

Report on Chiltern 20 Challenge Hike, Saturday 9th October 2010

Chiltern 20 puts Scouting on the map

Over 50 teams of Scouts, aged 10-14, from every District in GLN, plus three teams from Devon, one from Surrey, five from Essex and five more from Hertfordshire, enjoyed an amazing day of adventure during last Saturday's Chiltern 20 Challenge Hike. Over 200 Scouts hit the hills, using their hiking and orienteering skills to good effect, whilst navigating their way through 10 checkpoints. Each team chose its own route, walking about 25 kms. A couple of teams enjoyed themselves so much, one walker claiming "some hills were more akin to the Alps" that they spent nearly 10 hours completing the event.

At the sharp end was a crack team from 23rd Southgate, one of four teams from this Troop who have been keen supporters the Chiltern 20 right back from the beginning of the event's 30 year history. Their Leader Team will always be found staffing at least one of the checkpoints. The winning team of 13 year olds, adopting the team name "Servat Kurt" (don't ask!) was given a late start from Stokenchurch Community Centre which saw two teams setting off every three minutes. As it turned out, their excellent finishing time of 4-17 turned out to be just two minutes faster than the runners-up, Ridgeway Scout Group, from Tring. This was Ridgeway's fourth appearance in The Chiltern 20, and the fourth time they have finished in the runners-up position, this year with a much younger team. Can anybody notice a bit of a pattern, here?

Half an hour later, the third placed team emerged. This was one of the two teams from 19th Enfield, whose Leaders put their entrepreneurial skills to good effect by cooking a selling masses of bacon rolls as a GLN Jamboree Unit fundraiser. A few minutes later saw the arrival of teams from 16th Hendon, 4th East Barnet and another team from 23rd Southgate. In fact, all four 23rd Southgate teams finished in the top twelve, a remarkable achievement for young people and their adult Leaders, considering they all walked without an adult. A special mention must go to the first all girls team who finished next, one of three 15th Finchley teams, who picked up the Committee Discretionary Cup for their achievements.

It turned out to be a delightful day's walking for everybody in the Chiltern Hills, with early morning mist turning into late sunshine, a far cry from the constant deluge earlier in the week. However, spare a thought for one of the Devon teams who drove through the night across the UK from their base at 20th Torbay to take part in the event. They were one of the first teams home but realised to their horror that they had missed out five checkpoints. Team member Callum takes up the story. "As we were heading south we turned the map upside down. After checkpoint 2 we turned right when we should have turned left. It took us ages to reach the next checkpoint and couldn't believe that it was checkpoint 8. Still, we will be back next year and won't make the same mistake again".

All the participants went home clutching their individual and team certificates and those who had worked on their Fitness Challenge Badge were presented with well earned awards. Their Leaders, who gave up another day to Scouting, were beaming with pride. One Hertfordshire Leader said "This was another fantastic event, all the teams had a great day".

Loads of people came along to support this year's event. Special thanks to the caterers who produced 300 meals in a short space of time, the registration desk, the checkpoint staff, the central control staff, the route controllers, and last but not least the County Mountaineering Team who provided the navigation training half way round the route. We will be doing it all again on Saturday 15th October 2011.

The spotlight is soon to turn towards The Southern 50 Challenge Hike on 19th February 2011 for all Explorer Scouts and adults in Scouting. Further information can be found on www.scouts-gln-southern50.org.uk

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(Chris Foster, Hon Sec, Chiltern 20 Challenge)