevent the necessary swivel on the ball of the back toe and so reduce the length of the stride. Jog trot results.

It was, however, once my pleasure to judge the Amateur Championships held on the St. Kilda Cricket Ground on 24th February, 1912, when W. Murray broke my records in the 1 mile and 3 miles Championships of Victoria, and set fresh records for Australasia.

The day was sunny, no wind, and cool. In both those races he walked absolutely faultlessly, and the cheers of the spectators during the last laps must have been as gratifying to him as it was to all of us in the official part of the arena, and only proves what a valuable and noble contest a walking race is in our sports when it is exemplified by a properly trained athlete,

The new records he created were one mile in 6 min. 22.5 sec., and later on the same afternoon he walked the three miles in 20 min. 56 sec. For these details I am indebted to the Hon. Sec. of the V.A.A.A., Mr. F. H. Pizzey.

In conclusion, may I suggest that the eye is not an infallible organ. When any animal is moving at speed, how little can we trust the eye. It was not until instantaneous photography came along that the ancient pictures and carvings of horses galloping were seen to be ludicrous. We are told there are 2000 million human beings on this planet and I don't believe 10 of them know what we do when we walk. I have tried to know.