

# **New Zealand Athletes who have set World Records and World Bests**

**Compiled by Steve Hollings**

The first New Zealand athlete ever to hold a World Record (World Best) was John Hempton who ran 9 4/5 seconds for the 100 yards on what is now Waitangi Day (6 February) 1892 at the New Zealand Championships at (the then) Lancaster Park in Christchurch. The difference between a World Record and a World Best performance is that the former is a performance that is ratified by the International Association of Athletics Federations, or its predecessor the International Amateur Athletics Federation (IAAF) where the performance was achieved using strictly enforced regulations at the time the performance was achieved. These regulations have changed over time and the list of events where World Records can be achieved has also changed over time. For example, the Marathon has only recently – 2004, become an event where a World Record can be established and set. Previous to this date performances in the Marathon were regarded as World Best performances. Between 1921 and 1935, Women's performances were recognized by the Women's World Federation (FSFI), but after that time the ratification of Women's records fell under the auspices of the IAAF. A World Best performance is determined as being a performance that was achieved in an event that was/is not on the list of events recognized for World Records or was achieved prior to the establishment of the IAAF or was never ratified because of certain circumstances.

Only six New Zealand men - Peter Snell (800m, 880 yards, 1000m, 1 mile – twice), Jack Lovelock (1500m, 1 mile), John Walker (1 mile, 2000m), Murray Halberg (2 miles, 3 miles), Dick Quax (5000m) and William (Bill) Baillie (20 kilometres, 1 hour) have held World Records that were ratified by the IAAF. John Hempton (100 yards), Peter Snell (660 yards, 1000 yards indoors) and Douglas Harris (880 yards) all posted Worlds Best times. However it is in the distance relay events that New Zealand teams or teams comprising at least one New Zealand athlete have had significant amounts of success. Full New Zealand teams have held the World Record twice in the 4 x 1 mile relay and on one further occasion held the World Best time for the event. A New Zealand team held the World Best time for the 4 x 1500m Relay, whilst New Zealand athletes Peter Snell, Murray Halberg and Neville Scott were members of either a British Empire team, or a Commonwealth Team that set World Best performances in the 4 x 880 yards (British Empire Team) or the 4 x 1 mile (Commonwealth Team). Interestingly the Commonwealth Team that set a World Best time for the 4 x 1 mile Relay of 16:26.4 in Sydney in December 1956 comprised Murray Halberg, Neville Scott, John Landy (AUS) and Ian Boyd (GBR). Ian later emigrated to New Zealand and was for a period of time the Chairman of Athletics New Zealand.

It is hard to imagine that a World Best performance by a New Zealand Woman occurred in Masterton! In 1923 a World Best performance of 64.0 seconds for the 440 yards was set by a D Johnston at the Masterton Oval.

Few details are available as the event (440 yards) was not a recognized event for women – it being considered too great a distance for women to run! Just four New Zealand Women have held World Records. Doreen Lumley was the first, setting a World Record for the 100 yards of 11.0 in March 1939. Marise Chamberlain set new World Records for the 440 yards three times in the period 1957 – 1959. Anne Audain set a World Record for the “new” distance of 5000m in 1982, becoming only the second woman in the World to hold the World Record over this distance. The fourth New Zealand woman to hold a World Record was Yvette Williams in the Long Jump in 1954. Yvette is the only New Zealand athlete, male or female to hold a World Record in a field event! D Johnston (already mentioned), Marise Chamberlain (1500m, 1 mile), Millie Sampson (Marathon), and Alison Roe (Marathon) are other New Zealand women to have held World Best performances in these events. Sue Jowett was a member of the Australia – New Zealand team that set a World Best performance in the 4 x 200m Relay in 1976. It would appear from the above that Marise Chamberlain with three World Records and a further two World Best performances is the most prolific record setter of New Zealand women. However there is a New Zealand women who can boast at having set five World Records. Rosemary Wright (nee Stirling), born 11 December 1947 in Timaru, South Canterbury was a member of (totally) British teams that set World Records for the 4 x 400m Relay, 3 x 800m Relay, 3 x 880 yards Relay, and the 4 x 800m Relay (twice) between 1967 and 1970 – and yes in those days 3 x 800m and 3 x 880 yards were the standard events for women’s World Record purposes.

Just two male New Zealand athletes (Dave Norris – Triple Jump and Gavin Lovegrove – Javelin Throw) have set World Junior Records / World Junior Bests. In Norris’s case his was achieved before World Junior Records were recognized by the IAAF and thus was a Junior World Best performance. Gavin Lovegrove set a World Junior Record in the Javelin three times in 1986 – 1987, but on two of these occasions they were not ratified as World Records because of administrative inconsistencies. However, Lovegrove is the only New Zealand athlete – male or female to have ever held a ratified World Junior Record.

Below is a list of those New Zealand athletes and New Zealand relay teams or relay teams consisting one or more New Zealand athletes who have set World Records and World Best performances.

## MEN

*(Performances in blue italics were not recognized as World Records because of an irregularity that is explained in the text. They were therefore World Best performances)*

### **100 yards**

*9 4/5                      John Hempton                      Christchurch                      6 February 1892*  
National Championships, Lancaster Park. 1 John Hamilton Hempton 9 4/5, 2. J.H. Buchanan 5 – 6 yards behind. Hempton ran an unrated 9 3/5 at the 1889 – 90 NZL Championships at

Dunedin on 14 December 1989 assisted by a "howling gale", winning by 5y. He also ran an unrated 9 4/5 at Napier on 15 January 1892

### **660 yards**

**1:16.9**      **Peter Snell**      **Christchurch**      **3 February 1962**

Intermediate time during 880y World Record. See below under 880y. The 660y was not a recognized distance for World Record purposes.

### **800m**

**1:44.3**      **Peter Snell**      **Christchurch**      **3 February 1962**

Set during an 880y race (1:45.1) – see below. (3 watches: 1:44.2 – 1:44.3 – 1:44.4)

### **880 yards**

**1:49.2**      **Douglas Harris**      **Wanganui**      **25 January 1947**

International Meeting – Grass Track. 1 Doug Harris 1:49.2 (3 watches: 1:49.2 – 1:49.2 – 1:49.4). Under a national rule at the time, the slowest watch time was taken as the official version. Sydney Wooderson (GBR) had run 1:49.2 for 880yards at Motspur Park, London, on 20 August 1938 in a handicap race to hold the World Record for the 880yards)

**1:45.1**      **Peter Snell**      **Christchurch**      **3 February 1962**

International Meeting. Lancaster Park – grass track. During an 800m race (see above). 1. Peter Snell 1:45.1 (all three watches 1:45.1), 2. James Dupree (USA) 1:49.6, 3. John Bork (USA) 1:53.5. Snell's splits: 24.8y – 26.2y (51.0y) – 25.9y (1:16.9y) – 28.2y (1:45.1y), lap times 51.0y and 54.1y

### **1000 yards**

**2:06.1i**      **Peter Snell**      **Los Angeles (USA)** **10 February 1962**

Los Angeles Times Meet. LA Sports Arena. 160y banked boards. 1. Peter Snell 2:06.1, 2. Bill Crothers (CAN) 2:07.4, 3. Ray van Asten (HOL) 2:10.0. Splits: 440y 53.0, 880y 1:50.2. Not a standard distance for World Record purposes.

### **1000m**

**2:16.6**      **Peter Snell**      **Auckland**      **12 November 1964**

International Meeting. Western Springs Stadium. 1. Peter Snell 2:16.6. (watches: 2:16.5 - 2:16.6 - 2:16.6). 2. John Davies 2:19.3, 3. Joseph Odlozil (TCH) 2:19.4 Splits were 400m 55.0, 800m 1:48.8

### **1500m**

**3:47.8**      **Jack Lovelock**      **Berlin (GER)**      **6 August 1936**

Olympic Games. 1. Jack Lovelock 3:47.8 (all three watches 3:47.8), 2. Glenn Cunningham (USA) 3:48.4, 3. Luigi Beccali (ITA) 3:49.2 Lovelock's splits 61.7 – 63.9 (2:05.6) – 59.8 (3:05.4), last 300m: 42.2, last 400m 57.2

### **1 Mile**

**4:07.6**      **Jack Lovelock**      **Princeton (USA)**      **15 July 1933**

Cornell/Princeton vs Oxford/Cambridge. 1. Jack Lovelock 4:07.6 ( watches: 4:07.3 – 4:07.6 – 4:07.6) 2. William Bonthron 4:08.7. Lovelock's splits 61.4 – 62.2 (2:03.6) – 65.1 (3:08.7) – 58.9

**3:54.4 Peter Snell Wanganui 27 January 1962**  
International Meeting, Cooks Gardens 385.85m grass track. 1. Peter Snell 3:54.4 (watches: 3:54.2 – 3:54.4 – 3:54.5, 1500m 3:39.3), 2. Bruce Tulloh (GBR) 3:59.3, 3. Albert Thomas (AUS) 4:03.5. Snell's lap times: 61.3 – 59.5 (2:00.8) – 59.0 (2:59.8) – 54.6, the last 880y: 1:53.6

**3:54.1 Peter Snell Auckland 17 November 1964**  
International Meeting, Western Springs Stadium. 1. Peter Snell 3:54.1 (watches: 3:54.0 – 3:54.1 – 3:54.1, electronic 3:54.04, 1500m: 3:37.6), 2. Joseph Odlozil (TCH) 3:56.4 (3:40.3), 3. John Davies 3:56.8 (3:40.2). Snell's splits: 56.4 – 1:54.1 – 2:54.3. Lap times 56.4 – 57.7 – 60.2 – 59.8.

**3:49.4 John Walker Goteborg (SWE) 12 August 1975**  
Goteborg Games. Slottsskogsvallen Stadium. 1. John Walker (watches: 3:49.3 – 3:49.4 – 3:49.4, 1500m 3:34.3), 2. Ken Hall (AUS) 3:55.2 (3:36.6), 3. Graham Crouch (AUS) 3:56.4 (3:39.2). Walker's splits: 55.8 – 59.3 (1:55.1) – 57.9 (2:53.0) – 56.4.

### **2000m**

**4:51.4 John Walker Oslo (NOR) 30 June 1976**  
Bislett Games. Bislett Stadium. 1. John Walker 4:51.4 (electronic 4:51.52), 2. Karl Fleschen (FRG) 5:00.4, 3. Klaus-Peter Hildenbrand (FRG) 5:00.6. Walker's splits: 60.1 – 58.5 (1:58.6) – 57.7 (2:56.3) – 57.7 (3:54.0) – 57.4. 1000m of 2:27.1 – 2:24.3, 1500m: 3:39.5, Mile 3:55.5

### **2 Miles**

**8:30.0 Murray Halberg Jyvaskyla (FIN) 7 July 1961**  
International Meeting, 1. Halberg 8:30.0 (three watches 8:30.0 - 8:30.0 – 8:30.1), 2. Reijo Hoykinpuro (FIN) 8:44.4, 3. Patrick Clohessy (AUS) 9:00.6. 400/800m Clohessy 64/2:08, 1000/1500m: Halberg 2:40/3:58, 3000m Halberg 7:57.6.

### **3 Miles**

**13:10.0 Murray Halberg Stockholm (SWE) 25 July 1961**  
International Meeting. During a 5000m race. 1. Halberg 13:35.2 (at 3 miles 13:10.0, 3 watches 13:09.4 – 13:10.0 – 13:10.0), 2. Barry Magee 13:39.2 (13:11.2), 3. Dave Power (AUS) 13:53.4 (13:25.8). Kilometre splits: 2:41.4 – 2:46.6 – 2:43.6 – 2:46.6 - 2:37.2

### **5000m**

**13:12.9 Dick Quax Stockholm (SWE) 5 July 1977**  
July Games. Olympic Stadium. 1. Dick Quax 13:12.9 (electronic 13:12.87), 2. Karl Fleschen (FRG) 13:13.88, 3. Peter Weight (FRG) 13:14:54. 1km splits: 2:39.3 – 2:39.2 (5:18.5) – 2:43.0 (7:56.0) – 2:43.0 (10:39.0) – 2:33.9

### **20 kilometres**

**59:28.6 William Baillie Auckland 24 August 1963**  
Intermediate time during a 1 hour run (see under 1 hr record)

### **1 hour**

**20,190m William Baillie Auckland 24 August 1963**

International Race. 1. Baillie 20,190m (20km: 59:28.6 – also a World Record, the three watches: 59:28.4 – 59:28.6 – 59:28.9) 2. Kokichi Tsuburaya (JPN) 20,083 (59:51.4), 3. Ray Puckett 19,880, 4. Kazumi Watanabe (JPN) 19,781 (1:00:40.8), 5. Barry Magee 19,062, Splits: Mile: 4:32.2, 2 Miles: 9:33, 3 Miles: 14:23, 6 Miles:48:10

### **4 x 880 yards Relay**

**7:18.0**      **British Empire**      **London (GBR)**      **14 September 1960**

British Empire – USA dual meet. White City Stadium. 1. Empire (Anthony Blue (AUS) 1:51.0, George Kerr (JAM) 1:51.9, Tom Farrell (ENG) 1:50.3, Peter Snell (NZL) 1:44.8) 7:18.0, not ratified as the Empire team included athletes from more than one country. 2. USA 7:19.4 – officially accepted as a World Record.

### **4 x 1500m Relay**

**14:40.4**      **New Zealand**      **Oslo (NOR)**      **22 August 1973**

International Meeting at Bislett Stadium. 1. NZL (Tony Polhill 3:42.9, John Walker 3:40.4, Rod Dixon 3:41.2, Dick Quax 3:35.9. Not Ratified, as the second man, John Walker was paced for three laps by Byron Dyce (JAM) who ran without a baton).

### **4 x 1 Mile Relay**

**16:26.4**      **Commonwealth Team**      **Sydney (AUS)**      **5 December 1956**

Empire / Commonwealth vs USA 1. Commonwealth (Murray Halberg (NZL) 4:05.2 – Neville Scott (NZL) 4:06.3 – Ian Boyd (GBR) 4:10.5 – John Landy (AUS) 4:04.4) 16:26.4 (Commonwealth team consisted of athletes from more than one country, nullifying performance for record purposes). 2. USA 16:54.8

**16:23.8**      **New Zealand**      **Dublin (IRL)**      **17 July 1961**

International Meeting. Santry Stadium. 1. NZL (Gary Philpott 4:12.9, Murray Halberg 4:02.4, Barry Magee 4:07.2, Peter Snell 4:01.2) 16:23.8 (3 watches 16:23.0 – 16:23.8 – 16:24.0). 2. England 16:24.8

**16:02.8**      **New Zealand**      **Auckland**      **3 February 1972**

World Record attempt. Mt Smart Stadium. 1. NZL (Kevin Ross 4:01.0, Tony Polhill 4:02.0, Richard Tayler 4:01.0, Dick Quax 3:58.4) 16:02.8 (all 3 watches 16:02.4!! Erroneously – four tenths of a second had become four fifths of a second, which then logically became eight tenths of a second – officially recognized as 16:02.8) 2. Australia 16:27.6

**15:59.57**      **New Zealand**      **Auckland**      **1 March 1983**

Record attempt. Mt Smart Stadium. 1. NZL 15:59.57 (Tony Rogers 3:57.2, John Bowden 4:02.5, Michael Gilchrist 4:02.8, John Walker 3:57.1), 2. Australia 16:30.17

## **Women**

### **100 yards**

**11.0**      **Doreen Lumley**      **Auckland**      **11 March 1939**

International Meeting. Grass Track. 1. Doreen Lumley 11.0 (all three watches, plus an extra watch 11.0), 2. Decima Norman (AUS) 11.0 (beaten by 9 inches = 20cm), 3. Carr 11.5e (4 yards behind)

## **440 yards**

**64.0**            **D Johnston**                            **Masterton**            **10 February 1923**

Handicap Meeting. Masterton Oval. No other details. Distance not recognized for record purposes

**57.0**            **Marise Chamberlain**            **Christchurch**            **16 February 1957**

National Meeting. Rugby Park – grass track. 1. Marise Chamberlain 57.0 (all three watches 57.0) 2. Fay McBeath 60.6.

**56.1**            **Marise Chamberlain**            **Christchurch**            **8 March 1958**

National Meeting. Rugby Park – grass track. 1. Marise Chamberlain 56.1 ( watches: 56.0 – 56.1 – 56.2) 2. Fay McBeath 30m behind

**55.6**            **Marise Chamberlain**            **Sydney**                            **14 March 1959**

New South Wales Championship & NSW-NZL “Trans-Tasman” Cup. Sydney Cricket Ground. 1. Marise Chamberlain 55.6 (all three watches 55.6), 2. Madeline Bergman 56.8, 3. June Cleary 57.7

## **1500m**

**4:19.0**            **Marise Chamberlain**                            **Perth**            **8 December 1962**

Intermediate time during a 1 mile race (see under 4:41.4). The 1500m for women was not recognized as a distance for record purposes in 1962.

## **1 Mile**

**4:41.4**            **Marise Chamberlain**                            **Perth**            **8 December 1962**

International Meeting. Perry Lakes Stadium. 1. Marise Chamberlain 4:41.4 (1500m 4:19.0 – also a World’s Best – see above), 2. Joan Beretta 4:45.5

## **5000m**

**15:13.22**            **Anne Audain**                            **Auckland**                            **17 March 1982**

National Meeting. Mt Smart Stadium. 1. Anne Audain 15:13.22, 2. Barbara Moore 15:29.65, 3. Lorraine Moller 15:40.23. Splits: 3:04.5 – 6:06.5 – 9:11.4 – 12:03.0. At 3000m: 9:11.4 Moller, 9:11.6 Audain, 9:12.0 Moore.

## **Marathon**

**3:19:33**            **Millie Sampson**                            **Auckland**                            **16 August 1964**

**2:25:28.7**            **Alison Roe**                            **New York**            **25 September 1981**

11<sup>th</sup> New York Marathon. 1. Alison Roe 2:25:28.7, 2. Ingrid Kristiansen (NOR) 2:30.08, 3. Julie Shea (USA) 2:30:11.5. The winning time was initially thought to be a World’s best, but the course was found to be only 42.047 km, a shortfall worth about 28 seconds.

## **4 x 200m Relay**

**1:36.2**            **Australia / New Zealand** **Brisbane**                            **26 January 1976**

International Meet. Mt Gravatt Stadium. 1. AUS/NZL (Barbara Wilson (AUS), Susan Jowett (NZL), Raelene Boyle (AUS), Denise Robertson (AUS)) 1:32.6 Not accepted as the team was made up of athletes from more than one country.

## Long Jump

6.28m      **Yvette Williams**      Gisborne      20 February 1954  
National Meet. Childers Road Stadium. 1. Yvette Williams 20' 7¼ " = 6.2802 (+0.2w), 2. M  
McMahon 5.46.

## Junior Men

### Triple Jump

*15.46m(1.9\*)* **Dave Norris**      *Lower Hutt*      *8 March 1958*

National Championships. Lower Hutt. 2. Roy Williams 15.30m. Norris led up until the end of the fifth round when he was called away for a relay race. Williams on his last jump of the competition overtook Norris's best to move into the lead. On hearing that Williams had taken the lead, Norris raced across the runway, made a headlong last attempt and jumped a new National and Record\* and a World Junior Best.

\*The wind exceeded the limit of 2m/s but the wind gauge official had taken it upon himself to grant a 10% 'safety margin', which lowered the reading to 1.9

### Javelin Throw

76.68      **Gavin Lovegrove**      Athens (GRE)      5 July 1986

Warm up competition meet prior to 1<sup>st</sup> World Junior Championships in Athens. Lovegrove won the competition beating Gary Jenson (GBR) who had held the previous World Record. At the WJC two weeks later, Lovegrove came third (74.22m), but he lost his World Record to Vladimir Sasimovich (URS) who won with a throw of 78.84m

*79.58m*      **Gavin Lovegrove**      *Noumea (NCL)*      *31 October 1986*

International Meeting. Ten days after his nineteenth birthday, Lovegrove regained his World Junior Record. However the record did not become official because anyone claiming a World Record must have been dope-tested straight afterwards, and testing facilities were not available in New Caledonia.

*79.60m*      **Gavin Lovegrove**      *Wellington*      *9 March 1987*

National Championships. Lovegrove was deprived of having this performance recognized as a World Record because of the interpretation of the "age" eligibility. Lovegrove was 19 years 4 months old when he threw this distance (exactly the same age as Jenson (above)), but in Lovegrove's case he would turn 20 during the calendar year and therefore was deemed to be a Senior athlete – although he won the National Junior title at the same time! The inconsistency between an athlete's "age" for the season and the "age" on the date the performance was achieved has created a great deal of debate throughout the years in New Zealand.