



# Easton Royal Heritage Group

## ***Beating the Bounds Bank Holiday Monday 28<sup>th</sup> August***

Beating the Bounds is a custom from Anglo Saxon days when the community would walk the bounds of the parish to share knowledge of where they lay and pray for protection and blessings for the land. It prevented encroachment by neighbours and created a folk memory of the true extent of the Parish. A parish-ale or feast afterwards ensured its popularity.

The Saxons called it Gangdays. It is mentioned in the laws of Alfred the Great and Athelstan. It may have derived from the celebrations of the Roman god Terminus, the god of landmarks where there were sports, dancing and offerings of cakes and wine on prominent boundaries. Similar ceremonies derive from the Norsemen. In medieval times it often involved taking young boys, often choirboys, and whipping them or bumping their heads on landmarks to ensure that knowledge of the boundaries would be impressed on the next generation. Due to recent legislation such options now have to be severely curtailed! Other customs include carrying stripped wands or green boughs of willow or hazel to beat the boundary markers. Queen Elizabeth I at one time banned the practice because of its religious overtones, though it had to be reinstated in secular form for its function of preserving boundaries.

In America beating the bounds occurs in Massachusetts and New Hampshire carried out by the Selectmen of the town. In Bodmin, Cornwall a game is played with a silver ball carried from a pond called the Salting Pool to the Turret Clock in Fore Street. John Dee writing of the event in Manchester in 1597 speaks of it lasting for six days. In the City of Portsmouth part of the route has to be by boat as the boundaries are offshore.



A modern survival of the practice of bumping choirboys now carried out with due regard to the human rights of the child! At least he is smiling!!



In Aldbourne they blow a horn at the north, south, east and west extremities of the village.

There are two options for our walk: one around the east side of the village taking about 2 hours, or a shorter walk round to the west taking about 45 minutes. Both will start from the church, the east walk at 10.00 a.m. and the west walk at 11.15 a.m. In traditional fashion they will both end at the Bruces' Arms where you may partake of refreshments.

We are grateful to Messrs Cooper, Rowlands and Brook for permission to walk on their land - dogs must be on leads over farmland and walkers do so at their own risk. Please let Liz (810289) know if you plan to have lunch at the pub so we can warn Matthew.

### **Forthcoming Event.**

Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> October - Horrible and Unusual Wiltshire History – Terry Bracher