

## **A MEMORABLE SOUTHERN 50 IN SO MANY WAYS**

The ingredients were all there. The largest ever Southern 50 with a record number of 100 teams across 17 Counties ready to take off from 0600 hrs on the Saturday morning. Over 400 participants with the highest number of young people ever recorded (56% of the total number). And 36% of the 400 participants were female, another record. Nearly 90% of those who started out in the muddy conditions successfully finished. The walkers, 100 adult staff and the event organisers can all look back at this year's 34<sup>th</sup> consecutive Southern 50 with huge pride.

But it didn't stop there. Four Leaders from 23<sup>rd</sup> Southgate, having been inspired by their own young people, chose to raise money for Leukaemia & Lymphoma Research as each member of the team had been affected by this terrible disease. They set a target to raise £1,000 and to date they are just short of their amazing total. They have left the website open in the hope that they can reach their target, and you can reach the web page on <http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/JustStretchingOurLegs>. They completed their 50km event in 12 hours 1 minute.

But that's not all. Graham Bell, was walking as part of a 50 mile team with Leaders from 4<sup>th</sup> Southgate. Graham is best known for his antics as Pantomime Funny Man. However, as he arrived at Checkpoint 9 where his girlfriend, Charlotte, was waiting for him, Graham was completely serious as he went down on one knee and proposed to her. Charlotte said yes in what turned out to be another unique Southern 50 moment.

We were shocked and saddened to receive some tragic news just a few days before the event. 'Charlie' Davis, 16, a member of The Dragons ESU in Southgate was the victim of a fatal accident when he was hit by a train on his way home from college. Charlie took part in last year's Southern 50 and rated it as one of the best things he had done as a Scout. Five incredibly brave close friends from Charlie's Unit formed a team at the last moment to walk in the 30km event, naming themselves "For Charlie" and carried photos of him all the way round. They finished in 9½ hours and received a huge emotional ovation when they collected their team and individual certificates during the Sunday morning presentation.

Just for the record, the joint winners of the 30km event were the newly formed Highgate & Hornsey ESU and last year's winners The Spartans from Harrow ESU. Their time was 6:48 and they were nearly an hour in front of our friends from 20<sup>th</sup> Torbay with 41<sup>st</sup> Epping Forest in hot pursuit.

The 50km event saw The GLN County Mountaineering Team breaking from their 50 mile tradition and they stormed round in 7:42, over two hours ahead of the runners-up Phoenix Flyers Too from 201<sup>st</sup> Islington. This young adult team finished third last year following success in the 30km event, and this year's trophy haul saw them collect the runners-up trophy, plus awards for the fastest team all under 25 and fastest mixed team. Third team home was 22<sup>nd</sup> Southgate who returned home within minutes of finishing as they were up early the following morning for a grueling Devizes to Westminster canoe training session. The award for the first team home with an aggregate age of over 200 went to CLVU Return Again from Cambridgeshire.

Finally, in the blue riband 50mile event, the top two teams were a repeat of last year. Hot favourites, Doddering Old Starts from 1<sup>st</sup> Chesham Bois forged ahead in the closing stages to finish in 12:30, just twenty minutes ahead of Phoenix Flyers – another team of Leaders from 201<sup>st</sup> Islington, who for the second year running were forced to move up in class for fear of being beaten by their other younger team. They were in turn 25 minutes ahead of a County Active Support Unit from GLSW. Three hours later came the Kent based Sittingbourne Stompers who picked up the award for the second year running for fastest mixed team. Spare a thought for the first all ladies' team winners, Sisters With Blisters, made up of three Scouting friends from CCI and Central Yorkshire. They beat the 24 hour deadline by 14 minutes finishing in 23:46 with one team member nursing a broken toe which was sustained a few days before the event. This was the slowest time recorded for 20 years and in a similar league to when a certain Fozzy and his team created a personal worst.

Once again, the loyal group of over 100 adults who help to staff the event were once again all brilliant. Last word comes from one of the many comments already posted on our Twitter and Facebook pages. This was from a team making its debut: "We really enjoyed ourselves throughout the whole weekend. Everyone's helpfulness and friendliness was really great. The Southern 50 definitely embodies what Scouting is all about. You'll definitely see us back again next year!"