

Report on Chiltern 20 Challenge Hike, Saturday 18th October 2014

Another Record Breaking Day in The Chiltern Hills

A record number of 64 teams started this year's Chiltern 20, along with a record number of over 300 Scouts who took part in the mild and damp autumnal weather conditions, and they nearly all finished. And just to prove that Scouting For Girls is really taking off, a record number of girls were involved, making up 38% of the walkers. This percentage total keeps in rising every year.

We had teams from all four Districts in GLN, plus our friends from the Isle of Dogs in GLNE, Tring in Hertfordshire, Misbourne Valley in Buckinghamshire, Romsey in Hampshire and Torbay in Devon.

Stokenchurch Community Centre was once again chosen as the start and finish for this year's event in order to accommodate an ever growing entry. The 10-14 year olds perfected their teamwork and leadership skills by hiking and navigating their way through nine remote checkpoints, all walking in excess of 16 miles. When you add that lot together, they walked the equivalent from London to New York! This year's course took the participants south from Stokenchurch and then doing a clockwise ring to finish up back where they started. Conditions were somewhat challenging owing to the recent heavy rain. One team enjoyed themselves so much that they spent nearly 10½ hours completing the event, whilst the first team home breezed round in just over five hours.

This annual event was organised by a County team from Greater London North supported on the day by over 100 adults who enjoyed a day in the countryside as much as the young people. This year, several improvements were introduced which were well received with a more streamlined registration desk, starting area and finishing set-up. The quality of the evening meal was also enhanced. Just for good measure, a record number of 250 Fitness Challenge Badges were presented to the Scouts who had been working towards this award. This achievement has had the boffins at Gilwell scratching their heads thinking that this might be a world record number of Fitness Challenge Badges presented at one single Scouting event.

For the record, and for the first time ever in this event, two teams from one Troop occupied the winning position and runner-up. Take a bow, 23rd Southgate. Hot on their heels was one of the 20th Torbay teams which occupied joint runners-up spot, with both teams finishing just three minutes behind the winners. Another 20th Torbay team finished just out of the frame some fifteen minutes later. Four minutes later came 11th Finchley with 2nd East London clocking up a hugely improved time from previous years. They were one of the earlier starters and blazed a trail to lead the event all the way from checkpoint 3, picking up the Committee Discretionary Trophy in the process.

The new person tasked in managing this event, Colin Batsford said: "This was my first year as chairman. So what is it about the Chiltern 20 that makes it so popular with Scouts? Well it is the very reason why, after many years of being involved made me want to take over as Chairman.

As a Scout Leader, training the young people in our charge in various skills is very fulfilling in itself. But to see them use those skills successfully makes it all the more worthwhile. To see the Scouts out there in the great outdoors, where young people should be, using their skills together with their mates, having fun and achieving something, one cannot be anything other than inspired.

To all the Scouts who took part - Hold your heads very high and be proud of yourselves. Not many people of your age can claim to have done what you just done and succeed.

As for the rest of us, long may we be inspired by the achievements of the young people around us".

Melanie, aged 13, from Enfield said "What a brilliant day, and so well organised. I have never walked so far in my life before and I can take home a certificate and Fitness Challenge Badge to prove it".

The event organisers will now turn their attention to The Southern 50, designed for Explorer Scouts and adults in Scouting, taking place on Saturday 14th February 2015. What a way to spend Valentines Day, especially for those who love walking! Further information can be found on www.scouts-gl-n-southern50.org.uk

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(Chris Foster, Hon Sec, Chiltern 20 Challenge)