



Surrey Tops 2014 Report



Before commenting on the event itself I really would like to thank all the marshals without whom this event would simply not have happened. Not only did they volunteer, often being up all night staffing CPs and the kitchen at Witley, but they did so, as many of you have commented, with such enthusiasm and encouragement. So marshals, a VERY BIG thank you. Here they are:-

Location	Marshals
Car Parking	John Lay, Gordon Roots
Registration	Mary, Mark Pickard
On-line entries	Elton Ellis
Kitchen (drinks)	Elizabeth. Molly
Cars Drivers (retirements)	Andy Fogall, Gordon Roots
Sweepers	Tony Davis, Fiona Cameron
Closing Down	Mary
Start - Check-out	Tony Davies, Roger Sage
CP1 Elstead	Kent Group, John Lay
CP2 St Mathas West CP	Dave & Pat Challenger, Ruth & Andy Coleman, Richard Ireson
CP3 Abinger Common	Sussex Group (Janet Chapman)
CP4 Smithbrook Kilns	Ted Swift, John Westcott, Elizabeth Bryan, Kevin McGivern
Finish - Chichester Hall	Kitchen: Glenys Kirkpatrick, Henry & Jennie de Bozzart, Alastair & Sue Charlesworth, Juliet Eberle

To the event itself. This year we had a total of 165 entrants. Of those 125 made it to the start at Witley and a commendable 116 reached the finish under their own steam. The high number of non-starters (40, as apposed to 28 in 2011) is disappointing and it's not clear quite why. Having said that, thanks to those that let me know beforehand that they couldn't make it.

This year the weather was kind to us. In fact, conditions were ideal. Little rain had fallen in the weeks prior to the event and in general

it was dry underfoot. The only exception being in the last couple of miles after the Merry Harriers PH where the bridleway and stream are coincident.

My apologies for any confusion over the start time(s). I appreciate the web details indicated two times, one for walkers and the other for runners. To those that contacted me prior to the event I did suggest they could start between the two times if they wished - consistent with CP opening times. Had this had been generally known, then some of you would have stayed in bed for another hour or two it seems! My fault entirely and next time I will make the start times clearer in the event details.

Many congratulations to Tara Williams who went round in a very commendable time of 11hrs 27mins. Arguably though those that persevere and come in close to the time limit have the toughest time. In this respect I would like to mention Chris Dent, Tim Glenn and Debbie Murphy coming in with 17mins to spare. The sense of achievement (and relief) on their faces was clearly palpable as they arrived back at Witley as night began to fade into dawn. Another group I would wish to single out for special note includes those that were doing the Tops, not just for the first time, but as their first Challenge walk. To choose the Tops, recognised as a tough event, was a courageous call. So to all of you, a very well done!

Surrey has always erred on the side of 'tough' in planning its challenge events. The Winter Tanners, for example, offers no hot drinks or food and minimal support but remains heavily subscribed. We still believe (and say) that entrants should carry their own food and supplement it at checkpoints. I appreciate that this view may not prevail across LDWA events in general but it remains so in Surrey.

In devising the Tops we focus, first and foremost, on producing a challenging (but scenic) route with minimal road walking supported by a clear, accurate and detailed route description. We then add quality CPs which are not over frequent and staffed by enthusiastic and encouraging volunteers. Finally, a well organised and overarching event control to underpin progress and deal with eventualities.

The 4 CPs (inc the finish) averages to one every 10 miles, again something we feel is appropriate in terms of providing adequate support whilst at the same time serving to maintain the tough nature of the event. The comments posted on the Events forum reflect this notion - tough but well planned and executed. So in that sense I think we have got it about right. I would not like to see the event 'softened' by calls for more or more substantial CPs.

Finally then, a very well done to all of you, and hope to see you in 2017.

Tony Cartwright
Event Organiser

Feedback received either by email or posted on the Events forum:-

Thank you Surrey LDWA for an excellent (if tough) Surrey Tops, made even better by the weather. Special acknowledgement to the volunteers who worked through the night to man the last checkpoint and check in finishers, as well as feed us at the end. Everyone was so cheerful and helpful.

Thank You sO much for a fantastic event. Special Thanks to all volunteers at the check points.

A very tough 50! We thought it seemed longer! Thanks to all who made it possible. Very welcome hot food at CP 3 and the finish. The distance between CPs was a tad longer than on some other events, but very good when one got to them. An extra checkpoint would have been welcome. Too much walking in Dark Woods at night for my taste. Well done to the route description team, excellent over all, we only went astray a couple of times and they were our fault not the description.

Agreed it was a tough route over many of the tops of Surrey. Well worth the drive down south.

All CP's were well staffed and plenty of food on offer if a little sparse (5 Inc finish) enjoyed the full English breakfast at the end. Well done to all at Surrey LDWA, fantastic event.

Challenging in terms of distance, number of checkpoint, route and navigation, I guess that's why it's called a challenge event. A lovely part of the country to walk in, just a shame the weather obscured many of the views.

A big thank you to all involved in organising and running the event. Welcoming checkpoints, good food and much appreciated Beef Stew at check point three and Breakfast and a shower at the finish. Well Done Surrey Group.

Many thanks for sending the results so promptly. This was my first challenge event and I really enjoyed it! Many thanks to you and your team for organising such a well run event.

Fantastic event. Really enjoyed it.

A big thank you to all the marshals with especial mention for the plentiful food at CP2 and welcoming faces on the verandah at the end. The route description also was very well crafted.