

RICHARD MANKS AND THE PEDESTRIANS

Robert Barclay Allardice (1779 – 1854), generally known as Captain Barclay, is without doubt the best known of the 19th century pedestrians. His 1809 feat of walking 1000 miles in 1000 hours for 1000 guineas captured the imagination of the public and became the standard against which all future pedestrian efforts would be measured. He is rightly considered the father of the 19th century sport of pedestrianism, the precursor to modern racewalking.

To get around the major problem of needing to rest, Barclay figured that if he walked back to back miles – a mile at the end of one hour and another at the beginning of the next – and repeated this strategy throughout the race, he would be able to rest in approximately 90 minute intervals throughout the near 42 day long feat. It worked. He completed the walk on July 12th 1809, 42 days after he commenced.

As an aside, it is possible to read the diary of his 42 days of walking, in the excellent 1813 publication [*Pedestrianism; Or, An Account of the Performances of Celebrated Pedestrians During the Last and Present Century*](#). It is available online at the above link.



Portrait of Captain Barclay (source British Library)

During the remainder of the nineteenth century, attempts to repeat or better this particular athletic challenge were made by many pedestrians. Indeed, the feat continues to challenge people nowadays.

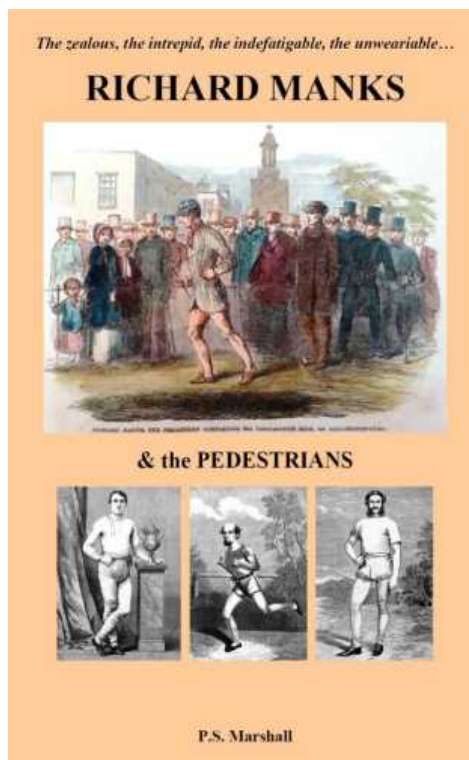
First to some references. I have a couple of definitive books of the period:

[*A Man In A Hurry*](#) by Nick Harris, Helen Harris and Paul Marshall (2012)

[*King of the Peds*](#) by P. S. Marshall (2008)

However, both these books cover the final period of pedestrianism from the 1870's onwards. What of the period before?

Paul Marshall, author of *King of the Peds*, has come to the rescue, publishing in December 2016 what I am sure will quickly become the definitive book covering the earlier period from 1800 onwards. Called [*Richard Manks and the Pedestrians*](#), it is an exciting read of 198 pages, full of facts, newspaper articles, letters and of course drama and skulduggery. What's even more noteworthy is that Paul is offering the book (in pdf format) freely, for the price of a donation to a charity of your choice. I have already procured a copy and have started to read it in depth.



One of the things it does very well is cover the various post-Barclay feats, inspired by his wonderful 1000 mile performance. A brief summary follows

- **Josiah Eaton** bettered Barclay's feat in 1816, walking **1100 miles in 1100 successive hours**. He adopted Barclay's strategy of walking it two miles at a time. Later that year, he redid it, walking each mile at the start of the hour, a more demanding proposition. The following year, he attempted and completed the even tougher task of walking **2000 half miles in 2000 successive half hours**. Interestingly, he stopped at 1998 half miles, a protest against some of his supporters whom he believed had deceived him. By not finishing, they lost their wagers. At the time, it was declared "*the greatest pedestrian feat ever performed*".

That same year (1817), Eaton and John Baker contested a 2000m mile race, the challenge being to finish in less than 42 days. Baker won with 2 hours and 53 mins to spare. Eaton also bettered the 42 day limit, by the narrowest of margins (10 minutes). Baker (The Rochester Pedestrian) had walked 1000 miles in 21 days in 1815 so had good credentials.

Eaton completed an even tougher challenge in 1818, attempting **a quarter mile every quarter hour for 6 weeks**. This he duly completed, covering 4032 quarter miles or 1008 miles.

Fast forward 28 years to 1846 for one final great walk by the then 77 year old Eaton, who completed yet again the Barclay feat (1000 miles in 1000 successive hours) in Canada. Excellent article on this feat at <http://montrealgazette.com/sponsored/mtl-375th/from-the-archives-walking-was-serious-business-for-josiah-eaton>. For longevity and quality, Eaton must be ranked one of the finest ever pedestrians.

- **Robert Skipper**, the Norwich pedestrian, completed **1200 miles in 1200 successive hours** in Cambridgeshire in 1823. Later that same year, he walked **1000 miles in 1000 successive half hours**.
- **Sutton**, the Kentish Pedestrian, also walked **1200 miles in 1200 successive hours** in Brighton in 1827.
- In 1838, **J. E. Molloy**, the celebrated pedestrian, walked **1250 miles in 1000 successive hours** (1.25 miles each hour) on Bromley Common. But his record was soon bettered.

- That same year, **Charles Harris** succeeded in walking **1500m miles in 1000 hours** (1.5 miles each hour) in Finchley, England. Later that same year, he upped the ante and completed **1750 miles in 1000 hours** (1.75 miles each hour) in London.

So the bar was now set at such a high standard that people wondered whether it would be possible to ever improve on these performances. **Richard Manks**, born 3rd May 1818 in Knowle, Warwickshire, was the man who would answer that question.



Richard Manks the Pedestrian (photo <https://solihullobsvr.co.uk>)

Manks' first recorded professional pedestrian appearance was in 1843, when he ran 3 miles in less than 18 minutes. Over the next few years, he ran many races, both scratch and handicap, from distances of 1 miles upwards, and had many fine wins.

It was not until 1851 that Manks turned his attention to the Barclay feat. The occasion presented itself when Mr Broadbent, the proprietor of the Barrack Tavern in Sheffield, offered 50 pounds to anyone who could complete 1000 miles in 1000 successive hours, with each mile being started on the hour. Articles were quickly drawn up and signed and Manks was off and walking his first mile, within a week of learning of the challenge. By the time he was to complete his final mile some 42 days later, around 20,000 people would be in attendance. He reeled off that final mile in the very fast time of 8:55!

Within months, he was challenging himself with what might be called the ultimate test – **1000 quarter miles in 1000 quarter hour blocks, followed immediately by 1000 half miles in 1000 half hours, followed immediately by 1000 miles in 1000 hours**. This would take a total time of 72 days and 22 hours and involved a total distance of 1750 miles. On the second last day, he was so disoriented that he walked into a wall, causing him to bruise his forehead and knees. But complete it, he did.

Only months later, Manks was to start another amazing challenge at the Kennington Oval in London, to walk **1000 miles in 1000 half hours**; ie to walk 1000 miles in 500 hours. He duly completed the task, with his last two mile splits being recorded at 8:05 and 7:40. Amazing indeed!

Dominic Utton, writing in London's Daily Express on Friday 28th July 2017, documented this 1851 feat with a fine article – see <https://www.express.co.uk/life-style/life/834074/richard-manks-the-oval-first-person-walk-1000-miles-in-500-hours-1851>. For completeness, I reproduce it at the end of this discussion.

After this latest feat, Manks returned to the shorter distances and back to running mode. But such was his prowess that he found few if any challengers who were willing to accept his wagers. Perhaps his most extraordinary feat during this period was running 12 miles within the hour at the Noah's Ark Bowling Green near Newcastle. No one could match that!

With few if any willing to accept his challenges, he had no alternative but to go back to the longer distances, and he announced in early 1852 that he would attempt to walk **1750 miles in 1000 successive hours** at the Noah's Ark Bowling

Green. But unlike Charles Harris who had done it successfully in 1838, he would do it the hard way – walking **1 mile at the commencement of each hour, followed by a half mile at the 30 minute mark and the final quarter mile at the 45 minute mark**. Unbelievable! Of course, he completed it, finishing his last quarter mile on 5th July.

What was left to do but to try for the impossible – **2 miles each hour for 1000 successive hours** – a total distance of 2000 miles, a distance of 48 miles per day. While he did announce that he was keen to do it, he was beaten to the punch by one of his main rivals, **James Searles**, who did indeed embark on this ultimate of challenges. Searles started his attempt on Monday 20th September 1852, using a 7 laps to the mile course on the grounds adjoining the Pineapple Inn in Liverpool. With his weight reduced from 11 st 11 lb to 9 st, Searles finally finished the feat on Monday 1st November.

From then on, Manks contented himself with shorter distances, running regularly and winning most of the time. It was not until 1862 when he was drawn back into the long distances, taking on the Barclay Challenge once again, and completing 1000 miles in 1000 successive hours at the West London Grounds, 12 laps to the mile.

But this was very much his swansong. From then on, appearances were few.

Sadly, Manks died at the Sheffield Public Hospital in 1969, after a short illness. He was only 51 years old. The newspapers reported his death as due to “*the bursting of a blood vessel*”. Nowadays, this would be called an aortic aneurysm.

A public funeral was held, with hundreds of people lining the streets to give their final respects to one of their greatest athletes. Like many before him, his deeds would be forgotten over time. Now, thanks to Paul Marshall, that has been rectified.

And what of the women. Did any of them manage the Barclay feat?

Due to the commonly held view of the time that women were extremely frail, they were strongly urged (and sometimes forced) to not partake in strenuous activity such as sporting competitions. It would be many years before two women showed what was possible.

It was in 1864 that **Emma Sharp**, who was then in her early thirties, completed the Barclay feat. Undeterred and despite the fact that she had not actually trained for the event, Emma started making plans for the event once she heard that an Australian woman had attempted it and failed. She was fortunate enough to enlist the help of the landlord of the Quarry Gap Hotel, at Laisterdyke, England, who enthusiastically offered up the grounds attached to his hotel as the location of the course. In exchange, he would receive a percentage of the money earned from ticket sales, and no doubt do great business from all the spectators.



Emma Sharp started her 1000 mile walk in a bright red chequered suit, scandalizing onlookers with her use of trousers
(photo <http://www.factfiend.com/emma-sharp-just-didnt-give-a-fk/>)

And so it was that on September 17, 1864, Emma Sharp took the first step of her 1,000 mile venture. She took the same approach as Captain Barclay by walking a roped off course of 120 yards for 30 minutes at a time, which was equivalent to

about two miles, before taking a 90-minute break. She would continue this routine for six weeks straight, walking day and night, until she completed her last mile. As expected, since no woman had ever successfully completed this journey, Emma's progress was widely reported in the newspapers and watched closely by supporters and critics alike, with tens of thousands of people turning up at various times to watch her put one foot in front of the other again and again. On October 29, 1864, at approximately 5:15 a.m., Emma Sharp became the first woman to complete the Barclay Challenge. Read more at <http://www.todayifoundout.com/index.php/2016/05/time-emma-sharp-walked-1000-miles-1864-just-prove-woman/>

Fast forward some 12 years for another extraordinary English walker, **Ada Anderson**, who walked the obligatory 1000 miles in 1000 hours in 1876. At a Kings Lynn music hall, in July, 1878 she topped the Barclay feat by walking a mile and half every hour for 672 hours, logging 1008 miles. Announcing herself as the champion walker of the world, she travelled to New York at the end of 1878 and reeled off 2700 quarter miles in 2700 quarter hours at the Mozart Hall.



*An artist's impression of Ada Anderson in 1878 at Mozart Hall in New York
Photo from Athletics in Drogheda 1861-2001 by Joe Coyle*

Boring it was not, for not only did the redoubtable Ada reveal shapely and superbly developed limbs that were visible to the knee; she had trained as a music hall performer and liked to sing and play the piano in her rest intervals. If someone in the audience fell asleep, Ada was given a tin horn to blast in his ear. Huge crowds paid to see the fun. She earned \$8,000 in Brooklyn, and then took the show to Chicago for \$15,000. Read more at <http://www.vrwc.org.au/tim-archive/articles/w-ada-anderson.pdf>.

And what of our modern era?

The Barclay Challenge continues to attract aspiring runners and walkers. One of the highest profile of the modern attempts was the Flora 1,000 Mile Challenge, held from 2nd March to 13th April 2003 in London and sponsored by the London Marathon.

A field of 6 runners (alas, no pedestrians on this occasion) was chosen to attempt the 1000 miles in 1000 hours, unaided on foot. Like Captain Barclay, competitors would be required to complete one mile in each hour. The challenge was to finish on the day of the marathon, April 13, 2002. It would be held on The Mall in London and continue up and down the London Marathon route for the next 1,000 hours, when participants would arrive in Blackheath.

Sharon Gayter, Britain's No.1 women's ultramarathon runner, was the only competitor pre-selected for the Challenge – the other runners were selected by a panel of experts. Competitors were

- **Sharon Gayter**, Britain's No1 ultra- distance runner and the World No 5.
- **Rory Coleman**, a business manager from Nottingham who has run 346 marathons in his life.

- **Shona Crombie Hicks**, Scotland's No2 Marathon runner with a personal best time of 2:40.53.
- **David Lake**, a lieutenant in the Welsh Fusiliers, the same company that Barclay himself was a member.
- **Paul Selby**, a dual British and South Africa passport holder who was run 440 marathons during his life.
- **Lloyd Scott**, a former English professional footballer and fireman who this year made headlines across the world by completing the New York marathons in five days wearing a deep sea diver's costume.

Five of the six starters completed the full distance of 1000 miles in 1000 hours. The only runner forced to retire was Lloyd Scott after 233 miles. But in fairness, he was the most inexperienced runner and did not really look like having the form to finish.



The five successful Flora 1,000 Mile finishers (photo www.alamy.com)

The other 5 all reached halfway with little discomfort but gradually the effects of the mileage and sleeplessness began to take their toll. Rory Coleman had to resort to injecting iodine into his blisters just to get him through the miles, and struggled through most of the second half. And perhaps that sums up the difference between this event and the original Captain Barclay epic. These runners had the whole arsenal of modern sports medicine and modern sporting and food technology to help them through. Two hundred years ago, Captain Barclay had only his iron will and self confidence to help him through what was generally thought to be an impossible feat.

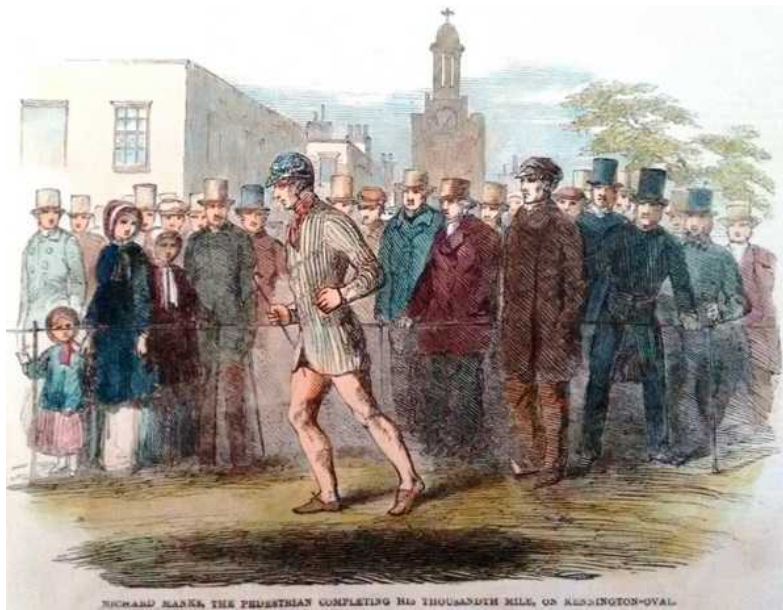
Once the runners finished the 1000 miles, they had a day's rest and then fronted up for the London Marathon. The first man and woman to finish the marathon would be deemed the overall winners.

The two women runners, Sharon Gayter and Shona Crombie-Hicks had really dominated the second half of the event and continued this pattern in their marathon runs. Shona, a 2:40 marathoner, was the overall winner with a very impressive 3:08 marathon. Second to finish was Sharon in 3:34. Paul Selby crossed the line in 3:44 as Men's Champion (all his earnings were donated to charity) and David Lake on his debut marathon recorded a highly respectable 4:15. Finally Rory Coleman finished in 4:21.

Tim Erickson
Wednesday 5th October 2017

Striding into History

By Dominic Utton, Published, in the Daily Express, Friday 28th July 2017



*WALK THIS WAY: Victorian Richard Manks displayed most remarkable mental and physical endurance
Courtesy of www.kingofthepeds.com*

WITH England playing their 100th Test match at the Oval, we recall the amazing Richard Manks, who in 1851 became the first person to walk 1,000 miles in 500 hours by doing laps of the outfield

For 172 years the Oval cricket ground in south London has boasted a glorious history. Presently hosting its 100th England cricket Test match, it was also the venue for the first FA Cup final as well as England rugby's first home game (against Scotland), both in 1872. But in 1851 an event was staged there that arguably stands as one of the greatest sporting achievements ever. And it was performed by a man who by rights should be remembered as one of Britain's finest athletes.

In October of that year Sheffield brickmaker Richard Manks walked 1,000 miles around the outfield of the Oval in 500 hours – a distance roughly the same as travelling from London to Rome. And he did it without ever pausing for longer than a quarter of an hour at a time.

Born in 1818, Manks was one of Britain's foremost "pedestrians", a lost Victorian sport. Attempts to walk hundreds of miles against the clock were major sporting attractions, drawing huge crowds and attracting big prize money.

Before Manks, the most famous pedestrian had been Captain Robert Barclay, who in 1809 had managed the astonishing feat of walking 1,000 miles in 1,000 hours. Manks proposed to slash that record in half. However, his first attempt ended in disaster. As the Illustrated London News reported: "Manks commenced this feat in September but being suddenly attacked with diarrhoea he was compelled to give up after having walked 129 miles."

A doctor prescribed a fortnight's rest and recuperation and on the afternoon of Friday, October 10, he began again. Manks' strategy was simple but required superhuman mental and physical endurance. Having marked out a lap of the cricket outfield, he allowed himself half an hour to complete each mile before starting the next, aiming to finish each lap within 15 minutes, leaving the remaining 15 minutes for a rest. Any eating, sleeping or medical attention would have to be crammed into that quarter of an hour before the next mile... over and over again until he had completed 1,000 laps in three weeks.

Initially the newspapers reported Manks to be "full of spirit". He passed his first 100 miles after just 43 hours and his second 100 after a further 44 hours, averaging 14 minutes per mile and so allowing 16 minutes rest every half hour.

He ate 10 times a day, keeping his strength up with what the Illustrated London News reported as: “Animal and other nourishing food, including game and poultry, roast beef and steaks, mutton and chops.” He also drank “strong beef tea in considerable quantities”, “old ale” and tea with brandy in it.

As the miles accrued word began to spread that Manks was on the verge of achieving something special and crowds began to form. So many that according to the Morning Advertiser: “A number of variegated lamps have been placed in the most conspicuous parts of the course and one placed on each of the stakes that hold the ropes that form the ring.” These lamps – enabling the spectators to watch Manks at night – made this the world’s first floodlit sporting event.

On October 28 the weather turned. Until then the skies had remained clear but with Manks just three days and less than 150 miles from victory the heavens opened. With no option but to press on through the downpour Manks began to suffer: as well as the cold and wet his feet were rubbed raw with blisters.

“This was very trying for the almost worn-out pedestrian,” reported the Illustrated London News, “and, although so near the finish, many persons were apprehensive that he would not be able to complete his task.” It continued: “Still onward Manks went, against the most fearful odds and obstacle although his feet were severely blistered, his limbs in great pain and he altogether showed the frightful effects of his incessant labour.”

After nearly three weeks of no more than a few minutes rest at a time, he was also suffering from sleep-deprivation. And it was this more than the blisters, the aching limbs or the sheer unending slog of the undertaking that almost proved his undoing.

At 2.30am on the final morning the papers reported that after a timekeeper woke him from a nap: “He cried like a child and said, ‘I’ll walk no more,’ and, ‘Do you want to kill me?’”

By that time the crowd inside the Oval had grown to 3,000 with “many more thousands outside”. Perhaps spurred on by their roars, Manks got up, resumed his walk and at 11.37am on Friday, October 31, he crossed the finishing line.

If Richard Manks’ superhuman feat – described at the time as an “instance of the capability and endurance of the human frame altogether unparalleled” – remains one of the Oval’s greatest sporting spectacles, performed by one of Britain’s greatest forgotten athletes, there is a further twist to the story.

After completing his 1,000th mile, Manks’ route around the Oval outfield was measured again and was found to be 21 yards longer than it needed to be... meaning that not only had he managed to walk 1,000 miles in 500 hours but he had actually walked about 12 miles further than he needed to.