



Winter Tanners 2018 Report



The 40th Winter Tanners was held on Sunday 21st January 2018, the weather forecast had been poor, but the early morning was dry. To mark the 40th event an additional 40 mile route was added to the normal 30 and 20 mile routes. This considerably stretched the Winter Tanners day with registration opening 6:15am, entrants starting from 6:45 with 15¼ hours to complete (by 10pm), there were 5 checkpoints (rather than 3) with the last checkpoint being open for almost 9 hours. It was a very challenging event and established new records for mud!

Anniversary and history

The first predecessor walk, held in July 1960, was devised as a 30 mile challenge walk by Alan Blatchford for the Epsom and Ewell YHA Group. Interest in longer distance walking being stimulated by Billy Butlin's *Big Walk* from John O'Groats to Lands End and the exploits of the eccentric Dr Barbara Moore. The walk became annual and was renamed the *Tanners Marathon* in 1964 (with its own organising



John Westcott, left, holding the new WT badge and a 40th anniversary paperweight (with Richard Ireson, current organiser)

committee). Alan Blatchford met Chris Steer on the 1968

Tanners Marathon and they went on to found the LDWA in 1972; the inaugural meeting was at Tanners Hatch Youth Hostel. The first *Winter Tanners* was held on 11th January 1976 as a walk out for that summer's 17th Tanners Marathon and has been run by Surrey LDWA since then. Alan Blatchford's untimely death in September 1980 led to John Westcott, then secretary of Surrey LDWA, taking over as organiser of the Winter Tanners and he has devised all WT routes since. The event did not run in 1988 (due to 1987 storm damage), 1990 (a soon reversed policy to annually alternate with the Punchbowl) and 2013 (snow/ice made CP access impossible). In 2010 the last, 50th, summer Tanners Marathon was held (the organising committee all retiring). So in 2018 we had the 40th event of this "*challenge walk (or run) on Surrey footpaths and bridleways with MINIMAL support in weather conditions which may be adverse and for which only strong and self-reliant walkers and runners should enter.*" This event and Tanners Hatch Youth Hostel have been central to the founding and development of the LDWA.

John Westcott has written a longer history of the WT see:

www.ldwa.org.uk/lgt/downloads/Surrey/WT_Docs/History_of_WT.pdf

Routes on the 40th event

The routes went SE from Leatherhead; for the 30 and 40 routes this went away from traditional WT territory but often into flatter muddy fields. Once again John has designed the route and Mary Dee did much of the checking, negotiating with landowners and wrote route descriptions (and reporting several footpath obstructions/issues to Surrey CC). Mary's route description seemed much appreciated:



The route description



Enjoying the mud on Reigate Hill

"This year's route description was especially notable for its literary merit, in intriguingly, inventively and indefatigably finding so many different adjectival embellishments to the instruction to continue ahead. (We did especially need the "steadfastly", "determinedly" etc. this year too)."; "superb Route Description 'Spot on!"; "Btw can I just thank the writer of the Winter Tanners route description ... it was so funny! I can honestly say I 'unswervingly', 'steadfastly', 'unwaveringly' and 'determinedly' kept going whenever instructed to do so, and got quite nervous whenever I saw an 'NB'".

For the first time we formally provided 'gpx' files for download to GPS devices; Surrey Group have now decided to make this the norm where possible (as other groups and National do). The route description, however, remains the primary/definite route description.

The 20 route started from Mole Valley Business Park then alongside the River Mole, up across Leatherhead Downs to ascend to Colley Hill and a very muddy path adjacent to the M25! On to Reigate Hill which normally gives spectacular views but for most this was where they first met snow! The southerly descent was on a steep, slippery, polished chalk path that was 'challenging'. Through Reigate to CP1 at Priory Park (8.7 miles). Then west to Brockham before starting the ascent of Box Hill. This section of the route provoked considerable comment (much of it from 30/40 milers): *"I fell on my face going up Box Hill and on my back going down"; "The welcome committee at the top of Box Hill, the guiding lights down and the master controller at the bottom were thoughtful touches for tired eventers."; "I had literally face planted going up the steepest section of Box Hill - feet slipped from underneath me on the slippery icy slope - then afterwards I*



The path from Box Hill to the Zig Zags

slipped on my backside!”; “Words escape me about Box Hill, well those spoken are not for sharing 😊”. The hot tea at the bottom (CP5, Zig Zag car park, 16.1m) was much appreciated! (as were marshals who washed mud out of mugs before pouring tea!). The route then crossed the railway and north back to Leatherhead. There were pre-prepared flood routes as alternatives to the Mole bankside but, in the event, they did not have to be used (though the riverside mud was ‘interesting’).

The 30 route started as the 20 but from CP1 sent south to Iron Bottom (which would have been useful for many entrants!) and on the flat to CP2 (South Lodge 14.5m). Then SW to CP4 (The Surrey Oaks Pub,



Coming down Box Hill

checkpoint undercover on veranda, hot drinks but Malbec available to marshals!). Then NW to eventually ascend Box Hill (comments above!) and back to Leatherhead.

The 40 route was a later addition to the event design and provided the length for 40 miles. From CP2 it went almost to the end of Gatwick runway (for CP3, Nutshell Farm, 22.4m) and then past the grave yard of Royal Navy Sea King (?) helicopters. It re-joined the 30 route. Whilst the muddy fields gave their own challenge it wasn't the traditional Surrey Hills!

Overall the route/event was found to be:

- *"It was an especially tough day - not only was the weather poor (it snowed then rained pretty much all day), but the ground had largely been transformed into a muddy gloop. So all in all a bit of an epic."*
- *The mud varieties were quite interesting, ranging from ice rink standard to the shoe stealing variety. And if it was not for the ice cold temperature some of the fields could be used for rice growing.*
- *This year's Winters Tanners was for me very challenging but perversely also very enjoyable. Or should I say endurable!*
- *The WT 40th anniversary will not be forgotten! My trainers have only just been allowed*



Comparing mud at CP2

back in the house after a few days in a bucket of soapy water. My adventures on the day are already written up and submitted for the next issue of Strider. Having not done the 2014 Valleys 100, Sunday's WT takes the title for the most mud EVER on an event!
(Tara Williams)

General comments: *"wintry, wet, drizzly, muddy, slippery, cold ... and well organised" - "soggy but so much fun" - "definitely an experience" - "the hardest 40 I've*

ever done" - "bloody marvellous route description" - " more mud than the Gatliff" - "and how about those seven fields ... I almost lost my shoes and my mind by field five" "awesome. Mudfest indeed! I wasn't expecting quite so much deep slurry!!" "The field of pure cow dung was pretty special too 😊"

Facts and figures

The table below give the principal statistics about the Winter Tanners (and the further table gives similar figures for last five years).

Summary statistics

	Route	Total/All	20	30	40
Entrants					
Entrants		494	138	162	193
Presented		366	90	134	134
Started (after any registration switches)		366	129	131	103
Finished (after any in-event switches)		358	133	149	76
Retired		8	5	1	2
Route switching					
40 to 30				Start/during	Start/during
40 to 20					21 / 24
30 to 20				25 / 9	11 / 3
Switched to a longer route			4	1	
Did not show		128	48	28	59
Entrant shares					
	%		%	%	%
Entrants	100		27.9	32.8	39.1
Presented	100		24.6	36.6	36.6
Started (after any registration switches)	100		35.8	28.1	28.1
Finished (after any in-event switches)	100		41.6	21.2	21.2
Did not show proportion %		25.9	34.8	17.3	30.6
Times hours:minutes					
Average			11:29	8:55	6:57
Median			11:25	8:30	7:04
Max			15:12	14:16	10:31
Min			7:39	5:23	3:48
Distance/Speed					
Mileage			40.7	30.4	20.8
Average mph			3.1	4.2	3.2
Fastest mph			5.3	5.6	5.5

The switching figures are less accurate as they are based on PACER snapshots, and some switched down and then switched up again!

The entry limit on the WT is 500 (the maximum allowed within the LDWA). Having the event slightly later in January than was traditional gives more time post-Christmas to take withdrawals and all 35 waiting list entrants were offed places on the event (this is facilitated very efficiently by Fabian4 our entrant system operator).

The organiser had planned on the basis of a 20% now show. However poor weather forecasts, emails withdrawing due to sports injuries, winter colds and other reasons (*"With the weather forecast saying it will be dire in Leatherhead on Sunday, I have decided to withdraw from the event and stay in Essex"*) made it likely that turnout would be less. In the event 26% did not show (similar to 2015 but it had fallen to 15% in 2016!). 35% of the 20's



We've done it!

DNS and 31% of 40's it was the 30 entrants whose DNS was 17% who reflected a certain event loyalty.



Snow in Priory Park

The poor conditions led to much higher levels of downward switching than usual. 32 switched out of the 40 at registration and 27 transferred out during the event. 25 transferred out of the 30 at registration and 9 during the event. Thus 40 milers represented 40% of the entry but only 20% of the finishers. 20 milers represented 28% of entrants but 42% of finishers! So for the 40 milers 31% DNS, 30% switched and 40% finished. The 30 milers were more determined to remain in their event.

Average speeds on the 20 were slower than previous years (surprising given the

large transfer in of potentially stronger entrants). The average speed of the 30s was significantly higher than recent years. Fastest speeds on the 20 and 30 were much slower than recent years.

Results can be seen on the LDWA website at: www.ldwa.org.uk/results/full_results.php?event_id=86
You can select and sort routes, times, speeds etc on this site.

The table below gives results over a 5 year period.

Summary of WT results 2014 - 2018

	Snow in Priory Park					30	20	20	20	20	20
<i>hours/minutes</i>	2018	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Times											
Average	11:29	8:55	8:31	7:40	7:43	7:54	6:57	6:22	6:48	5:45	6:27
Median	11:25	8:30	8:28	7:35			7:04	6:32	6:53		
Max	15:12	14:16	12:52	10:54	11:43	12:01	10:31	9:04	10:32	9:42	9:35
Min	7:39	5:23	5:21	5:10	5:01	4:15	3:48	3:29	2:56	2:53	3:33
Mileage											
Mileage	40.7	30.4	31.4	30.4	30.4		20.8	20.9	20.9	20.6	
Average mph	3.1	4.2	3.7	4.0	3.9		3.2	3.3	3.1	3.6	
Fastest mph	5.3	5.6	5.9	5.9	6.1		5.5	6.0	7.1	7.1	
Entrants	193	162	329	309	301	266	138	121	141	147	184
Finished	76	149	214	203	192	161	133	114	143	120	129
All routes											
Entrants		494	450	450	448	450					
Finished		358	328	346	312	290					
Did not show		26%	24%	15%	26%	24%					

Notes: The number of finishers on the shorter routes is usually significantly boosted by switching from the longer ones. The 40 mile route in 2018 was to mark the 40th event.



Differing types of PACER on-line tracking points: Tony Cartwright at CP3, Fiona Cameron (in car) at CP2 and Tony Davis, with Malbec at Pub, at CP4

Organisation and marshalling

This year's WT was organisationally demanding, two extra checkpoints, an extra route to devise, describe and check, finding marshals who could work outside in potentially freezing conditions for a longer duration than is normal on the WT. We managed it but had no reserve of volunteers to fill any unexpected gap! In all there were 35 people working on the Tanners and it worked because they worked as a team. They all got on with it and didn't complain; the feedback from entrants was marvellous (thank you!). We could not have staged this event without our volunteers. Whilst it was good to put on the 40 route and celebrate the 40th anniversary none of the organising team are enthusiastic to repeat it and demand so much of themselves and all the volunteers! The 2019 event will be back to two routes and three checkpoints (hooray!).

We are now regarding the PACER software and hardware as a mature system in which we have great confidence. The mobile networks are improving 4G coverage and, with some searching, we now find a useful signal in most CPs. Results/progress can be seen instantly on the public internet. The pictures above reflect the very different arrangements for the computer equipment at three of the checkpoints! We are also benefitting from improved mobile phone coverage which can aid searching for any entrant about which we are unsure.

Again we are very grateful to Mike Tuke and MatOrtho for providing the start/finish venue and its extensive car parks. They helpfully gave us more space upstairs this year and hopefully entrants will have found that useful. Long term entrants will realise how far our facilities have improved over 40 years (there was a sense of déjà vu on the marshals 40 mile walk out at 6.30am making bacon butties in the open air Leatherhead municipal car park which had been the initial base of the WT for the majority of its life!, there was a slight shower!) The organisers were also slightly relieved that, despite the dreadful slippy conditions there were no accidents or injuries!

So we thank all the marshals and express our great appreciation for their efforts. Their list of honour is below. We look forward to seeing you on **Sunday 20th January 2019** for next WT.

Richard Ireson, Organsier,,:
For Surrey LDWA, 27th January, 2018
surrey.wt@ldwa.org.uk
www.ldwa.org.uk/surrey



Thanks to the Marshals

Start

Registration/Start out/Pacer: Mary Dee, Mark Pickard, Tony Cartwright, Fiona Cameron, Frank Eberle

Car Parking: Nigel Barraclough, Mike Tuke, Jeff Campbell



Starting in the dark at about 7:15



CP1

Checkpoint 1, Priory Park: Ray Rowe (*leader*), Stephen Ford, Dave and Pat Challenger, Gordon Roots, Pacer: Adam Dawson, Avril Stapleton, Tony Cartwright, Mary Dee

Checkpoint 2 South Lodge: Nigel Barraclough (*leader*), Steve Athawes, Martin Matthews, Mark Pickard, John Bates. Pacer: Fiona Cameron

Checkpoint 3 Nutshell Farm: Alastair Charlesworth (*leader*), Sue Charlesworth, James Blogg, Ruth Coleman, Adam Dawson. Jeff Campbell, Pacer: Tony Cartwright

Checkpoint 4, The Surrey Oaks: Janet Chapman (*leader*), Ertan Ali Faik, Alan Shons, Gordon Roots, Avril Stapleton, Keith Chesterton, Christopher Woodward, Stephen Ford, Pacer: Tony Davis



CP4 Marshals

Checkpoint 5: Zig Zag Car Park: Ted Swift (*Leader*), Jackie Barker, Mike Tuke, Barbara Thomson, Dave Watmore. Pacer: Vicki Bell

Finish: Juliet Eberle, Jenni de Bossart, Elton Ellis (Certificates). Pacer: Frank Eberle, Tony Cartwright

Driving/Pick-up: Henri de Bossart, Martin Matthews, James Blogg, Roger Sage, Andy Fogel

Executive Menu Planning: Janet Chapman

Splits Marshall: Christopher Woodward

Equipment and logistics: Roger Sage and Andy Fogel



Orpington Roadrunners in the sleety snow



Comparing 'literary merit' at CP2