

TOWER GETS BEAT

At the Tower of London, the Ascension Day custom of 'Beating the Bounds' lingers on. Assembling on Tower Green, choirboys of the Royal Chapel of St. Peter Ad Vincula are armed with willow canes. Then accompanied by yeoman warder, they move in colourful procession to the boundaries of the Tower Parish.

Erged on by the traditional cry, "Whack it boys, Whack Whack it," they thrash each of the 31 boundary marks in turn. The ceremony - once prevalent throughout the country - is a reminder of the days when the well-defined boundaries of Parishes had to be strictly observed. To impress a respect for neighbours property upon young people, they were made to 'Beat the Bounds.' To give a more 'lasting' impression the boys themselves were sometimes whipped.

In perpetuating this custom, the Tower (associated with so many violent episodes of history) gives a glimpse into a more peaceful aspect of the past.