

The Olympic Torchbearer

In this year of commemorations and anniversaries the Olympic Games stands out as one which generated an enormous amount of pride and a sense of goodwill amongst British people and visitors. On 15 July at 5.20pm – day 58 on its way around the British Isles – Daphne Laycock of Emsworth, pictured below with Dorothy Bone, carried the Olympic torch. She describes her journey:



'To my surprise I found I had been nominated as a torchbearer by Chloe Oliver and seconded by Becky Garfield, both members of 1st Emsworth Girls' Brigade. This was followed later by an email that came through asking me to describe my hopes and aspirations for the future and to forward a statement to Coca Cola, the sponsors. After two elimination rounds I was told in December 2011 that I had been successful but that I was not to give out any more information until the official

launch, due to take place in March this year. It was very difficult to keep quiet about it, apart from telling close family. Later all those taking part were briefed and given helpful information as to what we would be expected to do; I was most impressed by all the meticulous organisation. Once the route and participants became public knowledge interest snowballed with lots of local publicity and I felt caught up in an exciting but very efficient machine.

'Those people on my section – 22 of us – were taken by coach to Gosport Ice Rink where we were again briefed, before being taken, dressed in our white tracksuits, to start of the route and dropped off, one by one. My particular 'leg' of the run was in Privett Road close to Privett Park from Charlesbury Avenue to Jellicoe Avenue. There was a tangible excitement growing inside the coach and as we were each dropped off it rose to unbelievable levels. When I stepped out on my 'leg' – No. 63 – I found I was lucky enough to be in a quite narrow stretch of road and I could see a cheering crowd including over one hundred family and friends shouting me on 'Give it up for Daffers' as I carried the top heavy one-and-a-half kilo torch, which was easier in fact to carry vertically aloft. On my journey, which I chose to walk, I was flanked by members of the Metropolitan Police through a smiling, happy throng. From a vehicle in front of me film and television crews relayed the event live around the world (my daughter followed it live via the internet in Australia) – for over five minutes I was the centre of attention all over the planet. 'Afterwards participants were all given their torch in a cotton bag to keep. But that was not the end of it for in the following weeks local interest carried on and I was invited to speak of my experience at St. James' School as well as others in Horndean, Hayling Island and Cowplain and clubs and societies, one of which was Emsworth Girls' Brigade, where it had all started.'

Daphne Laycock