

Another Checkpoint.....

The Surrey Tops, CP3, Evelyn Hall, Abinger Common
Saturday 17th September 2011, open from 1800 to 2200.

The weather was mild with sunny intervals and occasional heavy showers.

The Surrey Tops is one part of the Kent, Surrey and Sussex (KSS) Triple Challenge, the others being the White Cliffs 50 and the Sussex Stride. Each 50 mile event takes place once every three years. Those who finish three successive events have completed the challenge and receive a badge and certificate.

Abinger Common is 31.5 miles out and is the 'hot food' stop. Evelyn Hall was built in the 19th century and has recently been refurbished. The kitchen boasts a water boiler and a large, modern electric cooker, both of which proved essential as the evening progressed. Stew was the order of the day, beef, carrots and tomatoes for the carnivores and kidney beans, butter beans, sweet corn and tomatoes for the vegetarians, both served with new potatoes. French bread and soup were provided for those who couldn't face the stew. Apple pie and custard followed with tea, coffee and the inevitable squash in abundant supply.

Of the 150 entries 122 started. The first participant arrived at 1741 and the last at 2206, both, strictly speaking, outside the CP opening time. These time violations give the CP staff a problem. Early arrivals, usually runners, tend to be more interested in their finish times and often continue with no more than a drink. The condition of slightly late arrivals is (discreetly) observed and if they are fit and wish to carry on they are free to do so. The very late tend to stop and the CP staff have the authority to retire anyone they judge unfit to continue. In all cases the entry numbers are recorded so that the person who closes the CPs and has the up to date list of non-starters and retirees, and the sweepers, know if anyone is running late.

Providing hot food at a checkpoint, even one as well equipped as Evelyn Hall, can have its moments. The participants do not arrive in a regular stream, they start as a trickle which becomes a flood. As they often walk in groups demand can go from two to twenty in a few minutes. Hot beef stew, if kept too long in a pan, can degenerate into a thick, unappetising, slurry - even tinned new potatoes can go the same way. By the time the kitchen staff have mastered the technique of preventing this the flood has returned to a trickle. On this occasion slurry production was minimal.

Six people retired at CP3 and 107 finished the event. A further 14 had completed their KSS triple Challenge.

A report and results can be found on the Surrey Group website ldwasurrey.co.uk. My thanks to all the CP staff - Shirley Greenwood, Trevor Beeston, Chris, Margaret and Gabby Coates and Joe Baines-Holmes.

Special thanks to Janet Chapman of the Surrey Group who organised the food and helped on the CP.

Chris Baines-Holmes - Chief Tin Opener.