



The Kindness of Strangers

Tom Benyon OBE

Edinburgh to London
October 2010



Here is my brief diary of The Walk.
We raised over £300k, for which ZANE is very grateful.

My wife Jane (who walked most of the way with me) and I were the recipients of very generous hospitality along the way, for which we are very grateful.

We have left the names of our hosts out of the diary.

Day 1 - Monday 20th September

Restless night. Woke up sweating. A number of people had told me that they thought I was plain mad seeking to tackle such a walk. "Too long and too fast and you're too old" one said "You're not a natural walker" – perhaps referring to the fact that I walk like a crab. If only I had said York to London or better still Cambridge! But why oh why did I say London? Perhaps I might develop the galloping ab-dabs and cry off. But what would all the donors say then? Perhaps they would demand their money back! "Poor old sod" they would say. They would be very nice to my face but in their heart of hearts I would lose credibility and the staff in Zimbabwe would be gutted.

But then I recalled what Archbishop Fisher told Laud as he was being burned at the stake at Martyrs' Memorial in Oxford: "Play the man!"

We set off in the warm late summer sun to the sound of bagpipes, all the old songs I knew from my days as a soldier. To the sound of the Black Bear, and all the regimental tunes I well remember. Our driver Harry Campbell was unused to seeing what we usually look like in the early morning and was convinced we would both collapse before we left Edinburgh. However we strode up the Lammermuirs and made good time covering the 18 miles. The day was glorious and all in all it was a surprisingly

fine start to our trek. Jane and I were downcast by the fact that our dog - a Staffordshire Bull Terrier - hurtled over a cliff after a rabbit the day before and badly strained, or has perhaps even broken, her shoulder. So there she sits in our car staring sadly at us with her liquid brown eyes.

We were shown wonderful hospitality by our hosts the night before and we would like to say a huge thank you to the supporters who gave us a free lunch.

The countryside is covered with a thin layer of litter . . .

Day 2 - Tuesday 21st September

Good weather all day. A little late starting off, but we'll get used to it!

The vet says our poor dog has probably broken her elbow and needs to rest for a month. So she'll be staying in the back of the car.

We made good time and finished at around 5.30pm. No rain yet . . .

Day 3 - Wednesday 22nd September

At the end of the third day we are spending the night with one of our very hospitable donors. We are about 55 miles south of Edinburgh. Neither of us is on the point of collapse but delighted to stop! Jane walks fast and with grace, I walk like a crab, both are unblistered so far.

Harry is clearly a reincarnation of Mary Poppins. He is hugely attentive and looks after all the admin and warns oncoming cars we are staggering on the road ahead. Whenever I am tempted to stop I recall the advice of an old buddy who, when he heard about our undertaking, suggested that to spur my steps I might imagine that the Serbian army was on our heels!

Our poor Staffie with the broken shoulder sits in our car like the Queen of Sheba.

Day 4 - Thursday 23rd September

The sticks I started with gave me tennis elbow! I now have sticks with small springs that allow me to bounce along. The hills are fine, I can lean into them, it's going downhill that's the pain.

Harry goes on ahead accosting strangers with leaflets and drumming up support. Still sunny, it can't last!

There is nothing so wonderful as sitting in a piping hot bath with a cup of tea when you are truly knackered. Harry refuses to go and see the sights but sits at mile spaces to encourage us. There is no sight as warming as seeing the car and his finger signs of another mile done.

The air appears to be full of tiny biting insects - "no see ums" - who have taken a great fancy to me . . .

The last few days have been me proving to me that I can walk without my old bones popping through my flesh and my muscles cramping up!

Now at Flodden Field, where in 1513 the poor old Scottish nobility were killed - along with 30,000 poor peasants who, I am sure, had no clue what they were fighting for.

The dead were all piled in a pit!

The king of the Scots gave a month's warning to Henry VIII of his intentions on grounds of chivalry. He died!

Up the 310th hill eyes apop, teeth stretched in a rictus grin between Flodden and Wooler. The sign said 8 miles to Wooler (when I thought we had got there!) and 2 miles on another sign said 8 miles to Wooler! A fatwa on the road folk in Cumberland!

I now know what a catatonic state is: when you stare at the ground thinking about the meaning of life . . . 5 miles to Wooler . . .

Day 5 - Friday 24th September

Sorry, Tom didn't write anything today. His brother-in-law joined him and Jane on the walk and they were chatting all the time so didn't get round to blogging!

Day 6 - Saturday 25th September

Sorry, Tom didn't write anything today. However, Jane spoke on the 'phone and commented that it is the last hour and a half of each day which is the hardest slog. They are planning to walk a bit tomorrow (Sunday) to eat into next week's route a bit.

Day 7 - Sunday 26th September

We have now travelled 124 miles from our starting point of Edinburgh. We spent last night in a huge and elegant house near Morpeth, dripping with game and horses. Great hospitality and kindness from our hosts. We have stayed in houses vast and luxurious and small and homely and none of us care much provided there is a cup of

tea and a hot bath. One penalty of staying in so many houses for such a short time is where on earth the loo is in the middle of the night!

We are holding up physically surprisingly well. My whole body seems to send vague signals of surprise to my brain at yet another 20 mile yomp, but apart from that no real problems. A tribute to training, Compeed blister plasters and the right clothes and shoes.

Although it's Sunday we propose to do another 10 miles to break the back of Monday's proposed 21 mile trip and to stop us seizing up.

Day 8 - Monday 27th September

We have just finished the 8th 18 miler back to back. We have just walked through the centre of Newcastle and now we have stopped at a cemetery in the middle of Gateshead (just across the Tyne from Newcastle).

I told the team to save time in the long run to just drop me off and leave me there!

Day 9 - Tuesday 28th September

An irritatingly late start caused by Newcastle rush hour. This means walking until almost dark to catch up when energy levels start to drop. We are well out of Newcastle now and towards Durham. A number of kind supporters cheered us on and walked part of the way with us.

We have now walked through miles and endless miles of grimy streets, all rather depressing in a grey drizzle. It's shocking how unaware we are in the south of the effects of the depression: pinched and sad faced women all with cupped fags, and

waddling behind them are apparently terminally unemployed and tattooed men.

Six counties so far: Midlothian, East Lothian, Peebleshire, Roxburghshire, Northumberland and County Durham.

Great hospitality from generous donors living in homes ranging from manor houses to wee crofts and all varieties in between. Several enthusiastic supporters walking with us as we bob along. I use 2 walking sticks to heave myself up the hills. I am sure I look like a great wally but I am beyond caring! Jane as elegant as ever, and what a callous slave driver she has turned out to be! Imagine if you will: there I am, way beyond the last gasp, purple-faced and near collapse and I see what I know with total certainty is the finishing line.

"Only four more miles" cries Jane as she vanishes over the next hill. "Come on."

Day 10 - Wednesday 29th September

What a dreary day! Constant rain and roads through Tony Blair's old constituency of Sedgefield. John Rennie, my son's father-in-law, came with us, a great joy and encouragement.

One lorry roared past me at fifty and hit a Niagra of water over me. Jane said I gave a good impression of Munch's scream as I emerged.

Now to the dog: she is highly intelligent and I swear she overheard our plans to walk around 400 miles. She clearly thought we were deranged. So, in Zimbabwe fashion, she made a plan. In WW1 reluctant soldiers who wanted to go home, hit on the idea of shooting themselves in the foot; it was called a "Blighty," a wound

sufficient for the purpose of going home, but not so dangerous as to be life threatening. So the day before we set off Leah leaped over a cliff and cracked a bone in her shoulder.

For the past 10 days she has lain in the back of my car wearing a soulful expression and grinning at us as she is driven along.

In the last couple of months she has cost me a small fortune; she has had her insides reordered, (delicacy for a lady forbids me to go into detail), and now a series of x-rays of her blasted shoulder. If I have to spend any more on her I intend to float her on the stock exchange.

On towards Doncaster . . .

Day 11 - Thursday 30th September

Off to Ripon tomorrow having passed through Darlington.

Beautiful countryside and generous hospitality. John Rennie returned home (wise man) and, sadly, Jane leaves for a week to catch up with children, work and a wedding. I am about to be bereft. My support team is about to be denuded and reduced to the excellent Harry. Even the dog is jumping ship.

In N. Yorkshire now.

Day 12 - Friday 1st October

On my own today and a wet and cheerless start without Jane, who had had to go back to Oxford for all sorts of reasons. She has been a fantastic encouragement so far. When she left she was convinced I would fall apart! Instead I walked my 18 miles through a downpour in record time with gritted teeth!

The excellent Harry has spurred me on at each step of the way. He slows the traffic and accosts passers by and tells them about Zane. One man stopped me to ask who had persuaded me to undertake such a crazy trip; "Are you being punished for some crime?" he asked anxiously. We agreed that no court could pass such a sentence to walk from Ed to Lon on a 68 year old for it would be in breach of the human rights code!

Now we are in Ripon.

Day 13 - Saturday 2nd October

Last night in a 17th century house in Ripon, kind hosts and grouse for supper! In bed, after the 12th session of 18 miles in successive days, I felt the muscles in my legs develop a life of their own and begin to gently flex: a leitmotiv to cramp I suppose. I propose to eat more bananas and drink tonic water. Another 9 miles out of Ripon and another day's 18 miles done and dusted. I feel like a prisoner ticking them off!

A great number of well wishers along the way, all so encouraging. A good number asking about the state of my feet. In fact thanks to my dear foot lady in Oxford, Elizabeth Humble Thomas, they have never been a problem; the problem has been an occasional spell of tiredness that, without warning, can hang over me like a pall. It's then I have to think of the people who are facing real problems in Zimbabwe, and this thought keeps me going.

Day 14 - Sunday 3rd October

Successful visit to Hornsea (some 80 miles away) to speak at a church at the Sunday morning service. Great response and a

generous couple of gifts: one from the Church, the other from our old loyal and generous friends the Lions Club.

We drove back to the walk after the heavy downpour and charged through Knaresborough and Harrogate in glorious evening sunshine. Not a bad mileage for the day off!

Generous dinner party and the second Zane presentation in one day!

Wakefield tomorrow

Day 15 - Monday 4th October

Walked from Kirkby Overblow towards Leeds. I was taken through the most glorious N. Yorkshire countryside overhung with gossamer mist and a water colour clear blue sky, all reminding me of a Japanese water garden. I walked with a lady whose dad was a WW1 Military Cross winner and priest who today lies buried in Harare cathedral. All kindness and support to me and Zane. What a wonderful day to be alive.

Onwards to Wakefield

Lunch in a Leeds Tesco! Not exactly romantic but after 11 miles and hungry, it's any port in a storm. We have broken the back of the day's walking anyhow. I propose to go as fast as I can walk to get away from the apparently never ending and dreariest suburbs I have ever seen. All the cars belt past with thin faced people gripping the wheels as if they were in the process of strangling someone. They rarely smile or wave and often seem to aim their car directly at me. What causes so much apparent misery on such a lovely day?

Out of Leeds now and well on the road to Wakefield on what is quite the most

ghastly road I have seen to date. Narrow, very windy and all the cars racing along as if they were competing at Le Mans. No pedestrian walk so I was forced to balance on a narrow strip of grass, like the tightrope walker Blondin, as the trucks zoomed by me.

Harry (driver, handiman, occasional mapreader and now close friend) darts ahead trying - without much success - to slow down the cars. He is quite the most determined canvasser for Zane you can imagine. He hands out Zane leaflets to everyone, however improbable a prospect of monetary reward. He solicits anyone with a pulse!

In a quiet (very rare) layby, I saw a parked white van moving gently yet rhythmically. As I walked past I looked inside (well wouldn't you?). There was a couple in the back going at it like dingbats! Harry was about to rap on the window and tell them all about me and the walk and Zane . . . fearing for our safety, I managed to stop him just in time.

So the walk isn't dull. I thought back to my youth "plus ca change, plus ca meme chose . . ."

Day 16 - Tuesday 5th October

Walked to Barnsley, never been here before . . . unlike the Wakefield lot, the Barnsley folk all smile and say, "How are you?" as if they really mean it and want to know the answer.

For the first time since I began I am ahead of schedule, so went into "I.B.Gorgeous" to have my hair cut by Sam (a girl!) who is in business along with Anna, Emma, and Vickie, all excellent ladies, full of chat and interested in Zane. In fact, all those at the

cutting edge of Zane would be warmed if they knew how much people are interested in the drama that is being played out 5,000 miles away and how much goodwill is being generated . . .

Now at Wentworth and another 19 miles done and dusted. A great day for walking: warm and overcast. Extraordinary that you can at one minute be in dreary suburbs and then all of a sudden you appear to be walking in Arcadia, spoiled I have to confess by the litter. As people apparently no longer walk, the bridle paths are deserted and in many cases overgrown. The hill out of Barnsley is the longest I have encountered.

Sad in the cities that there are so many hugely fat people waddling about. As there are so many of the obese I suppose they no longer see themselves as extraordinary.

Day 17 - Wednesday 6th October

Had an extraordinary dream last night of a never ending hill; each time I crested a peak yet another one appeared, on and on I climbed until I was screaming with doubt that I would manage to conquer it. There was a group of faceless people all laughing and pointing at my struggles to climb on. I awoke sweating to find I was sitting up in bed with my legs violently flexing. I managed to quieten down with mouthfuls of tonic. What would Freud have made of that?

Downpour of rain, battleship sky. I have to say that the outer suburbs of Yorkshire towns are at best an acquired taste: the architecture is uniform, a never ending series of stationary light fawn dumper trucks staring into the horizon under a Wuthering Heights sky.

The day has now turned out sunny. We are hobbling through the outer suburbs of Sheffield, once again up huge hills. We were nearly enticed into the so called "Effing Sandwich Joint" out of sheer curiosity but sanity prevailed. Hard to find open pubs, the vast majority are boarded up as a sign of the times.

Harry is formidable in any pub we find open for lunch. I sit down tired after hauling myself up vast hills, humped and silent in a corner. Harry advances on guests or the bartender, who is usually deaf, and tells him "He is walking from Edinburgh to London, aged 68 he is, for charity, all by himself." Then he repeats it loudly and the entire pub stop and stare at me in wonder as I wheeze and dribble, muttering to myself into my soup.

"Poor old thing," I hear, "He should be in a home . . .", ". . . he won't last. Better give him a drink . . . it may be his last."

I now know what the boneless man and the bearded woman must have felt like as they were wheeled round Victorian England.

We tramp on to Chesterfield

Day 18 - Thursday 7th October

Today we walked out of Barnsley, into Sheffield and then through Chesterfield! I've never been so knackered in my life! I have had the great pleasure of a number of guests, one day walkers, who walk with me. I like to see how they tackle the long hills that seem to climb all the way to heaven. Tim Gibbs - the son of the last governor of Rhodesia, Sir Humphrey Gibbs - walked with me today and he did really well.

I have a sort of walker's satnav with a little man (we call Fred) who walks the set route line. Fred works really well until he doesn't, as he failed today, indicating a route that wound back on itself so after an hour's hard walking, we found ourselves back where we began. You won't be able to imagine how depressing that was. It wasted at least an hour traipsing round derelict houses on the outskirts of Sheffield.

We get wonderfully kind hospitality everywhere we go.

I know now Harry's nickname for me. I overheard him calling me "The Terminator".

Well, I've been called a lot worse in my time.

Now we are in Derbyshire.

Day 19 - Friday 8th October

Shock and Awe

Publicans seek to guard their premises from those out to harass their clientele and demand money.

Harry (now my bodyguard and all out champion) plans his raids on innocent pub customers with all the care of Bonnie and Clyde.

It's all about surprise and sheer effrontery.

Harry's "technique," if it can be called such, is to charge into a pub or restaurant like an amiable rhino whilst carrying a handful of Zane brochures: he darts from table to table talking incessantly, dishing out literature and pointing out me wheezing at my table as the main exhibit of wonder to anyone with a pulse. Such is his speed that no-one has any time to escape. By the time the manager or

barmaid has recovered their composure to protest at our outrageous abuse of hospitality and sheer bad manners it is, of course, far too late, the promotion completed, the job done and dusted. I am left facing the aggrieved manager, and I flap my hands in mild despair at Harry's brazen vulgarity. I mutter something about Irish manners and how beyond my control he is. Then I say how sorry I am as we pocket the money. Then we dart to the next pub. We don't collect a lot this way but it's huge fun. By now we have refined the routine to a fine art.

We are now out of Chesterfield and into Nottingham (Papplewick).

I was feeling a bit low but brightened up as soon as I hear that yesterday's walking companion is today a whimpering object of pity, unable to walk and smothered with several blisters the size of fried eggs. What excellent news! Nothing like a bit of *schadenfreude* to keep one going!

Tom the Terminator

Day 20 - Saturday 9th October

From Keyworth to Twyford

I can tell a painful camber at 100 paces.

Most roads don't appear to cater for pedestrians or even cyclists. You should always walk facing the oncoming traffic. The trouble is that years of thundering cars have long since bedded down any hidden subsidence; the result is that when you walk on the edge, one leg is walking either up to six inches lower (or higher) than the other. After any distance this places huge skeletal and muscular strain on my old system and leads to serious and increasing pain after a relatively short time. The only solution appears to be to walk

smack in the middle of the road! In fact I try and beat the problem by dodging from side to side.

People keep asking about my feet. They have never been a problem. If I get sore anywhere (and from time to time I do) I do some yoga and walk through it.

It looks as if I have lost half a stone since I began. Not that I was exactly a fatty before I began. But I may have found the ideal weight reducing plan: walk from Edinburgh to London. But I don't think it will catch on somehow.

Day 21 - Sunday 10th October

The most "sensitive" dinner I had on the trek was in a house near Newcastle.

I was hot and knackered really and all I wanted was to go to bed. After my bath we started to talk. Soon it became clear that our hostess was so left wing she thought Scargill was right wing. She appeared to disapprove of any sort of government. I decided it would be safer to talk about the weather rather than anything else. No chance, slowly she ferreted out of me that I had been privately educated.

Then it slipped out that I had been in the army. Shock horror, the Guards, then it got worse and worse. She had been a veteran of Greenham Common, where she had been arrested with the CND and she had scar tissue to prove it. When she heard I had been an MP and a Tory to boot, it looked as if it was good night sweet prince! But then we both began to laugh, it was too late to throw me out of her house, and we had a lovely time. Given time, grass will grow on even the most bloody battlegrounds.

Day 22 - Monday 11th October

At the start of today's 18 mile walk (outside Market Harborough) I seized a bottle of water and drank a huge draught.

My eyes popped, my lungs collapsed, and I felt as if I had been hit by a jackhammer.

Ten days ago I was smothered in paint by brushing against a recently restored bridge, so I bought some turpentine . . .

A Zane supporter walking with me was astonished when she arrived to see the founder of Zane slurping turps 2010 (not a good year). When she heard the language I used, it's surprising she stayed the day! It's fortunate that no-one was smoking.

Day 23 - Tuesday 12th October

Well on the home track now as we are south of Northampton and walking through a series of beautiful villages. My legs are holding me up (sort of). But I am still vaporising turpentine from every orifice. Someone lit a ciggy near me yesterday and an observer swears that they saw a yellow and blue tinged flame flickering all over me. It's hard to blame anyone else (as is my usual reaction to accidents) for my debacle. The label warned with a skull and crossbones and a garish warning: "internal consumption can cause blindness". In fact, I escaped lightly. My only side effect was that I had an overwhelming urge to sing my very own bowdlerized version of the Hallelujah Chorus as I walked for most of yesterday . . .

Dreadful mistake today. We encouraged our gorgeous granddaughter, Amelie, to walk with us. The snag is that she is only three months old and she insisted on bringing her parents with her. It was Noel

Coward who said: "Never work with animals or children!"

As soon as she arrived, all the attention instantly shifted from me to her!

In fact it was a wonderful day. Oli and Lois (Amelie's parents) are a joy and so is she.

What a lucky guy I am to have such a family. They say that everyone "should have a battle to fight, a cause bigger than they are and a maiden to woo." I have all three.

Day 24 - Wednesday 13th October

19 miles from Harrington and we ended up in Cardington. I forgot to say that we lunched in a lovely pub called the White Swan Inn in Holcot, where the owners were unusually hospitable. If you pass that way please go there!

Many people have asked how I am bearing up physically. The short answer is that the sort of severe and continual tests to which I have subjected my body, especially at my age, are bound to expose any weaknesses. But, in short, I have been amazed how well I have been, considering I have been averaging 19 miles each day for about a month.

I have lost a couple of toenails; I have lost about half a stone in weight. I thought that my left kneecap had fallen off but I have found that if you ignore moderate muscular pain in time it goes. How do I keep collapse at bay? Well one trick that works for me is that every 10 miles or so I lie down on the grass verge and do a series of stretching exercises by the side of the road. Last evening a woman walked out of her house to see me lying on the verge with my hands behind my back

appearing to be bowing towards Mecca and groaning slightly as one does from time to time. She gave a loud scream and fled back into her hall! I could see her peeping at me from behind her lace curtains as if I was Jack the Ripper. What extraordinary behaviour! She didn't even try to find out if I was ill. There's no accounting for folk!

We are tonight staying in the home of John Howard, the famous prison reformer, just outside Bedford. Once again we enjoy the astonishing kindness of strangers.

Day 25 - Thursday 14th October

My wife Jane of 42 years' standing has completed at least two thirds of this monumental walk. She is an extraordinary woman: loving, joyous and tough in equal measure; what must irritate her contemporaries is that she has retained the figure - and the same weight - she had when I married her.

But can she give me a tough time! She is a daunting walker, stylish, fast and resolute; it seems she can roll out the miles forever.

I got competitive today but was beaten easily. My eldest daughter, Clare, came to walk with us today. A real joy and treat to have 2 of my favourite people in the world walking with me (or was I walking with them?). The only problem is that if even slightly challenged, Clare and her mum appear to enjoy forming a cabal against me.

At the end of today (we arrived at Harlington) I felt, after 26 back to back 18 mile marches, rather like Napoleon's soldiers must have done right at the end of the retreat from Moscow. So I lay in a ditch preparing myself for death when Jane told

me there was only another 4 miles to go! I refused to budge. Jane fixed me with a steely look and told me to get off my butt and finish the walk!

“What,” she cried waving her sticks, “would all those people who look to you for leadership think if they knew you were a wimp?”

I said that I couldn't care less what they thought (or words to that effect), then Clare joined in: “What would the people who work for Zane say if they could see you now?”

I started to whimper to win sympathy. I shed a few tears. It was pointless.

They both continued to poke me with their sticks like a baited bear until I staggered to my feet.

There were another 4 visitors walking with us today who were all staring at me. I knew when I was beaten.

I finished the walk.

A walk through any of the parks that surround our midland cities can be a depressing experience. As one trawls through the fast food cartons and the condoms I title it the “Land of the Fat Tattoo.” An irreverent verse came to my mind:

“See the mothers in the parks,
Ugly women chiefly,
Someone must have loved them once,
In the dark and briefly.”

Day 26 - Friday 15th October

My Aunt Daisy used to tell me, “If you can't say anything good about someone, better say nothing at all,” so I do not propose to say anything much about

Luton. I am whizzing through it on my second to last day.

Yesterday evening at around 3.15pm five of us were walking along the road into Luton when a DHL truck tried to kill us. We were travelling on the B road parallel to the M1 between Wood End and Flitwick. Only agility on our part saved us. I caught a glimpse of the driver's face; he was speaking on a mobile and at the same time he gave us the finger and blew his horn! A hideous member of the fat and tattooed class. He may have been the raunchy chap we disturbed going like a dingbat outside Wakefield (see earlier blog). We could give a testimony against him but I can't be bothered to call the cops. So I will content myself with what the Arabs are said to chant in such circumstances: “May the midges infest your armpits!” Well, I made that up of course, but if they don't say it they should!

Jane and I were joined by half a dozen jolly friends as we ended the penultimate walk in St Albans. The reality that I am going to finish the walk is gaining acceptance.

I ring an old friend of mine from my days as an MP, Peter Lilley, who is the MP for the constituency next to St Albans. He told me he would walk with me, but sadly now he can't because he's going abroad. He asked me how much money we have raised. I told him about £300k for the walk. “Just think how much you might have raised if you had run,” he told me cheerfully.

I usually end the day totally knackered. I wonder how I must look to those who do not know me in (by now) old trainers, dirty trousers, sun-blasted and rained-on hat and a generally grubby appearance. I was

given a hint this evening. The walk ended at the Bell Pub in the High Street. It was closed. As soon as I arrived, I sank, gently moaning with relief, on the pub step facing the street. A kind old lady took one look at me and said solicitously: "You poor man, here take this 50p for a cup of tea."

Day 27 - Saturday 16th October

Yippee!

We ended the days' walk with 8 friends and supporters, on the last full day of our walk. We walked from St Albans' centre to the Old Bull and Bush in Hampstead. This was the last of the long hikes.

Day 29 - Monday 18th October 2010

The Kindness of Strangers

Why did I, aged 68, undertake to walk from Edinburgh to London, some 458.91 miles in 25 days; that is an average of 18 miles a day?

1: Security constraints limit my ability through the media to alert potential donors to the fact that today the situation in Zimbabwe for Zane's clients is worse than at any time since Zane's foundation in 2002. Costs have rocketed, demand for our services is up 500 per cent, and all the indications are that extreme violence will punctuate next year's elections.

So, all in all, the future looks grim and without Zane many will die.

2: Because, to a large extent, the western media appears to have lost interest in the issue and have been diverted to other issues.

3: Lastly, many of my contemporaries and friends quietly told me that such a trip was quite impossible and imprudent at my age, and they intimated that it was absurd for me to even contemplate it. So universal was this view that I decided to prove them wrong!

So you will forgive a batsqueak of pride when I say that I completed the walk on time.

My wife Jane - who loyally accompanied me most of the way - and our excellent driver, Harry Campbell, join me in thanking our 25 generous donors who opened their houses to us on the journey. We knew only a small number of these hosts at the outset, and we have now made some new good friends.

The hospitality given us was universally unstinting. Thank you. Thanks are also due to the many people who walked with us part of the way; then there are those who texted and emailed us and left kind messages and, all in all, made our journey rather less onerous than it otherwise might have been. Such was their number that I had no chance to listen to Anna Karenina or Trollope on my Ipod!

There's not the slightest chance I will ever be persuaded to repeat such a gruelling journey. But, on the other hand, I would not have missed it for anything.

And my office tells me the walk raised over 300k.

So profound thanks to these donors.



Tom Benyon OBE

Help the people of Zimbabwe continue to get vital aid and support

Details of Donor

Title Forename(s)
 Surname
 Address

 Postcode Country
 Email
 Telephone

741022010

Here is my gift of £ **cheque payable to ZANE**

or please debit my Debit/Credit Card (tick choice)

Mastercard Visa Amex CAF Debit

Card No

Start date Expiry date Issue no Security code

Name on Card

I would like my gift to be spent: at the discretion of the ZANE Trustees ,

on Pensioner Work , on Impoverished Communities

Gift Aid

Please complete this Gift Aid Declaration for one person only. If you are a UK taxpayer, ZANE can claim an extra 28% on any gift you make now or in the future. From 5.4.2011 this reduces to 25%. Under the Gift Aid rules we need your address. I am a UK taxpayer and want ZANE to claim tax on all donations that I have made for the six years prior to this financial year, or from and all donations I make in the future.

Gift Aid It

I understand that I must pay an amount of income tax and/or capital gains tax in the relevant tax year equal to any tax reclaimed by ZANE in that period. I will tell ZANE if I am no longer a taxpayer.

Name

Signature

Date

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Please pay £ _____ monthly/annually from the date
____ / ____ / _____ from the account detailed in this instruction to
Sort Code: 30-99-74 Lloyds TSB Bank, Winslow,
Acc No 00576568 - ZANE: Zimbabwe a National Emergency

Please fill in the form in BLOCK CAPITALS

Name and full address of your Bank or Building Society

To: The Manager _____
Bank/Building Society _____
Address _____
_____ Postcode _____

Name(s) of Account Holder(s)

Bank/Building Society account number

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Branch Sort Code

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Signature(s)

Donate online at www.zane.uk.com or call our credit card hotline 020 7788 7803

Send donations by post to: FREEPOST RSBR-YLRX-UBUH, ZANE, PO Box 451, Witney OX28 9FY

To return this form, tear or cut this page, enclose your gift if applicable, put in an envelope and post.

If you choose to use a stamp, ZANE will be grateful for the postage saved.

Thank you for your support.



Donate online at
www.zane.uk.com

or call our credit card hotline
020 7788 7803

or text
ZANE to 70007
and donate £3 with each text*

*You will be charged £3 plus one message at your standard network rate for each text. ZANE will receive a minimum of £2.67 from each message sent.

or fill out the donation form
and send by post



Registered charity number: 1112949

- ★ ZANE does not supply money or food in bulk. Rather ZANE is a “relational” charity, in that we gently means test the 1,800 elderly people to whom we give aid. At the same time, we give encouragement to often very lonely people. That includes about 600 ex-servicemen and their widows/wives. In this way, ZANE ensures that only those who are really in need of support receive it and that we don’t waste donor money.
- ★ ZANE has lost no donor money to corrupt officials since its foundation in 2002. Support goes to where it is needed to make a vital difference.
- ★ ZANE is the only charity that allows donors to choose which aspect of the work they would like to support (See donor application form).
- ★ ZANE is the largest supplier of financial grants to the pensioner community in Zimbabwe.
- ★ In 2007-8, ZANE provided about £300,000 to fund its work. In 2009-10, as a result of demand driven by worsening conditions, this figure (including the valuable contribution made by the UK services’ charities) has risen to circa £1.3m.
- ★ ZANE is in effective partnership with all the UK services’ charities in Zimbabwe. Since 2004, ZANE has facilitated about £1.3m in grants to WW2 veterans and their widows (and others).
- ★ ZANE assists primary care clinics in the impoverished communities around Harare, where there is extensive disease and poverty and therefore limited access to health care.
- ★ ZANE assists in the funding of an orphan prevention programme and a club foot correction programme.

www.zane.uk.com



ZANE: Zimbabwe A National Emergency

ZANE, PO Box 451, Witney OX28 9FY www.zane.uk.com info@zane.uk.com

Charity reg no 1112949