

## C950 Susan Clements

London Vidarians W.C. 'Colchester 100' 1996 23.13.59

Club: LDWA

I took up walking in my teens, starting with the 42 mile Lyke Wake Walk and progressing onto challenge walks organised by the Long Distance Walker's Association (LDWA). For a long time I harboured a desire to become a Centurion but always thought it was out of my reach. Despite competing successfully at County and National level in another sport, I never considered myself an athlete.

Then, in 1995, I found myself supporting Jill Green C 989 on the Chalons - Colmar race. As we walked together she said that if I could maintain a similar pace I could complete the Centurion. Other members of the support crew tried to persuade me to try that summer but as the 1995 race was only 7 weeks away I was not confident I was ready. I decided I would spend the next year training and try the following year. However, it was not to be.

Out of curiosity I sent off for an entry form for the 1996 Colchester 100 then spent the next few weeks gazing at it periodically. Then, two weeks before the Centurion, Jill telephoned to ask me why my name was not on the list of entrants. She had told the organisers that she would not be walking because she was supporting me, so where was my entry? I decided it was worth a pop so I quickly filled the form out and posted it before I could change my mind.



When I arrived at the start Boyd Millen C 930 was surprised to see me there, and even more surprised when I said I was walking. "I didn't know you were a racewalker" he said, to which I replied "I'm not". He could not believe I was serious but kindly took me on a lap of the course, coaching me as I went so I didn't fall foul of the judging. In the end he acknowledged that it was too late for me to improve my walking style and simply advised me to do my best. I took a goodybag full of favourite snacks so I would have something to look forward to during the later stages of the race. As it turned out, during the last few hours all I could think of was putting one foot in front of another, so I was over the moon when I completed my first Centurion in 23.13.59.



Becoming a Centurion broadened my walking horizons and since then I have notched a number of events of 100 miles or longer. I became a Centurion in 3 other countries: Australia 1998 (C35 23:580), The Netherlands 1999 (C 288 23.13.25) and New Zealand 2001 (C10 23.00.05). I travel to Europe a number of times a year to take

advantage of the excellent events that are organised in The Netherlands and Belgium.

Walking is a friendly sport and I continue to enjoy the camaraderie of the domestic walking scene and friendship all over the world. My experience shows what an 'ordinary' walker can achieve given support and encouragement. I am sure there are many more walkers out there with the potential to become Centurions.

