Powering on: Looking forward, never back - John Rigby’s story:

[John Rigby] I'm a palaeobotanist, documenting evolutionary trends. When I finished my undergraduate degree, I realised there were two subjects I'd majored in. One of them was botany and one was geology and palaeobotany was the only thing that could use both of them, so I said, "I'm going to be a palaeobotanist." That's what I've been ever since. And that was in the '50s.

I'm working in a period of over 150 million years. I've worked in plants of this age in all continents, which includes Antarctica. That's sort of been my niche in life.

Normally I'll come here four times a week, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday. Wednesday I'll just do running. I do fun runs sometimes as well.

I stopped doing full marathons oh, probably about 10 years ago. Since then, I've only been doing half marathons or shorter. One of the few things I did this year, because of my health problem, was I took part in the Queen's Baton Relay with the Commonwealth Games.

The type of body building I do is not lifting heavy weights but it depends on posing and on my appearance as a model so I don't get to get a G-string. But the one I've been wearing since then is a nice reddish colour with quite a good sheen on them. They're the ones I was looking for. I can show you my trampolining leotard as well, if you like!

I started competing in 2012. In 2013 I entered the Australian national titles, in the 80+ division, at that stage. The nearest other competitor to myself was more than 10 years younger than me. I've done a number of other Australian competitions and I've also done a few international competitions and, again, I've been the only one in my age division. I'm the World Natural Bodybuilding champion in my age group.

This one is the trophy I won in Slovakia in 2014 in a world competition. I have since competed in other world competitions and they're buried in all these other trophies.

Six months ago I fell over. I hurt my back again and I decided I'd better go to the hospital and have an X-ray. In the testing, they found I had bowel cancer so instead of spending perhaps a few hours in hospital I ended up staying there for five weeks. And they put me on chemotherapy and at the end of five weeks, they decided I was right to go home again, look after myself.

It's four weeks since I left hospital and I'm only doing about half the number of exercise sessions at a very low level at the moment. I still haven't got back to normal sporting activities, which I'm hoping to do next year.

My preparation for body building meant that my cancer, I was told, cured very easily. Not only that, the whole time I took no painkillers or anything like that because I wasn't in pain.

As far as I'm concerned, as soon as I've recovered, I'm going to start competing again. I hope to defend my Queensland titles, my national title, and my world titles.

Now, there have been a few centenarians in palaeobotany so I've got something to compete for. And as far as body building is concerned, I don't think there have been any centenarians or even 90-year-olds or, for that matter, 80-year-olds. After all, I only have to keep going for another eight years till I hit the century mark, so why stop?

There we go.

I'm looking forward to being able to go on for quite a number of years yet. I've got enough fossil material without collecting any more to last me for 15 to 20 years. Because I find that when I go to a locality, collect specimens, in a week I get enough material to work for about two years. So I just keep on accumulating more and more stuff that I have to get round to someday.

Someday I'm going to die and when I do I'm going to leave a lot of specimens that someone else has to work on. My future goal in science is to keep making discoveries and making some magnificent discovery that'll make me famous.