

It was the Biggest Chiltern 20.....EVER!

Last Saturday's Chiltern 20 Challenge Hike saw a record number of 86 teams registered and a record number of over 400 participants. That's more walkers than not only the previous 36 events, but also more than its big brother event, The Southern 50. Most of the participants came from our own amazing Scout County, but it was lovely to welcome teams from GLNE, GLSW, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hampshire and Hertfordshire.



Storm Callum did its best to disrupt proceedings with the worst of the weather tantalisingly close to the action. However, the rain started to fall just before the first starters made their way out of the large secondary school in Great Missenden. It was decision time whether to wear waterproofs with the potential to overheat with the warm temperatures, or risk getting soaked. As it turned out, the rain stopped, the sun shone, and air temperatures reached 23 degrees.

This year's route had to be hastily redesigned after the original plan meant that participants would have been walking right through the middle of the HS2 development project. The new route saw walkers walking west through the glorious Chiltern countryside and going through Prestwood, Speen, Great Hampden, Little Hampden, Mobwell before returning to Great Missenden. A total of 66 teams took part in the Senior event of about 20km and they could choose whether they had up to two adults walking with them for safety reasons, or not. The Junior event had 20 teams, and was for younger participants. Their route missed out two checkpoints and was about 12km in length. All Junior teams had up to two adults walking with them.

We all had to deal with an incident towards the end of the hike when every team did a detour away from a large field which was occupied by several frisky bulls. In their friskiness, they had trampled down a fence and they were directly in the path towards the final checkpoint. Then there was the story of a Leader who walked with a 23rd Southgate team. Two days before the event she fell over and broke three middle toes in her right foot. She strapped them up and completed the walk with her team, not wanting to let down the young people.



So, how did the teams get on? Having never troubled the leader board before, the 4th Wood Green led the way home in the Junior event finishing in a highly commendable 4-01. Nearly an hour later came the runners-up from 6th Southgate. Completing the frame was one of seven teams from 8th

Holborn. They set off from home extra early to catch the first Underground and then the first train of the day to arrive at Great Missenden Station in good time for registration and kit check.

The Senior event saw the Phoenix Flyers from 201st Islington triumph again for their 3rd top place finish in the past four years. They were the last team to start, and they flew round in 4:41. Just two minutes later came our old friends from 2nd East London who had five teams taking part, all looking resplendent in their bright orange hoodies. They finished a mere seven minutes in front of our first adult accompanied teams from 1st & 3rd New Barnet. Three minutes later came one of the four 6th Friern Barnet teams, and they were just seven minutes in front of the second adult accompanied 1st & 3rd New Barnet team.



A record number of 92% of all starters completed the event, and every team was back at the school within ten hours for the best meal ever provided at this event. A member of one of the teams who finished in the dark said "I thought that we had failed due to finishing so late, but it was brilliant when everybody came out to cheer and applaud us as we finished".

Yet again, we called upon over 100 adults who spent their entire day volunteering their time to fill the many component parts. And we will all be back to do it all over again next year!

The 6th Friern Barnet have posted their own report on their website. Here is their closing paragraph:

"The Chiltern 20 Challenge is a great event because it demonstrates so much of what Scouting is about. As leaders we can help by providing training, advice on kit, practice hikes and encouragement, but the navigation skills, physical effort, teamwork and determination are up to the Scouts themselves. They all stepped up to the challenge and it was lovely to see."



There were hundreds of post-it notes on a wall at the end of the event where the participants were encouraged to write their own thoughts of the event. Amongst their many positive messages was this one: "Thank you for making this a very good experience to push me to the next level".

