

## SANDRA BROWN – 176 HUNDREDS

Sandra Brown is arguably the greatest ever female long distance walker, based on a competitive record which is unmatched for both quality and longevity. She was born 1<sup>st</sup> April 1949 so is now 68 years old but her walking performances have hardly dropped over that time. To list some of her many achievements

- She is the only person in the world to be awarded all 7 Centurion medals (English, Continental, Australian, New Zealand, American, Malaysian and African) – meaning walking 100 miles in less than 24 hours in that particular country.
- She holds the record for the most number of finishes (100 miles in less than 24 hours) in the annual English Centurions 24 Hour race, an amazing 30 times and still going.
- She holds the official World Walking Records (track) for the 100 km, 100 miles, 12 hours and 24 hours <sup>1</sup>
  - 100 km            11:17:42            Etréchy (FR)            27/10/1990
  - 100 ml            19:00:47            Auckland (NZ)            10-11/7/1999
  - 12 hours            106.180 km            Etréchy (FR)            27-28/10/1990
  - 24 hours            194.758 km            Ware (GB)            19-20/7/1997
- She held until 2006 the women's record for the Land's End to John O'Groats epic (one end of Great Britain to the other), a distance of 830 miles in 13 days 10 hours. <sup>2</sup>
- In Nanango in Qld in 1996, she set a Women's World run record for 1000 miles – 14 days 10 hours, 27 mins, 20 secs (and she walked most of the way!). <sup>3</sup>
- As yet another example of her ongoing excellence, he completely rewrote the W60 record books upon turning 60 in 2009, setting 6 W60 British racewalking bests and one British road running best performance

- Racewalking:**
- W60 10km track walk – 56:56.8  
Battersea Park Track, 29 April 2009 (VAC track championship walk)  
(Previous record: Mary Worth, 62m 37s 8, in 1992)
  - W60 10km road walk – 57:28  
Lee Valley Stadium, 15 August 2009 (Enfield & Haringey League walk)  
(Previous best: Mary Worth, 59m 05s, in 1988)
  - W60 20km road walk – 1:55:34  
Lee Valley Stadium, 15 August 2009 (Enfield & Haringey League walk)  
(Previous best: Mary Worth, 2h 04m 34s, in 1989)
  - W60 50km road walk – 5:47:30  
Newmarket race-course, 11 July 2009 (within RWA championship)  
(Previous best: Renee Scott, 6h 31m 12s, in 1993)
  - W60 100 miles road walk – 19:57:24  
Newmarket race-course, 11-12 July 2009 (RWA and Centurions championship)  
(Previous best: Annie van der Meer, 21h 18m 00s, in 2007)
  - W60 24 Hour road walk – 187.549 km (this is also a World Best)  
Bourges, 6-7 March 2010 (French 24 Hour national championship)
- Road Running:**
- W60 24 hour road running – 187.119 km  
Keswick, Cumbria, 17-18 September 2009 (Commonwealth championship)

Since turning 65 in 2014, she has done a similar job on the W65 records

- Racewalking:** British W65 records for 3000m, 5000m, 10km and 20km

1 <http://www.athleticsweekly.com/stats/records/world-records-best-performances-womens-race-walking> and

2 Her record was broken in 2006 by English ultra legend Sharon Gayter (see <http://www.sharongayter.com>)

3 Subsequently broken by the great English runner Eleanor Robinson in the 1998 Nanango event

W65 100 miles track walk World Record - 20.40.32  
Southend, 2-3 August 2014 (within RWA championship)

W65 100 miles road walk World Best - 20.57.26  
Castleton, Isle of Man, 15-16 August 2015 (within RWA championship)

W65 24 Hour Walk World Record – 189.949km  
Wadelincourt, Belgium, 23-24 August 2014 (French 24 Hour Classic)

- She is also a very good runner and has represented England on many occasions in ultra distance championships including the 2007 IAU 24 Hour Championship in Canada and the inaugural Commonwealth 24 Hour Run championship in 2009 in Wales.
- She is a member of the prestigious '100 Marathon Club', having run well over 100 marathon distances and still counting.<sup>4</sup>
- Over the last 34 years, she has successfully completed an amazing 176 races of 100 miles or more and is still going strong.

Her 30 finishes in the annual British Centurions 100 Mile qualifying event speak for themselves in terms of quality and quantity.

1.	1982	Leicester	22.18.24 (C 735)
2.	1984	Leicester	18.36.24 (GB best)
3.	1987	Ewhurst	22.32.40
4.	1988	Leicester	21.11.14
5.	1989	Hendon	19.56.17
6.	1990	Leicester	18.56.46
7.	1992	Leicester	18.50.29
8.	1993	London	20.09.05 (24 hr race)
9.	1994	Leicester	19.09.17
10.	1995	London	21.37.21
11.	1996	Colchester	19.42.53
12.	1997	Ware	19.27.15 (24 hr track race)
13.	1998	Manx	19.32.26
14.	1999	Battersea Park	20.01.49
15.	2000	Newmarket	20.16.43 (24 hr race)
16.	2001	Colchester	20.36.45
17.	2002	Blackpool	20.27.27 (24 hr track race)
18.	2003	Newmarket	20.23.25
19.	2004	Colchester	19.17.28 (W55 best)
20.	2005	King's Lynn	19.25.07
21.	2006	IOMVAC	19.28.38
22.	2008	Milton Keynes	19.59.29 (track race)
23.	2009	Newmarket	19.57.24 (W60 best)
24.	2010	Colchester	20.23.30
25.	2011	Lingfield Park	20.18.23
26.	2012	Colchester	20.45.03
27.	2013	IOMVAC	19.57.50
28.	2014	Southend	20.40.32 (W65 track record]
29.	2015	IOM Castletown	20.57.26 (3 <sup>rd</sup> lady, 1 <sup>st</sup> W65, W65 road best)
30.	2016	Redcar	21.10.06

In all but 1982 and 2015, she has been the first woman to finish in the English Centurions event and in a number she has been the first overall, beating the men as well. In a number, she and her husband Richard have filled the first two places (in varying order!). In 14 of the 30 finishes, she has broken the 20 hour barrier and on 3 occasions, she has broken the 19 hour barrier.

Like the great Yiannis Kouros, the key to Sandra's success is her efficient and balanced technique. As the following photo (taken in 2006 in England) shows, she is able to maintain a racewalking action throughout a long event, thus keeping her pace up and avoiding injuries due to imbalance and postural irregularities.

4 <http://www.100marathonclub.org.uk/new/statistics/rec-vet-uk-total.shtml>



*Sandra leads Herbert Neubacher of Germany in the 2006 British Centurions event at the Isle of Man*

I recently asked Sandra for the walks that she thinks were her most memorable. She commented:

*The performances, all judged race-walking, I'm probably most pleased with are:*

- 18.36.29 in my second UK Centurion 100 at Leicester in 1984, the British ladies' best time
- 200kms in 24.04.20 at Vallorbe in 1991, a world best
- 50 miles in 7.54.54 in the Manchester to Blackpool in 1991
- 50kms in 4.50.51 at Basildon in 1991, then a world best and still the W45 age group record
- 189.949kms at Wadelincourt [Belgian 24h championship] in 2014, the W65 24h record
- 51 completions [to date] of proper Centurion races worldwide, including 31 in the UK; 20 of these 51 in a first class time [under 20 hrs for 100 miles] including 14 in the UK
- Winning outright various Centurion 100s in the UK and elsewhere
- Winning over 30 Paris-Colmar/Alsace qualifying events [no. 30 was Wadelincourt 2014 and I have won others since]
- 191 completions of 100 miles or more, to date.

#### **Other Documents and Links of Interest:**

- A list of the 191 ultra distance events completed by Sandra Brown - sorted by category  
<http://www.centurions.org.au/documents/Sandra%20Brown%20Ultra%20record.pdf>
- A list of the 191 ultra distance events completed by Sandra Brown - sorted by year  
<http://www.centurions.org.au/documents/Sandra%20Brown%20Ultra%20record%20-%20year%20by%20year.pdf>
- This document:  
<http://www.vrwc.org.au/tim-archive/articles/wo-sandra-brown.pdf>
- Sandra Brown wikipedia entry:  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sandra\\_Brown\\_\(Ultradistance\\_Athlete\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sandra_Brown_(Ultradistance_Athlete))

The article on the following pages was originally researched and written by New Zealand statistician Dudley Harris in 2004 when Sandra reached 100 hundreds. It was updated to reflect Sandra's 'hundreds' tally up till 2010 – the list then stood at 141 – and was republished, with acknowledgement to Dudley, to bring the record up to date.

**Sandra Dobney Brown, the first woman to complete one hundred foot-races of 100 miles or more, has now completed more 'hundred-milers-or-more' than any other known person**

Sandra's is a very considerable achievement spread over 29 years. Sandra was the first woman to reach one hundred 'hundreds' in 2002 and since then, she has continued on without a break so that her current tally stands at 141.

It should also be noted that, by the rules adopted by Sandra and Richard Brown, each event is counted only once, no matter how far beyond 100 miles it may be. Thus the Land's End to John O'Groats epic, being in excess of 800 miles, and the Nanango 1000 miles race, each scored only once in the total tally.

There are no time limits for each individual 100-miles or more, although they must be continuous, and the only occasions when 100-milers have taken longer than 24 hours were for cross-country events of a very severe kind; nor for the total period in which they have been accumulated. Indeed, the realisation that such a challenge was possible to achieve probably came to mind only in the latter years, after which, what had begun gradually as a secret ambition, started to become apparent to others.

### **1982-1988**

After a childhood which included what most people would consider to be long, healthy walks 'off the beaten track', Sandra eventually succumbed in 1982 to the public mood for running marathons with her first one, in Winchester. In her 'onwards and upwards' style, that same year saw Sandra enter her first 'ultra' (i.e. beyond the marathon's 26 miles 385 yards) with the 100km Surrey Summits in April and a LDWA cross country 100 mile event along the Pilgrims' Way from Guildford to Canterbury in May - her first 100-miler!

In that era, popular opinion considered that one marathon a year was enough for novices, with two the maximum for those more experienced in racing. More often than that lay madness! In her early thirties, Sandra either did not know of or ignored conventional wisdom. Discovering and briefly practising the technique of race-walking, she entered her first judged Centurion 100-mile event in Leicester in August 1982.

And so the accumulation proceeded gradually: a cross-country event in Snowdonia in 1983, six events in 1984 which included her first two in Europe, and another four in 1985. However, Sandra's fifth year after 'going ultra' went nowhere, other than the wonderful achievement of giving birth to daughter Victoria, born in February 1986.

1987 saw a cautious (or wise) return to endurance events, with two 'hundreds', followed by three in 1988, the third being 163½ miles in Sandra's first 48-hour race.

### **1989**

In 1989, the year Sandra turned 40, came a new level of activity, with eight 'hundreds-or-more'. Not that a birthday-with-a-nought would have made any difference, nor at such an early stage would the thought of aiming for one hundred 'hundreds' have occurred. Much more likely was the attraction of qualifying for and competing in the Epernay-to-Colmar (the female version of the male Paris-Colmar) multi-day walk. (Sandra would compete in the French 'blue-ribbon' event in three more consecutive years.) So the 1989 total shot up to eight events, including the first of a continuing appearance in the 28-hour Roubaix walk, and a second consecutive year at the Blackpool 48-hour, this time with about 18 extra miles.

### **1990-1991**

In 1990, Sandra's 'bag' increased to nine, including the now long-distance 'blue ribbon' event, with Chalons-Colmar at over 211 miles.

In 1991, the annual total decreased to six, although the quality was still there. In September, Sandra set a women's World Best Distance of 200km in 24hr 04mn 20sc in a walk in Vallorbe, Switzerland. That was just two months after a second-place-overall in the Manchester-Blackpool 50-mile walk. Her 7hr 54min 54sec event was described by the Race Organiser as "the greatest exhibition of long-distance walking ever seen in this country".

### **1992-1998**

Seven years would follow at lower levels of frequency: four competitive ultras in 1992 and 1993, five each in 1994, 1995 and 1996, and three in 1997. But the quality was still there, as were some mind-boggling distances.

For example, in 1992, Sandra completed the multi-day Chalons-Colmar in 2<sup>nd</sup> place for the third consecutive year; and the Centurion 'hundred' was in her 2<sup>nd</sup> best-ever time (her 'best' of 18.36.24 had come when she was eight years younger).

1994's five events included a 48-hour and a 6-day run; while in 1995, Sandra and husband Richard made their own individual attacks on the 840-miler land's End to John O'Groats - and each was successful.

In 1996, still with an annual 'strike-rate' of five 'hundred-miles-or-more' events, Sandra set a new women's World Track Record time for 1000 miles in Nanango, Queensland in March. After an amazingly short recovery period, she was back in competition again in May and August for two Centurion 'hundreds' and, one and two months later, runs of 24-hours and, in Odessa, 48-hours.

In 1997, there were just three 24-hour events in consecutive months; though in the third one, Sandra set a World Walking Record time for 100 miles on a track.

But in 1998, and possibly with the thought that, a year later, an age of psychological importance would be upon her,

Sandra wound the frequency back up to five, including one (in the Isle of Man) which she would count among her own best four performances anywhere!

### **1999-2001**

1999, the year of Sandra's 'Big Five-Oh', began early with one '100' in April and three in May! A brief rest, thence across the world in July to New Zealand, where she broke her own 100 mile World Track Record by almost 27 minutes. From NZ to London for another '100' in August, thence in September to Australia for a fourth 'country qualifier' with her 7<sup>th</sup> of the year; rounding off 1999 with two more in October.

If 1999 had seemed hectic to observers, Year 2000 was celebrated with 11 'hundreds' in the nine months from Feb to Oct. So to 2001, and the balance of 7 'hundreds' in seven months. Amazing!

Amazing that Sandra could operate at such a rate (27 'hundreds') in the last three years required to reach her goal, not only without any significant decline in quality but also without being held back by injuries - a matter of experience and skill, plus an indomitable spirit.

### **2002-2010**

Many top-rated athletes, having reached their major goal successfully, retire from racing, especially if they can no longer achieve their same level of performance. But not Sandra. Albeit at a lower frequency, she has continued to compete with high-quality performances, which many other 'ultras' (of either gender) can only envy. Sandra has now completed more 'hundred-milers-or-more' than any other person.

In May and August 2004, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> best times (only 40 seconds apart) and outright wins in both the Dutch and English Centurion events confirmed that Sandra continued to dominate the 'hundred miles and more' list.

Her 2006 performance in finishing the UK Centurions annual 'hundred' for a record 21<sup>st</sup> time in 19:28:38 set a standard that no one is ever likely to match.

In the 4 years since then, her ongoing excellence has continued. She celebrated her rise into the W60 age group in 2009 by winning the British Centurions 100 mile event (a feat she matched again in 2010) in a W60 world record time of 19:57:24. She followed this with England representation in the inaugural Commonwealth 24 Hour Run championship, competing with distinction against the field of Open ultra runners and finishing 13<sup>th</sup> with 187.119km.

2010 has seen a further 5 'hundreds' added to the tally.

Onward ever onward towards 150!

### **2010-**

Sandra still shows no signs of reducing her workload or dropping in her quality. She still regularly completes up to 8 'hundreds' each year and has now taken her finish count in the English Centurions qualifying event to an amazing 30.