

THE HOUGHTON TRAIL EVENT

Annual Report Houghton Annual Parish Assembly 2023

History of The Houghton Trail Event

The event was first run by All Saints' Church in 2007, primarily for villagers and attendees of the church as a fund raiser. Since then, it has grown, attracting between 400 and 500 competitors from all over the south of England. The event has recently expanded by the addition of an event for those running with dogs. Last year, the Canicross event had to be capped at 75 entries and is the fastest growing of all 5 events.

In 2020 and 2021, there was no event due to Covid-19 and the subsequent lockdowns, but returned with a brand new organising team for 2022.

2023 Event

To date, we have around 275 competitors that have registered and expect that this will swell beyond the 400 mark over the remaining time before the Trail on May 14th. Planning is now at an advance stage with the organising team meeting each week in the lead up to the event. The team are also busy 'standardising processes and tasks' so that in 2023, it will be much easier to organise the event.

Marketing the Event

This is done primarily through our Facebook and Twitter accounts, so if anyone on the village use these, please 'follow' us and share our posts as this greatly improves our reach and registrations. We also have two large banners erected in the village and have placed fliers in a range of retail outlets locally. We also 'fly post' around local villages, in places where runners and cyclist would frequent. Our adverts are featured in some of the local parish magazines, but the prime channel for marketing is 'word of mouth' amongst the running and cycling communities, many of whom cite the great cakes and refreshments offered by the WI Refreshment Team as they reason they attend year after year! This year, we will be rewarding the WI with a share of the profits.

Sponsors

Team member Pippa has managed to secure a wide range of sponsors who have either made monetary or goods donations to support the event. These include Sunbelt (free Loos), Alexandra Sports, Evans & Partridge, Hildon Water, Hobbs Printers, Houghton Lodge Gardens, Stockbridge Osteopath and many, many more. Many other local businesses have supplied raffle prizes and we will be offering around 20 prizes on the day; come armed with your cash and/or debit card!

Beneficiaries

This year, we are planning to spread the benefit more broadly than previously. As well as All Saints' Church and Houghton Village Hall (who give us the use of their facilities free of charge and run the coffee morning on May 13th), we will be making a small donation to the Middle Wallop Air Cadets, who send around a dozen cadets to help us marshal, and rewarding the Houghton WI, who donate all of the cakes and refreshment free of charge to competitors and villagers alike. Last year, we raised over £5,000 for beneficiaries and hope to top that figure this year.

Volunteers

With around 450 competitors descending on the village from across the southern counties, we need a small army of 90 volunteers to man the car park, register entrants, marshal the events, photograph

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the day, time keep, hand out medals, provide first aid and of course feed and drink competitors and villagers alike. We are pleased to report that we have just about sufficient numbers to safely hold the

2023 event, but are seeking more volunteers to form a reserve list in case of last minute 'drop outs'.

Acknowledgements, Without Whom...

- Funding – Our Sponsors
- Our Organising Team of John Broomfield, Sarah Broomfield, Pippa Goss, Kate Handy, Terry Heffernan, Tina Heffernan, Sam Holloway and Mark Pendlebury.
- Organising Team Adviser Fiona Evans
- Website management and online bookings Reg Goodwin
- Volunteers – all 90 of them including Air Cadets from Middle Wallop
- Refreshments by the Women's Institute Refreshment Team
- Houghton Village Hall Management
- Event Sweepers and Tail Runners Marie Simmonds, Stu Simmonds, Alan Young, Carol Bradwell
- Event starter Craig Doyle
- Landowners on the event routes
- The residents of Steven's Drove
- Houghton & Bossington
- The entrants

Terry Heffernan – Lead Organiser

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www.houghton-trail-event.org.uk