

WALKING THE 1556 BOUNDARIES OF ABINGDON

Abingdon's ancient but lapsed custom of "Beating the Bounds", or walking the boundaries, was laid down in the Charter of Incorporation 1556.

In past times, Beating the Bounds was a special occasion with the Town Chamberlain obliged to swim the River Thames at the point where the boundary crossed the river. Cakes and ale or tea was distributed to residents and there would be a feast for Town dignitaries at the end.



Boundary or Meer stone – Abingdon Lock



1831 Boundaries – almost the same as 1556

The Charter was written in Latin. The following excerpt comes from an English translation thought to have been made in the seventeenth century.

"...that the compasse and circuit of the Borough aforesaid shall extend and stretch itselfe from the Locks aforesaid, called the Abbey Locks, through the whole River Thames, including the same River unto the Bridge called the New Bridge built upon and over the said River of Thames, and from the aforesaid Bridge called the New Bridge including the whole of the River of Thames unto the aforesaid little Bridge of St Helene called St. Helen's Bridge, where the said little Stream of the Ock falls unto the Thames as aforesaid, and from thence by and through the aforesaid little Stream of the Ock including the same little Stream unto the aforesaid Bridge of the Ock called the Ock Bridge, and from the said Bridge called the Ock Bridge directly by and through the publick way leading from the same Bridge to a little Close called the Trinitie Closes, and from thence by and through the Common way leading by the aforesaid little Hill called Barrow Hill unto the aforesaid Boundary and Meer Stone without the aforesaid Barres of the Bore Street, situate in the meeting together of the aforesaid two publick ways leading towards the aforesaid Borough, and from thence by and through another publick way a little turning towards the North until you come to a certain Crooked little Ditch inclining towards the East, which said little Ditch together with the aforesaid publick way includes on the right hand Fitzharris Farm and a certain piece of Arable Land called Fitzharris piece, and the Fields, Meadows and Pastures called Fitzharris Closes to the same Farm belonging and apperteyning, and from thence by another Ditch on the right hand also including a certain Close called Pykes Close

unto the aforesaid Boundary and Meer Stone without the Barres of the Publick Street of the Wyneyard aforesaid, situate in the meeting together of two publick ways leading to the Borough of Abingdon aforesaid, and from the same Meer Stone by and through another publick way turning towards the East towards the River of Thames, including a certain Conventuall Close called the Convent-Close, being wholly ditched and partly hedged, and partly paled, and one little Close called the Pytenry, and from the corner of the same Close called the Pytenry through the said River of Thames including the same River unto the Locks aforesaid and that the Soile and Land, with all the Lanes, Streets, Ways, Places, Closes and Corners whatsoever, lying and being within the aforesaid Boundaries, Meers and Limitts, shall be and shall be reputed and taken to be within the Borough aforesaid and the Liberties thereof, and all and singular Messuages, Houses, Buildings, Lands, Tenements, Grounds and Soils whatsoever within the aforesaid Meers, Boundarys, Limitts and Precincts from henceforth be and shall be reputed to be parts and parcells of the said Borough of Abingdon, now by these Presents into a Body Corporate and Politick, erected and incorporated, and it shall and may be lawful for the aforesaid Mayor, Bailiffs and Burgesses of the Borough of Abingdon aforesaid for the time being, and for their Successors to make perambulation or perambulations thereof for the true and better knowledge thereof to be had as often as it shall please them, or to them shall seem convenient, and this without any Writ or Warrant therefore of us, the Heirs or Successors of us the aforesaid Queen in this behalfe, in any manner to be had or prosecuted."