

# Beating the Borough Boundary in 1912

6 NOVEMBER 2016 — EVELYN WILLIAMS



*The practice of 'bumping'*

When *The Whitley Pump* [beat the bounds of Katesgrove](#) for our birthday celebration we did not engage in any of the high jinks such as 'bumping' on boundary posts in which councillors often participated on borough perambulations.

The image above from the 1912 perambulation illustrates the practice of 'bumping', although the location is unknown and almost impossible to

identify precisely. The mayor at the time was John Wesley Martin who bore a strong resemblance to the person being bumped. The Berkshire Chronicle report [*ref 1*] of the perambulation tells how the mayor, Councillor Venner, Mr Mason, Mr Mason jnr and Mr H.C. Love were all bumped, 'with a dignity befitting their positions'; Ben Gibbons, described as 'portly', was also bumped. If the bumping pictured is the occasion described above, then it probably took place somewhere on Reading's north western boundary in Tilehurst.

The 1912 perambulation took place during 6 and 7 November. It was the first since the 1911 extension of Reading's boundaries to include Caversham and a large part of Tilehurst. The mayor and most of the aldermen and councillors met at the council chamber at 8.30 am and then crossed the Thames by barge from King's Meadow. There, they were joined by the rest of the party and day one of the tour started on the boundary in Caversham from the bank of the Thames northwards [*ref 2*].

The perambulating party included the mayor, the mace bearer, aldermen, councillors, and 12 boys from the Bluecoat School [*ref 2*].

By lunchtime on 6 November they had reached the Roebuck Hotel where they were entertained by the mayor. They then continued along the borders of Tilehurst, erecting boundary markers as they went. At 4.35 pm they called it a day, by which time they had reached Burghfield Bridge.

Day two began at 10.30 am at Burghfield Bridge. The party, which was smaller than on day one [*ref 3*], were carried by barge along the Kennet to Manor Farm. There, lunch was provided by Councillor Eighteen, chairman of the farm committee. After lunch there were a succession of toasts and speeches, led by the mayor.



*Lunch break at Manor Farm on day two of beating the bounds. The mayor is pictured centre wearing a bowler hat and the mace bearer was Sgt. Cook. The Bluecoat schoolboys are in their uniform.*

Councillor Egginton was quoted as saying how much he had enjoyed the perambulation:

He had never enjoyed himself so much on a corporation outing. Corporation work was pleasant as a rule but frequently tiring and boring. He had lived in Reading for 43 years, but this was the first time he had the pluck to beat the bounds.

Councillor Rabson then paid tribute to the arrangements made for the perambulation by officials and went on to say:

He had been struck by the amount of non urban land during the perambulation. They had got enough land for building purposes, and he hoped the time was not far distant when they would pull down their slums and put up good residences for the working people (loud applause).

The party was then given a tour of the sewage works. Councillor Eighteen apparently remarked:

... that it was not often that he had the pleasure of entertaining either councillors or the general public.

After the tour the perambulation continued to Whitley Wood, through Whiteknights Park and back down to the Thames where day two ended successfully at 5.30 pm.

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## Notes

1. The perambulation is described in brief in Council Minutes, [Perambulation of the Boundary 1912](#), in Reading Borough Library, and much more colourfully in Berkshire Chronicle reports over the two days of the event.
2. The photographs are from the Reading Borough Library images collection. Using the minutes and newspaper reports it may be possible to identify other people who are pictured.
3. The Reading boundary has changed very little since the Reading Extension Bill of 1911 and this perambulation in 1912.

4. A perambulation took place in 1887 after an earlier boundary extension which took in Whitley and part of Tilehurst. John Wesley Martin, mayor in 1912 had taken part on that occasion and according to the Berkshire Chronicle was the only attendee to have taken part in both. In 1861 the boundary still went through the middle of the King's Head Pond, approximately where the Whitley Pump now stands.

## References

1. Berkshire Chronicle 6 and 7 November 1912. Microfilm copies are available at Reading Borough Library.
2. Council Minutes 6 November 1912. Participants on Day 1. The mayor, John Wesley Martin; aldermen: Harold Coster Dryland, Thomas Mason, Joseph Milsom, Cox\* and Parfitt\*; councillors: Frederick Williams Allwright, Alfred Holland Bull, William Edward Butler, William Merrill Colebrook, Denys Egginton, William Frame, Stanley Hayward, William Roland Howell, Frederick John Lewis, Albert James Maker, Thomas Norris, John Rabson, William Rudland, Frederick Arthur Serjeant, Thomas Edward Stacey, Leonard Goodhart Sutton, John Henry Trye, Thomas Henry Turner, Arthur William Alfred Webb, Adey\*, Dormer\*, Farrer\*, Gibbons\*, G.J. Lewis\*, Morley\*, Venner\* and Watts\*. The borough surveyor was unable to attend due to a breavement. (\* joined at Caversham; other aldermen and councillors started from the council chamber). The Berkshire Chronicle report adds: the town clerk, W.S.Clutterbuck and W.L. Hilder, the latter represented the

borough surveyor. (Note: The perambulation was joined by others including local officials on some stages, the Chronicle reports a group of 150 at Mapledurham.)

3. Council minutes 6 November 1912. Participants on day two. The mayor, John Wesley Martin; alderman Mason; councillors Childs, Egginton, Eighteen, Farrer, F.J. Lewis, Rabson, Trye and Turner. The Berkshire Chronicle report adds: corporation officials Hilder, Long and Walpole; does not mention councillor Farrer and says that councillors Childs and Eighteen joined at Manor Farm. (Note: The perambulation was joined by others including local officials on some stages.)

## Links

1. [Beating the Bounds](#)
2. [Caversham 100 years on](#)
3. [The first local elections in Katesgrove Ward in 1887](#)
4. [The history of the Whitley Pump](#)