

# Best foot forward

**Richard Barr** joined the 6,000 walkers on the 2012 London Legal Walk, playing a small part in raising more than half a million pounds for charity. Here is his footsore account of the event



I was gasping for breath as I emerged from Chancery Lane station. That did not bode well for what was to follow. I was late. I did not want to be left behind. Still less did I want to be stretchered away.

My idea of going for a walk is to push a trolley gently from the car park in North Walsham into Sainsbury's, load it up with things that we will never need and then push the laden trolley towards the car.

It was with a mixture of trepidation and self consciousness that I dusted off my trainers (last used briefly several years ago when my daughter Sophie bought me a subscription to the local gym which I visited three times before deciding that I was now fit enough to resume normal life), dug some loose-fitting jeans out of the drawer and set off for London ready to take part in the 2012 London Legal Walk.

The Law Society was not its usual dignified self that evening. Its entrance arch was festooned with yellow balloons and there were two people dressed as shrubs wandering around making squeaking noises. Nonetheless the man on the door who normally sees me wearing a suit gave me just the slightest 'who do you think you are?' look as I dropped in to pick up my SCOMO (the name of our firm) t-shirt before heading for a photo shoot in the Royal Courts of Justice.

For once the strict security was relaxed as several hundred participants swarmed in, many wearing the logos of their firms. Normally your camera is removed from you and you are searched in places that even airport security guards do not go. That evening they waved me and my camera through without a murmur and let several dogs into the court too.

I found our group already posing for its picture. We were graced by the presence of the soon-to-be president of the Law

Society and our senior partner Lucy Scott-Moncrieff. When asked if she was to take part she gave a lame excuse – that she was lame: she had a pulled hamstring.

So, resplendent in our t-shirts, with our surnames printed on the back we felt like real athletes as we headed out into the

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strand and then down through the Middle and Outer Temple and reached the Thames. En-route we passed some exceedingly tall policemen (possibly lawyers in disguise – it was that kind of evening).

Our route took us along the Victoria Embankment, past the Houses of Parliament (there were a few unkind jeers and jibes at the highly respected occupants of these buildings). Then it was on to Millbank and down to Vauxhall Bridge and back on the other side of the river. It was tempting to take a spin round the London Eye but there was a long queue, so we contented ourselves with watching the street entertainers and wondering how long it would be before we too were forced to make our living by pretending to be statues or singing badly to canned music.

Our route turned inland behind Tate Modern before taking us across the Millennium Bridge and back up to St Paul's and – six miles later – to the Law Society for drinks on the house provided by a big City firm (at least they have some uses).

## Impressive turnout

Refreshed but footsore I then made for home, this time walking against the oncoming crowd of walkers who had set out after we had. While you are walking

one way you do not have a feel for the numbers of participants, but now I am walking against a tsunami of lawyers. There were small armies from the bigger firms with expensive shirts, groups of Citizens Advice Bureau workers, a lone solicitor from East London bearing a slogan from

Woman's Aid: 'You can't beat a woman', costs draftspeople, the entire contents (so it seemed) of large sets of chambers, a group of barristers each with a Scotty dog, the red shirts of the Waterloo Action Centre, someone from the Greenwich Community Law Centre (identified only by the name in a plastic filing sleeve around his neck – a sign of a tight budget?), members of Public Concern at work ('for whistleblowing advice' – complete with whistles) and the Master of the Rolls purposely striding with a number of senior judges. It was an excellent turnout, of which the entire legal profession can be justly proud.

My trolley experience at Sainsbury's was evidently not bad training, because the following day I had only slightly sore feet and did not feel stiff, which meant of course that I could be even more dangerous with my trolley when I next visited the store: essential if I am to be in training for the next London Legal Walk. Want to join me next year – on 20 May 2013?



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