

Chiltern 20 2020

Report

The 2020 event managed to take place right in the middle of the COVID pandemic.

The event organisers managed to find a way for all teams to participate. It wasn't a competition against other teams and no trophies were awarded. Instead, twenty different routes were offered and teams could choose which one worked best for them. Ten different days and two different times slots during each day were offered, which resulted in a total of 400 different route/day/time combinations to choose.

That part of the event worked really well. A huge number of 36 teams from all four Districts in GLN were registered to take part, and despite some heavy rain and flooding towards the end of October, all teams successfully navigated their way around a choice of twenty different routes.

However, a new lockdown in November meant a delay for the remaining 23 teams still wanting take part, and this situation remained in force until March 2021.

So how did the teams fare?

One of the first teams to enter the new format C20 - 2020 was the 16th Wood Green. Their Scout Leader, Sarah, made the following comments about the event, "Like a number of Leaders, we were nervous about getting our Troop back and running for our first outdoor event. What with the new risk assessments and purchase of the PPE for the Troop, this all added to the pressure. Our Troop has always been a regular supporter of the Chiltern 20 and we saw this as a great opportunity to run our first outdoor activity and get the Scouts back together, socially distanced, of course. With the support of the Chiltern 20 Committee we signed up two teams for the event. The whole Leader Team agreed that it was a perfect idea and all the Scouts who took part loved their first day out in the countryside again after such a long time. I can only encourage other Troops to sign up and thank the C20 committee for what they have done for my Troop".

An early Saturday morning departure faced 10th Edmonton, and all went well. Ella said "It's the first time I have done anything like this. It was long and muddy but I enjoyed myself and would do it again next year". George added "It was very muddy but I enjoyed getting outside and using my newly found map reading and compass skills and putting them to the test". Summer summed up the event brilliantly: "I was worried about taking part in the Chiltern 20 event as I did not think I would be able to do it. But my leader told me to 'just do my best' and that this year's event was a good training exercise, so that I felt more confident to take part in next year's event. She was right".

Meanwhile, early on a Sunday morning, the first of the 201st Islington teams started their journey at Finsbury Park and walked along the disused railway line to Alexandra Palace. This team contained 14 year old Nathan who lives with cerebral palsy and needs a wheelchair. He said "I have always dreamed about taking part in the Chiltern 20 and now my dream has come true". The look on his face when he knew he was setting off as part of his team was a joy to see.

Ian Frai, Scout Leader of the 8th Hampstead picks up the story: "The 8th Hampstead have been taking part in the Chiltern 20 for many years and have always been unsupported by adults. My Scouts have told me many a time when I dared to mention they could enter the junior event with an adult that this would not be acceptable and it was always about them trying to achieve results by their own skills and team work. They have come 5th overall on three occasions and so this becomes their own personal target. The real achievement is of course just taking part as a team and getting round the course without any help. The event has always been wonderfully organised and what is great is just the sheer number of young people taking part and this brings home the message to our young persons that they are all part of the same impressive and large Movement. But along came COVID 19.

I could not have been more pleased to see that there was going to be an alternative version of the Chiltern 20 for this year. This was the perfect opportunity for some really enjoyable face to face Scouting and the response was fantastic. A total of 26 of my Scouts took part so we were able to enter six teams. Our first weekend involved a gloriously sunny Saturday with two teams starting from Great Missenden Station. They had a fantastic time, despite one team making a minor navigational error which probably gave them almost a km extra walking. However, by the time they had finished the hike the navigator was being blamed for at least 4kms extra! Fake news! Just one look at the Scouts in each team showed that they had clearly enjoyed the day despite it being wet under foot. But nothing compared to what was in store with the other teams.

Two weeks later, the weather forecast was for rain most of the day with a couple of hours of torrential rain and strong wind in the middle of the day. Just for a change the forecast was correct. Did this dampen the enthusiasm of our Scouts? No, everything else, yes, but not their enthusiasm. Whole sections of the route were underwater with no option but to walk through these floods. Despite the organisers' wonderful notes on the terrain for each part of the hike, there was no mention of these conditions underfoot! On our return to Chorleywood Station, I was being told with great enthusiasm about the flooded sections and I was even sent a video after the event of the team running through a flooded section of road near Latimer. The Scouts may have looked very wet but they all enjoyed the hike and would be telling the tales for a while to come. I was only glad that I didn't have to drive them home in a minibus. Just think of the cleaning. On the Sunday of the same weekend most of the rain had stopped but the flooding was even more in evidence. This was on the Bricket Wood route. There was a section along the River Ver and having crossed the Ver on a footbridge, they were a bit surprised to find that the river had burst its banks, forming a second river. The team decided the best way through was to take off their boots and carry them across this section. They all enjoyed the hike and the best part was obviously the river crossing!

If the event runs again when we move back to Amber then I can recommend this to any Troop leader as a wonderfully prepared event giving your scouts an excellent day out. I know some groups have been put off particularly by such things as risk assessments which generally are going to mean less Scouts taking part in Scouting activities until reorganised in a different way, but it is worth the effort and the event organisers will help with these risk assessments. Thank you team Chiltern 20 for all your efforts in giving so many young people a wonderful day in the country.

Here are some comments heartfelt thanks from parents:

"Ian, thanks again for today, really enjoyable, Rory is wonderfully tired and full of stories about wading through flooded rivers. Thanks for putting it all together, the Scouts loved it."

"The Scouts were soaked but feel very proud of their epic and muddy walk."

"What a perfect timing you chose for the hikes. It is lovely that all Scouts will have been able to do the hike and get a lot of fresh air before the new lockdown."

"What a success last weekend was. Thanks so much again for all your organisation. The team of younger Scouts were very pleased with their endeavours."

"Thank you so much again for yesterday - a beautiful day - the Scouts are very lucky for all the effort you make for them."

"Thanks a million for a great outing and all the planning it must have involved. Rufus had a great time and will sleep well tonight!"

And finally, here is one from a 13 year old patrol leader who was leading a team:

"Thank you for organising the expedition for us. We all really enjoyed it."

Event Chairman, Colin Batsford said "I am so proud to head up such a brilliant team of positive and dynamic event organisers. Despite all the restrictions that we have been facing, they have all worked so well together to put on a different type of Chiltern 20 this year, whilst at the same time provide adventure, fun and challenge for all the young people and adults who will be taking part in the event during the next six weeks".