

THE HOUGHTON TRAIL EVENT

Annual Report Houghton Annual Parish Assembly 2026

History of The Houghton Trail Event

The event was first organised 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, as far afield as Bristol to the west and Maidstone to the east. The event has recently expanded by the addition of e-bike categories for the two cycle routes, 11k and 32k. The 11k Canicross event is believed to be the largest of its kind in the south of England.

2025 Event

2025 saw the 22nd anniversary of the Trail and the fine spring weather was enjoyed by around 450 entrants. The event raised around £7,500 which was disbursed to All Saints' Church, Houghton Village Hall, Houghton Women's Institute and three charities that support members of the parish. Revenues come largely from the entry fees paid by competitors, augmented by the raffle, sponsorships, the fantastic WI Refreshments and the ice cream van.

2026 Event

To date, we have around 175 competitors that have registered, which is slightly lower than in 2025 at the same stage. However, history suggests that this will swell around 400 by the date of the Trail on May 10th. Planning is now at an advanced stage with the organising team meeting each week in the lead up to the event.

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 in Stockbridge at high traffic points. The team also place fliers in a range of retail outlets locally and we 'fly post' around local villages, in places where runners, dog walkers and cyclist frequent. We email local running, cycling and Canicross groups who kindly inform their memberships. 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 members Pippa and Sarah have the unenviable task of parting sponsors with their cash and raffle prizes. These include some businesses managed by Houghton residents, Alexandra Sports who pay for the race numbers, Evans & Partridge who place advertising boards prior to the event, Hildon Water who supply us with bottled water for the event, Hobbs Printers who undertake our print requirements free of charge, and a wide range of other retailers in Stockbridge and beyond.

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2026 Beneficiaries

The team consider requests for the funds raised once the event is over and proceeds calculated after invoices have been settled. This year, we are once again planning to spread the benefit to some charities supporting parishioners. Our church, village hall and WI will all benefit as usual, together with some local charities.

Volunteers

With around 400 competitors descending on the village, 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. At the time of writing, we are still seeking a handful of residents to step forward and help us of 2 hours on the day. It is a condition of our insurance that we fill all of the marshal points to be able to safely hold the event.

Acknowledgements, Without Whom...

- Our Sponsors
- Our Organising Team of John Broomfield, Sarah Broomfield, Pippa Goss, Kate Handy, Terry Heffernan, Tina Heffernan, Sam Holloway and Mark Pendlebury, David Pratt, Helen Pratt, and Sarah Woodford.
- Volunteers – all 90 of them!
- Refreshments by the Women's Institute Refreshment Team
- Houghton Village Hall Management
- Houghton Community Benefit Fund
- Event Sweepers and Tail Runners
- Event starters Tom Bradby & Craig Doyle
- Landowners on the event routes
- The residents of Steven's Drove
- Houghton & Bossington village
- The entrants

Terry Heffernan – Lead Organiser

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