

FRANK CLARK

Let's go back 50 years to the 1969 Australian T&F Championships which were held on the cinders track at Olympic Park in Melbourne and which featured an Open Men's 3000m Track Walk. The 3000m walk, which was held in pouring rain, saw NSW walker **Frank Clark** win with a time of 12:54.4.



Frank Clark wins the Australian 3000m Track Walk in Melbourne 50 years ago

Stuart Cooper remembers the occasion

I was at the track that day. The rain didn't let up at all, and the whole of the back straight was a muddy bog. I saw Ron Clarke win the national 10,000m and Ralph Doubell the 800m. They were tough in those days.

I watched the 3000m walk from the stands. Frank led all the way but for a brief moment with two laps to go, when Graeme Nicholls - who'd been at his shoulder throughout - overtook him. Frank soon got the lead back, while Graeme's energy expense on that boggy surface (he was 19 at the time) told and he fell a long way back, being overtaken by Noel Freeman and eventually DQ'd. Frank was totally dominant that day. His time in those conditions was remarkable.

It was Frank's only national win on the track and it balances nicely with 3 track silvers and three track bronzes. His national track medal performances read as follows

2 Mile Walk

1961	Bob Gardiner	VIC	14.40.2	Frank Clark	NSW	14.44.8	Peter Waddell	NSW	14:45.2
1963	Noel Freeman	VIC	14.32.1	Frank Clark	NSW	14.50.7	Frank Leonard	NSW	14.59.3
1964	Noel Freeman	VIC	13.58.6	Bob Gardiner	VIC	14.36.6	Frank Clark	NSW	14.40.2
1965	Bob Gardiner	VIC	14.10.2	Noel Freeman	VIC	14:16.6	Frank Clark	NSW	14:16.8

3000m Walk

1968	Noel Freeman	VIC	12.39.6	Frank Clark	NSW	12:41.6	Peter McCullagh	SA	13:31.4
1969	Frank Clark	NSW	12.54.4	Bob Gardiner	VIC	13:24.6	Wayne Melville	TAS	13:37.6
1972	Ross Haywood	VIC	12.44.8	Frank Clark	NSW	12:47.6	Frank Leonard	SA	13:09.0

Frank had an illustrious career on the road as well, winning 2 golds, 1 silver and 3 bronzes in Australian road titles.

National Championships

1964 Aust. Roadwalks	50 km Walk	3	4:31:21.6
1965 Aust. Roadwalks	20 km Walk	2	1:37:35.0
1966 Aust. Roadwalks	50 km Walk	3	4:28:06.2
1967 Aust. Roadwalks	20 km Walk	1	1:35:13.6
1968 Aust. Roadwalks	50 km Walk	3	4:30:34.0
1969 Aust. Roadwalks	20 km Walk	1	1:31:56.6

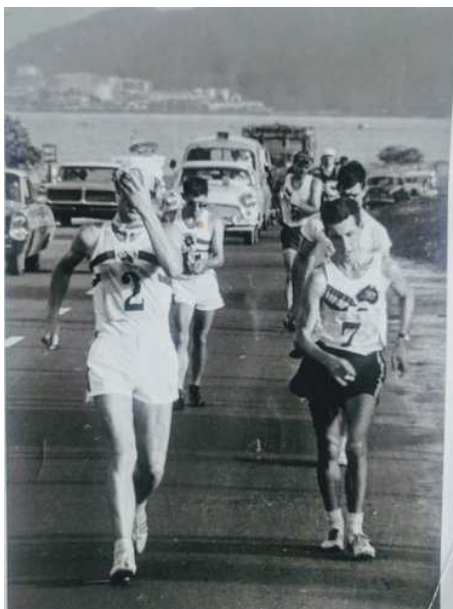
Internationally, he repped at the 1966 Commonwealth Games and the 1968 Olympics.

International Representations

1966 Commonwealth Games	20 mile Walk	DNF	
1968 Olympic Games	20 km Walk	16	1:40:06.0
1968 Olympic Games	50 km Walk	12	4:40:13.8

Frank born 11th September 1943, turned 75 last year and is still going strong.

Let's look back into the photo vault 53 years to the 1966 Commonwealth Games in Kingston, Jamaica, when the walk distance was 20 Miles. The photo below shows English walker **Ron Wallwork** leading alongside Australian **Frank Clark**, followed by English walkers **Don Thompson** and **Ray Middleton**.



Leaders in the 1966 Commonwealth Games 20 Miles in Jamaica (photo Frank Clark)

Now this is a pretty famous group of names.

- **Frank Clark** was one of our top walkers throughout the sixties and is the person featured in this short article (see <http://www.vrwc.org.au/newsletters/heelandtoe-2019-num28.pdf>)
- **Ron Wallwork** represented England many times in the sixties, did 2 Commonwealth games, and is still active today, being the main Enfield League organiser and a regular contributor to this newsletter.
- **Don Thompson** was the 1960 Olympic 50km gold medallist and a walker without equal over the ultra long distances (see <http://www.vrwc.org.au/tim-archive/articles/wo-don-thompson.pdf>)
- **Ray Middleton** was one of the most versatile walkers of that era, excelling from short distances right through to the long distance classics like the London to Brighton. He represented England at 7 Lugano Cups. See my article at <http://www.vrwc.org.au/tim-archive/articles/wo-ray-middleton.pdf>.

Tim Erickson
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