

“CHILTERN 20” REPORT

Another highly successful annual County event was made even better by the last decent weather of the year. A total of 28 teams, across the length and breadth of GLN plus new friends from St Albans, turned up at Northchurch Community Centre ready for action. Most teams were accompanied by an adult, and these adults had a strict remit just to be responsible for the safety of the young people, and not to “lead” their teams.

We are delighted to report that every Scout who completed The Challenge was presented with not only their own achievement certificate, but also the Fitness Challenge Badge (one of four Challenge Badges which along with a personal challenge goes toward The Chief Scout's Gold Award). And for those of you who aren't sure where it goes, these Challenge Badges are positioned on the uniform on the right breast pocket.

We are forever grateful to the large contingent of adult helpers who offered their services and expertise to make this both an enjoyable and a safe event for all participants. Special thanks go to our loyal and dedicated band of checkpoint marshalls and to our catering team who worked wonders to produce over 200 hot meals. It was also a pleasure to have had the skills of the County Mountaineering Team who were at two of the checkpoints giving practical sessions on aspects of navigation.

So what about the 120 young people who were the real stars of the show? Congratulations to the 16th Wood Green for winning The Challenge for the second year in succession. The powers that be obviously knew what they were doing when they presented their team manager and walker, Derek Austin, with his well deserved Medal of Merit earlier this year. His team of a 13 year old, two 12 year old and one aged 11, were involved in a sprint finish through the final two checkpoints, with the 23rd Southgate “118 118” team breathing down their necks. In the final shake-up there was just 9 minutes separating the two teams. We got their number as even more remarkable was that the runners-up finished the event in an excellent time and were unaccompanied by an adult. Huge credit must go to the 23rd Southgate Leader Team. Some half an hour later in bronze medal position came the 4th Wood Green “B” Team. They were making light work of the pleasantly undulating course in the early stages but slowed in the latter stages, possibly due to having to wait for their adult, Ian James, to keep up with them. The first ten teams home completed the event in under six hours. At the other end of the spectrum, the 15th Finchley “A” Team were enjoying themselves so much that they were on their travels for over 10 hours and finished in the dark. Then there was the 4th Edmonton, whose team suffered a mechanical minibus breakdown and found themselves starting the event an hour behind everyone else. Team times didn't really matter. The Challenge was all about Scouts plotting their way through 10 checkpoints and demonstrating the combined skills of teamwork, leadership, endurance, navigation and orienteering. Map reading skills improved as the day progressed. Some teams were left scratching their heads at the start not knowing where they were on the map because their minibus wasn't marked. We gave one team some helpful information to send them on their way. When they reached the end of the car park we advised them to turn right. We then watched them disappearing into the distance and at the end of the car park they turned left.

We reckoned that this year's course was about 15 miles in distance, not accounting for odd detours and going off course. The combined distance walked by all competitors was over 2,000 miles. Well, that was the figure worked out on the back of a fag packet by ACC Scouts, Steve Gough, who was with us from start to finish and who made the presentations in fine style.

All this bodes well for the rosy future of “The Chiltern 20 Challenge”. And definitely a good curtain raiser for “The Southern 50 Challenge” on 14th February 2004. This is our 25th running of the event so start planning now and join in with our Silver Jubilee celebrations. Full details can be found on www.scouts-gln-southern50.org.uk.

Chris Foster
Chiltern 20 Committee