

As ever the marshals had walked out the routes the week before and both groups met for lunch at Bocketts Farm. Here they exchanged tales and pictures of their intrepid crossings of Bookham Common. They then continued round to finish. This year they had some support after their starts - the 20 being met for the last half mile and the 30 milers enjoying the luxury of a couple of impromptu checkpoints on the way round - the hot drinks being particularly welcome at Gomshall as they finished in the dark.

On the day 400 entrants cheerfully queued up in the dark and set off on a familiar route to Tanners Hatch. From there they crossed Ranmore Common and the road and set off westwards along the Great Copse and down to join the North Downs Way. Below Dunley Wood they descended steeply to continue along the valley and after a short ascent crossed the railway and up and over to Abinger and around to the first checkpoint at Gomshall.

Those on the 20 were then faced with a steep ascent of Hackhurst Downs, followed by a traverse of Oaken Grove, and across Outdowns. They then skirted Cranmore school and more woods to reach the final checkpoint outside Little Bookham Village Hall.

Meanwhile the 30 milers had crossed Shere Heath and Brook to reach Blackheath and then headed north past Lockner Farm to climb Colyers Hanger and go over the shoulder of St Martha's. From there they went east to Silent Pool and climbed up steeply to reach checkpoint 2 at West Hanger. From there they sampled the delightful valley of Daws Dene, skirted the Horsleys, crossed Effingham Common, encountered the standing water by Mallards Mere and then reached the final checkpoint.

At this stage the entrants were quite pleased with themselves, only to encounter wiser marshals who told of adventures ahead. And they were not wrong! All the entrants now reached Bookham Common and the finest stretch of classic Surrey mud - the like of which they had not yet seen. All slowed down as they slopped and squelched their way to reach the haven of the footbridge. And to finish the owners of those tired and muddy legs had to exercise their brains to follow the intricate set of Fetcham alleyways to regain sight of the pumping station and an easy stroll to the finish.

The day started on a grey note, with mist obscuring some of the hill views, however by the afternoon the sun shone till dark. The recovery driver was kept busy early in the day with 9 retirements but after lunch was no longer needed.

Comments received included 'an amazing day out in the Surrey Hills', 'the checkpoints were perfect and as always those at them cheerful and helpful', fantastic effort from everyone yesterday', 'a massive thank you to all the volunteers ... we had an amazing time', 'a rather daunting wade through mud up to our knees at the end',

Thanks are due to

Car parking Bill Boughton, Matt Carolan, Mike Tuke, Paul Chamberlain, Roger Sage, Simon Delph

Registration & Start Ann Muggeridge, Cathy Turton, Mary Dee, Stewart Hilton, Tony Cartwright

Checkpoint 1 James Blogg, Stephen Ford, Tim Bedwell, Vincent McDonnell

Numbers check 1 Ann Muggeridge, Chris Woodward

Numbers check 2 Bill Boughton, Paul Chamberlain

Checkpoint 2 Alan Shons, Ertan Ali Faik, Jude Unsworth, Roger Sage

Checkpoint 3 Mike Tuke, Simon Delph, Stewart Hilton, Tony Cartwright

Finish Cathy Turton, Mary Dee, Matt Carolan, Vincent McDonnell

Recovery Vehicle Vincent McDonnell

Photography Richard Ireson

As well as the above I would also like to thank those who largely go unseen - John Westcott for the benefit of his long experience over the years, Mike Tuke for sorting, preparing, renewing and restoring all our equipment to its rightful place, all those who helped me to check the route, Tony Cartwright for sorting PACER and its necessary equipment, the landowners who kindly granted us

permission to site our checkpoints, all those entrants who came to make our hard work worthwhile, and not forgetting the Almighty, who, after my intercessions last year, gave us the preceding week's rain producing such fine mud, and even some sunshine on the day! I would also like to give special thanks to Fiona Cameron who has done much route checking in the past and who checked part of this year's route on her very last walk before she sadly passed away at the end of last year.

Statistics

Our entrants hailed all the way from the South coast to Yorkshire, and from the West Country to East Anglia. There were 474 entrants, ie with an uptake of 84% of the available spaces. 400 entrants started, that is 84% of those entered. But of those 400 starters all but 7 finished. This event is not a race and entrants took it at their own pace which varied from 2mph to 5.8mph on the 20 route, and from 2.6mph to 6mph on the 30 route. The 20 route was in fact 20.8 miles long with 2168 feet of ascent; the 30 being only 29.9 miles long with 3117 feet of ascent.