

JANET HOLMES

This article was written by VRWC member Heather Carr and was published initially in the Victorian Masters Assn newsletter Footprints. Thank you Heather for allowing me to add it to our VRWC archives...Tim Erickson...August 2014

Janet Holmes, a 59 year old Masters Athlete, has lived in East Malvern for the past 30 years, and primarily attends the Glen Eira venue of the Victorian Masters.

Janet has a very interesting athletic 'history', beginning with her school days, where she attended Ruyton Girls Grammar. During her final year at Ruyton in 1970 she tried out for her school house sports in the 100 yard dash; but as she discovered, was not a sprinter, did not make the 'grade', and so any aspirations of athletic fame and fortune were subsequently dashed! During this time, cross country was not even an option, so Janet's dreams were thwarted then and there! Fortunately the story does not end there, as in 1997, following her discouraging schoolgirl attempts 20 years earlier, Janet attended her first Victorian Veterans Athletic Championships, and thus began an enduring and very successful association with athletics.

Janet interest in running was carefully nurtured when she was encouraged from being a spectator of sprints to actually becoming involved in running longer distances. Beginning in 1978 with jogging around the suburban block where she lived, taking around four minutes, to running at lunchtime with husband Jon who was also transitioning from sprinting to longer distance runs. Eventually these training runs progressed into fun runs and ultimately the 'Two Bridges' run. This run was connected with the Marathon Club which included the Anderson Street and Swan Street Bridges. Running evolved to the point when in 1985, Janet competed in a half marathon in Forest Hill, and was thrilled to break two hours. Her children, Julia, now 30, Josie, now 28 and Rob now 26 competed in 'Little Athletics' and the family rallied in support of one another in more fun runs. Janet came into contact with Doug Adeney through Little Athletics, who encouraged Janet to attend the Caulfield venue of Veterans Athletics, and thus began her long relationship with running and racewalking.

In 1997, Janet and Jon entered the World Athletic Championships in Durban, South Africa. Janet entered the W40 10km Cross Country finishing with a time of 48:48, placing 26th and a 5th team placing. Then in the W40 10km roadwalk she placed 10th with a time of 1:03.40, and won a silver medal along with Heather Carr (McDonald) and Barbara Atkinson. Whilst in Africa, Janet's fitness was at a pronounced peak so the adventure of climbing Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania was absolutely unique and amazing. One of Janet's life's highlights!

Following Janet's South African successful journey in 1997, she joined Glenhuntly Athletic Club where she concentrated on racewalking.

The next phase of Janet's career in athletics began prior to 1999 when the World Athletic Championships were held in Gateshead in the UK. Janet was also a member of the Victorian Race Walkers Club, circa 1998, and it was at this venue that her long association with Lloyd Nicholls, her coach and mentor began. Lloyd offered to coach Janet and in so doing she joined a racewalking group that met at Jells Park every Monday. Janet then began a rigorous training program that required 5 km 'chases', attempting to 'catch' the person in front. Speed training also came into the equation. Track work of 6 x 400 metres Mondays and Fridays proved to be testing and tiring; an exhaustive schedule designed for improvement - and one which resulted in a most positive outcome!

In 1999, in the World Championships in Gateshead in the UK, Janet, aged 46, once again finished 10th in W45 10,000m racewalk in a time of 1:02.36. The same Australian team as Durban won the silver medal!! (Janet did not enter the 5km track walk). Janet then began specializing in racewalking.

Janet's improving times lead to her best times being recorded at the Australian Championships in Hobart in 2000. 57:27 for the 10km racewalk and 28:09 for the 5km track walk. An immense improvement of over 5 minutes over 10km in less than a year. A great result for all her hard work.

Unfortunately in 2001 Janet sustained a stress fracture of the tibia. This traumatic injury stopped Janet from competing in the World Championships held in Brisbane that year.

Returning refreshed in 2002, Janet competed in Geelong at the 11th Oceania Veterans Athletic Championships. In the W45 10km racewalk, she finished 3rd in 1:00.58 and in the W45 5000m racewalk, finished 2nd in 29:17.35. In the Melbourne 2002 World Masters Games, Janet competed in the same events.

In 2004 during the 12th Oceania Masters Athletics Championships, Rarotonga, Cook Islands, Janet entered the W50 10km, finishing 3rd in 1:01.20, and in the W50 5000m racewalk, celebrating in first place with a time of 29:02.12.

In 2006 in Christchurch at the 13th Oceania Masters Athletic Championships W50 3000m racewalk Janet finished 3rd in 17:01.25 and in the W50 5000m racewalk finished 3rd in 29:18.50 and finally in the W50 10km racewalk finished 2nd in 1:00.59.

In Townsville at the 2008 at the 14th Oceania Masters Athletic Championships, in the W55 3000m racewalk Janet was unfortunately disqualified, but won the W55 5000m racewalk silver in 28:59.08 and the W55 10km racewalk bronze in 1:01.29. Team medal for W35-59 was silver, and team members were Marlene Gourlay and Lynda Woodward.

In her next appearance at the 2007 World Championships in Riccione, Italy, when she travelled with staunch friend, Gwen Steed, Janet finished 11th in the W50 10km racewalk in a time of 1:03.30, and 6th for the W50 5km racewalk in 29:43.30. Also in 2007 during the World Masters Masters in Melbourne Janet competed in the 5000m racewalk with a time of 29:10.38, as well as competing in the 10km racewalk.

By 2009, Janet had decided that she would concentrate on running, as her hamstring injury was proving to be a problem and she was also experiencing recurring knee problems. This led to some disqualifications, which was extremely frustrating, after working and training so hard and then discovering at the end of the race she faced a disqualification. It was during the Geelong Masters Games that Janet was persuaded to try some running.

From this awakening, Janet entered the Victorian Championships as a runner and was successful in both the 400 and the 800 metres in her age group. Janet really enjoyed this experience. Her P.B. for 400 metres is 75.92, run at the Australian Athletic Championships in Melbourne 2012. For Janet's 800 metres her P.B. is 2:55.42 established at Brisbane in 2011.

Since then, there has been no holding Janet back!! Competitions include the AV Shield Team where Janet competed for the Masters team, both summer track and winter cross country. To add variety, as well as pick up a few extra points for the team, Janet has added throwing events to her repertoire including javelin, shot put and discus. to add to her versatility Janet has added the Victorian Masters Track & Field Pentathlon!

Janet still holds a penchant for 10km racewalking and 400/800 runs. The marvellous part of all of this, is that Janet has found pleasure and fun can coexist in athletics!! Friendships have developed into long lasting companionships. In earlier years, Janet worked full time, so there was little time to socialise and establish lasting friendships. Since finishing full time work, Janet has discovered a "whole new world of people at Vets to meet and compete with". Early in her racewalking career Janet travelled interstate and overseas to New Zealand with coach Lloyd Nicholls and his wife Thelma. More recently Janet has travelled, again interstate and overseas with her close and steadfast friend, Gwen Steed. These adventures have created a whole new vista for Janet. "Athletics and meeting with the people who participate has made a major change in my life and you are free to have a go at any event you like. I can probably run further and faster than I could when I was a couch potato at 20."

Janet trains with Shirley Coppock and Lloyd Nicholls on Mondays at Jells Park and together they switched from racewalking to running. Janet and Shirley complete 400 repetitions or strenuous hill work, depending on their upcoming competitions. Janet also attends Glen Eira Masters venue on Tuesdays and East Burwood Masters venue on Thursdays for competition. On Fridays Janet performs interval work of 300 metres and

then strength work stair running. She accomplishes a long run on Saturdays when not competing and laps of Mentone track on Sundays with fellow athletes.

Janet has achieved success through her determination and resolute persistence and perseverance over many many years. Well done and congratulations Janet.