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Background To Stone Walking

Two Highland Games competitions in Australia have a Dinnie Style stone walk.

Around 1860, Donald Dinnie performed a renowned feat of strength at the Bridge Of Potarch near Kincardine, Scotland. He carried two large stones simultaneously - one weighing 154kg (340lb) and the other 197kg (435lb) – approximately 5 yards across the width of the bridge.

The stones were being used as anchor points during a bridge repair.

This is a massive test of overall body strength and especially grip strength. This feat has never been replicated to this day. Modern attempts can be categorised as assisted (with straps) and unassisted (without straps). Straps

are used to fasten the hands to the handles and remove the grip component of the challenge.

There is video evidence, and some credible claims, of shorter distances being walked without straps but no one has yet walked across the width of the bridge in modern times.

Recently, the Dinnie stones were walked 18'4" in an American 'for television' performance.

Unfortunately, that show allowed straps to artificially boost performances.

The stone walks in Australia must be performed without any gripping aids as per the original feat of strength performed by Donald Dinnie.

There are many credible stone-walking performances in Australia. A particularly noteworthy rivalry is that between Luke Reynolds (NSW) and Craig Reid (NSW). Between them, they have recorded some of the longest stone-walks in Australian competition.

Binks Stones

At the Amulet Highland Games in Beechworth (Victoria) two stones are carried for maximum distance. No time limit is imposed but dropping or dragging of stones is not permitted.

It is an historic location for a stone walk as Donald Dinnie himself competed at Beechworth (1890) and one can only imagine what distance he would have recorded.



The two stones are of different sizes, heights and weights which contribute to the difficulty of challenge. The smaller stone is 102kg (224lb) and the larger is 151kg (332lb) when dry.

The Binks Stones are named after their original owner, Billy Binks, who trained with them in the 1970s and achieved a very commendable distance of 20' walking with them. Billy Binks also lifted the Dinnie Stones in Scotland unassisted.

First Stone Walk At Amulet Winery

The first year the Binks stones were included as an event in the Amulet Highland Games was 2010. It was included as the 5th and final trial in a tough set of events, which included a 70lbs Stone put, 56lbs Weight For Height (WFH), Atlas Stones and Caber toss.

The line up was a very solid group of competitors including Craig Reid, Morgan Westmoreland, Aaron Monks, Luke Reynolds & future World's strongest man competitor Eben LeRoux.

Record Breaking Walks

Some of the longest distances yet were recorded that first day in front of Billy Binks and a very courageous crowd. Three athletes managed to exceed the original record set by Billy Binks in the 1970's and the remaining two athletes came very close.

Luke Reynolds and Craig Reid have subsequently recorded the top five distances seen at this venue.

Since that day in 2010, many very strong athletes have attempted the historic feat of strength including strongman, highland games athletes, powerlifting and Olympic and Commonwealth champions.

The Amulet winery has maintained a book of all the competition attempts of these stones since 15/8/2010. The inaugural record was set by Luke Reynolds with a distance of 40' 9"/12.4m.

At the time of writing the record is still held by Luke and it stands at 41' 1"/12.5m in 2014.

Binks Stone Walks (Amulet Highland Games)

Year	Name	Feet	Inches
2014	Luke Reynolds	41.00	1
2010	Luke Reynolds	40.00	9
2010	Craig Reid	39.00	10.25
2013	Luke Reynolds	31.00	1.25
2011	Craig Reid	27.00	9
2014	Scott Martin	24.00	9
2010	Moe Westmoreland	21.00	10
2010	Eben Le roux	16.00	6.5
2011	Moe Westmoreland	16.00	2
2014	Jordan Steffens	14.00	9.5
2010	Aaron Monks	14.00	1
2014	Tim O'Shea	12.00	2
2013	James Grahame	11.00	2.5
2012	Harley Ford	10.00	10
2012	James Grahame	9.00	10
2012	Nick Maloni	9.00	0
2013	Jordan Steffens	8.00	11.5
2013	Tim O'Shea	8.00	8.5
2014	James Grahame	6.00	6
2012	Alistair Ronaldson	5.00	4
2011	Steve Tye	4.00	5.5
2011	James Grahame	2.00	10
2011	John Giggins	1.00	2.25
2012	James Devlin	1.00	0
2011	Nick Derecki	1.00	0
2013	Tim O' Shea		3.5
2013	Scott Martin	DNA/Injured	

Below: Craig Reid of NSW attempting the Binks stone walk in 2010.



Below: Luke Reynolds, Binks Stones Walk, 2013.



East Coast Games

The East Coast Heavy Events Championship is a long standing competition.

It continues to exist due to the relentless efforts of Craig Reid. It often serves as a qualifier for the National Highland Games championships. It is one of the few competitions where hammer throwing is allowed in competition. However, our focus in this article is on an (optional) event which occurs after the throwing stops.

A pair of stones are available to be walked for distance. It is open to anyone to attempt (after they have signed a waiver). They weigh 145kg/319lb and 125kg/275lb respectively. The handles are different too. A 10mm D-handle is attached to the heavier stone. A Ring Handle is attached to the lighter one. The competition rules differ from those stated above for the Binks stones.

In this competition the objective is maximum distance within 90 seconds over a 30 metre course. Should the athlete complete 30 metres and still have time left (and indeed energy) they may turn and continue back the way they came. Multiple drops allowed but no dragging. Under these conditions, and an unforgiving Australian crowd, you are guaranteed 90 seconds of pain.

The stones themselves were the result of some molds splitting overnight during the curing process.

In true Scottish style of 'Waste not. Want not', Craig, having successfully lifted the original Dinnie Stones in Scotland, realised the potential of a couple of misshapen stones and promptly put a handle on them. Thus the challenge was born.

The stones were first included in competition at the 2008 East Coast Highland games championships. They are the 10th event of the day after an exhausting 9 throwing events. As mentioned above the stone carry is an optional, non-scoring event for athletes to challenge themselves further, or indeed members of the crowd brave enough to accept the challenge. Cash prizes are awarded to the top three attempts of the day.

Craig Reid himself set the pace in 2008 with a victory in the games overall as well as the Dinnie carry. His Dinnie walk was 19metres (approx 62').

The Dinnie challenge returned in 2009. Much anticipation rested on the inclusion in the line up of seasoned international Kiwi strongman and renowned gripster, Jeremy Hogg.

Jeremy did not disappoint, blasting past the original record, but badly shredding his hands in the process of setting a new record 24.85m (approx 81').

In 2010, Craig Reid sought revenge and wanted to reclaim his record. The lineup included record-holder Jeremy Hogg and also arch-rival Luke Reynolds.

With steely determination and a grip strong enough to open a Scotsman's wallet, Craig made a mockery of the old record and pushed it out to a huge 30 metres (approx 98').

This record still stands.

Craig Reid, East Coast Highland Games, 2010



Below: Luke Reynolds, under the watchful eye of Highland and Strongman legend, David Huxley. 2010.





Conclusion

Stone walking is a unique challenge and a great homage to the great Heavy Donald Dinnie. We are lucky in Australia to have two such events available for athletes to test themselves against.

Better still, the exclusion of gripping aids (such as straps) is a reminder that the style-of-performance is more important than the distance achieved.

Despite the competition setting, it is, and always was, man-versus-stone. Not man-versus-man.

Which Rules Do you Prefer?

The two stone walks have different rules and make different demands upon the athlete. It would be good to know which style you prefer. If you have an opinion, please add your comments below.



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