

Dear Neville

May 2012

Re: The Greatest Possible Distance

I propose for the London 2012 Opening Ceremony project that you walk from the Olympic Park to Eel Pie Island in East Twickenham, wearing electric shoes. These shoes, which have not yet been commercialised, use piezoelectric contacts in the heels to charge a small battery that can operate a radio transceiver or cellphone.

Electric shoes were invented by Trevor Baylis, who lives on Eel Pie Island. He also invented the wind-up radio, which has had a major impact in developing countries. You will videomap your journey with a smartphone charged from a practice walk with the electric shoes and also charge spares while you walk -- one on each shoe.

Racewalking is an Olympic event but everyday walking is another mode entirely. In this humble manifestation, it is perhaps the 'Greatest Possible Distance' from the 2012 ceremonial pomp. And yet we only ever get anywhere by walking. It is a fundamental act of human agency and can in certain circumstances be heroic.

Your shoes will have a pouch full of electronics (including a battery) on the side. This could arouse some concerns among the public. This would offer a parallel exploration of public space and associated notions of risk and safety.

According to google maps, the journey is approximately 17 miles and should take you six hours to complete. That calculation maps the most direct route but you are free to take another. Interestingly, you will traverse from far east to far west, across London central (<http://goo.gl/maps/jTyk>).

Your route should be tagged by tweets with the geolocator enabled. This tracking will enable others to later follow in your footsteps and do the same, creating over time a layered collaborative digital narrative, with a cutoff date in tandem when the Olympics comes to an end.

Upon reaching Eel Pie Island, Mr Bayliss and yourself should enjoy the opening ceremony together at the White Swan, adjacent the island. You will listen to the ceremony on a wind-up radio. Radio is the medium through which much of the world's population will experience it also. They are, in effect, the 'Greatest Possible Distance' from the opening ceremony. You will continue to tweet as the ceremony begins, thus disrupting further time, space and technologies.

Best,
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P.S. Mr Baylis apparently narrowly missed qualifying as an Olympic swimmer in his youth -- or so says Wikipedia!