

29th SURREY INNS KANTER – New Year's Day 2003

This was my first attempt at trying to organise an event and I hope it didn't show too much. It couldn't have functioned as well as it did without the able assistance on the day of John Lay, Brian Haigh, and Peter Bull - thanks guys. Additionally, thanks to Bill, Eric, and Pat for making refining the route so enjoyable.

I'd also like to thank the 47 of you (and the dog) who ignored the weather forecast and turned up! As I was checking the water levels on the towpath between dawn and my opening the Hall, I was wondering if anyone would brave the elements. The previous day I'd jogged some of the towpath (but unfortunately didn't go more than about 200 metres upstream from 'The Parrot' road bridge as it looked passable beyond there). This recce made me suggest that you came off the towpath at St Catherine's Lock, since I felt it would have been hazardous downstream after dark even at the water levels on the Tuesday afternoon. From previous experience I knew that the North Downs Way (NDW) path is slightly below the level of the Wey in Shalford Park so I didn't suggest that as a route option. My memory was confirmed by those who attempted to stay to the east of the river after 'The Parrot' and use the NDW footbridge, and who got even wetter than the rest of you. In the early morning the overall level didn't seem to have risen much since the previous day but I suspect that, listening to people's stories on their return, the levels did rise fairly significantly during the day.

I obviously knew from the beginning that taking you along the towpath was a potential problem, but I'll be honest and say that I didn't think it was a significant one based on my experiences running the towpath in the winter in the last 18 years. I also knew that if the water level was high it was feasible to abandon the route out to the A3100 at a fair number of places with not much distance lost, so I wasn't too concerned.

I tried to get a mix of terrain into both routes – flat to steep, open to wooded, with a range of surfaces. Unfortunately there are only a finite number of routes that be used given the fairly fixed distances of 12 and 20 miles, and particularly near the Hall you will always get a sense of déjà vu. Other constraints include minimising road walking, not crossing 'fast' roads at dangerous points, and not drowning anybody. There is also the need to pass near at least a couple of 'Inns'. Additionally I wanted to get the towpath in near the end of the routes, as under most circumstances it is a very enjoyable stroll, with a number of birds even in the middle of winter - I know at least one person saw a kingfisher on the event.

My original routes planned out at about 23 and 13 miles. Unfortunately in my attempt to reduce the mileage I somehow went mad and short-changed those of you on the suggested long route, as it ended up nearer 18 miles than 20. Please accept my apologies; and if I get enough requests I'll add the difference onto next year's long route! The suggested short route was just over 12 miles.

I'm never certain how many clues you should have in a Kanter. A lot means you can have very 'fiddly' routes, but at the expense of a 'flowing' walk or jog. In mild weather the constant stopping and starting both to map-read and to answer the clues is not a problem, but it can be uncomfortable if it is cold and wet. Also, the likelihood of the answer sheet surviving in wet weather reduces with every extra clue. I'm also not sure if people do the event for the walk with the clues just being there, or if answering the clues is more important than the walk. Answers by email please ...

As a final comment, dare I say that when the marshalls walked an intermediate version of the long route in September, we had a warm day with fine views (particularly from Puttenham Common following an undeclared navigational hiccough on my part!), good food and beer at 'The Cyder House', and high tea in the sunshine by the River Wey at Godalming.

Congratulations to all. We hope to see you all again next year, in more clement conditions.

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If you see any errors in the results, can you please let me know and I'll at least get the web page updated.

LOST PROPERTY: A plastic magnifying glass in a yellow case – contact me for return.