

THE HOUGHTON TRAIL EVENT

Annual Report Houghton Annual Parish Assembly 2022

Recent History of The Houghton Trail Event

This event was last held in the village in May 2019, attracting around 450 competitors. After this, the organising team stood down and a new team was formed towards the end of 2019. We set about the task of organising the 2020 Event and through our marketing, had attracted around 120 entrants at the time of the National Lockdown in March 2020. This forced the 2020 event to be postponed and we optimistically set a new date for later in the year (September). This was also postponed when it became clear that the lockdown was continuing and we hoped to stage the event in 2021, but again this had to be postponed to May 2022. Fortunately, few of the registered entrants chose to ask for a refund and we expect them to head for the village on May 8th this year.

2022 Event

At the start of 2022, we needed to form a new organising committee as two of our members stood down, one due to moving out of the village. An appeal was made and four new team members stepped forward, three of whom are relatively new to the village. However, this also meant that there was nobody on the team that had been involved in organising before! However, Fiona Evans who was the lead organiser in 2019, the last time the event was held, agreed to act as our 'adviser' and has been a dotted line member of the team.

As of April 21st, we have 325 entrants but expect that by May 8th, we will be close to the capacity we have set of 450. This has been achieved through social media campaigns, flyers posted on public footpaths and byways used by runners and cyclists, flyers left at the registration desks of three similar local events (The George Skeates Event, Stockbridge, the Harewood Forest Run and the Hurtsbourne Tarrant 5. We have also placed posters in most of the Stockbridge shops and on village noticeboards within a 5-mile radius of the village. Lastly, neighbouring villages have agreed to place adverts in their Parish Magazines free of charge.

We have managed to secure a wide range of sponsors who have either made monetary or goods donations to support the event. These are Ace Loos, Alexandra Sports, Evans & Partridge, Hildon Water, Hobbs Printers, Houghton Lodge Gardens, Stockbridge Osteopath. Many other local businesses have supplied raffle prizes; traditionally there was only one prize of a magnificent cake made by Fiona Evans, but this year we have around another 20 prizes which we hope will help us to raise more funds for our two beneficiary organisations, All Saints' Church, and Houghton Village Hall.

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 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 2022 event, but are seeking more volunteers to form a reserve list in case of last minute 'drop outs' given that Covid-19 is still rife locally.

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.

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Current Issues

Along the way, we have had to resolve some issues that would otherwise mean that the event could not happen. These were the number of volunteers required, a suitable field to use for car parking (given that the field next to Shaun Bradley has been ploughed, the Butler Field normally has livestock, and the Cardoe Field has been left unmanaged), and the loss of our Public Address system provider. The latter remains as an issue, but we hope to procure a second-hand PA and have asked the Houghton Community benefit Fund for a grant to cover the cost of this, together with 2 megaphones to muster entrants and a first aid kit to make sure that our volunteer First Aider (Caro Holliday) we can deal with any injuries.

Acknowledgements, Without Whom...

- Funding – Our Sponsors
- Our Organising Team of John Broomfield, Sarah Broomfield, Pippa Goss, Kate Handy, Terry Heffernan, Tina Heffernan, and Mark Pendlebury.
- Organising Team Adviser Fiona Evans
- Website management and online bookings Reg Goodwin
- Volunteers – all 95 of them including Air Cadets from Middle Wallop
- Refreshments by the Women's Institute Refreshment Team
- Houghton Village Hall Management Committee - Coffee Morning, New Gazebos and hire of hall)
- Event Sweepers and Tail Runners Kevin Barwick, Carol Bradwell, Marie Simmonds, and Alan Young
- Event starter Craig Doyle
- Landowners on the event routes
- The residents of Houghton & Bossington
- The entrants

Terry Heffernan – Lead Organiser

houghtontrail@gmail.com

01794 388473/07834 483384

www.houghton-trail-event.org.uk