

## Southern 50 Challenge Hike Report

19<sup>th</sup> February 2011

### A Record Breaking Event

The 32<sup>nd</sup> consecutive annual **Southern 50 Challenge Hike** witnessed its highest number of team entries in over 20 years, with nearly 400 participants from fifteen different Counties across the UK all seeking their own slice of adventure. For the first time ever, there were more young people taking part than adults and over a quarter of walkers were female – another record. Despite the pouring rain for the first three hours of the event, despite the demanding course, despite hilltop checkpoints being shrouded in mist, and despite the cold and the mud, 75% of all teams managed to complete the course, with the last 50 milers finishing just before 02:00, having been on their feet for the best part of 20 hours.

This year's Southern 50 presented the normal three routes of 30 km (exclusively for young people), plus the 50 km and the blue riband 50 mile event, all taking part in a new area of the Chiltern Hills, with the route details only being disclosed two minutes before each team set off.

The 30 km event saw the top four places going to West Country teams. You can understand why the 20<sup>th</sup> Torbay Explorer Scouts enjoy their annual trip to The Chilterns as they continue to make a dynamic impact. The winning team from 20<sup>th</sup> Torbay with all four taking part in the event for the first time, made up of one 16 year old and three 15 year olds, showed why they take their orienteering so seriously. They finished in 4:31, nearly an hour and a half faster than their Devon Scouting neighbours, the West Country Wonderers from Plympton Explorer Scout Unit. This team was in runners-up position last year. Gauntlett, from Weymouth & Portland, was able to shake off injuries to two team members, finished in bronze medal position, equalling last year's 3<sup>rd</sup> place. They were just seven minutes in front of another 20<sup>th</sup> Torbay team, Teliki's Titans. The Ladies' Trophy was picked up by Majendie-Steeple A, four female Explorer Scouts who share great delight in having beaten the boys' team from the same Unit for the past three years. Spare a thought to three teams. Firstly, the Haringey Explorers' team who stopped for 30 minutes to search and successfully find an elderly lady's lost dog. Secondly to the other Plympton Explorers' team who went to three random schools in High Wycombe before finally stumbling across the correct finishing location. And finally, to the Plympton Guides' team who before the event were texted which map numbers to buy. Alas, a finger slipped on the keypad and instead of them buying the correct map 172, they bought map 142 and only realised at the kit check that their map had a clear view of Shepton Mallet.

Popular winners of the 50 km event were the Phoenix Flyers who flew round in nearly an hour faster than anybody else. This team from 201<sup>st</sup> Islington do their training for this event behind the gasworks at St Pancras Station. For the past two years they have been 50 km runners-up but are no strangers to the winner's trophy as they won it for three years in a row between 2006-2008. The Billericay based 1<sup>st</sup> Runwell Overtakers finished as runners-up this year, improving one position from 2010. They were over half an hour faster than the 1<sup>st</sup> Plympton Leaders who equalled their bronze medal position in 2007. CLVU Return Again, from Cambridgeshire, picked up the Martin Hornsby Tankard for being the fastest team whose aggregate age exceeded 200 years (by a matter of just a few weeks). March Hares won the Novice Trophy, the first silverware brought home to The Hatters Explorers from Southgate in GLN, a Unit which never fails to turn up mob handed to this event every year. A Warwick Network team called Why Not? collected two trophies for the fastest mixed team and fastest team all under 25. Finally, the County Winners Trophy, the first GLN team winning no other trophy, went to the aptly named Where The Hell Are We from 16<sup>th</sup> Wood Green, GLN. A special round of applause went to the Anomalous team from Amphil & Woburn in Bedfordshire. For the second year running, they used the event to be sponsored, with all proceeds going to Keech Cottage Children's Hospice in Luton. Their aim is to be able to write a cheque for £1000, which is double last year's total.

The 50 mile walk produced a real test of endurance. The clear winners were the pre-event favourites, 1<sup>st</sup> Chesham Bois in Buckinghamshire. Having won the event for three years in succession before finishing as runners-up in the previous two years, this time around the result was never in doubt as they stormed home in an amazing time of 12:15. We had to wait three hours and ten minutes for the runners-up, 20<sup>th</sup> Torbay, to appear. Nearly an hour later saw the arrival of The Undertakers from Halstead & Colne Valley in Essex, who took home The Grove Trophy (aggregate age of over 130 years) and The Sharon Blower Trophy (fastest mixed team). The Dragons A Team from Hornchurch, GLNE, also took home two trophies, the Novice Trophy and for being the fastest novice team all under 25 years old.

This event would not have been possible without the staff support of about 100 volunteers who managed checkpoints and the finish, transport, catering, and Central Control. The Eastbourne District Scout First Aid Team was up to its usual immaculate high standard of professionalism. And to wrap it all up, Ian Newbery, GLSW County Commissioner and 50 km participant said some nice things during at the Sunday morning presentation, giving special mention to one of his team-mates, Chris Dean, who had just completed his 27<sup>th</sup> consecutive Southern 50.

The organising committee wishes you all a good summer season of Scouting and we look forward to seeing you all again next year, on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2012.

Fozzy (Chris Foster)  
Walk Secretary