AIDAN DE BRUNE: 100TH BIRTHDAY OF HIS WALK AROUND AUSTRALIA

One of my regular go-to sites is https://www.wr-nw.com/ (World Rankings - Racewalking and Nordic Walking). As well as maintaining ultra walking records and ranking lists for various distances, the site publishes various occasional articles of a historical nature. Last month a new article was published, concerning the 100th anniversary of Aidan de Brune's walk around Australia (see https://www.wr-nw.com/historic-news.html). I must admit with embarrassment that I was previously unaware of this feat but I am now!

Left: Aidan de Brune – The Tramp Journalist who walked Around Australia (photograph taken in 1921)
Right: de Brune's route around Australia – Sydney to Sydney anticlockwise

This summary is taken from his wikipedia entry (see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aidan_de_Brune) and expanded out to add additional facts of interest.

Aidan de Brune (17 July 1874 – 15 February 1946), journalist, author and pedestrian, was the first person to walk around the perimeter of Australia, unaccompanied and unassisted.

De Brune was born Herbert Charles Cull in London, England and started his professional life as a printer. He married Ethel Elizabeth Crofts in 1907 and a son, Lionel, was born in 1909. In 1910 Cull came to Australia, arriving in Fremantle, Western Australia on 23 May 1910. His wife and child followed him and arrived in Albany, Western Australia on 26 November 1910.

In 1912 Cull's wife and son returned to England but Cull remained in Australia for the rest of his life. In early 1920 he was working for the Bunbury Herald newspaper and wrote two serial stories: The Pursuits of Mr Peter Pell and The Mystery of the Nine Stars. The latter story was unfinished when, in November 1920, Cull left the newspaper and began to walk from Fremantle to Sydney, following the Trans-Australian Railway. When he reached Sydney, in early 1921, Cull was calling himself Aidan de Brune.

In September 1921 he began his circumnavigation walk, from Sydney to Sydney, anticlockwise. De Brune described his goal to be "to leave Sydney on foot, to walk ten thousand miles (more or less) around Australia, calling at all the ports en route on the four coasts, and to return to Sydney." He proposed taking twelve months to complete the walk.

In the event, de Brune took two and a half years to complete the walk, eventually arriving back in Sydney on 4 March 1924. He was laid up in Burketown Hospital in the Gulf Country of north western Queensland for about two months, in February and March 1922, and at other times did not walk, because of illness or because he chose

to remain in a town and give a lecture on his travels. He was away from Sydney for 897 days, of which he walked on 572 days.

De Brune kept a diary during his walk, in which he made daily entries detailing the distance walked each day and the total distance to-date. He also invited people he met along the way to certify his presence at the location he was at and to make comments. After he finished his walk he donated the diary and a typescript of the contents of the diary to the State Library of New South Wales. You can read his description of his walk at http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks17/1700801h.html. The Gutenberg archive also contains his walk diary in full, with daily distances, etc, along with lots of photos (see http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks18/1800081h.html).

J T Beckett, a journalist, had met de Brune in Darwin, during his walk. A newspaper article written by Beckett appeared when de Brune was in Penong, South Australia, about 1700 miles from finishing his walk. Beckett concluded the article: "*Aiden de Brune has not finished his walk but should he never move another yard further, he will have put up a record that few, if any, will ever attempt to equal*."

After his walk around Australia, de Brune settled in Sydney and began writing serialised mystery stories for newspapers. Most are available to read on Gutenberg – see http://gutenberg.net.au/plusfifty-a-m.html#debrune

Aidan de Brune/Herbert Charles Cull died in Sydney on 15 February 1946. He was buried in Botany Cemetery.

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