

GORDON SMITH - AUSTRALIA'S FIRST CENTURION



Left: Gordon in the early 1930's in bushwalking mode - Tall, with a magnificent physique, he looked like he'd strolled straight out of an old Chesty Bonds singlet commercial.

Paybook photograph, taken on enlistment in June 1940, of NX26819 Private Gordon Archibald Smith, 2/19th Battalion, Australian Infantry¹

Gordon Archibald Smith, born 18 January 1902 in Burwood, NSW, was one of the most consistent racewalkers in NSW for a long period from the early 1920's right up to the outbreak of war.

A NSW Walking Club coach picked him out from a number of his school mates as being out of the ordinary and suggested he should join an athletics Club. He did so in 1921 and in 1922 he proved the discernment of his nominator by winning his first State Championship, the NSW 20 mile title, at 20 years of age. From then on, his 17 year career saw him accumulate 17 Gold and 5 Silver Medals in NSW State Championships, a silver in the 1935 Australian 50 km championship and a swag of State and Australasian records for distances from 15 miles upwards. The following list shows his wonderful championship record over this extended period.

1922	NSW 20 mile title	1 st in 3:37:16
1926	NSW 20 mile title	2 nd
	NSW 50 km title	2 nd
	NSW 15 mile title	1 st in 2:20:45 (New State road best time)
	NSW 50 mile title	1 st in 9:17:32 (New Australasian record). Course was from Sydney to Camden
1928	NSW 20 mile title	1 st in 3:23:23
	NSW 50 mile title	1 st in 9:24:08
	New state record for 15 miles	(2:18:15)
1929	NSW 50 km title	1 st in 5:10:27 (New Australasian best)
	NSW 50 mile title	1 st in 9:28:49 Course was from Sydney to Camden
1931	NSW 15 mile title	1 st in 2:08:10
	NSW 20 mile title	1 st in 3:15:31
	NSW 20 mile title	1 st in 3:07:49 (new State road best time)
	NSW 50 km title	1 st in 5:07:02
1932	NSW 15 mile title	1 st in 2:11:40
	NSW 50 km title	1 st in 5:35:08
1934	VIC 50 km title	3 rd in 5:01:32
1935	NSW 50 km title	1 st in 5:08:30
	AUST 50 km title	2 nd in 5:11:52
1936	NSW 30 km title	1 st in 2:56:15
1937	NSW 30 km title	1 st in 2:55:06

1 Source: <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C333590>

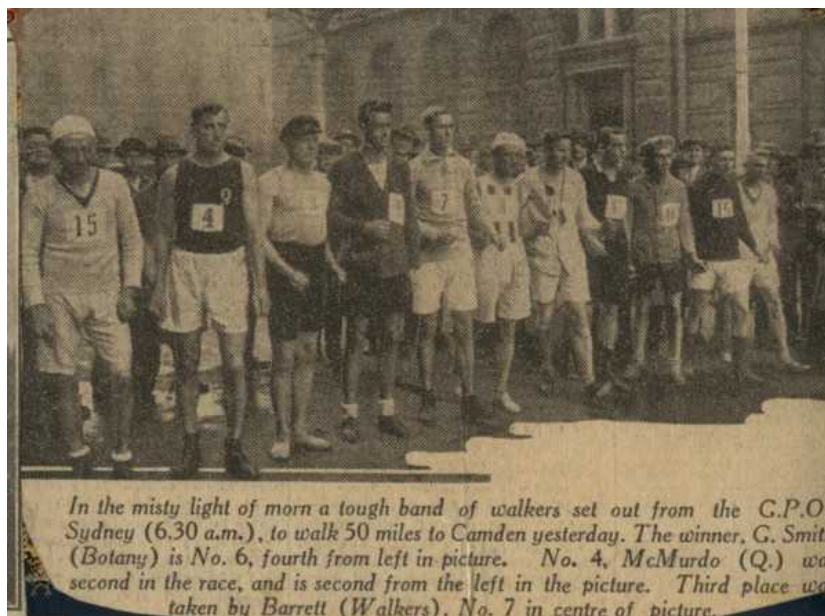
	NSW 50 km title	1 st in 5:28:03
	NSW 20 km title	2 nd in 1:55:03
1938	NSW 50 km title	1 st in 5:18:15

But it was when the first NSW 50 Mile Championship was scheduled in 1926 that Gordon really found his forte. On this occasion, he was second to Victorian Jack Lewis ² who set a new Australasian record of 9:20:24. But in the next scheduling of this championship in 1927, Gordon won easily and broke Lewis's record with an excellent 9:17:32.4. The following newspaper cutting gives some details of the walk

In winning the 50 mile road walking championship of N.S.W. last Saturday in 9hr 18min 32 2-5sec, G. A. S. Smith clipped 2min 51 3-5sec off the Australasian record. The contest was over a course from Sydney to Camden, and at the finish the winner was enthusiastically cheered.

Smith was faster throughout than last year. Harper retired before 15 miles, Stone at 19 miles, Darke at 25 and Kingston at 30. At 27 miles, Smith was ahead of the best previous record by 2min 23sec, and he established new figures from there right to the finish. The best previous figures were: 30 miles 5.24.29 Barrett (1926); 35 miles 6.27.02 Barrett (1926); 40 miles 7.24.6 Lewis (1926); 45 miles 8.26.9 Lewis (1926); and 50 miles 9.20.24 Lewis (1926). Smith also shifted various kilometres and "hours" records. ³

Repeat wins in 1928 and 1929 stamped him as Australia's leading long distance walking exponent. Alas, although we do know that NSW long distance championships continued to be scheduled throughout the 1930s, the results are not available ⁴. But given that he continued to win the NSW titles over the shorter distances during this period, we can assume that he continued to excel in whatever long distance events were available.



The start of the 1929 NSW 50 Mile championship. Gordon Smith is fourth from the left in the dark top.

In particular, three outstanding long distance racewalks that Gordon did in 1937 and 1938 stand as his greatest achievements. More about these later on.

Like many walkers of the era, he also had an interest in bush walking and joined the Sydney Bush Walkers ⁵ in 1928 as a foundation member. In the early days of the Club he pioneered, with fellow club members, a number of routes, some of which are now popular walks. They included the first traverse of the Gangerang, where his name was given to the pass leading to the range from Kanagra ⁶ and the first trip down the Colo River.

² See <http://vrwc.org.au/tim-archive/articles/wv-jack-lewis.pdf> for further details of Jack Lewis

³ Bert Gardiner Archives, Victorian Race Walking Club

⁴ When fire destroyed a Sydney pavilion in the 1970s, most of the archival materials of the New South Wales Amateur Walking Club were lost.

⁵ See <http://www.sbw.org.au/> for further information on the Sydney Bush Walkers

⁶ When Sydney Bush Walkers was formed in 1927, vast areas of now well known bushwalking country such as Kanangra Boyd National Park were still unexplored.

In fact, he was one of the "Tiger Walkers" of Sydney Bush Walkers, a list that included Dot Butler, Jack Debert and Max (Maxwell) Gentle (among others). The Tiger Walkers travelled light and fast in their explorations of new areas for which topographic maps did not exist. They were among the many who assembled information for the several Myles Dunphy sketch maps of the Blue Mountains.⁷

Gordon used his knowledge and experience of walking, together with a capacity for detailed planning, to organise many very enjoyable trips for his club mates. It would have been much easier for him to go on long walks with a few strong walkers, but he usually preferred to take a large party of average, or even weak members. By good team work they were enabled to enjoy walks they could never have done on their own. He led his parties by quiet guidance and encouragement, never by assertion: which capacity is perhaps the measure of true leadership. His unassuming manner and quiet persuasiveness endeared him to all who knew him.⁸

The Sydney Walkers Club document 'The First Sixty Years' contains many references to Gordon, his many exploits and the many trips he organised.⁹

The Blue Mountains Gazette described Gordon as follows in a 2018 article¹⁰

Legendary Blue Mountains bushwalker Gordon Smith was a man who looked like he'd strolled straight out of an old Chesty Bonds singlet commercial. Tall, with a magnificent physique, this founding member of the Sydney Bush Walkers club went on many an epic adventure in the Grose, Wollemi, Gangarang and Kanangra wilderness areas in the 1920s and 1930s. He was part of the club's "Tiger Walkers" clique renowned for their feats of speed, endurance and daring over the roughest terrain.



*Tigers at Carlons Head, 25 April 1937. Left to right - Jack Debert, Gordon Smith, Bill McCosker, Len Scotland, David Stead, Alex Colley, Hilma Galliot, Dot English, Norbert Carlon, Max Gentle. Photo: Alex Colley.*¹¹

Gordon's name appears on two localities.

- When you venture towards Mt Cloudmaker from Kanangra Walls you descend **Gordon Smith Pass** off Mt Brennan as the last plateau of the Kanangra Walls massif.

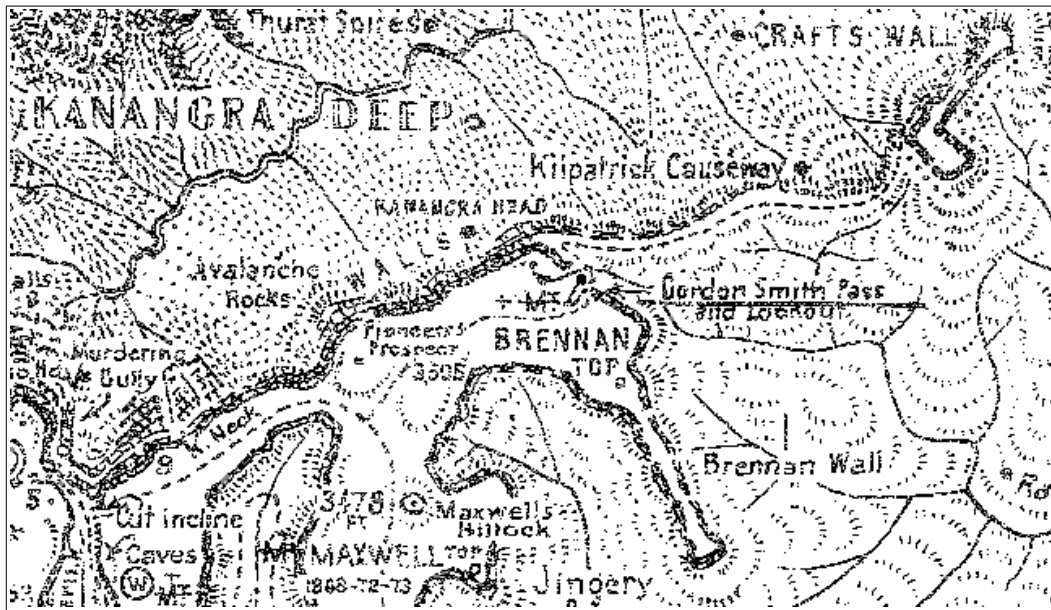
7 This and related information on the areas named after Gordon were written by Keith Maxwell (NSW Confederation of Bushwalking clubs) and passed onto me by Belinda Keir of the Sydney Bush Walkers

8 This information supplied by Belinda Keir of the Sydney Bush Walkers

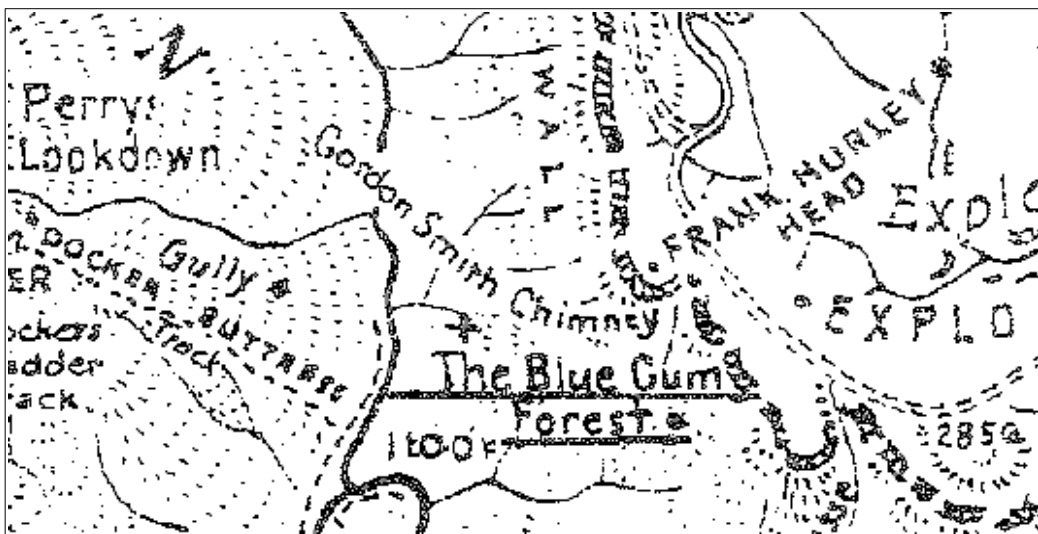
9 See <http://www.sbw.org.au/images/Documents/First%2060%20years-1.pdf>

10 See <https://www.bluemountaingazette.com.au/story/5691758/celebration-of-bushwalker-gordon-smith-who-died-on-borneo-death-march/>

11 See http://www.sbw.org.au/Content_Common/pg-About-us-Sydney-Bushwalkers-Sydney-Bush-Walkers-Walking-Club-Sydney-Bushwalking-Bush-Walking-seo



- **The Gordon Smith Chimney** is a difficult pass to ascend from Blue Gum Forest up Banks Walls onto Mt Banks. Thus it is a pass through the high cliffs of the Grose Valley. The pass goes up between the Grose Walls and a tall separate block (to make the chimney) There may have been a rock fall so that this pass is now far less easy than when discovered. In January 1971 a Scout died from a fall while attempting to descend this pass at night. It was a difficult task to rescue his seriously injured companion.



And now to move swiftly to the sad end to this story. In June 1940 Gordon resigned from his Public Service position, said good bye to his wife and joined the long list of able bodied men who answered the call, enlisting in the 6th Infantry Battalion with the rank of Private. This was no easy decision – he was 38 years of age, had been married for 15 years (he married his wife Mary in 1923) and had a son Gordon, then aged 12. He was heavily involved in bushwalking and racewalking and had his own career.

Soon he embarked to Singapore and was transferred to 2/19 Infantry Battalion on Intelligence Duties. Able to read maps and negotiate unknown terrains, he was an obvious choice for such a role.



Gordon Smith (in middle, without hat) in Malaya in 1941

Official Caption: Lubok, Malaya. 1941-06. Members of 'I' Section, 2/19th Battalion, beside a truck enjoying a drink and a smoke. Identified are: Private (Pte) V. A. H. (Vern) Benjamin; Pte S. J. (Stan) McAlister; Sergeant (Sgt) W. H. (Bill) Tozer; Gordon Smith; Sgt M. J. (Maurie) Brennan; Pte R. S. (Bob) Evans; Sgt Jack Christie and Pte I. A. V. Melouney (driver, seated on the ground). (Donor R. Newton) ¹²



Klang, Malaya. 1941-11. Members of I Section Reconnaissance, 2/19th Battalion AIF, in the jungle near Jemaluang, studying their next move. Left to right: Private S. J. McAlister; ? Murray; Sergeant W. H. Tozer; Private V. P. H. (Vern) Benjamin; Gordon Smith (at rear). ¹³

In February 1942, when Singapore fell to the Japanese forces, he was listed as Missing in Action. By 1943, this had been amended to 'Prisoner of War'. He was one of the unlucky prisoners who was transferred to Sandakan in Borneo. In what was one of the darkest episodes of the Pacific Theatre of the war, he and the other prisoners in that camp endured forced labour, beatings, torture, starvation and illness. He died on 8 March 1945 in Sandakan Number 1 Camp, from what the Japanese recorded as malaria ¹⁴ and is commemorated on the Labuan Memorial Panel 13 in Labuan, Malaysia. ¹⁵

12 See <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C294456>

13 Source: <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C294450>

14 See http://www.roll-of-honour.org.uk/atrocities/sandakan/S/html/sm_database_20.htm

15 See <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/20347596/gordon-archibald-smith>

Of the 2345 Australian and British POWs who were imprisoned in this infamous camp in January 1945, only six survived. It is bitterly ironic that Australia's best long distance walking exponent should have died in such circumstances.

In 1945, two groups of about 500 of the fittest prisoners were marched out of the camp to Ranau in what became known as the Sandakan Death Marches.¹⁶

The following obituary was published in *The Sydney Bushwalker*, December 1945

Gordon Smith Obituary

After months of uncertainty the news that we feared has come through. Gordon died in Borneo in March this year. Many of those near him felt, perhaps, that he would not come back. We knew that he would be in the forefront in the face of danger and oppression.

Gordon would have hated a eulogy, so we shall give only a simple description of him as he was known to his Clubmates.

He started walking as a track walker in the NSW Walking Club which he joined in 1921. In 1922 he won the first of his many long distance championships. Before he enlisted he held nearly all the Australian long-distance records, including the 12 hour record (66 miles) and the 50 mile record (8 hrs 52min) and the 24 hour record (114 miles). He was a foundation member of the SBW, though even before this he had done some long road and bush walks. In 1929 he met Max Gentle on the mountains train and decided to go with him to attempt a traverse of the Gangerang. They were the first walkers to do this now popular trip and the pass from Kanangra Tops to the Gangerang is named after Gordon. In February 1931 these two were the first walkers to do the Colo, probably the roughest river in Australia.

It was not till 1937 that the so-called "Tigers" came into being, their first trip being Wentworth Falls-Cloudmaker-Katoomba on Anzac weekend. Their numbers grew and varied till a large number of club members had been on a "Tiger" walk on some occasion. In the next three years many new and sometimes dangerous routes were pioneered.

Gordon would have been the last to claim leadership of these walks. Often they were somebody else's idea. But by the time the trip started he had probably arranged the food list, found out all there was to know about the country and accurately estimated distances and walking times. In his own words (describing the "Tigers" in the *Bushwalker* of April 1939) "Not for them the rules and regulations or even leaders. Decisions were made in accordance with communal desire and as a result their trips in the face of almost any obstacle were inevitably successful..." This was one of the features of his trips. Everyone had a say. If we did what Gordon suggested it was because we knew his suggestion was based on knowledge and experience. And it was a fine example of how democracy should work. After such thorough discussion the party seldom took a wrong route, and only once (on their first walk) did they miss the last train home.

The walks were hard and many of those included were very ordinary walkers. They did walks which, for themselves, they would have considered impossible. In the tough spots Gordon was there to help - he was usually near the back of a big party. Just a few quiet words of good humoured encouragement and the "rabbits" forgot they were worn out. Someone once said that the walks were "killers", to which Jack Debert replied that the only one Gordon was likely to kill was himself because of the weights he carried - usually enough to enable several of the weaker ones to get through with light packs. Yes, they were hard walks, but how we enjoyed them!

And now he has gone. To those who knew him the contrast between his great strength and his quiet good humour will remain a vivid and cherished memory. To those who came after and the club members of the future he will be a legend.

Perhaps we may hope that some time an area of the country he so loved - a great expanse of mountains, a scene of wild and rugged beauty - will be dedicated to him.

To our clubmate, May Smith and his son Bruce, we extend our deepest sympathy.

16 See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sandakan_Death_Marches for information on this infamous piece of Australian history. Additionally, the book *Sandakan: A Conspiracy of Silence* by Lynette Ramsay Silver covers this dark period thoroughly. See <https://lynettesilver.com/sandakan/overview/> for further details.

When he died, the significance of his wonderful long distance walks of 1937 and 1938 faded and it was not until the early 1970s, when the Australian Centurions¹⁷ were formed, that he was posthumously granted the title of the first Australian Centurion.

At the time of awarding him Centurion membership, the newly formed organisation had not been aware of his 1937 24 hour walk in which he completed 110 miles. So the official Australian Centurion records incorrectly show his 1938 walk as the first Centurion walk on Australian soil. Newspaper cuttings have since been found to confirm that his first 100 mile walk performance was in 1937 and that his 100 mile walk split in that race was 21:38:04.

Investigations also unearthed the news that a second walker, Jack Debert, had also reached 100 miles on that occasion. After discussions amongst the Australian Centurions Executive, Jack Debert was retrospectively awarded a special Centurion Badge 1A and is now honoured as Australia's second Centurion. As his 100 mile split was not known, his final 24 Hour distance of 100 Miles 266 Yards has been used to estimate a 100 mile time of approximately 23:59:00.

The first two centurion walks in Australia are now recorded as follows

C1	Gordon Smith	Centennial Park, Sydney	15-16 Oct 1937	21:38:04
C1A	Jack Debert	Centennial Park, Sydney	15-16 Oct 1937	23:59:00 (approx)

Details of Gordon's extraordinary endurance feats of 1937 and 1938 now follow.

17 See <http://centurions.org.au> for further details of the Australian Centurions

1937, NSW 24 Hour Trial, Centennial Park, Sydney

1937 saw a unique event - a 24 hour walk. Smith was an enthusiastic starter and the brief reports state that he completed a distance of 110 miles 831 yards for an Australasian best. This was the first time that a walker had bettered the 100 mile standard within 24 hours in Australia in a judged walking contest. We can assume that he would have passed the 100 mile mark in a little over 22 hours.

Now onto 1938 when, in the space of one month, Smith completed 12 hour and 24 hour walks and shattered all existing records. His 12 hour walk resulted in new State records for 50 miles and 100 km and 12 hours. His 24 hour walk broke his own NSW State record set the previous year.

Sept 17 1938, NSW Amateur Walking Club 12 Hour Walking Trial, Centennial Park

The first of the two 1938 events was a 12 Hour Trial put on by the NSW Amateur Walking Club and staged in Centennial Park in Sydney. Along the way, he bettered his own 50 mile best time of 9:16, set in 1927 and went on to set a swag of new records. The final result showed him winning the event by over 5 miles.

1. Smith, Gordon	65 miles 781 yards (50 miles in 8:50:25, 100 km in 11:21:30)
2. Barrett, H	59 miles 1367 yards
3. Debert, J.	57 miles 781 yards
4. Gentle, M.	54 miles 414 yards
5. Stannett, M	53 miles 1514 yards
Sealed Handicap results:	M Gentle 1, H Barrett 2, J Debert 3, G. A. Smith 4, M Stannert 5.

The following newspaper article recorded his feat as follows

Sunday 18.09.1938
SMITH SETS NEW RECORDS
Walked 65 Miles in Twelve Hours

At 7:30 a.m. yesterday, G.A. Smith, State 50 km champion, started to walk in Centennial Park. He stopped 12 hours later. He had covered 65 miles 781 yards, broken two records and probably set a third.

Smith, who was engaged in a 12 hours time trial, displayed the best form of his career. He left the mark with five others and, walking continually throughout the day over a two-mile lap course, finished at 7.30 last night.

He soon left the others behind and made the pace so hot at the beginning that D. G. Stead was forced to retire after covering 18 miles, suffering with cramp in the leg.

Smith increased his lead with every circuit, and set new figures on two occasions and probably made a third one.

The first record came when he slipped past the 50 mile mark in 8:50:25, reducing his own 1927 figures by 16:35. He covered 100 km (62 miles 245 yards) in 11:21:30, setting a new State record for the distance.

With this added encouragement, he increased his pace to see the time out. This is the first occasion on which the event has been held in New South Wales and Smith's distance will be considered for record recognition.

He was remarkably fresh at the finish and said that he could have gone further. He will have an opportunity to do this on October 15, when he will attempt a 24 hour trial.

Smith finished with a lead of 5 miles 1174 yards from H. Barrett who was also walking strongly while J. Debert, M. Gentle and M. Stannett finished in that order. Smith's times for intermediate distances were: 10 miles 1:40:45; 20 miles 3:24:40; 30 miles 5:10:35; 40 miles 7:00:25; 50 miles 8:50:25; 60 miles 10:53:01; 100 km 11:31:30

WALKED FOR 12 HOURS



HIS AVERAGE SPEED was nearly 6 m.p.h. for 12 hours, so Gordon Smith, New South Wales 50 mile and 24 hour walking champion, could be excused for wiping the perspiration from his brow during the New South Wales walking marathon on Saturday, in Centennial Park

His second ultra distance walk of 1938 was just as astonishing. This time the NSW Amateur Walking Club used the hard asphalt track around the Bankstown oval and Smith improved by over 3 miles on his 1937 centurion performance.

Five men and a girl started walking the event at 10:37 a.m. on Saturday 15 October. All were members of the NSW Amateur Walking Club. The girl, Miss Mary Stoddart, a stockily built 22-year-old, had a reputation as a bush walker and hoped to establish a record for a 12 hours walk. Amongst the men, S. Sheedy was expected to drop out after 20 miles, it being his intention to establish a new NSWARWC record for that distance. The other contestants, all of whom hoped to stay on the track for the full time, were – G. A. Smith, D. D. Stead who was third the previous year, H. W. Barrett, an English walker who had previously competed in the London-Brighton walk and other events, and E. Mitchell.

Only a handful of officials and relatives and friends of the competitors were present to see the start. The men were initially bareheaded but there was a call for panama hats at around 11.30 a.m. from Mitchell and Stead. Sheedy and Barrett distained the head protection. They were refreshed at intervals with cups of tea, cocoa and glucose. Timekeepers and recorders worked in relays. Sheedy completed the first 5 miles in 45 min, 43sec with Smith and Barrett 4 laps back. Walking strongly, Sheedy reached his 20 mile mark in 3 hours 6 mins. 32 secs. to break the record by over 2 minutes and then retired. Smith began to draw away from the 48 year old Barrett while Stoddart walked her own race at the back of the field. Stead dropped out in the 143rd lap and Mitchell in the next, after covering about 38 miles. At a steady pace, Stoddart went round and round the track until she reached the 50 mile mark in 12 hours 16 minutes 45 seconds. Not surprisingly, she suffered from blistered feet and fatigue.

Barrett began to suffer from an ankle that was becoming worse with every step. He rested about 11.45 p.m. and had his ankle massaged with methylated spirits. He had then covered 58 miles and Smith was approximately 5 miles ahead of him. He made a gallant effort to continue, although in considerable pain, until he was persuaded to give in when he had done 78 miles. This left Smith on his own for the remainder of the race, to eventually complete a new Australasian 24 Hours Record distance of 113 miles 1309 yards..

Once the public realised it was illegal to charge for admission on Sundays, a large crowd gathered at the ground around midnight, after the closing of the Bankstown picture theatres. Many stayed through to the finish which was witnessed by a rowdy group of onlookers and supporters. After the race, Smith paid tribute to his masseur whom he said was a key factor in his success.

Again, the newspaper report says it all

Mon 17.10.1938
WALK RECORD IN 24 HOURS TRIAL
G. A. Smith's Effort NEARLY 114 MILES

Gordon A. Smith, of Summer Hill, set what officials of the New South Walkers Amateur Walking Club claimed to be the first official Australian record for a 24 hours road walking trial during the weekend by covering 113 miles, 1309 ½ yards at Bankstown Oval.

Apart from tiredness and several blisters on his feet, Smith showed little sign of his gruelling experience and finished his walk strongly. Smith averaged more than four miles an hour. Last year he covered 110 miles, 871 yards on the Centennial Park Circuit.

There was a large crowd at the ground at midnight, after the closing of the Bankstown picture theatres and there were a large number of people present at the finish yesterday morning.

Smith continued on his lone walk through the night and was given an ovation when he passed his previous best distance of 110 miles at about 9:45 am. He had then walked round the track 450 times in 23 hours, 12 mins 45 secs. He was suffering from the heat and frequently placed a panama hat filled with water on his head. He was given a great reception at the finish.

Smith attributed his fitness to careful massage treatment. He had three-quarters of an hour's massage by his trainer, Mr Victor Revelle, before he started, and said that his muscles were in fine condition. After the event he was again massaged on the limbs.

We remember Gordon as one of our greatest Australian walkers, as tough as they come and as game as can be. He may have died young but his memory lives on in various forms

- The Australian Centurions acknowledge him as Australian Centurion Number 1 and annually award the Gordon Smith Memorial Trophy to the best Centurion performance done on Australian soil.¹⁸
- The NSW Race Walking Club award the Gordon Smith Perpetual Trophy annually to the winner of the NSW 50 km racewalking championship.¹⁹
- He is represented on the honor roll of NSW bushwalkers and is remembered at a memorial at Splendour Rock in the Blue Mountains.²⁰
- His name is remembered with the Gordon Smith Pass off Mt Brennan and the Gordon Smith Chimney, a difficult pass which ascends from Blue Gum Forest up Banks Walls onto Mt Banks.

Finally, this article, published in the May 1938 edition of The Sydney Bush Walker, records and interview with Gordon. It is reprinted here in its entirety.

**The Pharlap Of The Bushwalkers.
An Interview with Gordon Smith
by Judex**

“How old were you when you took up walking?” I asked by way of commencing the interview.

“About 12 months, I expect”, was the laconic reply and Gordon started to edge away but the corner was rather congested and he did not succeed; so after the usual preliminary modesty (to which interviewers become accustomed) he gave in and sat down again.

Gordon was not born and bred to the bush; indeed had it not been for the S.B.W. he might never have found out the charm of bushwalking. His early walking activities were entirely in the racing direction. Someone from the N.S.W. Walking Club picked him out from a number of his school mates as something out of the ordinary and suggested he should join a Club. He did so in 1921 and in 1922 he proved the discernment of his nominator by winning the 20 miles championship. Since then he has won about 20 championships both Club and State. At present he holds the State 32 to 50 miles track-walking and the Australian record for 24 hours. He also held for some while the Australian 50 miles championship but a Victorian subsequently made better time on the same test.

During the last 12 years he has averaged 4500 miles a year, or about 88 miles a week - it makes one gasp - 88 miles in a long weekend perhaps but 88 miles every week!

Large mileages are Gordon's strongest point. He told me that in walks under 15 miles he is by no means a record-holder, a matter which may be a surprise to many who have been out with him and thought he flew over the ground, rough and smooth alike.

His now great love of bushwalking through the rough as well as along tracks is all the more interesting because racing walks are always along roads or at best good tracks. Long distance races, in which Gordon holds the record, are always along roads because it is only possible by this means to get the mileage calculated. The shorter walks are sometimes along tracks but none of them are remotely like bushwalking.

“Therefore how did you come to join the S.B.W.?” Gordon thought a good while but could not exactly remember. He was a foundation member of the Club and even before it was formed he recalls one purely pleasure walk of 500 miles which took him from Sydney through Nowra, Mossvale, Thirlmere, Burragorang, Jenolan, Bell, Richmond and Parramatta in 16 days, so apparently the germ of bushwalking came into existence unawares.

“And which do you prefer now, racing or bushwalking?”

18 See <http://centurions.org.au/documents/Gordon%20Smith%20Award.pdf>

19 See the Trophies Section of website <http://www.nswracewalkingclub.com/>

20 See <https://www.warmemorialsregister.nsw.gov.au/content/bushwalkers-war-memorial-splendour-rock>

“Both are pleasurable. Racing is hard work and has a certain fascination but it can't go on for ever. Each year I decide to knock off and then someone comes along and I go in for it for one year more. At best I can hardly do it for another 10 years. But bushwalking will go on for ever, I hope. It is the combination of walking and scenery that gives charm to bushwalking, not so much the wildflowers which do not appeal to me much, but the wider landscape. Then, of course, there is good companionship, swimming - and eating!”

Scenery being one of the main attractions of bushwalking it may seem strange to some that Gordon has taken only two important walks further afield, one to Barrington Tops and one to Tumut and Kosciusko. The explanation is that what he has seen of other parts only makes him love the southern Blue Mountains more. However, this year he is off to New Zealand and a taste of mountaineering, and it will be interesting to hear whether this type of scenery attracts him as much as his beloved Cox and Kowmung.

This year is the first year bushwalkers have taken part in race-walking and, as we all know, they topped the lists coming second, third and fourth after Gordon in each event. I was very interested, therefore, to hear Gordon's comments on the possibility of racing walkers being drawn from the bushwalking movement. It was this:

“In a long race nine-tenths of the N.S.W. Walking Club fail because they lack the necessary stamina. This is where the bushwalkers score. They have carried heavy packs up steep hills and the whole of the bushwalking activities builds up that requisite stamina. Those who went in for the walking races this year had none of the racing technique of style, and yet they succeeded. If they would acquire these things, then, the younger especially should be very successful. I hope they will take it up;

The N.S.W. Walking Club, of which Gordon is such a distinguished member, numbers about 60. But members are not all very active. It is interesting to learn that some years ago they had it in mind to establish a club like the S.B.W. but the latter established itself while they were cogitating over the idea. Gordon thought this a pity since their method would have put the N.S.W. Walking Club on a sounder basis financially and better able to send teams to other States and such like. However, perhaps it was a wise fate which kept the bushwalking separate from the racing, and its separation does not prevent the N.S.W. Walking Club from drawing recruits from our ranks.