



# Open Spaces Society

**BEATING THE BOUNDS  
OF YOUR  
LOCAL COMMON OR GREEN**

Information Sheet A3

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## ***Beating The Bounds Of Your Local Common or Green (or other open space)***

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### **Parish and community councils and other local groups may like to beat the bounds of their local common or village green on Rogation Sunday**

#### **What's it about?**

1. Beating the bounds is a centuries-old tradition, aimed at reminding everyone of boundaries that were important in their lives. During Rogationtide - the fifth week after Easter - villagers, with the rector and other local dignitaries, would walk the parish bounds. The children would carry willow wands to beat the boundary markers with, and in some ceremonies children had their heads bumped on boundary stones to imprint them firmly in the memory.
2. Today the parish boundary is not so important, and modern maps show them clearly enough. But other boundaries still are important and the map usually fails to show them - the boundaries of our commons and village greens. Often these areas are unfenced, and local people may not only be unsure about the boundaries, but totally unaware that this land has any special status.

#### **Why beat the bounds?**

3. There are all too many interests keen to encroach on the margins of our commons and greens. If no one objects in time, it can mean common land is permanently lost. So beating the bounds is just as important today. It reminds your local community that they have a common or green with a boundary to be guarded, and in the process also shows them how much enjoyment and interest the area has to offer. It's a practical and enjoyable way to protect a valuable part of our heritage.
4. But it may be that you do not have a common or green in your parish. You can still keep the ancient Rogationtide tradition alive by beating the bounds of other open spaces enjoyed by the public, or by walking your parish boundary. You could even help define some other important local rights by having a special walk along public footpaths.
5. To add interest, you could invite local experts on the walk, to tell about the history of the common and its wildlife. And if there are celebrities in your parish, ask them along. A picnic after the walk could bring even more people out, and remember that children really *make* the day, so include something of special appeal to them. With a bit of lively thinking and organising, your beating the bounds outing can become an exciting annual event.

## **How do we find the boundaries of my local common or green?**

6. The exact boundaries of commons and village greens can be found on the commons or village greens maps, held by the county council, metropolitan borough or unitary authority. Public rights of way can be found on the county's definitive map or the relevant Ordnance Survey Landranger (1:50,000) and Pathfinder Outdoor Leisure and Explorer (all 1:25,000) maps.

## **What arrangements should we make for the day?**

7. Ensure that you have permission for the event from the owner of the common. Let anyone else with an interest in the common, such as commoners, conservators or local authority managers, know about your plans. Ask your local wildlife trust about sensitive areas where you should avoid trampling or disturbance to nesting birds. Where such areas could be damaged, make a detour. Also avoid dangerous points such as marshes, but make sure everyone knows the real boundary.
8. Consult the local police, especially if you expect a large crowd, or need to walk on a busy road or arrange car-parking facilities.
9. Check that your organisation already has third-party liability insurance or arrange for temporary cover for the event.
10. Find out from your local records office if there are any special traditions connected with your common and green that you could revive on your walk.

## **How do we get publicity?**

11. Send a press release to your local newspapers, radio and TV stations. Arrange for one of your group to be a press contact.

## **What do we do on the walk?**

12. Take a good map of the registered boundaries of the commons and someone who is a good map-reader. Take a tape-measure, and compass if necessary! Organise someone to take photographs of the boundary to deter encroachments and unlawful works in the future. Map and photograph existing features on the common such as tracks and fences.
13. Ensure that participants follow the country code at all times. Tell people to come dressed for the conditions on your local common. Tell them how long the walk will be and to bring suitable footwear and waterproofs. Check the route in advance. If your common is in a remote area, follow guide-lines for mountain and moorland safety.
14. Make sure you have stewards to clear up litter, shut gates, organise car-parking, assist slow walkers and provide first aid.

**Whereas in previous years The Open Spaces Society has assisted with and coordinated events, unfortunately we are unable now to do so, due to lack of resources. But we hope you will organise your own event and that you have a good day.**

*The Open Spaces Society is unable to accept liability for any misinterpretation of the law or any other error or omission in the advice in this paper.*

~ Open Spaces Society, 1996