

# The Ansty Parish Boundary Walk, Saturday, June 23<sup>rd</sup> 2007.

Almost 13 years ago on Saturday June 23<sup>rd</sup> a group of Ansty villagers took part in 'The Ansty Parish Boundary Walk' – organised by Tony Keating (formerly of Ansty Manor) and others. The perambulation of our boundary on that day was more than a reference to the days when such walks were once common place and used to be referred to as 'Beating the Bounds'.

Beating the Bounds customs took place in the past to check the parish and property boundaries and to ensure the neighbours didn't encroach on land that wasn't rightfully theirs. These customs still survive around the country and are commonly associated with Rogationtide and Ascension Day, though not always. The association with Rogationtide and Ascension Day came about because it was a recognisable annual date at a good time of year for a walk, which could coincide with the thanksgiving associated with the ecclesiastical festivities of the season.

In those far off days the youngsters of the parish, usually boys, would be armed with long birch or hazel sticks to beat the specific landmarks such as an old tree or stones. In some cases, the boys themselves were beaten with the sticks, so they should never forget the crucial information passed on to them by their elders. You probably wouldn't get away with this custom these days! But then, few youngsters today possess any information about the history of their locality!

Back then, usually, the boys would have their heads bumped against the boundary marker whilst prayers were read from the Litany of Saints. The girls and women would wear and carry garlands of flowers and foliage. The Milkwort flower (*Polygala vulgaris*) is also dubbed the Rogation flower and was often used in the garlands.

It is unfortunate that these ancient customs are dying out but with advancing technology and a massive reduction in rural church congregations, the 'Beating of the Bounds' will soon be just a distant memory of our generation.

In 2007 Mr Keating had to obtain special dispensation from some parish landowners in order that they might be able to walk the boundary in its entirety. It is not possible to walk the parish boundary using our network of public footpaths – although there are enough footpaths in Ansty parish to follow large sections of the boundary!

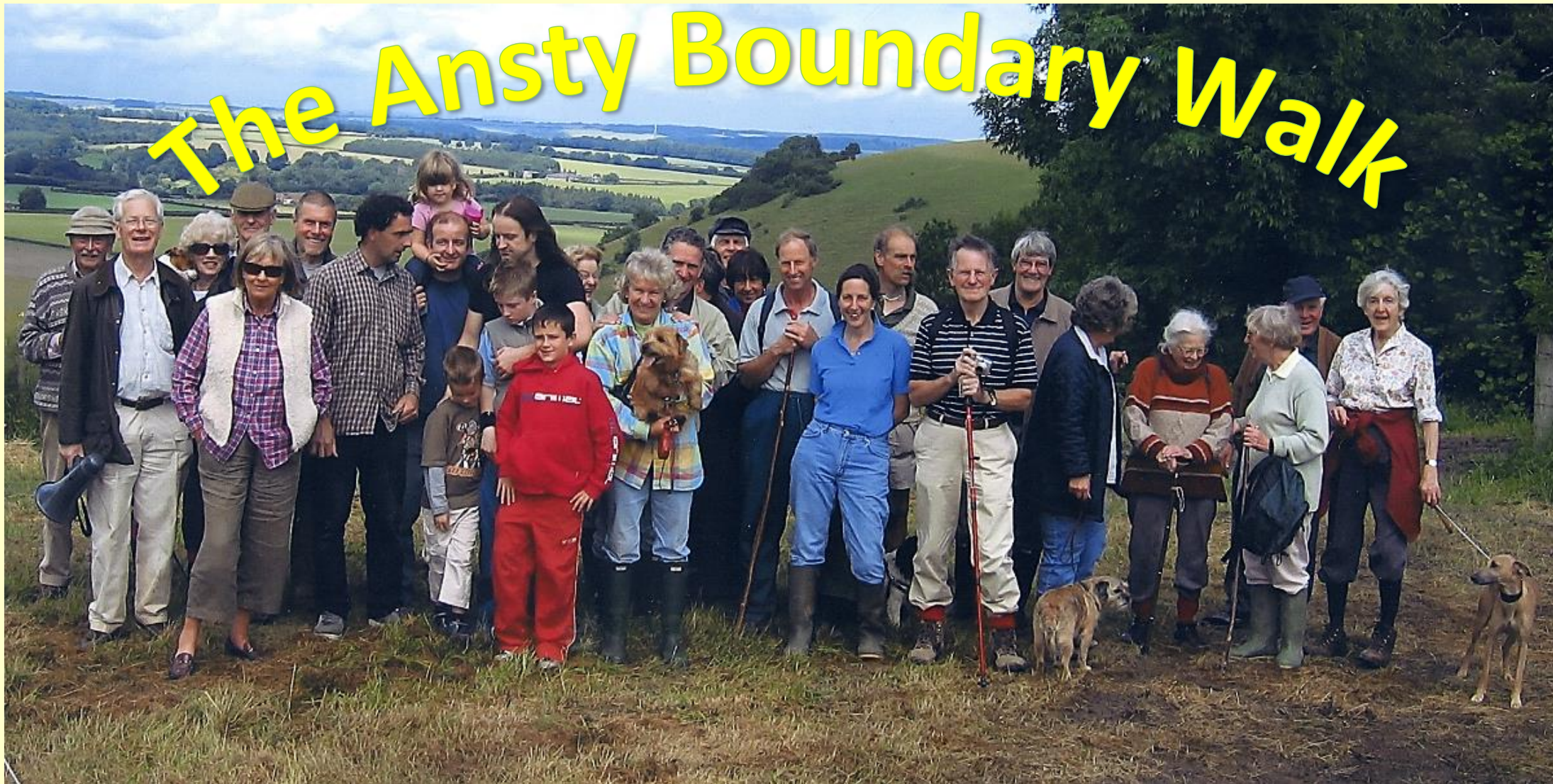
The Ansty Parish Boundary Walk had almost everything: a good turnout of villagers; stunning views, chalk downland, water meadows, ancient woodlands and village folk were able to see a variety of wild flowers, trees, birds and insects. The walkers appropriately assembled near the boundary stone at the top of Shave lane on Ansty Down although no traditional bumping of heads on the boundary marker took place!

The walk was approximately 6.5 miles and at a steady pace it took around 4 hours. In places the going was strenuous with steep climbs and descents. Not everybody managed the full circuit – some opting for easier to walk sections. All those who participated thoroughly enjoyed the day and those still with us have fond memories of village camaraderie at its best.

A parishioner recently commented 'we don't seem to organise things like this anymore'. Well, what is stopping us? Is there anybody in Ansty interested and prepared to organise a similar walking event like Tony Keating did?



# The Ansty Boundary Walk



John Oldfield   Sarah Gwinner   Martin Gwinner   Steven Drewitt (Drew)   Geoff Feltham  
 Tony Keating   Sal Riviere  
 Jamie & Damien with youngsters formerly tenants of Keepers Cottage  
 Morwenna Brewer   George Smith   Chris Smith   Silvie Turner   Brian Close   Florence Close   Peter Dalton   Jane Dalton  
 Robert Baker   Brian Hamshire   Chris Pile   Helen Forshaw   Miss Bowker   Beryl Beale   Alan Beale   Aileen Fisher-Rowe

Villagers taking part in the 'Ansty Boundary Walk' - Saturday June 23<sup>rd</sup> 2007. Photo taken on the crest of White Sheet Hill – leader Tony Keating (with the loud hailer).



Assemble at the BOUNDARY STONE AT TOP OF SHAVE LANE at 2.00pm. See attached map.

**SECTION 1\*** Starting at the Boundary Stone. This is an easy amble along the Hare Path at the top of the Downs with lovely views and the probability of seeing a variety of wild flowers and downland birds such as skylarks and yellowhammers. At the end of this section is a Neolithic longbarrow where Mark Dunkley will give a short talk on its archaeology. This is a very exposed location and in warm weather can be very hot. Estimated time to walk Section 1 approx. 40 mins.

**SECTION 2\*** Walking down the Shaftesbury side of the longbarrow, cross the barbed wire fence into the field, keeping the woodland to your right and descend the slope heading towards the A30. This section is a very steep scramble and there may be horses in the field. Sections 2-6 approx. 1 hour

**SECTION 3** On reaching the road (A30), cross over, turn right for 100 metres then left to enter the field keeping the woodland (which has ancient coppice) to your left. Walk along the field edge until the far north-west corner, cut into the woods and down the steep valley below. You are very likely to see buzzards which nest in this area and a variety of woodland flowers.

**SECTION 4** Pick up the forestry path that bears round to the right (north-east). It is not possible to follow the actual boundary for some distance. Continue to where the forestry path meets Horwood Farm drive and take a sharp left towards Horwood Farm. Keeping the farm buildings on your left, pick up the track bearing right before the farm buildings. Wardour Woods have a spectacular show of foxgloves in early summer.

**SECTION 5** Pick up the track that takes you across open farmland turning left at the end where a little further on you will meet a junction of footpaths including the path that leads to Wardour Castle.

**SECTION 6\*** Choose the right-hand path to the north-east which will be marked with an arrow. This easier section takes you past Squalls Farm to your left. Continue past the gatehouse and pick up the Squalls Lane roadway, at the end turn right and head towards Ansty Water Farm. Section 6 approx. 40 mins.

**SECTION 7\*** At Ansty Water Farm turn right into Ansty High Street, then take a sharp left through a small gate opposite Water Farm. Follow the field boundary to the woods at the top and find the easiest way over the fence and enter the woods. Scramble up through the woods by the badger paths and then through/over the barbed wire fence which will bring you into open farmland. Sections 7-9 approx 1 hour.

**SECTION 8** To avoid more barbed-wire, keep to the Swallowcliffe side of the hedge (arable field) until you reach the footpath sign on your right. Look out for the downs which appear in front of you to the south.

**SECTION 9** Take the footpath across the field heading west and then left on the track through Waterloo Farm and onto the A30. Cross the road and go into the field opposite following the set-aside strip which leads to Ansty Down.

**SECTION 10\*** At the foot of Ansty Down, go through the right-hand gate and climb upwards as directly as possible. This is a very steep section and will take you to the top of the hill where the views are very rewarding. Walk further on and you will reach the Hare Path. Keeping inside the field boundary, turn to your right heading west with the telecom site on your left until you reach the Alvediston road. When you reach the road, go across and through the gate at the right-hand side of the woods. Continue on until you reach the start, where the picnic site will be found from around 6.30pm onwards. Section 10 approx 40 mins.

*Congratulations!*

**The Ansty Boundary Walk was well organised with a map, helpful instructions and a certificate at the end of the walk!**

