

From the County Schools' Monthly Journal, 1910. Before written maps were common, beating the bounds was the way parishes, landowners and institutions reminded people of important boundaries in their home area. The custom is believed to date to before 1000 AD. Local dignitaries and villagers would walk around the boundaries every spring, traditionally during the fifth week after Easter.

Beating the bounds was a vital part of a child's education. Learning might be reinforced in unpleasant ways, such as whipping children at boundary stones, knocking heads on a marker or making them run through mud or water. More enjoyable methods were also used to help memory. Children were encouraged to beat the boundary stones with sticks or willow rods and were given treats of food or drink. Thank you to Peter Yardley for this contribution.

AN OLD TIME CUSTOM.—BEATING THE BOUNDARY ON THE FLEMING ESTATE.

ON Wednesday, April 13th, a party consisting of Squire Fleming, his two sons, Mr. Arnold (steward), three boys from Havenstreet, two from Binstead, and many farmers and private gentlemen, started from Binstead shore to beat the boundary of the Fleming Estate. After leaving the shore we went due south to Binstead, through a tunnel under the road; the water up to our waists. The younger son of the Squire was stepping on to a stone to escape getting wet when the stone slipped from under his foot and he fell into the water, getting a thorough wetting. We all had a good laugh, which the young gentleman took in good part, and we continued our way through the tunnel. We then went through some fields, going along the bottom of the Common; through some more fields, and then through Stroud Farm to Mr. Plumbley's, Kemphill, where we had some lemonade. After this we passed through some more fields near Ashey Station, then followed the brook to Pondcast, and on to Chillingwood, where we had our luncheon. At 2.15 p.m. we started again on our tour, following the brook through Chillingwood Copse into Little and Big Duxmoor Fields, along the bottom of the Downs, then across the road. Here we stopped to put in a boundary stone. This was done by one of Squire Fleming's workmen named Gray and the help of the Squire's two sons. We then went on through the fields of different farms, until we came nearly to Newchurch Station. Here we beat the stream to Horringford Station, and there we finished for the day. At Heasley Farm we had some tea, and started for home, arriving there about 6 p.m., the distance covered being about 17 or 18 miles.

Next day (Thursday) we again started to beat the other part of the boundary. Our starting place was Quarr Abbey. From here we went to Binstead Shore, walking along to Fishbourne, then through some fields into Ash Lake Copse. Here we took the middle of the road as the boundary and walked

back to our starting place. The Squire, Steward, and four more of our party went round to Binstead Shore and took boat to Wootton; the rest walked. Then we walked along Mill Pond out to the Marsh. Here we crossed the water and followed the stream along to Blackbridge. We then crossed the railway line and through farmer Brown's fields into his farm, where we had lunch at 1.30 p.m. After lunch we all had our photographs taken by a man from Binstead. We now went on our way to Blacklands Bridge, taking the road all the way. Then we crossed some fields, out again into the road, past the Hare and Hounds Inn, on towards Arreton. Climbing round a chalk pit, we crossed some fields, went through people's gardens, and came round by Arreton Bible Christian Chapel. Then we came to a high hedge belonging to a garden. We had to use a ladder to get over it. We went on through some fields and gardens till we came to our finishing place, at Horringford Station. The Squire, addressing us, said how very pleased he was to think he could say we had beaten the boundary of his estate. He also told us boys he hoped we should keep our sticks which we had used as a memento of our journey over his estate. I am sure I shall keep and value mine, and I trust never to forget the two days I spent in "Beating the Boundary" of the Fleming Estate. Not only was it most enjoyable, but very instructive, teaching me the extent of the estate and also a good deal of the geography of the Island. At Heasley Farm we had some tea, after which we made tracks for home, arriving about 6.30 p.m., having covered in all about 40 miles. I may say that our doing this was reviving an old custom, which used to be carried out annually in years gone by.

Written by William Henry Hayles, aged 13,
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