

# THE HOUGHTON TRAIL EVENT

## Annual Report Houghton Annual Parish Assembly 2024

### History of The Houghton Trail Event

The event was first run by All Saints' Church in 2003, primarily for villagers and attendees of the church as a fund raiser; there were 28 entrants. 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 with almost 100 dogs competing in 2023; this is the fastest growing category of race at the Trail.

### 2023 Event

2023 saw the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Trail and it was a record breaker. The fine spring weather was enjoyed by a record number of entries, around 450. The event also broke the record for the proceeds raised, around £7,500. This was disbursed to All Saints' Church, Houghton Village Hall, Houghton Women's Institute and the Middle Wallop Air Cadets who supplied 12 of their members to help with marshalling and other duties on the day. In addition, for the first time, the Trail Team decided to donate to two charities that support members of our community, namely Jane Scarth House and WM UK. The raffle and sponsorships both raised record amounts and for the first time, an ice cream van was in situ, much enjoyed by volunteers, children and competitors.

### 2024 Event

To date, we have around 200 competitors that have registered, which is slightly lower than in 2023 at the same stage. However, history suggests that this will swell around the 400 mark by the date of the Trail on May 12<sup>th</sup>. Planning is now at an advanced stage with the organising team meeting each week in the lead up to the event. This year, we launched a new website and time recording systems. These are much simpler than previously and allows the organising team to control the technology without the need of the external expertise we have been fortunate to enjoy previously.

### Marketing the Event

This is done primarily through our Facebook and Twitter accounts, so if anyone in 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!

### 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 some businesses managed by Houghton residents, Durkin, who are managing the SSN works in the village (free Loos), Alexandra Sports, Evans & Partridge, Hildon Water, Hobbs Printers, Houghton Lodge Gardens, Stockbridge Osteopath and a wide range of other retailers in Stockbridge and beyond. Many other local businesses have supplied a raffle prize and we will be offering around 20 prizes on the day; come armed with your cash and/or debit card; yes we take cards!

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## **Beneficiaries**

This year, we are once again planning to spread the benefit to some charities supporting parishioners. Our church, village hall, WI and the Middle Wallop Air Cadets will all benefit as usual, together with 2/3 charities.

## **Volunteers**

With around 400 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 all but around a dozen places filled to enable us to safely hold the event, a condition of our insurances. This means that we are still seeking more volunteers to fill the last places and 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
- Volunteers – all 90 of them including Air Cadets from Middle Wallop
- Refreshments by the Women's Institute Refreshment Team
- Houghton Village Hall Management
- Houghton Community Benefit Fund
- Event Sweepers and Tail Runners
- Event starter Tom Bradby
- Landowners on the event routes
- The residents of Steven's Drove
- Houghton & Bossington village
- The entrants

**Terry Heffernan – Lead Organiser**

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