START OF THE FIRST LEST WE FORGET FUN RUN 2003 KINGSPARK, 2457 JOHN GILMOUR 4701 LUKE WALKEY WHO JOHN COACHES AND IS A STATE CHAMPION IN HIS AGE GROUP ROUNDED ST...

Behind the champion lived a loving family man

LEGEND is a greatly over-used and generally inappropriate term. John Gilmour might just be a man worthy of such a title though.

Of course he is famous here, and around the world, wherever people know about athletics.

But his name is also known, spoken with awe, by people who have no true concept of his feats.

He is that 'amazing old man' who set all the world records.

Future generations might well doubt that such achievements were attained – through the seven ages of one man – long after most athletes give up the chase.

Then John Gilmour might become unbelievable, and be thought, like a creation from literary mythology, a legendary figure.

Touched by heroes

In this real world we know, regard and admire such famous people for their renowned deeds, their presence, and their public personality.

If we are touched by our heroes, so much the better.

John touched many lives, helped and mentored young people, coached a multitude of athletes, established clubs to further the sport he loved, made lifelong friends.

Most of all he nurtured his family – and received their love in return.

When John served his country in the Australian

army he, like many service people, sent money home to the mum he adored.

When he came home, after terrible years of captivity, mum had saved it all and returned the money to John.

Much, much later with health restored and his own children, John and Judith, flourishing as athletes under dad's coaching, he devoted so much time to training and running, in Australia and overseas.

How did that affect his family?

"His running and travels didn't affect us at all; why should they?" asks Judith.

"Dad's running always came first; but when he'd done his run you got his time, and it was always very special."

Alma

Everyone who knew them testifies that John's wife Alma was his rock. He always had her total loyalty and support, and it was mutual.

▶

Coach and mentor

John was rightly proud of the young athletes he coached and guided into their careers. Jim Langford, and his brother Fred, were among the earliest; Rochelle Rodgers is one the most recent.

It would have been enormously satisfying to him when John could combine his great passions – running, helping youngsters and supporting the Anzac tradition – as he did on the Gallipoli Run.

Our picture (opposite page) carries this caption:

"Start of the first Lest We Forget Run, 2003. 2457 John Gilmour, 4701 Luke Walkley, who John coaches and is a State Champion in his age-group at middle distance."

Though he was not a wealthy man, he was adept at sourcing grants for himself, and others, to help them compete.

Said Judith: "John was so proud when one of his young athletes succeeded; He often would send them small gifts, 50 dollars or so, as an extra reward for doing well."

Alma became ill and died six years ago but John cared for her at home until he had to admit, when he was 90 that she needed more help than he could give.

For the last three years of Alma's she was in care and John visited her every day.

The couple had 19 grand and great-grandchildren.

"John had a phenomenal memory," says daughter Judith. "He knew every one of their birthdays, and kept in touch by using Skype. Judith and Doug farm in Bendoc, Victoria and wanted John to move there.

"Too cold," he always said.

"Dad was very capable and self-sufficient of course, looked after himself, loved baking cakes and such."

As well as his own family in WA John had many close, supportive friends and neighbours here.

John Gilmour OAM
May 3, 1919-August 1, 2018

"Dad's running always came first, but when he'd done his run you got his time and it was always very special."

Club members know that in the past few years John made numerous visits to club events, often to make presentations.

These appearances were only possible through the kindness of Jim Barnes, over many years, and the late Dalton Moffett. Masters owes them our thanks.

Doug Cameron is a rugged Aussie, the rural fire captain in Bendoc, not the kind of man given to over-sentimentality. "I'll always be so grateful to all of the people who helped and supported John. Because if it wasn't for them I know Judith would have been over here with her dad."

GOOD MATES

Above, Jim Barnes and Dalton Moffett; right, John; on his left Cecil Walkley, ahead, Frank Mclinden (dec).

How the story ended

JOHN Gilmour made his last run on the morning of Friday, July 27.

Later that day he was to have surgery to fix a faulty heart valve, so he cut back his usual jog around the garden from 3km to just two.

Surgeons were confident.

John's body was that of a 70-year old, rather than a 99-year old man. At the hospital John was nervous.

"I could see it in his eyes," said daughter Judith. "I should never have let him go; I would still have my dad."

Stoical until now, she wept.

Before her was a mountain of photographs which she was struggling to reduce to 40 to show at John's funeral

"But I know he would have gone ahead with the operation, whatever we said."

Her husband, Doug Cameron agreed.

"John made up his mind, and that was that."

Because his heart had become inefficient John was suffering from lung congestion. Medical opinion was that without surgery he might live another year, perhaps a little more.

The initial surgery was successful; but complications and bleeding made a second, more invasive procedure necessary.

This time that mighty heart failed.

"He was really hoping to be at that Gallipoli event next year, aged 100," said Doug.

"And he came so close, so close."

A much-honoured man

IN John Gilmour's Leeming home there's a circular coffee-table studded with the dozens of major medals John won. Standing among them is the superb baton he carried as part of the Sydney Olympic torch relay.

The family call the room that houses these things (plus dozens more cups, trophies and mementoes) the museum. Somewhere here will be acknowledgment of John's Order of Australia Medal; and his induction into the AMA Hall of Fame.

But one honour might be overlooked.

Most recently the John Gilmour Medal was struck, and it will be awarded every year to WA's Sportsperson of the Year. In naming this medal for him the sponsors and organisers acknowledge the inspirational career of a man who himself won the medal's predecessor in 1975.

That was the year when, as a 56-year old, John took five gold medals at World and Veteran Championships in Canada (3,000m and 5,000m) and the USA (1,500m, 5,000m and 10,000m).
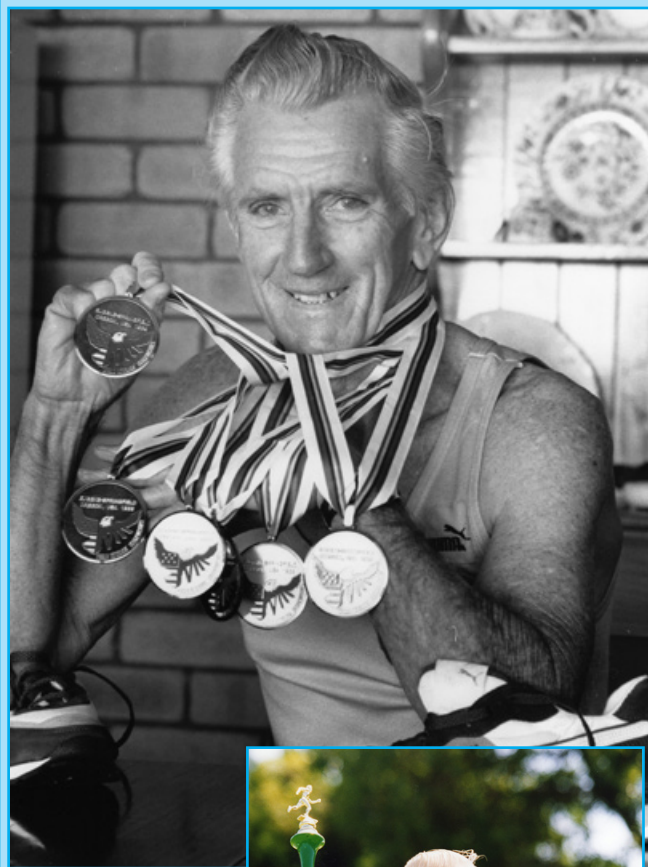
Above, John at home with some American medals. Right, his t-shirt illustrates international Championships from 1975 to 1993. The picture was taken when he was 81 and selected to bear the 2000 Olympic torch in Willetton.
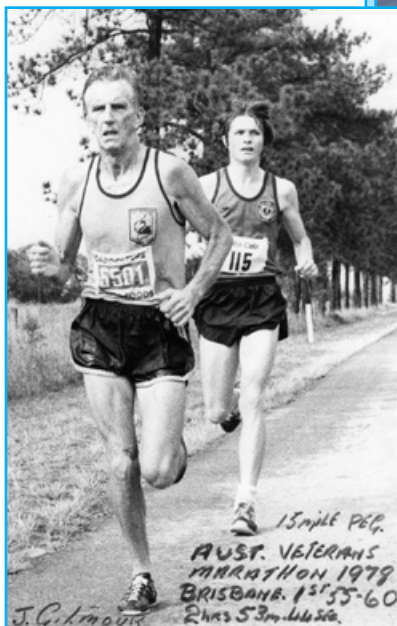
John's written: "15 mile peg. Aust Veterans Marathon 1978 Brisbane. 1st 55-60 2hrs 53mins 44 secs."

Another day, another honour. This time John is pictured taking part in the 2006 Queen's Baton Relay.

All In My Stride

JOHN GILMOUR'S STORY: CHANGI TO WORLD CHAMPION

RICHARD Harris wrote John Gilmour's story, he says, as a message of hope to people of all ages everywhere – to have a vision, to keep going, and to take setbacks in one's stride.

It is more than a book about running. It is about the strength of the human spirit when adversity is shared, the support provided by friends, how a little bit of hope will take you a long way, and of how small acts of kindness from strangers can be of value beyond measure.

He writes of John's early days living in a group settlement in the south west of Western Australia, the struggle for survival during the Great Depression, enlistment in the Army as a fit young man, and his coming to terms with major damage to his eyesight through malnutrition in Changi gaol.

After nightmare years as a slave labourer in Japan John returned to Perth post-war, just skin and bones, but went on to rehabilitate himself and later set world records in every event from 800 metres to the Marathon.

I DON'T believe anyone knows for sure how many records – State, Australian, World – John Gilmour set, and re-set over some 60 years of top-level competition.

Perhaps it will become a research project for some of our younger members?

But we do have John's own list of appearances at International Veterans Championships. The final page sums it up.

Veterans WORLD Records

Age	Track	Road
M50	10	2
M55	38	10
M60	24	6
M65	8	6
M70	7	10
Total	114	

John ran everything from the middle-distances, 800m and 1,500m, up to and including the marathon. He appeared at 48 different championship between 1971 (San Diego) and 1993 (Perth, WA).

Let's look at the period when he set 38 track records, as an M55.

He travelled to the USA, Canada, UK, Belgium, Sweden and Denmark. He ran in 35 events and won 25. In most other individual runs he came a rare second.

Times? In his first appearances at the San Diego, USA Championships, aged 52 John won all his events; 5,000m in 17:19; 10,000m in 32:42; Marathon in 3hrs 11mins.

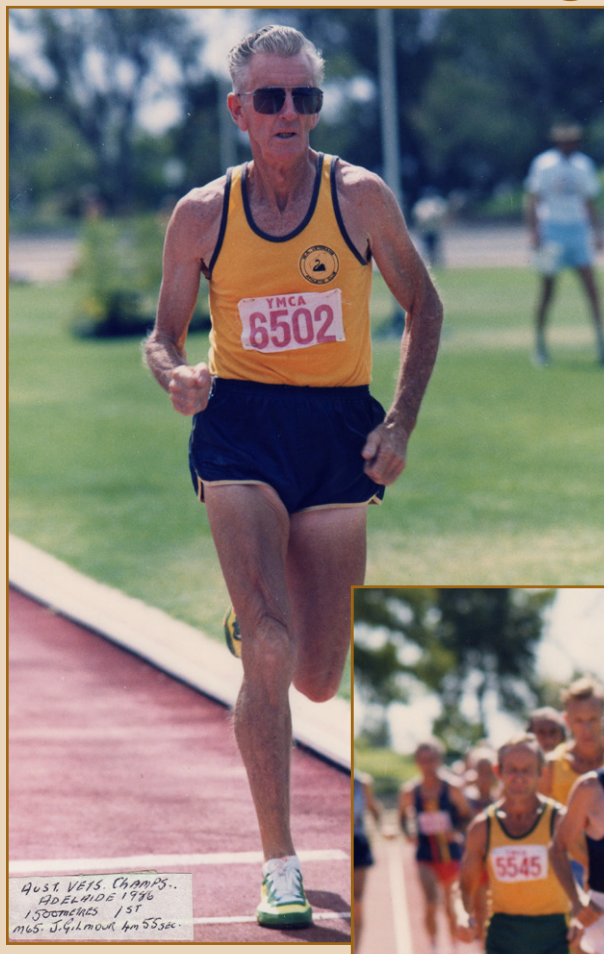Of course he would improve that marathon time, many times!

In 1977 in Gothenburg, Sweden John did 2hrs 50m 14 secs. (His record-keeping is nothing if not detailed!)

Olympic qualifying

Famously of course, as a 60-year old John Gilmour ran a 2 hours 38 minute marathon, the qualifying standard for the Australian Olympic team. Unfortunately he was not selected. As he said many years later: "Perhaps they couldn't face the idea of a 60-year old representing Australia at the Olympics!"

We are fortunate that all of John's momentous runs are covered in an excellent book, *Lasting The Distance,* by another club member, Paul Collier. It's available from Hesperian Press, as is an earlier book, *All in my Stride,* by yet another member, Richard Harris.

A record career of record-making

AUST. VETS. CHAMPS. ADELAIDE 1986. 1500 METRES 1ST M65: J.GILMOUR 4m 55sec.

For insight into the record-breaking career of the club's founder readers need go no further than Masters' own website.

From M55 to M70 John reigned supreme – and he still does!

Among those age groups John Gilmour holds State records for the 1-hour run; 1,500m; 1 mile; 3,000m; 5,000m; 10,000m; half-marathon and marathon.

The older of these unbroken State records were set more than 50 years ago!

Many were, and still are, Australian and/or World records. Details can be found on the club website.

Above: leading in the Box Hill 5km; Cliff Bould is on John's left.

Left and below: Australian Championships, Adelaide 1986. John, 65, winning the 1500m in 4:55.

800m

M95	John Gilmour	9:19.93

1,500m

M55	John Gilmour	4:22.0
M60	John Gilmour	4:29.0
M65	John Gilmour	4:49.16
M95	John Gilmour	19:35.95

Mile

M55	John Gilmour	4:40.0
M60	John Gilmour	4:57.1
M65	John Gilmour	5:20.6

3,000m

M55	John Gilmour	9:20.0
M60	John Gilmour	9:41.2
M65	John Gilmour	10:10.2
M70	John Gilmour	11:25.6

5,000m

M55	John Gilmour	16.09.7
M60	John Gilmour	16.33.3
M65	John Gilmour	17:25.3
M70	John Gilmour	18.46.62

10,000m

M55	John Gilmour	33:40.0
M60	John Gilmour	34:23.0
M65	John Gilmour	36:11.0
M70	John Gilmour	38:26.0

Half marathon

M55	John Gilmour	1:13:16
M60	John Gilmour	1:17:03
M65	John Gilmour	1:17:17
M70	John Gilmour	1:21:41

Marathon

M55	John Gilmour	2:38:19
M60	John Gilmour	2:41:07
M65	John Gilmour	2:57:59
M70	John Gilmour	3:03:04

One hour run

M55	John Gilmour	17,186
M60	John Gilmour	16,854
M65	John Gilmour	15,982
M70	John Gilmour	15,474