

# Surrey Group, Long Distance Walkers Association Report - 36<sup>th</sup> Winter Tanners Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> January 2014



After a very wet week Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> January started with the sun trying to break through at the start of the 36<sup>th</sup> Winter Tanners. There was a great route but what a contrast from beginning to end of day. Beautiful views, frost covered ground and sunshine then as day progressed, exactly as the weatherman said, cloud, drizzle and wind picking up. Walkers and runners skidded and slogged through the fields and balanced on the still frozen mole hills. At least river levels had stabilised and the flooding of earlier in the week had largely disappeared and the 'flood' diversions in the route description were not used. However the afternoon became damp and heavy mist rolled over the Surrey hills.



There were 450 entrants, the event limit, and there were many who wanted to enter but could not do so. Slightly less than two thirds of the entrants (297) actually undertook the event. Some of the entrants for the long route changed to the short either at the start or during the event.

Class	Entrants	Participants	Retired	Ave Time	Min time	Max time
Total	450 (47%)	297 (51%)	7			
Long	266 (54%)	166 (63%)	5	7h56m	5h10m	12h1m
Short	184 (36%)	131 (35%)	2	6h26m	3h33m	9h35m

*The proportion in brackets is the % LDWA members*

For the first time the event started/finished at the sports pavilion at Leatherhead Leisure Centre; this is not a luxurious building but it gave the shelter for the registration and provided toilets and changing room space. Afterwards the showers and café of the centre provided better facilities than WT entrants had previously enjoyed. The marshals clearly benefited from having proper tables, lighting and a degree of heat. This does seem a better base for the event without detracting too much from the tradition of a basic winter event. Car Parking remains at the nearby town centre car parks (the organisers greatly appreciated that entrants used those parks and did not fill the short term parking at the Leisure Centre).

Both routes went south from Leatherhead to Fetcham Downs, then east to the Surrey hills, through Norbury Park, Mickleham and Headley Heath. CP1 was by Bothy Cottage near Walton Oaks (and the M25!). The short route then went south west, often on part of the North Downs Way, towards Betchworth and then below and towards the top of Box Hill before dropping down to the Stepping Stones footbridge and on to Burford Bridge. Then south to before continuing west on the North Downs Way through Denbies Vineyard to ascend to the top of Ranmore. Here at Steers Field was CP3 with welcome hot drinks. Then on to Ranmore, past Tanners Hatch Youth Hostel and back again to Fetcham Downs and thence to Leatherhead. For the longer route after CP1 it was directly south to the east of Betchworth before going south west through parkland at Brockham. CP2 was by Fourwents



Pond on Holmwood Common. Then still south west, back into the Surrey hills before turning back and going north west through Coldharbour. Up through the woods of Abinger Forest and then dropping down to Westcott to re-ascend the North Downs and up to Ranmore and CP3 at Steers Field. Return was then on the same paths as the short route. The short route was 20.3 miles and the long was 30.5 miles. Both routes drew appreciative feedback from the entrants and we are grateful to John Westcott for devising the route (and always managing to include some new paths) and the route checking team for implementing it.

The event required 28 marshals. It was pleasing that, at long last, there were some new faces amongst the marshals. In particular the Serpentine Running Club staffed and ran CP 2, although the WT is a long distance walkers event it was great to see a running club supporting it in this way. Luckily it was not extremely cold. For CP3, which requires staffing for over 8 hours, a shift rota of marshals was used.

Nevertheless one entrant said *"The marshals at Steers Field all looked like they had put on several stone over Christmas, all wrapped up in so many layers"*.

Our thanks for the work of the marshals, without them there would be no event. The marshals made a great team that ensured the success of the day.



The online entry system was trialled last year and worked well (unlike the event which was 'snowed' off last year!). This year all entries were strictly online. Whilst some do not like online entry it removes particularly onerous manual tasks which it has proved increasingly difficult to find volunteers to undertake. It also is transparent, gives competitors instant confirmation, the data captured is less error prone (and more usable) and there is a very helpful ability to send mass emails to all entrants. Online entry has now been proven for Surrey LDWA events and will be the norm in future.

Although the online entry system worked well the organisers have more work to do in developing more robust systems for recording and tracking walkers. This year each arriving entrant was given a new event number for either the long or short route and the online entry number was not used. This delayed tracking and recording entrants, it was difficult and we will seek better arrangements for the future.

Although we have raised the entry limit to 450, less than two thirds of that number turned up for the event. Whilst the organisers expected about a 10% no show the outcome was much higher. This is particularly unfortunate given that entry was refused to many who would have liked to enter. The organisers hope that next year the entry system will support a 'waiting list' system and that it can be easier to recycle unused places (though there is some indication that many decisions not to come are taken late so it may not be practical to recycle all spurned places). We will do more work on this and see how we can ensure more places are actually used.

The entry system was able collect voluntary donations for the National Trust and, as a result, £240 will be given toward maintenance of the Surrey Hills by the NT. Thanks to all who contributed.

You can see pictures of the event at <http://www.ldwa.org.uk/Surrey/W/2893/wt12-archive-gallery.html>  
The results are at: <http://www.ldwa.org.uk/Surrey/W/2326/winter-tanners.html>

So we now look forward to next year's event. Please put **Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> January 2015** in your diaries for the 37<sup>th</sup> Winter Tanners. It may be noted that for next years event we will be altering the entry fee structure and significantly increase the non-LDWA entry fee (we did this for our sister event, the Punchbowl Marathon, this year but as partial recompense for cancellation without refund last year, we held charges this year). If you're not a member you might like to consider joining, it only costs £13/ year for which you not only get reduced entry fees on many LDWA events but also *Strider* the lively and informative magazine that gives details of hundreds of LDWA events which you are welcome to go on (see: [www.ldwa.org.uk](http://www.ldwa.org.uk)).

*Richard Ireson, Organiser, 18<sup>th</sup> January 2014, updated 21<sup>st</sup> January.*