

## **The First Surrey Tops 50 Mile Event September 24/25<sup>th</sup> 2005**

### **The Idea**

This was the 1<sup>st</sup> Surrey Tops Event inaugurated to replace the old Surrey Summits event. We made a number of changes compared to that event.

50 miles rather than 100 kilometres (62.2 miles), runners as well as walkers, 3 checkpoints instead of 7, no inside checkpoints and no hot meal on route, and starting it at 5pm (8pm for runners) instead of 9.30 - 10 am.

I thought an event timed so that it was mostly at night would provide something new and a different challenge to those taking part. And as I intended it to be in the spring, it would give useful night practice for the LDWA hundred mile event.

The timing of the starts would also mean that all entrants would have the same amount of time in the dark. With starts in the morning, the faster walkers and runners get through much more of the course in daylight and so get an advantage over slower walkers.

In addition, I wanted to make this new event more manageable for the Surrey Group to organise. So I cut back on the number of CPs, and the cossetting we used to provide. In a way, we would be going back to the style of the very early Surrey Summits, where entrants had to be more self-reliant. There are many much more spartan events in France, so if the French can do it, so can we!

### **How did it go?**

We were rather late publicising the event, especially to runners' groups and had a disappointingly small entry – 20, with 1 non-starter. We needed about 50 to break even and to justify the number of helpers, but decided to accept the loss, run it and get some experience of what it was like.

We were also too late for spring in 2005 so decided on autumn.

And after much discussion by Surrey Members, especially after the Marshals' Walk, we decided to provide more (cold) food than we had said in the entry instructions and also hot soup at one CP.

Some entrants unloaded some of their own provisions at the start after I told them this.

The food we did provide went down well and we had little left over.

The weather was good, fine and warm most of the time with just a light touch of rain about 7am on Sunday.

There were 14 walkers and 5 runners, though some of the runners walked later on.

Walkers' times ranged from 14 hours 22 mins to 20 hours 51 mins and the runners from 11.58 to 15.52. Participants found it a hard event and the differences from times expected in a daytime event were stark. They particularly found the stretch between check points 2 & 3, St Martha's and Reynard's Hill, hard going.

With some difficult navigation and lots of hills some walkers took 6 hours on this section – a long time between food and drink stops.

However, those who took part, said they enjoyed it. As one said "We can keep on doing the same old type of event all the while. It's good to do something different."

Other suggestions made were that we should have more checkpoints and perhaps start a little earlier.

### **Marshals' Walk**

This took place on July 23<sup>rd</sup>/24<sup>th</sup>. The weather wasn't so kind as on the main event and it rained during a lot of the night and the following morning. The 7 people who took part (& John Lay who did the first 20 miles with them) walked as a group, led by Tony Cartwright. As well as doing the walk, they were also checking the route description for any mistakes and ambiguities, and noting them. So their joint time of 19 hours 20 minutes compared favourably with the times on the main event.

The successful seven were Tony and Louise Cartwright, Janet Chapman, Bill Grace, Ian McLeod, Fiona Cameron and Margaret Miles. (Some marshals were stood down for the main event).

They were ably supported by Reg Chapman, who supplied food and drink at the 3 checkpoints.



**Tony Cartwright on the Marshals' Walk**

### **Thank You**

Route Description – Tony Cartwright, checked by Dave Challenger.

Organisation of Hall and Checkpoint Marshals – John Lay

Food for event and kitchen organisation – Janet Chapman

Equipment for event, entries and closing marshal – Reg Chapman

CP1 – Pat & Dave Challenger

CP2 – Louise & Tony Cartwright

CP3 - John Lay, Bill Grace & Ian McLeod

Kitchen at end – Janet Chapman, Cindy McLeod & Fiona Cameron

Night watchman in Hall – Peter Waterhouse

Design of Certificates (and their supply) – John Whiteman

John has also designed a beautiful badge for the event, but production will await more successful finishers.

Including myself, 14 people helped on this event, or a ratio of helpers to starters of 0.74. I'd also like to thank Surrey Wildlife Trust and the Hurtwood Control for their permission to have checkpoints on sites under their control.

I would like to thank all the helpers, who enabled this event to take place. With the small entry, they had long periods of inactivity, and LDWA people don't like that! So thank you again.

As the organiser, I'm pleased we ran this event successfully and would also like to thank all those who supported this new event by taking part and for succeeding in this new challenge.



**Jeff Campbell enjoying his meal at the end**

### **The Future**

The Surrey Group will be considering the experiences of this event and suggestions made. We will probably decide on the next Surrey Tops in spring 2006, so as to get it before the Hundred.

If you have any suggestions, after your experiences, please let me know – either by letter or by Email.

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