

A Guide to the Cheshire Hike

The Cheshire Hike is an annual competition open to all Scouts and Guides in Cheshire and the Wirral (ex Cheshire). It is organised for approximately the weekend before Easter but is dependent upon British Summer Time. The 2006 Hike will be our 40th and will be held on the 8th & 9th April.

Planning for the Hike starts in August. Entry forms are distributed to Groups during November. The Cheshire Hike booklet being distributed via the DCs in mid November, for entries to start to arrive after the Christmas break. **There will be a closing date for this Hike of the 2nd March 2006.**

The routes are in Cheshire and are planned in different areas each year. They are carefully checked out for distance, open public rights of way, safety of road crossings, locations for Check Points, and communication black spots, suitable fields for camping up to 260 Scouts and Guides in each of the 3 locations, emergency shelter in case the weather turns against us, suitably sized premises to check the teams through for the Start. Premises to control the Hike, with computers, telephone links to all the Check Points, Starts, and Base Camps, together with rooms to store rucksacks and a hall large enough to hold all the participants and their parents, could be as many as 2000 people.

Teams of 2, enter in one of the 4 age groups 11 to 12½, 12½ to 14, 14 to 16, and 16 to 18.

The **Junior** age group hike 19 km on Saturday, and 11 km on Sunday.

The **Intermediate** age group hike a minimum of 26 km with an optional extra 5 km on Saturday, and 14 km on Sunday.

The **Senior** age group hike a minimum of 29 km with an 2 optional extra legs of 5 km each on Saturday and 19 km on Sunday.

The **Senior Plus** age group hike a minimum of 34 km with extra 5km option on Saturday, and 19 km on Sunday.

Points are awarded for equipment, route finding (by the use of Observation Signs), visiting each Check Point scores points, together with points for incidents at these. At each Base Camp there are Buddies to ensure safety and also to keep an eye on camping standards and to award points. Similar

scoring is also run on the Sunday. Points can be lost for very slow walking although it is not a race, bad behaviour can result in a deduction, although I have to say because they are Scouts and Guides we have never had to do this.

As this is a County competition and combines with individual Districts, there will be winners, however all who complete the hike are seen as winners and each receive the Cheshire Hike Certificate and the Hike Neckerchief.

The Hike is controlled over the weekend by two dedicated teams. One which is in contact with all Starts, Base Camps, Check Points, and input all the data onto computers so that the whereabouts of each team is known, together with their points scored and their speed along the route. In the event of a team being overdue the information is passed onto the second team who are in radio contact with mobile personnel out in the field, these include: Doctor, Mini Buses, Cars with walkers in, and the Route Marshals (they are the leaders who have set the route and know of likely route problems). There is also a small team of people who slave away in the kitchen to feed the control team over the whole weekend, because we do not let them out.

When the teams arrive at the Finish they are checked in and presented with their Certificate and Hike neckerchief. They change out of their wet gear into their uniform tops and light footwear; their rucksacks are stored away ready for collection after the winners presentation along with the result sheets. They are then free to visit the Tuck Shop, Souvenir Shop, Lost property, Cafe, TV hall, or just put their feet up, until about 4.00pm when we assemble in the main hall for the presentation to commence at 4.30. That is if all teams are in!

Having spent so many months organising the event we want every teams that starts, to finish and we do our utmost to ensure that happens.

Good Luck

**Alan Thomason, Hike Organiser
September 2005**

Advice for the Teams

The following is no substitute for experience and those of you who have completed or taken part in the Hike could probably think of other items to include. I would be glad to here from anyone with additional ideas. I have never done the Hike!

1. Equipment

- a The booklet contains the list of equipment, but has not been prepared by lawyers, common sense is expected.
- b Keep the weight down. There is nothing clever about carrying 30 pounds. The maximum weight allowed is 25 pounds and you cannot start with more than that, try to get it below 20. See below!
- c **Marking**
Having spent a small fortune on your own or troop equipment, it's a pity to lose it. The average amount of untraceable equipment I receive each year amounts to two bin bags. Use a felt tip marker to put your name on everything. That way I can go through the records to trace you.
- d **Clothing**
Don't buy new boots 2 weeks before the Hike, blisters are the reason for 90% of retirees. Have a change of footwear for Base Camp and Finish, Not big heavy trainers; have you got light plimsolls?
Socks next to the skin are better if they are breathable; Cotton is good as it does not cause friction and sweating the same as nylon which softens the skin causing blisters to form early. Keep sweaters etc. light, 2 layers are better. If it gets warm you can take one off.
Spare trousers or preferably track bottoms are needed, if you get wet on the first day, it's not nice sat around wet all evening and at the finish.
Hat, there is a great loss of heat from the head, one with a brim at the back stops water running down the back.
Wash Kit, do you need a large block of Fairy? Put your Tooth paste on the brush, inside a small poly bag, this saves weight. The towel is only used twice, keep it small (nappy size)
First Aid kit, typically, Plasters that you are not allergic too, Headache tablet that your parents give you, bandage for wrist or ankle, with safety pin, 30p for the phone. All inside a small plastic bag.
Outer Garments need to be waterproof and if money is no object, breathable, to reduce sweating.
- e **Rucksack**
Ideally this is about a 60 litre with a top and lower compartment, I believe a waist strap is essential to reduce the weight on the shoulders. If it's not waterproof put a black bag liner inside. Try it on for comfort when its packed and adjust to your size, it is a lot of trouble to adjust when you hiking.
- f **Stove and fuel**
"Trangias" are good but not cheap, they have their own pans and windshield, the fuel is readily available but needs care as the flame cannot be seen in the sun. Keep spare fuel sealed when not refilling the stove, do not refill the stove when it is lit or warm.
Gaz or Gas. These do need a windshield as the wind sweeps the heat away quickly, you MUST ensure

there are no sources of ignition anywhere near when you change a cylinder. You must change a cylinder outside. Ensure the valve is CLOSED, if it does not seal do not panic, screw the cylinder further, if it still does not seal place on the ground, Warn others to turn off their stoves immediately, inform the Buddy and retire from the area.

Paraffin pressure stoves, not seen very often, Heavy! needs windshield, and is a bit messy to light, need to carry meths and paraffin but gives good heat
Solid fuel, generally not suitable. Petrol Stoves, not allowed

g Food and Drink

Water is available at all Check Points, so you do not need to carry any, Weight! Evening meal needs to be substantial, Pot Noodle is not sufficient, but dehydrated meals are acceptable, but need to be reconstituted properly and heated and cooked adequately. A good Hot Pot for your evening meal, frozen and put into two plastic bags serves the purpose well. Sandwiches for the lunches are fine but do not expect them to be the same shape as normal! A good Breakfast is needed and I suggest sausages and a pre buttered bap or similar.

h Tent

The heaviest item on the list, Dome tents are in, they need less pegs, poles are light and do not have bits that get lost, are easy to put up and have a front porch for rucksacks, but NOT for cooking under. Ridge tents are still good, but try to keep weight below 7 pounds. Do not forget 6 extra pegs, Aluminium pegs are the lightest.

2. Mapping Skills

a Map and Compass

Consideration has been given to Map scale, and although the 1:25000 are excellent, but expensive. The complete hike would require 3 such maps. Also they do not have overlaps, so for these reasons, The Hike organisers will supply a suitable map for 2006.

When you are informed of the Start and Finish points of the Hike, fold the map to cover those points but sized to fit a good waterproof map case. Mark the Start and Finish points and highlight the Grid reference numbers in the area, as this assists in plotting your route.

b Plotting your route

Plot as a team, one select the Eastings and the other the Northings, Use a permanent felt tip pen to show your route, mark so that you can still see paths and roads. Pencil will not mark the waterproof film. Practise plotting and joining up the references during the pre Hike period.

c Outdoors

Practise setting a map outdoors, Practise taking compass bearings outdoors, either of these should take no more than 20 seconds and will save you time in the long run.

3. Hiking Skills

a Set you map

This should be done at all route direction changes if you have any doubt.

b **Estimate**

Practise how long it takes you to hike a given distance, a reasonable pace will be about 15 min. to hike the distance equal to your thumb width on a 1:50,000 map but make sure it is in the right direction. See a, above.

c **Pace**

Keep up a steady pace, you do not need to run.

d **Observation**

Keep your head up and your eyes open. Observation signs are worth 50 points each and there could be as many as 18 on Junior Saturday route. They are not hidden, but are usually placed for you to miss if you take a short cut.

e **Lost?**

If you have not seen a Check Point in 2 hours, ring Control. We can then find you and get you back on the route without penalty, thus avoiding delay and possibly withdrawal later because of darkness.

f **Your Route**

Follow your route, the team in front could be wrong or you are on a different route to them.

g **Roads**

If there is no footpath, walk so as to face the oncoming traffic, this enables you to get out of the way if they do not see you. It is an offence to wander on any part of a Motorway.

4. **Practise**

a **Routes**

The Hike routes are kept confidential from you until

the Start, this is to prevent 600 Scouts and Guides practising on the same footpath for months and upsetting the farmers, who over the years have been very good to us.

b **Hike**

Try a short route first, which has plenty of turns. Try walking South and North, it is different, a 2 hour hike is better than 10 hours in the Headquarters

c **Camping**

Put up your tent and camp out, even on the back lawn, were you cold? Can you take it down and get it back in the bag?

d **Cooking**

Use your stove to cook some food and eat it. How much harder is it when it is windy!

e, **Packing**

Pack your own rucksack, you will have to on the Hike.

5. **Fitness**

a **Feet**

Your feet take the most punishment, care for them try and keep them dry.

b **Exercise**

I believe that if you take part in sports at School or you swim etc. you will be fit enough to complete the hike.

Above all enjoy being out and showing the world you can look after yourself.

