

Surrey Tops 2024 Report

This year's Surrey Tops had 168 entries and 135 starters - an 80% start rate. So far so good. But the statistic that was most notable was the record retirement rate of 21% - a hard night's work for the recovery vehicle driver. The marshals' walk, unusually only a week before the event, took place in warm weather with glorious sunshine during the daylight hours.



The walker's 100m start

The mass start walkers left in very light rain, which soon turned into warm sunshine. But throughout the day the high humidity resulted in an increased demand for water, particularly at the first two checkpoints. Elstead had been threatened with an enforced move due to Thames Water closing Westbrook Hill. But fortunately this was reopened three days beforehand - those on the marshals' walkers having been forced to fight their way through the

fenced road works. Kent group did a sterling job at their checkpoint sited amidst the puddles.



Passing the Sailors Stone on the Puncbowl

By St Martha's entrants were feeling the pressure of the mileage and weather, and 8 of them gave up the struggle at this point, some returning from the North Downs to retire there. The recovery vehicle started work in earnest. But entrants continued to enjoy fabulous views from the North Downs before darkness fell and the thunderstorm started as they travelled all way along to Blatchford Down, through Abinger Roughts and across the fields to Holmbury St Mary village hall and the renowned Sussex stews awaiting them. Here the retirements came thick and fast and in all 16 people were ferried home by a recovery driver whose feet never touched the ground as he drove back and forth for most of the night, including a roadside pick up for a geographically misplaced errant walker.



Walkers passing over Kettlebury Hill

The thunder, rain and mud increased and soon entrants were encountering the adventurous descent of Jelleys Hollow. Suitably adorned with Surrey's finest mud they continued to clock up the miles to the final checkpoint with its overhead shelter and hot drinks at Smithbrook Kilns. A few more retirements followed but most now fuelled up with caffeine and sugar continued to face Hascombe Hill, Holloway Heath and Hydon's Ball and then home to Witley once more.

Here the delights of a cooked breakfast complete with a la carte menu and table service awaited them. Notes were compared with laughter yawns and tales of woe in the hall whilst in the back others lay dreaming of mud slides and dark woods.



St Martha's Church shortly after CP2

A good event once again - fabulous views, laughter, mud, rain, thunder and great food. Grateful thanks go to our wonderful marshals - Alastair Charlesworth, Ann Muggeridge, Bill Boughton, Cathy Turton, Caroline Crolla, David Thornton, Elton Ellis, Fiona Cameron, Fiona McNicol, Geoff Bullock, Graham Baldwin, Helen Strong, Henri de Bossart, Iaan Davies, James Blogg, Jane Bates, Jennie de Bossart, John Goody, Marion Mueller, Mary Dee, Peter Hedgethorpe, Roger Bates, Roger Sage, Sonia Edwards, Stephen Ford, Sue Charlesworth, Tony Cartwright, Vikki Bell and Wesley McCullough.

Mary Dee, Sept 2024