

TIME FOR SOME RACEWALKING HISTORY

In October 2026, two of the Heel & Toe newsletters featured lead articles by John McPherson about the stellar careers of Sue Cook and Kerry Saxby-Junna. They are reproduced here.

John McPherson is a former Australain racewalker who now lives in Lismore, NSW. If you are an older walker, you might remember John who raced in Victoria as a young bloke in the 1970s (gold in the Victorian High Schools walk title and bronze in the Australian All Schools 3000m walk) and in Queensland in the 1980s (where he won couple of State titles – the QAAA 20km and the QRWC 15km - and briefly held the 5000m walk record) before his career was cut short by a major knee reconstruction. In the 1990s John returned to the track to win the NSW Country Championships and won bronze at the Australian University Games and the World Masters Games.

John, who is a retired academic, has always been interested in writing and research and has been working for the past couple of years on a book about Australian and New Zealand athletics world record holders. The document is now in draft mode and is sure to be a great read when it is eventually published.

The Oceania region has produced more than its fair share of racewalkers who have achieved World Records and/or World Bests. **Isaac Beacroft** with his World Records in the U20 10,000m walk and the U20 5000m walk, is the latest in the illustrious line of champions. But two walkers stand out for the quality and quantity of their World Record and World Best performances. These are **Sue Cook (nee Orr)** of Victoria and **Kerry Saxby-Junna** of NSW. I wish to thank John for sharing the chapter of his forthcoming book with us on *The World's Greatest Race Walking Record Breakers*.

THE WORLD'S GREATEST RACE WALKING RECORD BREAKERS



Sue Cook: 1987 World Championships, New York



Kerry Saxby-Junna: 1990 Commonwealth Games, Auckland

When starting to write a manuscript celebrating each of the Oceania athletics world record breakers in mid 2024 I knew that I would have an opportunity to give my former Ballina clubmate, **Kerry Saxby-Junna**, the exposure she fully deserves. I was aware that she had achieved what some called a 'world-record of world's bests'. However, I had never seen a list of her world beating times, so the exact number was uncertain. Some said it was in the vicinity of 32, others placed it in the mid twenties.

I contacted Australian Athletics and was told they didn't have a list of her world's best times. Ratified world records, yes, but not world's best times. Similarly the AIS, where Saxby-Junna was named their athlete of the year three times, and the AOC did not keep such records.

What was a real shame was that Kerry's first world's best time was 1:33.30 for a 20km road walk, held in Canberra on 13 June 1985. The unfortunate aspect was the date. Up until the start of 1985 Danish race walking statisticians, Egon Rasmussen and Palle Lassen would annually release their booklet *'The Evolution of Race Walking Records and Best*

Performances: Men and Women'. This was a highly authoritative booklet, particularly due to the involvement of the IAAF's "Mr Race Walking" Palle Lassen. The genial Lassen was the head of the IAAF's walking sub-committee for over two decades.¹

This meant that I had to develop Kerry's record from scratch, with the upper target being 32 world's bests, a number that Kerry believed was accurate. Over a number of months, researching independently and with the assistance of Kerry and her mother Jan, a list was built up that appeared to show 32 world best times. It was still uncertain, but these appeared to be the ones.

On the day that I had arrived at 32 prospective times, I sent an email to Kerry to advise her. That afternoon I then turned my attention to **Sue Cook**'s record breaking career, which all fell within the compass of Rasmussen and Lassen's work.

So I made an initial list of Sue's records. It was the sort of list that gets double checked, but my initial count of world records and world's bests was 33. I have to admit I was shocked. Double checking, I was even more astonished. Due to events where she overtook multiple previous world bests in the same race, the actual number was 34. As can be seen in another VRWC article I have prepared, Sue had two ratified world records that had been omitted incorrectly from World Athletics' record books. Lobbying World Athletics by myself and Australian Athletics statistician Paul Jenes will see Sue's record adjusted in their next progressive world record publication, which comes out every three to four years.²

After we had achieved that goal I contacted Paul to discuss my list of records for Kerry. He happily agreed to look over the list and check them wherever he could against his records. Due to questions over one of the races on the list, Paul and I agreed on 31 world bests by Kerry. There may still be a 32nd, and if members of the race walking community can assist it would be greatly appreciated as I would like to update the listing prior to finding a publisher of the manuscript, which is otherwise completed.

A list of Sue and Kerry's world bests, which are two of the best, if not the best, by any athletes in the history of world athletics, follows. Kerry set her world's best times in 31 races, while Sue's 34 came from 30 races.

If you have information that could add to these lists please contact John McPherson (a member of the Australian Society of Sports Historians and former Victorian Race Walking Club member) via the temporary Heel & Toe editor (tim.erickson02@gmail.com). Additionally, if you have newspaper clippings, or result sheets from Kerry's 3km road walk world's best time on 22 September 1987 a copy would be appreciated.

Sue Cook (nee Orr)

34 world's best performances from 30 races

4 world records ratified by the IAAF (in bold)

1.	6:35.1	1500m walk	Melbourne	8 January 1977
2.	6:29.4	1500m walk	Melbourne	3 February 1977
3.	6:28.9	1500m walk	Doncaster	21 January 1978
4.	6:27.3	1500m walk	Doncaster	4 February 1978
5.	6:24.0	1500m walk	Melbourne	12 January 1980
6.	1:15:21.0	15km road walk	Melbourne	3 February 1980
7.	1:41:41.6	20km road walk	Melbourne	3 February 1980
8.	13:20.7	3000m walk	Doncaster	8 March 1980
9.	46:48.0	10km road walk	Moss, Norway	11 May 1980
10.	1:13:59	15km road walk	Melbourne	13 July 1980
11.	6:19.0	1500m walk	Doncaster	8 November 1980
12.	6:57.1	1 mile track walk	Adelaide	12 November 1980
13.	6:47.9	1 mile track walk	Canberra	14 March 1981
14.	22:53.2	5000m walk	Adelaide	21 March 1981
15.	2:12:38	25km road walk	Canberra	20 June 1981
16.	1:39:31	20km road walk	Melbourne	20 December 1981
17.	13:20.6	3000m walk	Canberra	10 February 1982
18.	47:13.0	10,000m walk	Melbourne	28 February 1982

1 From the late 1960s until the mid 1980s, Palle Lassen and Egon Rasmussen jointly published many racewalking related books, including yearly world statistics almanacs, all-time best lists, ranking lists and world record progression lists. Nowadays, we can find all this info out via the internet, but they published it at a time when such luxuries were not even dreamed of. I have in my personal library 6 different titles of theirs, all of which have been thumbed through on many occasions. Check out the full text of the 1985 (and last) edition of [Evolution of Race Walking Records and Best Performances MEN and WOMEN](#).

2 The most recent edition is the [2024 World Records Progression book](#)

19. 22:31.5	5000m walk	Canberra	9 March 1982
20. 22:45.6	5000m walk	Adelaide	24 April 1982
21. 22:32.4	5000m walk	Box Hill	22 May 1982
22. 46:42.6	10,000m walk	Adelaide	23 May 1982
23. 12:56.5	3000m walk	Canberra	29 May 1982
24. 45:32.0	10km road walk	Canberra	10 July 1982
25. 2:45:52	30km road walk	Melbourne	5 September 1982
26. 1:12:10	15km road walk	Melbourne	19 December 1982
27. 1:39:36	20km road walk	Melbourne	19 December 1982
28. 12036 metres	1 hour track walk	Canberra	31 July 1983
29. 36:41.9	5 miles track walk	Leicester, England	14 September 1983
30. 45:47.9	10,000m walk	Leicester, England	14 September 1983
31. 6:10.8	1500m walk	Canberra	21 January 1984
32. 12:42.1	3000m walk	Canberra	10 March 1984
33. 1:11:24	15km road walk	Canberra	7 July 1984
34. 1:36:23	20km road walk	Canberra	7 July 1984

Kerry Saxby-Junna

31 world's best performances from 31 races

8 world records ratified by the IAAF (in bold)

1. 1:33:30	20km road walk	Canberra	13 July 1985
2. 44:53	10km road walk	Canberra	10 May 1986
3. 45:08	10000m walk	Moscow, USSR	9 July 1986
4. 12:20.7	3k road walk	Canberra	20 January 1987
5. 21:16.4	5000m walk	Sydney	4 April 1987
6. 21:07	5km road walk	Canberra	7 June 1987
7. 1:32:51	20km road walk	Canberra	13 June 1987
8. 42:52	10km road walk	Hobart	19 July 1987
9. 21:01	5km road walk	Furth/Nuremberg, Germany	8 August 1987
10. 20:59	5km road walk	Bad Krozingen, Germany	22 August 1987
11. 12:16	3km road walk	Hildersheim, Germany	22 September 1987
12. 20:34	5km road walk	Hildersheim, Germany	24 September 1987
13. 20:55	5000m walk	Sydney	10 January 1988
14. 42:14.2	10000m walk	Canberra	26 January 1988
15. 12:14.48	3000m walk	Sydney	20 February 1988
16. 20:45.32	5000m walk	Perth	27 March 1988
17. 1:29:40	20km road walk	Varnamo, Sweden	13 May 1988
18. 41:30	10km road walk	Canberra	27 August 1988
19. 42:46.45	10000m walk	Sydney	14 January 1989
20. 43:26.12	10000m walk	Canberra	26 January 1989
21. 12:13.75	3000m walk	Sydney	8 February 1989
22. 12:01.65	3000m indoor walk	Budapest, Hungary	4 March 1989
23. 20:32.75	5000m walk	Brisbane	19 March 1989
24. 20:25	5km road walk	Hildersheim, Germany	10 June 1989
25. 20:17.19	5000m walk	Sydney	14 January 1990
26. 12:06.42	3000m walk	Brisbane	18 March 1990
27. 42:25.2	10000m walk	Fana/Bergen, Norway	26 May 1990
28. 5:50.41	1500m walk	Sydney	20 January 1991
29. 11:51.6	3000m walk	Melbourne	7 February 1991
30. 20:03.0	5000m walk	Sydney	11 February 1996
31. 20:13.26	5000m walk	Hobart	23 February 1996

Thanks so much John. For those who want to delve a little more into the careers of these two wonderful walkers, see

Sue: <https://athletics.possumbility.com/athletes/athlete220.htm>
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sue_Cook_\(race_walker\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sue_Cook_(race_walker))
<https://www.vrwc.org.au/tim-archive/articles/wv-sue-cook.pdf>

Kerry: <https://athletics.possumbility.com/athletes/athlete127.htm>
<https://www.athletics.com.au/hall-of-fame/kerry-saxby-junna/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kerry_Saxby-Junna

<https://www.vrwc.org.au/tim-archive/articles/wa-kerry-saxby-junna.pdf>

You will see from the above tables that Sue set her last World Best in 1984 and Kerry set her first World Best in 1985. As one career finished, another started. I did manage to find one photo of the two walkers racing in the same international race in 1985. It is one of only a few such photos.



Kerry (far left) and Sue (third from left) racing together in the 1985 World Cup in the Isle of Man

With the world wide COVID-19 pandemic shutdown in 2020, I didn't have any races on which to report in my weekly Heel & Toe Online newsletter, so I posed 5 racewalking related questions each week. These questions (and their answers) are captured for posterity via link <https://www.vrwc.org.au/RW-Questions.shtml>. The answers to 9 of those questions either pointed directly to Sue or Kerry or included references to them as contenders.

6. Which Australian walker has the most appearances in the World Athletics Race Walking Team Championships?
9. Which Australian walker has the most medals from major championships (Olympics, World Champs, World Team Champs, Commonwealth Games)?
10. What are the longest standing and the most recent Australian racewalking records?
22. Which Australian walkers have represented Australia at 3 separate Olympics? Has anyone done 4 Olympics?
33. A double barrelled question – who was the first Australian walker to feature on a postage stamp, and how many Australian walkers overall have had this honour bestowed on them?
37. You would have read above that 1908 Olympic walk champion George Larner has a bus named in his honour. Do any walkers have streets or walkways or similar things named in their honour?
51. Which Victorian walker boasts the longest and most prolific national career (in terms of winning Australian and State Championships medals) of any Australian.
53. Who is the Australian walker who won two World championship golds, earned a bronze in the IAAF World Cup and set over 30 World records or World best times.
68. What athlete won the first women's walk contested at the Commonwealth Games?

Now that's what you call leaving behind a big footprint!

WORLD ATHLETICS SET TO BELATEDLY RECOGNISE SOME OF SUE COOK'S WORLD RECORDS

Following on from **John McPherson's** article about Sue Cook and Kerry Saxby-Junna in last week's newsletter, I reproduce the second part of the story, thanks to John's ongoing investigations.

On the weekend of 22/23 May 1982, **Sue Cook** produced one of the most outstanding achievements in Australian athletics history. On the Saturday, competing in the Melbourne suburb of Box Hill, she broke the world record that she had set a month earlier in Adelaide by 13.2 seconds, stopping the clock at **22:32.4**. The world record documentation was duly filled out and signed off by the chief judge Ray Smith, the five other judges and official lap counter and sent to the appropriate official at the AAU.

She then hopped on a plane so that she could compete in Adelaide the following morning. This time the distance was 10,000 metres, a women's track event, like the women's 5,000 metres walk, that the IAAF had finally recognised as eligible for world record ratification from 1981. Sue recorded **46:42.6**, beating both Sweden's Ann Jansen's 1981 world record of 47:58.2 and Sue's own time of 47:13.0 that she had set in Melbourne on 28 February, three months earlier than her Adelaide world record. Her Melbourne time was a world's best for the distance but uncertainty existed for its world record eligibility due to it being a mixed gender event.

As part of developing a yet-to-be-published manuscript, earlier this year, I sent Sue a list that I had developed of the astonishing 34 world's best times she achieved during her career.

I asked Sue to look over the list, also posing the question: was she aware that it was this many. She replied that she wasn't but noted I had a typo for her Adelaide 10,000 metres time. To confirm this she sent me a photo of a gold plaque that the IAAF had sent her, acknowledging both her Melbourne and Adelaide times as world records.

I immediately realised that neither of these 10,000 metre walks were included in the World Athletics Progression of Athletics World Records, a book that is updated every few years, that includes every athletics world record ever recognised by the IAAF (now World Athletics). Additionally the Progressions book also notes world best times for world record distances that, for one reason or another, did not achieve world record ratification. Neither of her 10,000 metres walk times appeared in that list.

Looking at the picture of the plaque I realised why. For some reason a bureaucratic mis-step at the IAAF had resulted in them referring to both races on the plaque as 10km races. As the term 10km implies that they were road races, for which there weren't world records, neither race was formally acknowledged in their official Progressions book and, as a result, were lost to history.

I immediately contacted World Athletics and had an email exchange with one of their officials. Sue sent me press clippings of the Adelaide event which proved that it was a track event, which I then forwarded to the official, pressing for the record to once again be recognised.

She also told me that about six months after her Box Hill record a new records official took office at the headquarters of the Australian Athletics Union. Going through various documents in his new office he discovered the record application paperwork for her 22 May 1982 5,000 metres record. It had never been sent to the IAAF and, as such, was not ratified. This meant that now, neither of the world records from Sue's incredible weekend were recognised.

Discussing the 10,000 metres issue with Mark Wall, Sue decided to contact Australian Athletics statistician Paul Jenès, who holds the position of Chairman of the global body: the Association of Track and Field Statisticians. Paul immediately got in touch with Richard Hyman, the editor of the World Records Progression book.

Overnight, Australian time, after looking at the evidence and the email sent by his organisation's chair, Hyman sent an email to all involved and said that the records will be corrected in the next edition of the book. Sue's forgotten record from May 23 1982 is to be revived!

I sent a further email to Richard asking about the February 28 time, which was acknowledged in the IAAF plaque. While his reply wasn't specific, it appeared as though this too will be recognised.

Currently Australian Athletics listing credits Sue with just two ratified world records. The next edition, due "in about 2028" will tell us if Sue Cook is now recognised as having three, and possibly four, ratified world records.

John McPherson, 6 September 2026

Thanks once again John. To complete this discussion, here are the World Best / World Record progression lists for the 5000m and 10,000m track walks, as per the 2024 IAAF book (<https://iaafmedia.s3.amazonaws.com/ebooks/world-records-progression/index.html>).

Note that, although the Fédération Sportive Féminine Internationale (FSFI) and the International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) amalgamated in 1934, allowing the IAAF to take control of all women's international track and field events, women's walking world records were not officially recognised by the IAAF until 1981. The records that the IAAF has recognised from then on are shown in **bold**. The performances of Sue and Kerry are in **yellow**.

WOMEN 5000M TRACK

25:48.8	Linnea Olsson (SWE)	Kristinehamn	25.09.1938
25:34.8t	Birgit Frisk (SWE)	Örebro	07.06.1942
25:13.4	May Holmén (SWE)	Tidan	12.07.1942
25:12.4	Linnea Olsson (SWE)	Uppsala	20.09.1942
24:57.4	May Johansson (SWE)	Varberg	11.07.1943
24:56.8	May Bengtsson (Johansson) (SWE)	Kumla	10.09.1944
24:47.2	May Bengtsson (SWE)	Örebro	01.10.1944
24:45.0	May Bengtsson (SWE)	Varberg	01.09.1946
24:27.5	Ingrid Johansson (SWE)	Borås	07.10.1951
24:18.0	Margareta Simu (SWE)	Sala	04.08.1974
24:16.2	Sue Brodock (USA)	Stockholm	24.08.1974
24:03.8	Jacqueline Delassaux (FRA)	Rennes	09.06.1975
23:58.8	Jacqueline Delassaux (FRA)	Nancy	21.06.1975
23:58.0	Jacqueline Delassaux (FRA)	Epinay sur Seine	11.04.1976
23:48.2	Margareta Simu (SWE)	Lyngby	14.08.1976
23:33.7	Britt Holmquist (SWE)	Stockholm	26.07.1977
23:25.0	Siv Gustavsson (SWE)	Göteborg	31.07.1977
23:17.5	Thorill Gylder (NOR)	Oslo	04.08.1978
23:11.2	Carol Tyson (GBR)	Östersund	30.06.1979
22:53.2	Sue Cook (AUS)	Adelaide	21.03.1981
22:50.0	Aleksandra Deverinskaya (URS)	Leningrad	24.07.1981
22:31.5	Sue Cook (AUS)	Canberra	09.03.1982
22:45.6	Sue Cook (AUS)	Adelaide	24.04.1982
22:41.4	Aleksandra Deverinskaya (URS)	Fana/Bergen(NOR)	15.05.1982
22:32.4	Sue Cook (AUS)	Melbourne	22.05.1982
22:32.4	Aleksandra Deverinskaya (URS)	Oryol	09.07.1982
22:04.0	Olga Yarutkina (URS)	Dnepropetrovsk	21.08.1983
21:51.85	Giuliana Salce (ITA)	L'Aquila	01.10.1983
21:40.3	Yan Hong (CHN)	Fana/Bergen (NOR)	05.05.1984
21:36.2	Olga Krishtop (URS)	Penza	04.08.1984
21:35.25	Giuliana Salce (ITA)	Verona	19.06.1986
21:33.8	Wang Yan (CHN)	Jinan	09.03.1986
21:34.37	Li Sujie (CHN)	Beijing	07/09/1986
21:26.5	Guan Ping (CHN)	Qingdao	17.10.1986
21:20.2	Yan Hong (CHN)	Xinglong	29.03.1987
21:16.4	Kerry Saxby (AUS)	Sydney	04.04.1987
20:55.0	Kerry Saxby (AUS)	Sydney	10.01.1988
20:45.32	Kerry Saxby (AUS)	Perth	27.03.1988
20:32.75	Kerry Saxby (AUS)	Brisbane	19.03.1989
29:27.59	Ileana Salvador (ITA)	Trento	03.06.1989
20:17.19	Kerry Saxby (AUS)	Sydney	14.01.1990
20:07.52	Beate Anders (GDR)	Rostock	23.06.1990
20:03.0	Kerry Saxby-Junna (AUS)	Sydney	11.02.1996
20:13.26	Kerry Saxby-Junna (AUS)	Hobart	23.02.1996
20:02.60	Gillian O'Sullivan (IRE)	Dublin	13.07.2002

WOMEN 10,000M TRACK

52:06.6	May Johansson (SWE)	Motala	12.09.1943
52:01.9	Mary Nilsson (SWE)	Sala	14.09.1958
51:06.8	Eivor Johansson (SWE)	Östersund	22.08.1971
49:46.8	Siv Gustavsson (SWE)	Örnsköldsvik	01.08.1976
48:59.0	Margareta Simu (SWE)	Västerås	16.04.1977
48:40.3	Siv Gustavsson (SWE)	Göteborg	30.04.1977

48:37.6	Marion Fawkes (GBR)	Hornchurch	31.03.1979
48:11.4	Marion Fawkes (GBR)	Härnösand	08.07.1979
47:58.2	Ann Jansson (SWE)	Falkenberg	17.10.1981
47:13.0 *	Sue Cook (AUS)	Melbourne	28.02.1982 (to be upgraded in next ed'n)
46:42.6 *	Sue Cook (AUS)	Adelaide	23.05.1982 (to be upgraded in next ed'n)
46:15.6	Rosa Underova (URS)	Oryol	28.08.1983
45:47.0	Sue Cook (AUS)	Leicester	14.09.1983
45:39.5	Yan Hong (CHN)	København	13.05.1984
45:31.9	Xu Yongjiu (CHN)	Jian	10.03.1986
44:59.2	Xu Yongjiu (CHN)	Fuxin	30.03.1986
44:32.50	Yelena Kuznetsova (URS)	Bryansk	16.08.1986
44:26.5	Xu Yongjiu (CHN)	Xinglong	31.03.1987
43:52.1	Chen Yueling (CHN)	Guangzhou	24.10.1987
42:14.2	Kerry Saxby (AUS)	Canberra	26.01.1988
43:36.5	Yelena Nikolayeva (URS)	Fana/Bergen	07.05.1988
43:36.41	Yelena Nikolayeva (URS)	Kiev	30.07.1988
43:26.12	Kerry Saxby (AUS)	Canberra	26.01.1989
43:08.4	Nadezhda Ryashkina (URS)	Fana/Bergen	28.04.1989
42:39.2	Ileana Salvador (ITA)	Roma	17.06.1989
42:25.2	Kerry Saxby (AUS)	Fana/Bergen	26.05.1990
41:56.23	Nadezhda Ryashkina (URS)	Seattle	24.07.1990
41:37.9	Gao Hongmiao (CHN)	Beijing	07.04.1994

John has pointed out that there are two times done by Kerry that should be on the list but are currently missing.

45:08 Kerry Saxby (AUS) Moscow, USSR 09.07.1986.

This was faster than the ratified world record. It is uncertain as to why this Goodwill Games result was not ratified as the judging procedures were no doubt appropriate. Xu Yongjiu had done a faster time three months earlier in Fujin, but it was not ratified. Kerry was under the impression her effort was a world record, so it is possible that it didn't get lodged by officials, similar to Sue's Box Hill 5000m record in 1982.

42:46.45 Kerry Saxby (AUS) Sydney 14.01.1989.
(not listed in the IAAF book, but confirmed with Paul Jenes)

And finally, what article would be complete without a couple of pics.



*Left: Kerry and Tim at the 2018 Australian 10,000m walk championship in Canberra
Right: Sue and Tim – a 1982 promo shot for the Westgate Bridge Fun Run*