

The Joe Beswick Sandstone Trail Challenge

Saturday 14th May 2022

Event Report

This was the first time the event had been held since 2019 and the first time it had been run in the memory of Joe Beswick. It was therefore fitting that the day dawned bright and warm temperatures were forecast, particularly for the afternoon. The trail was relatively dry so some fast times were predicted.

224 had registered for the event but only 164 actually appeared for registration at either Frodsham or Whitchurch.

Andy Hall, recently appointed Mayor of Whitchurch, started the race at 8.35am.



The leaders moved quickly along the trail and reached checkpoints in very good times. A new course record was anticipated but the warm conditions made it tough going for everyone.



At approximately 1.15pm Lawrence Eccles, Penny Lane Striders, crossed the line in a time of 4 hours, 38 minutes. Duncan Harris, Deeside Orienteering, was second in 4 hours 48 minutes. Duncan now holds the course record of 4 hours 10 minutes set in 2012 and the new male Vet 50 record. Jez Brown, came a very close third in 4 hours 51 minutes. There then followed a steady flow of runners with Claire Farrell, Delamere Spartans, claiming the first female place in 6 hours and 8 minutes.



By this time, it was very warm out on the course and the remaining participants who finished were very rosy faced and hot. Fortunately, we had no serious incidents of heat exhaustion or dehydration. Several people who retired recognised that they were not going to make the cut off or were not able to complete the trail due to the heat.

It was fortunate this year that refreshments were sandwiches and quiche, rather than pie, peas and soup!

The presentations went ahead following the first female finishing. It was a great pleasure to have so many of Joe's family present including grandchildren and his sister Doreen, Auntie Doe. Both Auntie Doe and Joe's son Alan said a few words. Auntie Doe and the club president, Phil Gillard, presented the trophies. It was a fitting tribute to Joe, to remember and celebrate all the fantastic support that he gave the club and the Sandstone Trail Challenge.



Later in the day trophies were awarded to Karen Ross, Run Knutsford, first female Vet 50, in a time of 6 hours 53 minutes and to Ian Hilditch, LDWA, first Vet 70, in a time of 9 hours 25 minutes.

The last of the walkers arrived back at the community centre at around 7.00pm with numbers 125 and 285, Sue and Susan deciding to complete the trail on their own after missing the cut off time at checkpoint 5. They arrived safely back at the community centre at around 9.00pm. Well done!

The challenge could not happen without a mass of volunteers, many from Helsby Running Club and the Mersey Weaver Scouts. We really appreciate their support. Thank you to all the participants who showed their gratitude on the day or have posted comments.

We have received some great feedback and constructive comments that we will note and look to improve the event in 2023. We know that it will remain a 10 hour cut off but will revise support at checkpoint 5. We will also give greater consideration to the weather forecast and plan accordingly. Unfortunately, we will have to raise the entry fee but it will remain very competitively priced.

Planning this event has been very time consuming and at times quite stressful but seeing people completing the course, presenting the Joe Beswick perpetual trophies and receiving so many lovely comments makes it all worthwhile.

“Thank you all for being so supportive on Saturday, it made the day very special. To see smiling faces when the fatigue sets in makes all of the difference. “

“A great day out on Saturday, thoroughly enjoyed it, great marshals and great checkpoints!”

“A huge thank you from me to the race organisers, marshals and volunteers for yesterday... The marshals from Helsby RC were fabulous.”



We hope to see you next year for the second Joe Beswick Sandstone Trail Challenge.