

# THE HOUGHTON TRAIL EVENT

## Annual Report Houghton Annual Parish Assembly 2025

### 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 as far afield as Bristol to the west and Maidstone to the east.

### 2024 Event

2024 saw the 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the Trail and it was a hot one; in fact, we probably had the best day of the summer! record breaker. The event raised, around £7,000 and disbursed to village organisations and charities that support members of the parish. Payments were made to the organisations All Saints' Church, Houghton Village Hall, Houghton Women's Institute and the Middle Wallop Air Cadets and we donated monies to Southampton Children's Ward on behalf of the Gregory family, two children's charities on behalf of the Hodder family and supported James Lewis at the British Transplant Games in Nottingham.

### 2025 Event

To date, we have around 300 competitors that have registered, slightly lower than in 2024 at the same stage. However, history suggests that this will swell around the 400+ mark by the date of the Trail on May 11<sup>th</sup>. We cap the event at 500 entrants, primarily so that we can ensure that all travelling from outside of the village can park in the paddock adjacent to the Clarendon Way, opposite The Orchards. We have a small contingent paddock for around 30 vehicles at Coopers Farmhouse, which was not required in 2024.

This year, we expanded the team with 4 new members, taking us to 12 and indeed we had a couple more volunteers that we had to disappoint! Planning is now at an advanced stage with the organising team meeting regularly in the lead up to the event. We have made some improvements to the website that was new for 2024 and it is working very well, taking the bookings for the events as well as showcasing what we do.

### 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 another two that will be placed in Stockbridge shortly. We have also taken fliers to several local similar events for them to place on their registration desks to attract entrants. We also 'fly post' around local villages, in places where runners and cyclist 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!

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## **Sponsors**

Team member Pippa, supported this year by Sarah Woodford, 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, Fortitudo who are developing houses on the old Ro-Dor site in Steven's Drove (free Loos), Up & Running, 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

20-30 prizes on the day. The star prize is a magnificent cake baked by Fiona Evans, that look like a real pair of trainers! Come armed with your cash and/or debit card; yes we take cards!

## **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 that we select after the final numbers are known.

## **Volunteers**

With 400-500 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 & Sarah Broomfield, Pippa Goss, Kate Handy, Terry & Tina Heffernan, Sam & Mark Pendlebury, Helen & David Pratt, Sarah & David Woodford.
- 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
- Landowners on the event routes
- The residents of Steven's Drove
- Houghton & Bossington village residents
- The entrants

**Terry Heffernan – Lead Organiser**

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