

## **THE SOUTHERN 50 MAKES ALL YOUR DREAMS COME TRUE**

Never mind that this year's event fell on Valentine's Day. Love appears in many different ways, and this year a record number of teams and walkers flocked to The Chiltern Hills to attend the event in which they love to take part. This is the one and only Southern 50 Challenge, celebrating its 36<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, making this event the longest running Scout County event in the UK.

A record number of 100 teams across 15 Counties took part this year, and over 400 walkers with the highest number of young people ever recorded (70% of the total number). Our UK Youth Commissioner, Hannah Kentish, really liked that bit, and she was on hand to witness the event in action on Saturday, stay for the presentation on Sunday morning and chat to the young people and young adults who achieved so much during the weekend. This year saw the highest number of finishers, with a record 94% of those who started out in the muddy conditions successfully reached their target. Every one of the walkers, the 100 adult staff and the event organisers can all look back at this year's event with huge pride.

All three distances were up for grabs again after last year's incessant rain forced the 50 mile event to be abandoned. It was good to see that walkers who had previously enjoyed the 30km challenge (exclusively for Explorer Scouts) and the 50km event, had stepped up in class and had swelled the ranks of the big one!

This year's route started off at Dr Challoner's High School in Little Chalfont and then headed north up to Ley Hill. The fifty milers then hot footed it through Berkhamsted, passing the Bridgewater Monument, and then up to Whipsnade before tackling Ivinghoe Beacon before turning back to Wigginton where they joined up with the 50km walkers which also doubled up as the 30km start. Everybody then tackled Northhill Wood, Lee Common, Great Missenden, Little Kingshill, Little Missenden, Amersham before finishing up back at the start.

Just for the record, a team of debut participants from The Hatters ESU in Southgate stormed home in under five hours to collect the 30km event which is exclusively for Explorer Scouts, finishing twelve minutes in front of a team from Fiennes ESU from Castle Point in Essex. They were seven minutes in front of Linkside ESU from Enfield, with five minutes separating them from a team from Evolution ESU in Barnet. Then came another team from The Hatters. In seventh place was a team from Highgate & Hornsey ESU in North London District. You could say that teams from all Districts in GLN had a superb showing.

The 50km event saw another good GLN showing with another of the Barnet based Evolution ESU team winning this event by a whopping 24 minutes in a hugely creditable time of 8:34. They were followed in by a team from Shamrock ESU in West Warwickshire. Hot on their heels, just three minutes later, came a team of adult leaders from Palmers Green ESU who won the trophy for the fastest mixed team. The award for the first team home with an aggregate age of over 200 went to the evergreen CLVU team from Cambridgeshire, who have taken this trophy home for the past five years. A team of all female participants from The Hatters ESU won the Ladies' Trophy.

Finally, on to the blue riband 50 mile event, where two GLN teams appeared in the top four finishers. The first team home were our old friends who this year called themselves Ten Gallons of Miso Soup in reference to a Japanese delicacy, a country they will be heading to in July along with over 3,000 World Scout Jamboree bound UK Scouts. This bunch of intrepid leaders began life in Hornchurch and they are now based in Abingdon, Oxfordshire. They picked up the 50km winner's trophy last year. In the recent past they have always been close to a 50 mile trophy without managing to lay their hands on one. They finished in a brilliant 12:48, just eight minutes ahead of a team of Leaders from 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> New Barnet, who stormed home some 48 minutes ahead of the Lamasu Leaders from Surrey Heath. An hour later came a team of leaders from 22<sup>nd</sup> Southgate, first timers in the 50 mile event, and they picked up the Novice Trophy. They finished ahead of the Kent based Sittingbourne Stompers who picked up the award for the third year running for fastest mixed team.

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!"