

Deny them ice cream

Organisers of the London Legal Walk should consider putting the profession's show of unity to greater good next year, says **Richard Barr**



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We live in a house where every space is crammed with things we one day might need and are too terrified to throw away. Who would have thought that the legal clerk's writing desk (the kind you have to stand up at) – which is languishing in the garage along with a broken refrigerator, a billiard table gathering dust, an out-of-tune upright piano and a small colony of bees that have taken up residence in a cardboard box – would ever be of use to anyone?

That was before I had heard of Peter Katzmarzyk. No doubt you will have rushed to Google his name... but stop.

We all spend too much time sitting at desks, crouched over screens or watching television. That's where Katzmarzyk comes in because he has carried out

studies on the relationship between poor health and sitting down. Too much sedentary activity shortens your life.

But the corollary is that standing or walking around continuously is good for staving off diabetes and cardiovascular complications, and extending life expectancy.

I am a reformed couch potato. I owe that to Nia, who wagged her way into our lives at Christmas. She is a rehomed guide dog and spent the first weeks of her life with us trying to figure out which one was blind. Eventually she concluded that was me.

Dog's life

I will not extol the virtues of this charming canine, except to say that she is large and needs exercise every day. My normal exercise routine has gone from walking between my desk and my printer a few times to a two- or three-mile daily walk with Nia guiding me and making sure I do not step in front of traffic.

When it came to the tenth London Legal Walk in May, I set out with two delightful colleagues, confident that I would cover the 10km-course without needing to lie down halfway.

On a warm evening, we and about 8,000 walkers, including some of the most senior members of the judiciary and legal profession, dodged

between Sherlock Holmes, Watson and several policemen on stilts, and skirted around two human hedges, who nodded wearily when it was suggested they were in the hedge fund team.



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By the time we rounded the Serpentine, we were ready for refreshments, but the ice cream kiosk had been hijacked by members of the Law Commission, who were queuing with their tongues hanging out. To our relief, they kindly allowed us to go ahead of them to order three cones (they wanted 17).

That piece of professional courtesy leads me to my next point, but I'll finish the walk first.

Pausing to admire an elegant heron on the return journey we marched down the Mall, bisected Trafalgar Square and, just a little footsore, returned to Chancery Lane for our free drinks.



One direction

As with previous London Legal Walks, it was a remarkable demonstration of the legal profession pointing in the same direction. Next year (save the date: Monday 18 May 2015), the organisers should consider putting this show of unity to good use.

For the price of extra sponsorship, litigation protagonists should be paired with a third party to mediate. As many judges take part, some could be pressed into service for this purpose. The task will be to settle the most intractable case by the time they have walked the 10km.

If they are judged by the mediator to be intransigent by the 5km-mark, they will be denied ice creams (the Law Commission will be requested to block any attempt to make a purchase). If they reach the end without agreement, they will be required to run the course again... and again... and again.

So, members of claimant and defence teams, I shall look forward to smiling compromises delivered at the end of the walk next year. By then I will have installed my legal clerk's desk and will have stood at work for a year, so I will be ready to do as many circuits as it takes. **SJ**

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