

## **ANOTHER RECORD BREAKING SOUTHERN 50**

The Southern 50 is another year older as it celebrated its 37<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and making this event the longest running Scout County event in the UK. We witnessed another record number of participants who once again flocked to The Chiltern Hills.

We had a record number of 102 teams from across 13 Scout counties taking part this year including 50 from GLN. This total was made up of over 400 participants consisting of 65% young people and 35% female, not bad considering just a few years ago this event was regarded as a male bastion. Our finishing rate was just under 90%, not bad considering the cold and wet weather conditions, the relentless mud and a particularly tough course this year. We even saw a flurry of snowflakes early on. 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.

This year's route started off at Icknield Community College in Watlington, located in Love Lane, which was rather topical as the day after was Valentine's Day. The 50 mile event consisted of not only the seasoned campaigners, but also some novice teams who had previously enjoyed the 50 kms route so much that they decided that they should move up in class and tackle the big one. Both routes wound their way up hill and down dale before reaching Russell's Water, where the 41 teams of Explorer Scouts began their own adventure.

Just for the record, the 30kms event saw just over half of the teams finishing as a complete unit and justifying themselves a team place. The winning team was Phoenix Flyers Too from North London District. This was a team of three participants, aged 16, 15 and 14. Willow Newman was the youngest and she was part of the winning team in last October's Chiltern 20. They finished 16 minutes in front of a team from Castle Point in Essex, who for the second year running finished as runners-up. In turn, they were just two minutes ahead of one of six teams from the North London's Wild Wolf Unit. The Hatter's Unit in Southgate went one better in number with a magnificent seven teams taking part. All four Districts in GLN were well represented in this event with the Merlin Unit representing Barnet and the Gough Hill Park Unit and three teams from Bush Hill Park Unit representing Enfield. One of the three Bush Hill Park teams enjoyed themselves so much that they took over 14½ hours. One member of this team was 14 year old Rachel Buck who said how much she loved the experience.

The 50km event saw another good GLN showing with teams from the County occupying the first four places. Phoenix Flyers created a win double for the 201<sup>st</sup> Islington stable by taking the winners spot in both the 50km and 30km events. Gemma, Gemma and Giacomo flew round in just over 7½ hours, some 43 minutes ahead of three leaders from 22<sup>nd</sup> Southgate, who, in turn were an hour in front of three leaders from 15<sup>th</sup> Finchley. Completing the four Districts, a Leader Team from 12<sup>th</sup> Enfield occupied 4<sup>th</sup> spot. A team of all female participants from North London Network won the Ladies' Trophy. Special mention needs to go to Richard Hersey, aged 75, a member of the Hornsey Veterans Team, finishing in 36<sup>th</sup> spot. Richard took part in the very first Southern 50, back in 1980.

Finally, on to the blue riband 50 mile event/ The first team home was our old friends and hot favourites, Ten Gallon Dixie, who are Leaders from the Abingdon Unit in Oxfordshire, featuring the evergreen Mike Suggate. He has been taking part in the Southern 50 for the past 20 years and has now won the 50 miles event two years in a row. Their winning time of just over 14 hours was the slowest time for eleven years, but this doesn't tell the tale of their epic battle with a team of Leaders from Lamasu Unit in Surrey Heath who kept pace with the winners until the final two checkpoints. Both these teams finished nearly 2½ hours ahead of a team of three determined novice Explorer Scouts from the Shamrock Unit in West Warwickshire. They finished just seven minutes in front of Sittingbourne Stompers, who once again took home the trophy for the fastest mixed team for the fourth year on the trot. Our friends from 1<sup>st</sup> Ivybridge in Devon then finished just in front of a Network team and an Explorer Scout team from Thames Ridge Network in Oxfordshire. The first team from GLN were three Argo Explorer Scouts from North London. They had the satisfaction of completing the course faster than our own CC, Jack Caine, who was the last man standing, returning home just before 5am. He still had just enough strength to say a few kind words, and present the certificates and trophies on the Sunday morning.

Once again, the loyal group of over 100 adults who help to staff the event were once again all brilliant. Thank you to everybody who helped to make the Southern 50 such a success. Seen you all again next year!