

Sandstone Trail Challenge

12th May 2018

Well, what a great day! Perfect weather, almost dry trails and no real first aid incidents – what a great combination!

I had reccied the trail the previous Saturday in blistering heat (partly with Ste Wiggins, partly alone) and found it in almost perfect condition, so as long as the weather held that boded well for the event itself. (The obvious exceptions were the wet fields before and after CP1 – what on earth will it take for those to dry out?). I'd also spoken to the farmer at Chads Farm who asked me to mark the path diversion on his land, so I went down to do that on the Friday before the event.

5.45am start on the Saturday to unlock the community centre and quickly organise the early volunteers – some on registration, some on car parking. This year the community centre toilets were working, which was a relief (groan) and the process of having two registration queues meant it all ran rather smoothly. Just as the registration queues were thinning out the first of the coaches arrived. The coaching is the Achilles heel of the event - if they don't turn up... well, I don't even want to think about it. But Carvers Coaches have never let us down. Excellent service.

Once the first coach was full we let it go, but as each of the others had the odd spare seat we had to hold them until registration was officially closed, in case of stragglers. This meant arrival at Whitchurch was a few minutes late, which knocked on to a delayed event start – sorry about that. Once everyone was guided to the start by the coach marshals and we'd registered the Whitchurch starters, Cllr Tony Neville, Mayor of Whitchurch said a few encouraging words before the final briefing and the event finally set off at precisely 8.41.



Tony Neville, Mayor of Whitchurch

Once Andy and I had set you off and done some final admin, we headed back to Frodsham via Checkpoints 1 and 2 to check everything was ok and thank the volunteers. Delamere Spartans always look after CP1 fantastically well, they've got it set up perfectly for the large numbers they get through at once. Search and Rescue were there too, keeping an eye on the southern stages of the route. And CP2 was manned by our very own Helsby RC, including June who was giving up the Saturday of her birthday weekend. I meant to mention that at the briefing but completely forgot.



Meanwhile volunteers had marked the final stretch of trail from the Bakers Dozen steps back to the finish area, something we prefer to do as the trail can be a little unclear on Frodsham Hill. We quickly set the hall up before taking the calls which told us everyone was through CP1 and we could close it. CP2 was a little more stressful as two walkers became seriously overdue – they appeared just as we were briefing Search and Rescue, but sadly they were timed out of the event.



Meanwhile the first runners were approaching Frodsham – first to finish was Jez Brown, in 4 hours and 28 minutes. Lawrence Eccles and Tom Booth followed closely in 4:29 and 4:32 respectively, and the first Helsby runner home was Chris Fitzpatrick in fourth in 4:53. First lady, Leah Leonard wasn't far behind in 5:18.



Keith Scovell, first MV50

Our category winners were:

First male (and first overall)	Jez Brown, 4:28
First Lady	Leah Leonard, 5:18
First Male V50	Keith Scovell, 5:30
First Lady V50	Susan Poole, 7:49
First Male U18	Joseph Wilson, 8:19
First Male V70	Ian Hilditch, 9:17

The trophies are appropriately formed of a piece of sandstone. When our club Chairperson went to get them, the supplier refused to take any payment as he had heard of the charity donations we made as a part of the event and he wanted to support us. So big thanks to Burton Stone in Wrexham, <http://www.jbstone.co.uk> for their support.



Susan Poole, first FV50

In total 193 entrants finished, with the last pair finishing in twelve hours. Everyone seemed in good spirits at the end, not particularly muddy and the first aiders thankfully had very little to do. The pie and peas at the Community Centre went down well, as well as the home made cakes. The local Guides always provide brilliant service too, milling round to save sore walkers from having to move around. All of the feedback we've had so far, in person, by email and on social media is really positive so hopefully everyone had a good day. If you've got any suggestions for how to improve the event of course, please shout up!

I'd like to thank all of the volunteers who make the event possible. In no particular order the Scouts (Explorer Scouts, Sea Scouts and the communications team), Delamere Spartans, the Guides, Cheshire Search and Rescue and of course Helsby Running Club. Plus assorted partners and kids who got roped in to help.

And finally of course a huge thanks to our runners and walkers, without whom we'd be sat in an empty hall all day. You make it all worthwhile, and we hope you had a great day. Next year's event is already set for 11th May, hopefully we'll see you there!

Ben Williams

Event Director



Lost property –

There's always a pile of stuff at the end of the event, and this year was no exception. Someone left their certificate but I've posted that out, so we're left with

Dark blue technical tee with white flashes, size large, can't make the brand out

2012 Chester Marathon long sleeved top, small

Berghaus jacket, pink/purple, size 14

Pair of black flipflops

If any of these are yours please let me know and I'll get them back to you.

sandstonetrailchallenge@hotmail.com or get hold of me via the Helsby facebook page.