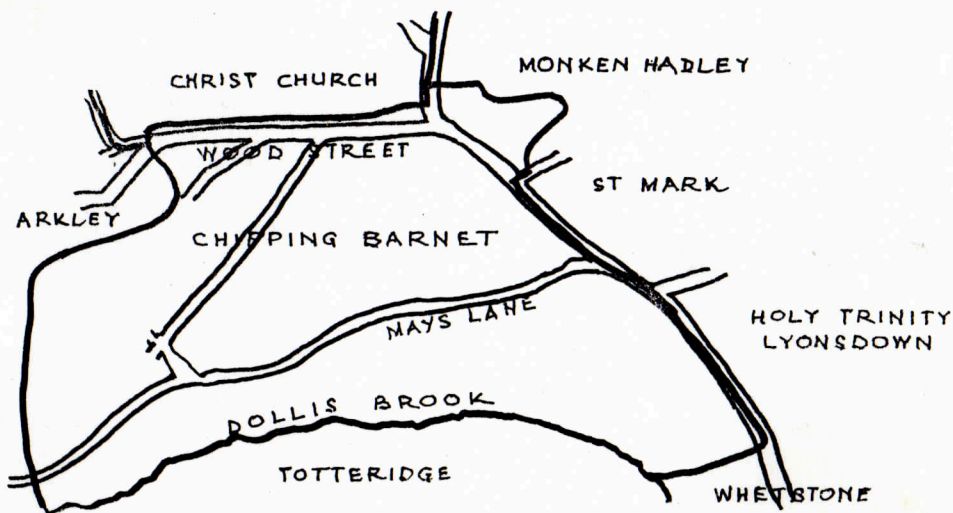


# *Barnet & District Local History Society*

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## BEATING THE BOUNDS CHIPPING BARNET AND ADJACENT PARISHES



It is proposed to Beat the Bounds of the parish of St John the Baptist, Chipping Barnet in 1995 to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of The Barnet Society which was founded in 1945 to support the Green Belt.

Beating the Bounds is a very ancient custom dating back to the 9th century. The ceremony is traditionally held at Rogation-tide, Rogation Sunday being the 5th after Easter. This time it will be held on Saturday 20th May 1995. It involves walking round the perimeter of the parish and literally beating the boundaries with willow wands. It was also taken as an opportunity to bless the crops.

Newspaper cuttings at Barnet Museum, supplemented by micro-films of the Barnet Press at Barnet Library, show that the ceremony in Chipping Barnet dates back to at least 1658. They record that this century it was held in 1964; 1957; 1933; 1920

and 1911. The 1911 report mentions that it had been held 23 years earlier (1888) and 1866. Unfortunately no reports can be found for these years.

It is traditional to take children along because, as quoted in the *Barnet Press* of 1933 :-

'In former days, when the parish Vestry had considerable administrative powers, great care was taken to perpetuate the boundaries of the parish by perambulation from time to time. It was then the custom, upon reaching border stones, to whip the juvenile processionists and bump them violently on the stone. The object of taking the boys was to ensure that witnesses of the boundaries should survive as long as possible. Saturday's processionists included a large proportion of boys and girls but though some were "bumped" none were handled "violently", nor were they "whipped".'

The boundaries are often defined by natural features such as rivers, streams or brooks. This is why I think that willow wands were used as willow is often found growing near water. The boundary with South Mimms follows the north side of Ravenscroft Park, where it forms part of Grimms Dyke, the ancient earthwork which is supposed to run from Harrow Weald and Pinner, through Barnet and Hadley, to the fortified camp at Bush Hill, Enfield.

The ceremony was last held on 6th June 1964, a month after Rogationtide, and it rained. The reason given was that they wanted the ceremony to take place during the year of office of the final chairman of the council before the town became part of Greater London. The route taken omitted the area between Mays Lane and Dollis Brook because since 1905 it was then part of the parish of Arkley. In 1995 we shall revert to the Ancient Boundaries.

This century the Ceremony appears to have been arranged by Barnet Urban District Council but it was originally organised by the Parish Council.

The town we know as Barnet is made up of three parishes:- Chipping Barnet, historically in Hertfordshire, and Monken Hadley and part of South Mimms, historically in Middlesex. Which means that Chipping Barnet is in the Diocese of St Albans, and the other two in the Diocese of London. This, of course, is very confusing.

There was some correspondence in the *Barnet Press* after the ceremony in 1933 when J.S. Chaloner, wrote :-

'The bounds that were beaten on May 20th were those of Parson Hutton's "Chipping Barnet" or Parson Barrett's, but not Eleanor Palmer's of 1585, Ravenscroft's of 1679, Garrett's of 1734, or the Chipping Barnet which supplied meat in the eleventh century. Chipping Barnet is not a parish but a town.'

W. Archibald Boyes, Magistrates' Clerk's Office, Barnet, replied:-

'The Ancient Parish of Chipping Barnet extended from "The Old Bell" at Barnet Gate, to the top of "Pricklers Hill", the southern boundary being Dollis Brook, at the bottom of the valley. It was shaped as much like an "orange chip" as anything.

After the passing of the Local Government Acts it was divided into three, the western portion and the bottom of the valley forming the Parish of Arkley, the eastern portion the Parish of Barnet Vale, and the central portion whose bounds were beaten the other day, the Parish of Chipping Barnet. All three parishes are now civil parishes, and all three are ecclesiastical parishes, so that the Rector of Chipping Barnet, the Vicar of Arkley, and the Vicar of St. Mark, Barnet Vale, are quite independent of each other.

It should be noted that all three parishes enjoy the benefits of the Chipping Barnet charities. No portion of the Parish of Chipping Barnet has ever been in the county of Middlesex.'

The Editor added:-

'Mr. Boyes does not enlighten us as to the difference, if any, between the present civil and ecclesiastical parish boundaries of Chipping Barnet, except by inferring that they are conterminous. Last year the Rev. W.G. Carpenter, Vicar of Arkley, wrote to the Barnet Press stating that the new elementary school at Underhill is in the civil parish of Arkley and the ecclesiastical parish of Chipping Barnet.'

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THE PARISH BOUNDARY was very important in earlier centuries. The Poor Law was administered by the Parish after the Act of 1597 which authorised them to levy a rate to be paid by those who could afford to do so. The collection of the rate was the

duty of the Churchwardens and Overseers, who also gave relief to those in need, either in money or kind.

Obviously the parish was not prepared to look after people from other parishes. When people moved from one parish to another they had to bring a **Settlement Certificate**.

Settlement was gained by birth in the parish, by being apprenticed to a parishioner or by serving a year in service in the parish, marriage with a native, contribution to the parish rates, or residence in property worth over ten pounds a year. Anyone from the working class wishing to move from one parish to another had to obtain a certificate saying that his parish of settlement would be responsible if he needed poor relief.

It was therefore important to have a child baptised in the Church of England to register a parish of settlement.

The contents of Monken Hadley Parish Chest, and a few items from Chipping Barnet, are held at Barnet Museum and they show that people were returned to their parish of settlement between Chipping Barnet, Monken Hadley and South Mimms, as well as to places further afield.

The Parish Boundary is still relevant today. Unless a Special Licence is obtained you may only be married in the church of the parish where one or the other resides, or is an elector on the Church Electoral Roll, after the calling of Banns in both home parishes.

The early parishes adjoining to Chipping Barnet were :- South Mimms; Ridge; Shenley; Hendon; Totteridge; Finchley; Friern Barnet; East Barnet and Monken Hadley. Some of these parishes were in Hertfordshire, some in Middlesex.

Most of these parishes now have additional churches nearer to our boundaries. i.e.

**Christ Church** in St. Alban's Road was built in 1845 and they will be celebrating their 150th Anniversary. It was built principally at the cost of Captain John Trotter of Dyrham Park who bought the land from George Byng of Wrotham Park. Christ Church is an ecclesiastical parish formed in 1900 from the civil parish of South Mimms, Middlesex. The registers date from 1853.

The parish of Christ Church will join the main party to follow the common boundary as far as the Arkley Hotel, then continue on their own parish boundary up Galley Lane, eventually meeting the

parish of Monken Hadley at the southern end of Kitts End Lane.

**St Peter's, Arkley**, was built as an Episcopal chapel in 1840 'at the sole expense of Enosh Durant', a wealthy silk-merchant who had purchased the High Canons estate in 1812. It was at the southern extremity of Shenley Parish on land owned by Mr Durant.

Arkley had been a Civil Parish within the Rural District of Barnet; it was transferred to Barnet Urban in 1894 thus losing the status of civil parish. It became an ecclesiastical parish in 1905, when it was dedicated to St. Peter. The registers were incorporated in those of the Barnet Parish until 1905.

The ecclesiastical Parish of Arkley was formed from parts of the parishes of Chipping Barnet, Shenley, Ridge, Elstree and St Paul's Mill Hill. Surprisingly the area between Mays Lane and Dollis Brook was taken from Chipping Barnet. In 1978 Arkley and Chipping Barnet Parishes were united in one benefice, becoming part of the new Team Ministry in 1983. That part of Arkley between Mays Lane and Dollis Brook is now in the 'District' of St. John the Baptist.

**St. Stephen's, Bells Hill**, was built in 1896 with money from the Chancel Estate, replacing a barn which was used for worship and as a chapel to serve the burial ground which was opened in 1895. It was within the Parish of Chipping Barnet until 1983 but became a parish Church within the Team Ministry that year.

The boundary with the historic parish of **St Andrew, Totteridge** is well defined by Dollis Brook.

**St. John the Apostle, Whetstone** is an ecclesiastical parish formed on 2nd September 1836 from the parish of St Mary at Finchley. The church was built at the expense of Joseph Baxendale and was opened and consecrated on 9th May 1832.

**All Saints, Oakleigh Park** was built, and its registers start, in 1882. It is a sub-parish of the parish of Friern Barnet.

**Holy Trinity, Lyonsdowne** was erected in 1864. The parish was previously part of St. Mary, East Barnet.

**St. Mark, Potters Road, New Barnet, or BARNET VALE** is a parish formed out of part of the old parish of Chipping Barnet. It became a civil parish under the Local Government Act of 1894,

and an ecclesiastical parish in 1899. It was governed by East Barnet Valley Urban District Council.

**Monken Hadley** was in the county of Middlesex and is still in the Diocese of London. It became part of Barnet Urban District Council in 1894.

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## ROUTE 1995

Recent discussions and research show that we will have to make some compromises next year as the boundaries of Chipping Barnet are now much larger than those beaten earlier this century although not as large as the ancient boundary. But they do mean that we shall really be in 'Green Belt' land – the defence of which The Barnet Society was formed.

It will not be feasible for everyone to climb fences etc., but it is hoped that a few names will appear for posterity to say 'They did it'. Our MP Mr. Sydney Chapman, President of The Barnet Society; resident in the parish of Christ Church but a member of the congregation of St. John the Baptist, Chipping Barnet, is game as is our young Curate, Ben Phillips. We hope there will be some children to remember the route.

We plan to start by following tradition in holding a short service in the churchyard, then (accompanied by Christ Church) pass through the Post Office and over the wall into St. Martha's Convent, exiting into Union Street. Most people will walk along the High Street and Union Street. Then to Leathersellers' Almshouses. From here we can see the Boundary Stone outside Ravenscroft Park. The boundary line runs through the Park. Permission has been granted to enter the Eleanor Palmer's Almshouses garden, exiting into Wood Street. It is no longer feasible to climb all the garden fences of the houses on the north side of Wood Street so we will walk along Wood Street. Dr. Ian Johnston is prepared for a Token Beating through his garden at 130 Wood Street.

Continuing to the Arkley Hotel, we part company with the parish of Christ Church, Barnet and meet the parish of St. Peter, Arkley. Calculations show that the original boundary stone would have been adjacent to the road sign "Arkley". We would like to lay a flat boundary marker here.

The original boundary with Arkley cut through the Wellhouse

estate, but this is now all in the parish of St. Stephens.

It would seem practical to walk down Elmbank Avenue; Trinder Road; Chesterfield Road - crossing Mays Lane - Connaught Road to Dollis Brook.

A BOUNDARY MARKER is still extant in Wellhouse Lane near the hospital car park. It is made of cast iron, triangular in plan, with the Hertfordshire crest of two harts. A similar one can be seen outside the Olde Red Lion at Underhill.

Using the Dollis Brook as the boundary, includes Leaside Avenue, etc. and the Dollis Valley Estate within the parish and after crossing Barnet Lane includes the Grasvenor Estate.

The road named County Gate indicates the County Boundary between Hertfordshire and Middlesex but it is not possible to cross the railway without entering the Parish of Whetstone at Walfield Avenue - when we may be challenged by St. John Whetstone. From here we proceed North with All Saints, Whetstone on the east side of the Great North Road; followed by **Holy Trinity, Lyonsdown**, then we meet **St. Mark, Barnet Vale** at Station Road. (OK - you would be justified in catching a bus up the Hill!)

Arriving at Bedford Avenue, we cross the road to Meadway. Here the boundary is between 116 and 118. Without intruding on private land the alternative is to enter Queen Elizabeth's Girls' School playing fields and follow the perimeter, skirting Queen Elizabeth Close, to the bottom of Park Road where there used to be a Boundary Stone and on to South Close where we meet the parish of **Hadley**. From here we can use the back gate of 58 Hyde Close and walk to No.16 Hyde Close. Their back gate leads to Bath Place and what was known as "Boundary House", now Boots' the Chemist, crossing to the West Side of High Street and so back to the Post Office.

Some amusing stories have been told. Frederick Brittain in "South Mymms", p.116, quotes from the Barnet Press 18th July 1885 :-

'The establishment of the Barnet Local Board in 1863, though it had relieved the parish officers of considerable responsibilities, had by no means taken all, and anomalous situations arose from time to time. In 1885, for instance, when hydrophobia was prevalent, stray dogs could be impounded by the police in South Mimms parish, but the by-law was not in force in Chipping Barnet. A dog was

consequently safe on one side of Barnet High Street, but if it crossed to the Mymms side it was liable to immediate arrest as dangerous.'

The Barnet Press report for 1920 reads that at Arkley Hotel 'As there is no boundary post at this spot, which is the meeting point of the parishes of Chipping Barnet, South Mimms, Ridge and Arkley, it was decided to have the exact spot located, and a stone placed there. It was here, too, that Mr. Archie Boyes, having casually mentioned that it was the only point he could not recollect "beating" on the last occasion, was "bumped" to "impress it on his memory" as vestry clerk. It is certain Mr. Boyce does not carry his memory in that region of his anatomy where he was "bumped".

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It is hoped that adjacent parishes will take part as many members of both *Barnet & District Local History Society* and **The Barnet Society**, and some members of the congregation of St. John the Baptist Chipping Barnet do not live within the parish.

We also hope to welcome other denominations; societies; schools – in fact any one who likes to come along. A celebration of 'Our Town'.

The perambulation will start from the Churchyard at 2pm. on Saturday 20th May 1995. Please bring suitable clothing, food & drink etc. Refreshments will be available at Church House for those who make it! And for all those who take part.

There will be a temporary exhibition in Barnet Museum from Saturday 29th April when earlier newspaper reports and photographs will be on display. It is hoped that photographs taken this time will be on display before the exhibition finishes on 24th June.

A Cine Film was made in 1964 and it has been made into a Video which is available for borrowing. We hope there will be some Video Cameras to record the event in 1995.

See *Barnet & District Local History Society Bulletin* No.11 The Treatment of the Poor in Chipping Barnet in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries. D. Marshall, B.A.

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