

## The Guildford Boundary Walk – a little history

The Guildford Boundary Walk was originally devised by Alan and Barbara Blatchford in 1971 and followed a footpath course as close to the 1933-1974 Guildford boundary as good walking allowed. In 1973 the then Mayor of Guildford, Bill Bellerby, started it off and walked it with the traditional 6 foot staff once used to beat the bounds. By 1979 the walk was well established and in that year Alan and Barbara published a booklet which featured the GBW alongside other associated walks.

The original walks started at Henley Fort but in later years moved to Manor Farm at the University. The 1980 event in particular will always



The 1979 event started from Henley Fort – Barbara Blatchford leads out...

remember since Alan, the event organiser and LDWA founder, died suddenly in the week before. Surrey Group Members hurriedly stood in to run it, but Alan's death was so unexpected, that many couldn't believe it, even when we had a 1 minutes silence at the start.

1980 will also be remembered for the underfoot conditions! There were no dry feet at the end and some walkers, having failed to detect ditches hidden by the floods, found themselves submerged above their knees. Even so, 228 out of 251 starters finished the then 21.5 mile course. 6 years old Matthew Cartwright, son of our present Chairman, was the youngest to complete it on the day. My own boys Alexander and Nicholas, together with Erica and Ian Blatchford walked it several times themselves. Interestingly in those days such distances appealed greatly to youngsters!!

Deteriorating traffic conditions gradually made the road crossings more hazardous and 1989 saw the final event. 17 on and new footbridges and road bridges have opened up new possibilities.

In conjunction with the University of Surrey to mark the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the granting of its royal charter and Guildford Borough Council, 2006 saw its successful re-launch with again Manor Farm as

the start venue. Started by the Mayor of Guildford Angela Gunning, 135 entered the re-launch, more than we expected, confirming a continuing popularity for this event – one of the oldest in Surrey's calendar.

If 1980 was to be remembered for the underfoot conditions then surely 2006 will be remembered for the overhead conditions, that of torrential rain. Some commented they have never walked or run in such conditions but all agreed it was a memorable year. Maybe Alan was playing with the taps...

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