

Olympic Torchbearer: Kathy Critchlow-Smith

On 23rd May 2012 I had the most amazing day as I became an Olympic torchbearer, being one of 11 people chosen to carry the torch through Marlborough, Chiseldon and Wroughton near Swindon. My route was through Wroughton and as that is over 25 miles from where I live, I just wasn't expecting the huge crowds that lined the streets, pavements, upstairs windows – anywhere to gain a decent view of the procession.

We all met at Marlborough College, where we boarded a minibus which would drop us off one by one at our designated routes. Of the 11, I was the 10th torch bearer to be dropped off so I was able to see how many people were excitedly waiting for a glimpse of the lighted torch and I suddenly became very nervous and felt very humble. To see so many people make the effort to support the torchbearers; from elderly folk outside care homes sitting in chairs laid out along the pavement waving their union jacks; young mums with babies (a large number wearing fancy red, white and blue hats and headbands); middle aged people cheering and waving flags; children from two schools that I passed - such incredible cheering from them. Patriotism is certainly not dead!

Preceding each torchbearer were three open topped buses carrying enthusiastic supporters who were entertaining the crowds, and

Loudspeakers giving a brief resume of why each torchbearer had been chosen. Included were George, 19, who, despite being profoundly deaf, was a football coach, and Ben, also 19, who was an Olympic Ambassador and a swimming coach to 3-11 year olds.

Security was understandably heavy, prominent policemen on motorbikes, bicycles etc and eight policemen in 2012 tracksuits walked/ran alongside each torchbearer (4 on each side) making sure that the public did not get too close. The flame was passed from torch to torch by putting the torches together, and each torchbearer carried the flame for 300 metres which was over far too quickly.

It was an incredible day and one which will never be forgotten.

