

Punchbowl Marathon report Feb 10th 2013

Both our cars packed, with food, paperwork, pots pans and whatever else needed to put on an event for 300 plus people. Its Sat 9th 5.15pm Ted is 1/2 hour ahead of me to collect key from Sue to open up Chichester Hall. I am on M25 when I get a call from Ted - he has 'that tone' in his voice! He says 'There is a problem'...

What? I ask. 'You have booked the hall for 16th and 17th' he states bluntly, it is booked out for this weekend!! - If you have ever suffered one of those OMG moments, you will know how I felt. I couldn't say anything except - WHAT are we going to do? He replies, 'get here - NOW' then hangs up!

300 people, no hall, rain forecast for all Sunday, cold night sleeping in the car, can I use the church, can I use the pub, can't cancel, can't get hold of ALL those people, all that food bought... all these thoughts going through my head and I feel completely - sick!

Arriving at the Hall, Ted is on his phone. Well? I say - 3 times? He ignores me. This time I shout at him (yes, my usual calmness has temporarily left me) He says I think we have the hall, just waiting confirmation, I am thinking, could we all share the hall and facilities....? .

It was a christening party of 50 people tomorrow lunchtime.

But it is a yes, we have the hall. Sue Winder had felt it was easier to find premises for 50 people rather than 300 she did, the school hall opposite the church.

Panic over, down to start preparation of the soup, pick up Glenys from the station (she was the only person to know our secret). Little did John Lay know when he turned up to the hall and looking at groups of small tables set out asked 'Has there been a tea party here?' We 3 knowing looked at each other and smiled, off down to pub for our evening meal.

Next morning greeted us with the great British weather RAIN and there it stayed all day. Sue's husband collects crockery, states a fridge has to be collected from a scout leader's house for the other hall they are already setting up. We rushed out and bought flowers for christening family and Sue. I take up to the hall with my humblest grovelling apologies. Family appear to be fine and Sue grateful for the flowers. Now to get on with our day

We had 250 starters, walkers leaving at 7.30 another bulk at 8.30 and dribs and drabs leave in-between. Once they had all left and Elizabeth had cooked us her yearly breakfast, we set up tables for the mass return. Girls in kitchen were stirring great vats of homemade veggie soup. Boys had gone off to assist Varla in setting up Tilford Hall. Registration team are collating all the starters on the computer in order they understand. Other marshals disappeared to their various check points to set up food and drink stations. I have to say, for once I was glad not to be taking part, it was not a pleasant day out there also very cold.

We had a call from 1 runner - 3 of them lost and they had only gone 3 miles!! I am not making any comment, as a runner I might be tainted. Same lot called some hours later - lost and ended up getting a lift back the last couple of miles. More route description reading practice needed I think and we all know, never to follow that person in front.

Everything is ready for the return of 250 cold wet hungry competitors. 1st man back was looking fresh and muddy. People continue to return until last ones are back at gone 6pm. There are many very, very cold and extremely muddy individuals. Soup, baked beans, rice pudding and fruit salad, biscuits where all consumed. Happy faces and many drawn with cold as they thawed out eating and drinking, regaling their day.

Marshals return, Dave and Pat looking cold from the outdoor c/p. He states they will only be doing one c/p next year! Enough is enough of standing outside for so many hours – 2014 volunteers wanted for c/p 1 please.

A lot of clearing up to do, but one consolation of the day, no burst pipes and no unblocking of toilets.

My heartfelt grateful thanks go to all the volunteers that help Ted and I out on this event. What makes our day so much easier is the fact you all – just get on with your varying tasks without questioning us and it takes off so much pressure away.

Thanks also goes to all the entrants that turned up knowing the day was going to be so horrendous weatherise.

Looking forward to Feb 9th 2014 already !!

JACKIE BARKER

You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream.

Some of the emails received from entrants:-

Dear Jackie & Ted,

Once again the LDWA Surrey group managed another slick (and I don't mean the conditions underfoot, even though the term did apply this year!) Punchbowl Marathon. Thank you both, and your team of helpers, for all the time you put into staging a successful challenge.

Whilst slogging through the best mud that Surrey has to offer in persistent precipitation it's hard to think of anything other than getting to the end, and I may have omitted to thank all the checkpoint and start/finish helpers on the day. You were all out there for much longer than I, and did a great job – thank you. The tasty food, that was served so quickly, at the finish was very much appreciated. I look forward to seeing you all again next year and one thing's for sure it can't get any muddier!

Peter Amos

Hello Jackie and Ted

Firstly many many thanks for putting on the event on Sunday; the route, the check points and the hot food at the end were all fantastic...just a shame you couldn't sort the weather out although I suppose it just adds to the challenge. The only down side was that when I went to leave my trainers were no longer outside. Could you possibly e-mail participants to ask if anybody has inadvertently picked up my shoes, and if so could they get in touch so we can sort out returning them? They are a pair of More Mile Cheviot 2 running shoes, size 9.5 and in grey and yellow (although they were like everybody else's dark brown by the end of Sunday); they weren't expensive but they were new and very comfy so I'd like them back.
All the best - Raymond Hickman

Just to say thank you for putting on a very well-organised Punchbowl marathon yesterday! The volunteers did a sterling job at the checkpoints and we were greeted with smiling faces from everyone. I'm sure it was an especially long day for all involved for which I thank all of you.
It was my first experience of Punchbowl, what a stunning area! I will be back but hopefully with better conditions!!
Kind regards,
Veritie

Fabulous event today - my first experience of the Weald and I found it hard to believe there was such an expanse of spectacular scenery in the South East. You might like to note that two walkers were delayed by perhaps 10 minutes today, tending to me when I was lying in the mud yelling my head off with an sudden and very painful attack of cramp. When they'd got one leg almost sorted, the other went, and then the first set off again.
They fixed me up and we finished the last mile and a half at a brisk pace. I didn't get their names but we all finished together. I was walker 161 and I think we must have come in at 1647 hrs. Another couple finished at the same time; my rescuers were both male. I'll try to find time to thank them via the website.
Simon

This years Punchbowl was one that will be etched in the memory along side the Slurry Tops of 2008. I can't thank enough all those who worked so hard behind the scenes to make the event success. All the check points were so very welcoming but I'd like to pass on a very special thanks to Molly at CP2 who stepped in to treat a cut to my face that I received in a fall.
Thanks again
Chris Pitt - Dorset

Hi Jackie,
Just to say thank you so much to you and your team of volunteers for standing out all day in the freezing cold and wet, looking after the column of weary, bedraggled refugees coming in to their checkpoints - their cheeriness (along with the drinks and food) made a cold, wet day rather more enjoyable.
If you do not have anyone lined up already to do the write up for Strider, I would be happy to do that as there is quite a lot to say about yesterday - all good though!
See you on the 24th.
Many thanks
Tara

Great event, flawlessly run, and I'm sure very one who attempted it will remember it for a long time. The tough ones stay in your mind a lot longer than the easy ones.

Elton