

Sun, snow and sunshine greeted us as we set off on the marshals' walks, the week before the Surrey group's annual Winter Tanners in January. Blue skies, beautiful scenery and bacon sandwiches for lunch - what more could you ask for? It was crisp winter walking at its best and walkers on both routes had a glorious day out. With spirits high, though bodies weary, we returned home to our final preparations with renewed anticipation.

On the event entrants were welcomed in by our car parking marshals armed with light sabres. After queueing up at the registration desk they set off on their routes to encounter Tanners Hatch rather earlier than some might have been expecting, reversing the oft-used homeward section of the route. Passing the numbers check opposite the church at Ranmore Common they enjoyed the fast and firm descent above the vineyard to wend their way past Ryka's, around the lower slopes of Box Hill and down steeply to the first checkpoint at White Hill. Here the routes split. Those on the 20 route crossed fields, ascended to High Ashurst and then up and down the slopes of Headley Heath and south to descend to Bletchingley and briefly join the North Downs Way. From here there was a long ascent up to the last checkpoint at Walton Oaks. Meanwhile those on the 30, having been fortified at the first checkpoint, immediately tackled the long flight of steep steps up to cross Mickleham Downs and over to join the Roman Stane Street, travelling as the crow flies for 2 miles. At the end of this straight stretch they ventured into Langley Vale wood - a new experience for many. It is owned by the Woodland Trust and is a First World War Centenary Wood - a living memorial to those lost in naval battles in World War One. Entrants went up the Regiment of Trees, commemorating Kitchener's troop inspection in 1915. Then they went through the 6 metre tall oak sculpture, Witness, inspired by the dead trees on the WWI battlefields. The route continued past a large community orchard and then made its way through the upright porthole markers honouring each of the British warships sunk in the Battle of Jutland. A network of pastoral paths then followed leading to a traverse of Banstead Heath and eventually to a viewpoint on Colley Hill and past the Inglis memorial with its decorated ceiling. Passing the numbers check entrants, descended Reigate Hill and contoured the North Downs at a lower level for quite some way before joining the 20 route on the ascent to checkpoint 3. After this everyone travelled through and round fields, skirting Headley, through Cherkley Wood before gently descending the wide open space of Mickleham Downs and down through the edge of Mickleham village. After crossing the bypass the route went past Norbury Park Farm, beside the River Mole and up to regain Bocketts Farm and on the familiar route back to the start.

Throughout the day temperatures rose to a high of 3°C, though not on the hill tops, and the well-clad marshals gamely stood their ground in near freezing conditions to support the entrants with warm welcomes. Sadly the mud

was not up to the usual Surrey standard and far too many entrants left for home with relatively clean shoes. There were only 4 retirements, 2 needing transport. On the whole the event ran very smoothly and was enjoyed by all.

Comments received included 'it was a totally brilliant fun day out', 'quite frankly I loved it and I love the fact that next year will be different', 'thank you again for a fabulous event', 'this was my first and I thoroughly enjoyed it', 'the route was particularly good' 'best LDWA RD award always goes to .. the Winter Tanners', 'absolutely my favourite course. Lots of variety so you could not get bored. Langley Vale Wood was particularly interesting', 'well done and a big thank you to all involved', 'wonderful volunteers all standing there in bitterly cold temperatures', 'warm welcomes and yummy treats at the checkpoints', 'I wouldn't have swapped the tea and biscuits at CP3 for a Michelin-starred meal!'

Thanks are due to

Car parking Debbie Wilkes, Jackie Barker, John Goody, Mike Tuke, Vincent McDonnell

Registration and Start Ann Muggeridge, Frank Eberle, Jude Unsworth, Mary Dee, Stewart Hilton, Tony Cartwright

Numbers Check Frank Eberle, Paul Chamberlain

Checkpoint 1 Ann Muggeridge, Chris Woodward, John Goody, Simon Delph, Steve Ford

Numbers Check 20 Debbie Wilkes, Jackie Barker

Checkpoint 2 Alan Shons, Ertan Ali Faik, Fiona Cameron, Roger Sage

Numbers Check 30 Paul Chamberlain, Tim Bedwell

Checkpoint 3 Bill Boughton, Mike Tuke, Stewart Hilton, Tony Cartwright

Finish Cathy Turton, Jude Unsworth, Mary Dee

As well as those above I would also like to thank John Westcott for the benefit of his long experience over the years, Mike Tuke for sorting, preparing and restoring all the equipment to its rightful place and for guiding checkpoint leaders, all those who helped with the route checking, Tony Cartwright for sorting PACER and its necessary equipment and training those PACER marshals who needed it, the landowners who kindly granted us permission to site our checkpoints, all those entrants who made all that hard work worthwhile, and last, but not least, the Almighty

for providing us with such stunning weather on the marshals' walks and dry conditions on the event, though I might intercede for more mud next year!

Statistics

Our entrants arrived from all corners of the country - Cornwall & Devon, North Yorkshire, East Anglia and the South Coast. There were 447 entrants, ie with 89% take up of the 500 places available. 368 entrants started, that is 88% of the entrants. We had 4 retirements, 1 who had downloaded last year's route in error, and instead of coming back to pick up a route description opted to continue his walk unaided! This event is not a race and entrants took it at their own pace, which varied from 5.8mph to 1.8mph on the 20 route and between 6.5mph to 2.6mph on the 30. The 20 route was in fact 21.4 miles long with 2701 feet of ascent, and the 30 route was a mere 29.5 miles with 3480 feet of ascent.