

Tom and Jane's Woke Walk

Tom Benyon OBE

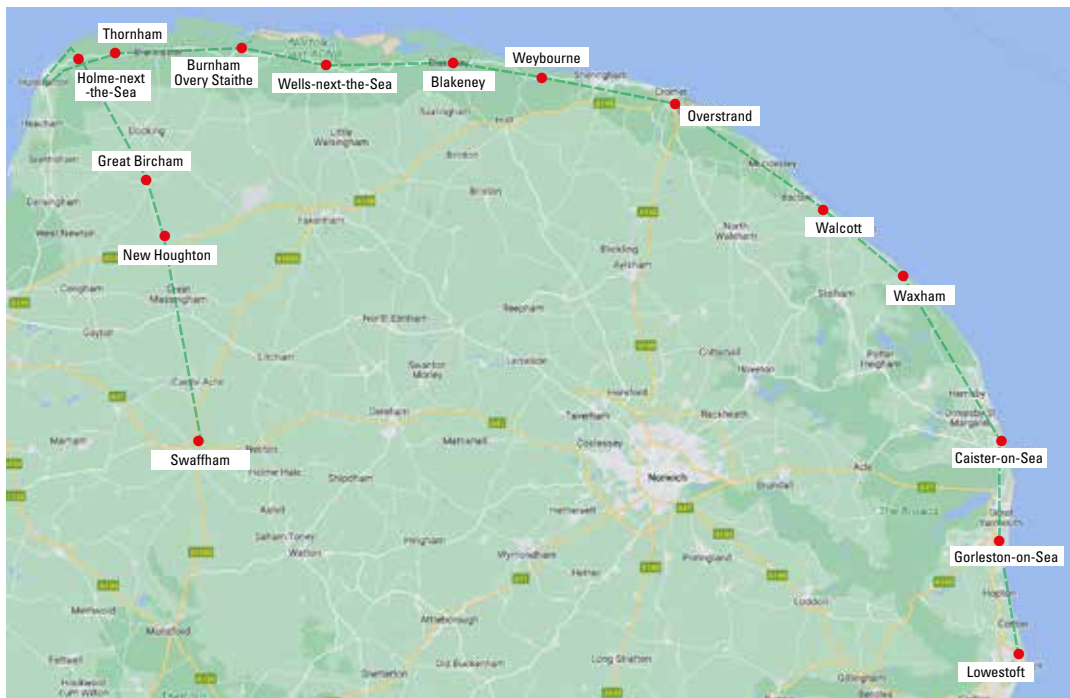


Reg Charity No 1112949

ZANE: Zimbabwe A National Emergency

Still walking for Zimbabwe's destitute pensioners

ZANE Walk 2023 3 – 17 September



Day	Date	Start Point
1	Sun 03-Sep	Swaffham
2	Mon 04-Sep	New Houghton
3	Tue 05-Sep	Great Bircham
4	Wed 06-Sep	Holme-next-the-Sea
5	Thu 07-Sep	Thornham
6	Fri 08-Sep	Burnham Overy Staithe
7	Sat 09-Sep	Wells-next-the-Sea

Sun	10-Sep	REST DAY
8	Mon 11-Sep	Blakeney
9	Tue 12-Sep	Weybourne
10	Wed 13-Sep	Overstrand
11	Thu 14-Sep	Walcott
12	Fri 15-Sep	Waxham
13	Sat 16-Sep	Caister-on-Sea
14	Sun 17-Sep	Gorleston-on-Sea
end at		Lowestoft

Dear Reader

Dr Martin Luther King Jr once wrote, “*We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope.*”

Hope. Faith. Trust that better times are ahead – that justice will come in the end... This is the hope of the people of Zimbabwe. For ZANE, it’s business as usual. The economic situation has deteriorated following the election and the long list of those in urgent need of help rises daily. ZANE’s work is more vital than ever before.

This is why Jane and I, alongside our dog, Moses, recently walked 117 miles along the Norfolk coast. We walked for the ordinary people of Zimbabwe who dare to hope for change. We walked to let them know that we continue to see them – we hear them cry, and we don’t forget them.

We hope you enjoy reading this walk commentary. Please be aware that the views expressed are ours alone – and although you may not agree with some of them, we hope you will read to the end.

Please also note that this booklet raises far more in donations than the cost of its production.

Thank you for your great generosity.

Tom Benyon OBE



Jane Benyon



“ I have seen a little bit of ZANE’s work on the ground and from what I have seen, it is very, very impressive . . . ZANE is one of those lovely organisations that make a little bit of money go a long, long way. ZANE is a good cause and the money is properly and well spent.

John Simpson CBE

World Affairs Editor of the BBC



Contents

Day Before	A Wonderful Beginning	3
Day 1	An Unholy Mess	5
Day 2	Baby Wants Cake!	8
Day 3	Putin's Divide	11
Day 4	Wolf in Sheep's Clothing	13
Day 5	God Save the King!	16
Day 6	The Empire Fights Back	19
Day 7	Heaven on Earth	21
Day 8	Kangaroo Court	26
Day 9	Keep Bugging On	29
Day 10	Rage, Rage . . .	32
Day 11	Waddle We Do About It?	35
Day 12	When Time is Over	38
Day 13	Money, Money, Money . . .	42
Day 14	Life Lessons	45
Day 15	Happiness	48
Day After	Buccaneers and Bureaucrats	51
My Side of the Story, by Jane Benyon		54

A Wonderful Beginning

2 September – The Day Before

ZANE's commitment to desperate pensioners, and all those we are privileged to assist, will remain unchanged.

So, Jane and I – along with Moses, the dog – walk to draw attention to the plight of those in Zimbabwe who are trapped in penury and destitution. All too many of them look to ZANE as their only lifeline.

As Stiff as Stoats

The setting for our fourteenth walk is Norfolk – and to be honest, it's getting harder to find locations we haven't already covered! This time, I demanded our walk planner look for a route that didn't involve major

roads – in the past, we've nearly been mown down by lunatics. Then we proscribed major hills for we're running out of puff, and told him no plough, for it clogs up our boots. And then last – and pleeease – no minor, overgrown paths that make the job of getting lost all too easy!

Someone asked me why the walks continue to be popular. I reckon loyal supporters assume that Tom and Jane must be as stiff as stoats after all these years – so they back us “one last time”. And then, guess what? The following year, we pop up again like a jack in the box with, “Hello! Here we go again!” And so, our supporters think, “Gosh, one more time it is, where's the cheque book?” And the process repeats itself!

So, it's the same old boots, the same old poles, the same old trousers and the same old dog – and off we go!

Postcard from Paris

I saw a postcard that made me smile. An elderly couple are eating breakfast and she says, "Darling... when one of us dies, I'm going to live in Paris!"

A couple of our closest friends are celebrating 45 years of a wonderful marriage. They told me that before they had even decided on a date for

their wedding, James suggested to Mary, "Let's anticipate the marriage. Come and live with me now?"

"Oh, no," she replied. "I'm far too fond of you to do that."

I suggest that this story would be incomprehensible to today's young.



An Unholy Mess

3 September – Day 1: Swaffham to Houghton

The sun was like a bishop's bottom – rosy and round and hot. It was the first real sunshine we've seen in months. We lunched in Castle Acre, a gem of a town with a priory, a castle and a grand house lurking somewhere.

I see the news at the moment is dull, which is good when you think of the miseries we've endured over these past few years. Perhaps our politicians might be persuaded to go on holiday more often – give me boring anytime!

I am reminded of a competition for the dullest newspaper headline ever. The winner was "Earthquake in Chile, only a few dead". (Sorry to any Chilean supporters, but I thought it was funny. It shows how tasteless I can be!)

Vast Carelessness

"They were careless people, Tom and Daisy," recalled Nick Carraway in F Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. "They smashed up things... and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made."

Readers of my last commentary will recall the case of the great Post Office mess whereby this old British institution prosecuted around 900 sub-postmasters for theft, false accounting and fraud. After a lengthy court case, it was found that 99 per cent of them were wholly innocent and that many had been maliciously prosecuted. Many lives were destroyed.

Oh yes, I nearly forgot to remind you – the Post Office CEO at the time, the Rev Paula Vennells, is a former Anglican priest. At first, she said she was misled by computer experts – but when she was told the full extent of her mess, she said she was "sorry". That's nice, isn't it? Bound to reassure those whose lives have been wholly destroyed. Pity about those who took their own lives before she issued her apology. The saga still hasn't concluded and compensation has not yet been agreed.

You think the Post Office scandal was a one-off? Think again.

Dirty Money

If any ZANE supporter was found to have assisted drug smuggling by laundering money, he or she could rightly expect up to 20 years in the slammer. But not so if you're too



big to jail. The world's largest bank is HSBC. During its recent drug-running days, the CEO of HSBC UK was the Rev Stephen Green – yes, these Anglican priests pop up everywhere.

Between 2006 and 2009, the bank – under Green's watch – allowed a breakdown in money laundering controls in its Mexican subsidiary with the result that at least \$881 million of drug trafficking cash flowed through its US accounts. The bank was so blatant in its enthusiasm to assist the drug cartels and enhance profits that bank cashiers' windows were specially adapted to allow large bungs of dirty drug money to be posted easily. When HSBC was warned – several times – that the practice was illegal, it turned a blind eye. There can be no argument about guilt. There is even a recording of a Mexican drug lord saying that

HSBC Mexico is “the place to launder money”.

When finally confronted with HSBC's crime of profiting from drug running on an industrial scale, Green expressed his “regret”. That's it. No explanation as to how the bank landed a fine of \$91 million, the largest penalty ever recorded. Amazingly, when the US authorities decided to prosecute HSBC, it was the UK's chancellor, George Osborne, who defended the bank's executives and pleaded that the economic fallout would be so great that prosecution had to be avoided.

Of course, Osborne was right. To bring criminal charges against nice, non-violent people like us, who hail from similar backgrounds and circles, and send us to jail and thereby ruin us and our families is quite another.

I bet you'll never guess the next bit. Partly thanks to Osborne's intervention, HSBC survived. And once Osborne had moved on from his chancellor role, he made two speeches for HSBC, one in Davos for which he was paid £51,000, and another for which he received £68,000 (he was obliged to register these fees in the Commons file of financial interests).

A Blooming Shame

This all makes perfect sense, doesn't it? You see, the authorities view non-violent criminals differently from violent ones. They don't regard them as, well, quite so criminal. Remember the old song "It's the Same the Whole World Over"?

*"It's the same the whole world over,
It's the poor what get the blame,
It's the rich what get the pleasure,
Isn't it a blooming shame?"*

So, what happened next? The key drug runner in Mexico,

"El Chapo", has been incarcerated for life in one of America's most secure prisons, the US Penitentiary Florence Administrative Maximum in Colorado (its nickname is "The Alcatraz of the Rockies"). He's locked up for 23 hours each day. A former warden claims, "The jail is not fit for humanity... I think being there day by day is worse than death."

Meanwhile, Rev Green (Cameron elevated him to Lord Green) "regrets" what happened. So, that's all right then.

Just like Rev Paula Vennells, the Rev Lord Green is today rich, retired and free. He's a member of the House of Lords and he continues his ministry as an Anglican priest.

Careless people these vicars. Smashing things up... and then retreating back into their money or their vast carelessness and letting other people clean up the mess they've made.



Baby Wants Cake!

4 September – Day 2: Houghton to Great Bircham

So many TV programmes start – ludicrously in my view – with a warning that watching, for example, a documentary about Putin’s war will involve bombing, rape and death, and “might be offensive to some viewers”. What do they expect? Do they think we live in a perpetual world of “Little Bo-Peep” or *The Sound of Music*?

Anyway, following the nannying trend perpetrated everywhere, here’s a warning that my walk commentary may be offensive to some readers. If it is, stop reading and get a life!

Over the years, I’m sure I’ve referred to that old song “Mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the midday sun” on more than one occasion – and so we did today.

Miles of sandy paths cut through the beautiful countryside along the Peddars Way, a 2,000-year-old track whose surface is hatched into grooves by bikes. The going is hazardous in that it’s dead easy to twist your ankle.

We have kind and generous hosts to see us on our way, and heroes Charles and Angela walk with us, often as pathfinders.

No, Nein and Non

Why do people accuse politicians of being liars? The answer is easy – if politicians told voters the unvarnished truth, they’d never get elected in the first place!

Do people realise how darn difficult it is to run a country effectively when the electorate act like babies who refuse to recognise the inconsistencies of their demands?

People cry for better healthcare, “free” social care, better paid teachers, more money for defence spending and roads without potholes. Then they simultaneously squeal for lower taxes – while failing to notice the

impossibility of having all these things at the same time. Voters want their cake, but they won’t pay for it by voting for the bills.

Of course, it’s not just British citizens who practise such wilful blindness.

“Do people realise how darn difficult it is to run a country effectively?”



In the US, people want to see an end to gun crime and mass shootings but steadfastly refuse to ban guns. They complain about eye-watering debt but decline to vote for candidates who pledge to do something about it. Remember Ronnie Reagan who quipped, “Our debt’s big enough to look after itself!” – and so he let it balloon. Of course, when the debt parcel finally reaches the end of the line and bursts – as it surely must – the poor sods holding it will face a world-shattering debt crisis and everyone will blame them for being lying, useless hounds.

In Germany, voters want energy security but said *nein* when asked

to buy the nuclear reactors that would have delivered what they needed. That’s why they were in hock to Putin’s oil. It’s much easier now for voters to lazily blame poor Angela Merkel and Gerhard Schröder for incompetence than accept responsibility for their own fecklessness.

In France, poor Macron is trying to deliver vital pension reform – an essential matter that has been ducked by previous presidents who realised the issue is electoral dynamite. Macron can only deliver it in his last term of presidential office when finally freed from democratic constraints.

We live like babies, voting for politicians who tell us what we want to hear and then accusing them of being liars when things go wrong – as they usually do in the end.

DH Lawrence's poem "We Can't Be Too Careful" sums things up. Here's an extract:

*"We can't be too careful
about the British Public.*

It gets bigger and bigger

*And its perambulator has to get
bigger and bigger*

*And its dummy-teat has to be made
bigger and bigger and bigger*

*And the job of changing its nappies
gets bigger and bigger and bigger
and bigger*

*And the sound of its howling gets
bigger and bigger and bigger and
bigger and bigger...*

*And soon even God won't be big
enough to handle that infant."*

Lawrence died in 1930. The baby's got a bit bigger since then, hasn't it?

There's an election in just over a year's time – another mouthful of cake, Baby Dear?

Time Waits for No Man

Now, something to cheer you up. As you get older, you of course have less time left but it seems to flick by much faster than when you were a babe.

For a 10-year-old, a year seems an eternity, while for a 79-year-old, that same year passes by in a flash. A paradox of course, but the mathematics tells us this. For a 10-year-old, a year adds 10 per cent to their life, a huge amount. For a 50-year-old, a year adds 2 per cent, a tiny amount. And that percentage diminishes each year that passes!



Putin's Divide

5 September – Day 3: Great Bircham to Holme-next-the-Sea

In last year's commentary, I listed the five regrets of the dying. The one that generated the most reader responses was, "When you wake up in the morning, do you think it's just another boring day or are you full of wonder that we are still alive in this incredible world?" Well, here I am on this beautiful day, contemplating how lucky I am to be alive.

We read that Mohamed Al-Fayed is dead. Will anyone mourn him? He had much in common with Robert Maxwell and Donald Trump, allegedly self-important bullies to whom truth and honesty were/are moving targets. I am reminded of the insight of the French novelist Balzac: "Behind every great fortune is an equally great crime." Maxwell and Al-Fayed are now both facing their maker. I suspect and hope that sometime soon the Donald will reap what he has sowed and spend richly deserved time in an orange jumpsuit.

High Noon

Of course, we all know that Putin is a dangerous and corrupt thug. However, he has a worrying point when it comes to his judgement of the west.

In the *New York Times*, I read that the Russian president is selling his disastrous war to citizens by

proclaiming a "High Noon" battle between a noble, family-orientated and disciplined Russia and the spiritually collapsed and morally dysfunctional west.

He starts by drawing attention to the US – presently an easy target – where, in 2024, the astonished electorate must decide which geriatric candidate is the least disastrous choice to run the country.

Putin then proclaims that the west has degenerated from being the home of ruthless capitalism to a "nest of sex changes, the rampages of drag queens, barbaric gender debates and an LGBTQ takeover." He goes on to claim that today the west is "a hotbed of selfishness, permissiveness and immorality, and in denial of the ideals of patriotism", and that it is "busy with the destruction of the traditional family through the promotion of non-traditional sexual relations".

Parade

To what degree are Putin's claims true? We can surely agree that his vicious campaign against the gay community is monstrous and cruel. But what about his assertion that here in the UK, there used to be a divide between simply letting people get on with their sexual preferences (within the law) and promoting and celebrating LGBTQ+ issues in the way that happens now? Worried critics remain silent for fear of being labelled homophobic, a career-ending insult. The "Pride" campaign has expanded from one day a month to a whole month, and parades a rainbow of sexual preferences, however bizarre they may be – other, of course, than the one that reproduces our species. Sexual aberration appears to be the new normal.

Why is it appropriate for "pride" to be involved with any sort of sexual activity? Why don't we just get on with what we like doing in our own bedrooms, shut up and try not to frighten the horses? And whilst I think about it, why are we passively conceding there is no such thing as "normal" sexual conduct, even the one that brought all of us into the world? Surely this is anti-family and manifestly not in the public interest. Why do we allow bias in the selection

of CEOs, leading politicians, military leaders and law officers, instead of just choosing the best candidate – whether straight, gay, white, black, Latino or Asian? If you want proof this happens, just study the circumstances in which Kamala Harris was chosen to be vice president of the US.

And surely Putin is right about our lack of patriotism. Any teacher or professor who dares mention the "ideals of patriotism" to their charges, or who demonstrates affection for our homeland, is considered not just absurd but malign. Teachers at schools and universities persuade the young to be ashamed of our country while cleansing the curricula of our cultures' classics. Yes, Putin has plenty of ammunition to feed his vicious campaign – all he need do is read our newspapers.

**"Officer, please
believe me, I used
to be a politician".
He began to laugh.
I could see it
coming.**

On the Road

I bought a new car in May. To be accurate, it's a very old car but new to us.

Anyway, I transferred my insurance cover, and to cut a tedious tale to its barest shreds, the insurance

company managed to get a single letter wrong in the new registration. Did you know that the traffic police now have a gadget that automatically reads registration plates and highlights the uninsured?

Well, they do! Within a week, I was stopped by a cop who politely told me I was uninsured. Of course, I had no paperwork with me, and he was adamant that I couldn't drive another yard without proof of cover.

"Officer, I'm not so stupid as to drive a car whilst uninsured."

No joy!

"Officer, please believe me, I used to be a politician".

He began to laugh. I could see it coming.

"All the more reason not to believe you, Sir!"

He let me go in the end.

Wolf in Sheep's Clothing

6 September – Day 4: Holme-next-the-Sea to Thornham

Walking on the beach at Hunstanton, we found ourselves compelled to look at nude swimmers. One tanned man in a thong and flexing his muscles – Jane, avert your eyes! – looked rather like a condom stuffed with conkers. Then later, I saw myself in a window, my hat askew, a blob of ice cream on my nose and my flies undone... Who on earth am I to judge what's absurd and what's not?

As so often on our walks, we have been overwhelmed by the generosity of supporters who take us in, usually sight unseen. One startled lady told me she was actually expecting someone else – "but, perhaps you'll do!" I took that as a sign I'd passed muster!

In Cold Blood

You may have watched TV's *The Sixth Commandment* recently? It detailed the ghastly experience of Peter Farquhar, who was sexually exploited and then murdered by the vicious Ben Field.

I knew Peter in the early 1990s when he was the Benyon daughters' English teacher at Stowe School. Our relationship was more than casual – I tried to help him, wholly unsuccessfully, to get his books published. He was an excellent writer, but publishing novels is a cruel game. As the saying goes, "Any fool can write a book, but it takes a genius to sell one!"

Peter was a gentle and very shy man. He was gay but as a deeply committed Christian, he had remained celibate. His unhappiness and desperate loneliness were brilliantly drawn by actor Timothy Spall.

Years ago, US author Scott Peck wrote a couple of brilliant books. *The Road Less Travelled* won worldwide acclaim but the less well-known *The People of the Lie* was equally insightful. In brief, Peck claimed that real wickedness is not just straightforward violence and crookery, which is bad enough. Real evil has yet another dimension, where the cold-blooded perpetrator cloaks his or her wickedness behind a mask of false kindness and virtue. For example, I wasn't surprised when a large army of priests were discovered hiding behind holy office whilst sexually abusing the children they had caught in their claws.



Ben Field pretended to love poor Peter. He then “married” him and persuaded him to change his will. Then he drugged Peter to make him feel like he was going crazy before finally strangling him.

Believe this: I attended the funeral service for Peter where Field – who had, of course, callously murdered him – gave the oration in his memory.

Field was caught after trying the same routine on a retired headmistress who lived a few doors away from Peter’s old house in Maids Moreton, Buckingham. Luckily, when Field came to change her will, he tried to employ the services of the same solicitor he had used for Peter. The solicitor smelled a rat – and what a rat he turned out to be! Fortunately, Field was jailed for life and will serve at least 38 years. Good!

Butter Wouldn’t Melt

Recently, another example of supreme evil dominated news headlines. Smiling, blue-eyed Lucy Letby, hiding behind the mask of the perceived virtue of her profession, murdered at least seven infants. No one could believe that such a gentle, innocent-looking woman, marinated in infant care, would stoop to such evil acts. Now we know.

There are, of course, cries in the *Telegraph* that we should debate the return of the death penalty. Probably, in the event of a referendum on the subject, its promoters would effortlessly win.

I remember 19 July 1979 well. Parliament debated whether capital punishment should, once again, be available as a penalty in the courts.

I was the MP who succeeded Airey Neave (following his assassination by the IRA in the Commons car park). To the consternation of many constituents, I voted against the motion.

First, there had been several well publicised

miscarriages of justice. Second, experienced lawyers warned me that if a jury knew that a defendant found guilty faced possible execution, the law of unintended consequences could bite. The jury might be afraid to convict, and guilty people might escape justice.

Last, in a debate in 1974, Lord Hailsham told the House of Lords that the death penalty is “a horrible and degrading thing”. That statement is as true now as it was then.

“The jury might be afraid to convict, and guilty people might escape justice.”

God Save the King!

7 September – Day 5: Thornham to Burnham Overy

Here we are, two old gits and not two pounds of us hanging straight. This morning, I imagined how we looked from afar, our minute figures meandering along the Norfolk coast under a vast, pale-blue canopy of sky. What a wonderful world and what a privilege to be alive at this hour!

Port in a Storm

It's inevitable in our free society that republicans are bound to make a fuss about the cost of monarchy, and some would even glue themselves to the roads in protest. But what they'll find is that it's far easier to moan than establish a decent alternative.

Okay, republicans don't like the class divisions that the monarchy is said to generate, and they disapprove of non-elected people exercising even modest influence in our democracy. Yet the vital quality of the monarchy and the stability it brings were tested when, between 2016 and 2022, the revolving doors of 10 Downing Street saw five prime ministers taking office

across a period of just over six years. While our democracy bent (though failed to break), our magnificent queen ruled calm and serene above the fray and brought a non-political stability to our affairs.

We pray it will be the same under King Charles III.

Rites and Rituals

The monarchy may look strange in our modern democracy – rather like the bumble bee, it shouldn't fly but it does.

We will never know the value of ancient ceremony, ritual and traditions until they've been destroyed. Imagine, if you will, that the monarchy was swept aside, and we faced our first presidential

campaign. The candidates would all proclaim to be "non-political", but we all know that is simply impossible.

It's a racing certainty the redoubtable Diane Abbott would appear as the first woman

candidate of colour – any accusation that she's far too dim to be seriously considered would generate shrieks of "racism". Her candidacy would

"Our magnificent queen ruled calm and serene above the fray."

OK, We abolish the monarchy as
you say... then what... President Boris?!
No thank you



be contested by Nigel Farage, furry collar, fag and pint at the ready. Then Peter Tatchell might be paraded by Stonewall as the ideal first LGBTQ+ president, and Blair would face Corbyn.

You think I am wrong? Want to take a bet? But sanity will prevail, and I can't see republicanism being introduced here.

Britain's Greatest Brand

Most people realise that the UK's monarchy is one of the biggest brands in the world. It's the thing we do best that no other country can match. The brand beats Facebook, Virgin, X (Twitter), Rolex, Trump, Amazon and Chanel into cocked hats. The cost is small, but the value in terms of soft power and influence is beyond price.

Twenty million people in the UK watched the king's coronation on

television and many hundreds of millions more looked on from around the world. From Tasmania to Toronto, from St Petersburg to Nairn, and from Newfoundland to Perth, viewers watched in awe as the best of British pomp and pageantry went on display. I bet many of them would have loved to take part and wished their country had even a fraction of our style and chutzpah.

What other world event could generate such favourable publicity? Not even the Olympics pulls that number of viewers. What monetary value can you attach to it? It's priceless. What positive effect do these figures have on our tourist industry? How much benefit do they bring to our worldwide businesses, the financial arena, and our goods and services?

God Save King Charles III!

Tried to super-glue himself
to the King, Sir



O, to be in England

Here's a definition of what it is to be English – and one that will not find its way into newspapers:

“Basking in our garden over the weekend, celebrating our temperate climate, a passive spirit, cricket at Lords, tennis at Wimbledon, sports day and the egg and spoon race, the village fete, a car boot sale and real ale. These things are in the English DNA and are a way of life. Those who wish to destroy it cannot understand it, and yet it is the very essence of why they will fail.”

Just going to have a pint and watch
the cricket on the village green, Dear



The Empire Fights Back

8 September –
Day 6: Burnham Overy Staithe to Wells-next-the-Sea

This morning, we were greeted by an overarching mist the colour of a tramp's vest. At any minute, I expected *Great Expectations'* Abel Magwitch to spring out from behind an ancient tombstone. The miles of glorious, galloping beach made me think of our horse Prince Panache, born in our former stables a generation ago.

For ZANE supporters interested in this sort of thing, prepare for a boast! Our horse, Prince Panache – sleek as a seal, 17 hands and like driving a Maserati – won the World Championships three-day eventing (show jumping, cross country and dressage) in Lexington, USA in the 1990s, ridden by Karen O' Connor. It was a fantastic achievement. When he died at the age of 32, there was a big obituary in *Horse & Hound*.

A Matter of Pride

The accusation by Meghan Markle that she and Harry were driven from the UK to the US – that haven of racial harmony – because of racism is a wicked nonsense. Why on earth did the media allow her and Harry Markle to get away with such a disgraceful slur?

Why do lefty media pundits accuse the UK of entrenched racism just because we once had an empire?

Pundits speak of our involvement in slavery as if the UK had invented it. But they must know the reality – slavery was endemic in all societies throughout history. And although, of course, we have our share of bigots, we should be proud of the fact that we are a remarkably tolerant society.

Why aren't children in schools and universities taught that the abolition of slavery in the late 1700s was brought about because of our Christian conviction in the basic equality of all human beings, regardless of race? And why aren't they taught that Britain was the first state in the world to abolish slavery within its own territories in the early 1800s?

Britain's imperial power was devoted – at vast cost – to the global suppression of slavery for the next century and a half. The campaign attracted widespread support, with an estimated one third of the male population in the UK signing abolitionist petitions. What other country has such a record?

American historian John Stauffer has written, "Almost every United States



black who travelled in the British Isles acknowledged the comparative dearth of racism there. Frederick Douglass [the famous black abolitionist] noted after arriving in England in 1845:

"I saw in every man a recognition of my manhood, and an absence, a perfect absence, of everything like that disgusting hate with which we are pursued in [the United States]".

The fact that Rishi Sunak is now prime minister of the UK, and that the country's government has more ethnic minorities in the cabinet than all EU member countries combined, is the fulfilment of our liberal, imperial vision. It should be a matter of great pride and not shame.

All these things should be taught to our young.

What's in a Name?

When I founded ZANE, I held a meeting for veterans in Bulawayo. I told them that because of their loyalty, ZANE would look after their needs.

One very old but sprightly man called from the front row, "Even me?"

"Why not you?"

"My name is Hauptmann Smidt. I fought in Hitler's army!"

The room froze. Then nervous laughter. I muttered that grass grows on all battlefields, and why not?

And so, we did!

Heaven on Earth

9 September – Day 7: Wells-next-the-Sea to Blakeney

We're now roughly halfway house, and we've burned a few pounds from our easy living! The faint muscle stiffness has abated, and we're swinging along with renewed confidence as each mile passes by.

About a year ago, I had an operation on my left foot, and I worried whether it would survive the inevitable battering of another hike – for if the feet pack up, then it's "Goodbye, sweet prince" to our walks. For several weeks, my foot was a bit stiff, so it was with more than a little trepidation that I launched said foot on the last walk. My old theory holds good – if you simply ignore pain, it often goes away. It did – and now everything's fine.

**"If there is
heaven on earth,
it is here, it is
here, it is here."**

Land of Milk and Honey

"If there is heaven on earth, it is here, it is here, it is here."

So said the fourth Mughal emperor, Jahangir, while visiting Kashmir in the seventeenth century – and those words might aptly be applied to the UK today.

Anyone who discusses immigration runs the risk of being called "racist",

and as there's no agreed definition of the word, it can be launched as a general insult to smear anyone you dislike. Nevertheless, ever since Tony Blair threw open Britain's borders and rebuilt the economy around cheap migrant labour, immigration has remained a contentious issue.

Once the genie had flown from the bottle, that was it. Cameron proved this in 2010 when he promised voters to reduce net migration from hundreds of thousands

to tens of thousands – instead, he ended up presiding over the highest levels of immigration ever seen. His inability to honour that pledge reinforced the growing sense amongst voters that no one was in control. Of course, this was one of the factors behind Brexit and it will be an important determinant at the next election.

I dreamt we were in England... we were happy,
we were free



Voters aren't stupid. According to YouGov, uncontrolled immigration – particularly illegal immigration – remains among the electorate's top three concerns. Across the Third World, millions of people, mainly young and unemployed, are determined to make the UK their home. Many of them live in countries where life is often cruel and short, where corruption is endemic, where there is no chance to alter society for the better, and where thinkers and critics often rot in jail. Meanwhile, their mobile phone screens tell them that the UK is a land of milk and honey – a country that promises free healthcare, free education,

generous social services, religious freedom, democracy, and the rule of law handed down from incorrupt courts. A land where – so the people smugglers tell them – lawyers will (for free!) do all they can to prevent new arrivals from being deported.

Truth and Lies

In short, to the Third World, the UK is Emperor Jahangir's "heaven". Who can blame young hopefuls for their iron determination to reach our shores? And who can be surprised that there is a booming business to facilitate their passage, run by corrupt people smugglers?

What can we do about this? First, truth must be separated from garbage. We are told that these non-European migrants are an economic benefit to the UK. If this is true, please will someone tell me why Belarus and Turkey use immigrants as weapons? Why isn't France campaigning to get its valuable migrants back from Britain? Why aren't countries everywhere competing eagerly for more incomers, perhaps incentivising them with bribes and goodie bags?

There is no such thing as a bargain! The reality is that migrants cost a great deal of money and the numbers are staggering. Net immigration – people allowed to come here – soared last year to about half a million.

That represents the population of a city half the size of Newcastle each year – and it costs north of £15 billion.

So, although estimates differ wildly, illegal immigration is an economic drain – at least in the short term – which is why the countries the migrants pass through play pass the parcel, and hope they end up in the lap of the UK.

The 100,000 illegal immigrants are, in the main, unskilled, poorly educated and heavily dependent on the public purse. Their accommodation in south-coast hotels

costs UK taxpayers £5.6 million per day – and this pays no heed to the numbers in the black economy, into which many foreigners disappear.

Self-Interest

UK residents already face an acute housing crisis, schools are overcrowded, and the NHS has a waiting list of seven million patients. We have escalating welfare bills and there is a growing reluctance by the country's increasingly elderly citizens to pay the necessary higher taxes to fund the welfare services they have grown to expect as their right. So, what is the government to do? Of course, no one wants migrants attempting dangerous boat crossings to drown. But we must stop our laws from being flouted by people smugglers.

And why is HMG embarrassed by critics focusing on self-interest on behalf of UK voters? Dare we discuss the level of immigration that suits the UK, however contentious

that calculation may prove to be? We must not heed the siren voices that tell us we must be “kind and nice” and try to improve the lives of immigrants everywhere, for this will lead to national bankruptcy. There are 89 million displaced people in the world, 27 million are refugees, 40 million live in modern slavery and up to 780 million can claim fear of persecution on grounds of

**“Dare we discuss
the level of
immigration that
suits the UK ...?”**

race, nationality or religion. The solution cannot be to bring even a small minority to the UK. Similarly, the popular “safe and legal routes” cannot stop the crossings unless they apply to everybody prepared to travel here illegally.

Surely, we must concentrate on the interests of the people who already live in the UK? Our government should decide what number of immigrants best benefits our resident population and elevate the interests of voters who already live here above the interests of people who don't. What's wrong with that? After all, HMG owes its first allegiance not to suffering humanity, but to the UK taxpayers who live in the country it was elected to protect.

Voters are merciless! Unless our relatively liberal government does something about uncontrolled immigration, voters will shrug and back far-right leaders who will. That's what's happening in Sweden, Italy and Germany. Our present leaders should take note.

Fighting Dragons

The Oxford Union debate was billed as “the most controversial debate of the year” when all it was about was whether trans women are in fact women, or should they remain trans? The star, whose role it was to attract mob hysteria, was the

mild-mannered Professor Kathleen Stock – previously outed from her job at Sussex University by her pusillanimous colleagues. Stock explained that she had no wish to deny trans women their rights but it was a “safeguarding” issue, about protecting women from predatory men who “self-ID” as women so they can invade women's spaces or ruin women's sport with unfair competition.

Yet, this issue generated crowds of students screaming, “Trans rights are human rights!”, even though no one – let alone Stock – was denying that. One protestor glued herself to the floor to proclaim that young people will kill themselves unless allowed immediate access to “gender-affirming healthcare”.

However, as Stock pointed out, this is emotive rot designed to bully people into silence. Surveys conclude that suicides almost always have multiple causes, and to say otherwise is merely irresponsible.

So why have “woke” activists worked themselves into such a rage about this particular issue? Why invent things to be angry about? Stock told one interviewer that she thinks students want her to be an evil person and this of course is at the heart of the issue. Previous generations of students have found

“Why invent things to be angry about?”



real issues of protest: apartheid, women's rights, human rights, civil rights, gay rights, but all these issues have long since been won. What's left for this lot of students? Not much, which is why they're conjuring a candyfloss issue from thin air.

It's what Douglas Murray calls, "St George in retirement syndrome" – all the other dragons have been slain, so a new one needs to be found. They are forced to create an issue and so here comes dear old Professor Stock.

Kangaroo Court

10 September – Day 8: Rest Day

Tennessee Williams coined the phrase “the kindness of strangers”, and never was it more appropriate than on this Norfolk walk. We don’t print the names of those who offer us hospitality, for few want that sort of publicity. And anyway, having stated that A and B are wonderful, what on earth can we say about X and Y?

Norfolk is fortunate in that it cannot boast of a motorway, and so it retains its independence and charm. We have even been spared the wind that is said to roar over from the Urals, the “Beast from the East”.

Sweeties for Everyone

A few days ago, we were with a delightful lady who kept calling me “Sweetie”! You read it right, not “sweaty”! Which would have been accurate. I was quietly pleased, for such endearments don’t come my way too often these days. Then I heard her calling her dog Sweetie as well, so my old heart simply drooped.

I recall the great Richard Attenborough was said to call everyone “Darling”. He did this – we are told on good authority – because he couldn’t remember anyone’s name, and so it saved time.

Trial By Mob

What is “Confirmation Bias” (CB) and why does it matter? It’s the tendency to process new information as confirmation of our existing beliefs – and it’s often the result of our desire to establish we are right. Perhaps you think you have an open mind and are willing to change long-held views if you receive new information? Are you sure about that?

“It’s the tendency to process new information as confirmation of our existing beliefs.”

Allow me to give you an example of extreme CB. Long before Rev Nigel Biggar, Professor of Moral and Pastoral Theology, wrote his excellent book *Colonialism: A Moral Reckoning*, he announced he was setting up a group at

Christ Church Oxford to research the pluses and minuses of colonialism and empire. To his astonishment, he attracted abuse on an industrial scale from Professor Priyamvada Gopal

Father... I touched the Daily Mail



at the University of Cambridge: “We must stop this shit!” Then followed a condemnatory letter from 59 Oxford academics, backed up by another 200 from around the world, which was publicly circulated. It came from intelligent people who decided to put the boot in on a project well before any of them could possibly have known what it entailed.

How did this come about? Easy! One person decided on the cancellation initiative. A letter was written and then colleagues were persuaded to sign it on the basis that Biggar was a misguided simpleton and anything

from his pen had to be condemned.

So, one by one, these people put the boot in – just as in *Alice in Wonderland*:

“Let the jury consider their verdict,” the King said, for about the twentieth time that day.

“No, no!”, said the Queen. “Sentence first, verdict afterwards.”

Then publisher Bloomsbury – who had commissioned Biggar – got cold feet and decided that they couldn’t go ahead with the book after all. Rumour had it that young employees decided they were far too delicate

to have anything to do with the “colonialism” in the book’s title, and so that was that.

Fortunately, William Collins was brave enough to publish, and the book has been a great success.

What Nigel Bigger suffered is an extreme example of CB, all from professors and publishers with brains the size of Basingstoke. Being intelligent didn’t stop them from acting like hens. They judged before they knew the facts – and none has apologised!

So, what hope have we got to avoid the CB trap? This is how it works. Let’s assume you supported the Remain camp back in 2016, and you loathe Boris Johnson, whom you regard as largely responsible for Brexit. Each time you hear of one of his achievements – such as the vaccine rollout ahead of all other countries or support for Ukraine – you simply close your ears. Meanwhile, his many disasters are like catnip to you.

Just listen to people parading they are “left wing” – whatever “left wing” is meant to mean? They are virtue-signalling they are not “right wing”, like that ghastly Nigel Farage and Boris.

Some claim to be so delicate they cannot bring themselves to read the *Daily Mail* or even have it in their house, as if merely touching

the paper would taint them with some exotic right-wing disease. When I point out that it’s the most popular newspaper in the UK with wonderful sports and women’s pages, an informative financial section, first-rate quizzes and simply stated opinions by top-class writers – so what on earth are they talking about? – they grow mute. CB sufferers are never happy to be challenged.

Trigger Warning

I submit we are all tainted by CB to some degree, welcoming views that support our prejudices whilst rejecting others that do not. Let’s run a simple test. To what extent do the names or words Jeremy Corbyn, Boris Johnson, Angela Rayner, Nicola Sturgeon, Nigel Farage, Meghan Markle, Brexit,

Rupert Murdoch, Dominic Cummings, Dianne Abbott, Richard Dawkins, *The Guardian*, the *Daily Mail*, Israel and Palestine, and the words “colonial” and “empire” trigger an attack of “CB” in you?

**“They judged
before they
knew the facts
– and none has
apologised!”**

Now we know the moral quality of figures from some leading universities and publishers, it makes it easier to understand the dynamics of Paris’s revolutionary mob, the Salem witch hunt, and why in America’s deep south, individuals were so easily persuaded to lynch black people.

Keep Bugging On

11 September – Day 9: Blakeney to Weybourne

After all these years, Jane and I are experts in our style of walking. We know all there is to know, and I say this without conceit. After nigh on 3,000 miles, we just know – and if we didn't, we'd really have to be very stupid!

First, we know the limits of how many miles we can safely cover in a day's walk. It may sound obvious, but it really isn't. We know how far to walk in an hour and when to stop and drink (often!). We've learnt how to handle traffic (with great care) and what sort of pubs to avoid and which to patronise. And we're experts in how to use our excellent LEKI poles, what socks and boots to wear, and so on...

It all comes naturally now. But everything has a season, and we're well aware that, in the end, everything – the good and the not-so-good, as well as the ghastly – passes. We're aware that at our respective ages, we are outliers and supremely fortunate that we remain fit enough to be able to walk such distances as we do, day after day – or indeed, to walk at all. It would really be very foolish to take any of this for granted. None of us, not even our wonderful ZANE supporters, will get out of this life alive!

Praise the Lord! Praise His Holy name.

On My Mother's Life!

On 30 April 2020, Sir Keir Starmer was secretly filmed in Durham Miners' Hall by a student. He was with May Foy MP and Labour's deputy leader, Angela Rayner, eating takeaway curry and drinking beer.

In a BBC interview with Sophie Raworth, Starmer was repeatedly asked about "Beergate". In a rictus of anxiety, he denied there could be any comparison whatsoever between this incident and Boris' "Partygate".

For the record, I'm sure Starmer was telling the truth. But that's not the point.

Soon, other people starting sharing evidence of Downing Street booze-ups and helped to bring down a prime minister. Smartphones have changed the world and that's the thing.

Fifty years ago, even 20, voters would never have known about Starmer's curry and beer, nor would they have known for sure about Partygate. Vague rumours may have circulated, but in those innocent, smartphone-free days, they were often limited to games of "He said, she said" with the truth a case of "Who do you believe?" Secrets were usually exploited by breaches of faith, and they went like this:

"I'm going to tell you a hugely important secret... but, please, please, promise you'll never tell a soul!"

"Oooh, of course... tell me. I'll not tell anyone. I promise on my mother's life!"

Of course, by the end of a week, most people would have forgotten any mention of their mother and exactly how very secret the secret was. By the end of two weeks, they'd have forgotten the secret was a secret; and by week three, they wouldn't even be able to recall who spilled the secret in the first place!

But that was then and this is now, for the world's a changed place. Today, cameras and social media rule, and nothing in public life remains behind closed doors for long. Politicians realise that everything

they do and everything they say – all their mistakes, outbursts of anger, follies, boozing, betrayals, hands-on-the-knee and other infidelities – may be recorded on camera, or by other means, and paraded to a world that's gagging for scandal.

Now, most people (except ZANE supporters, of course)

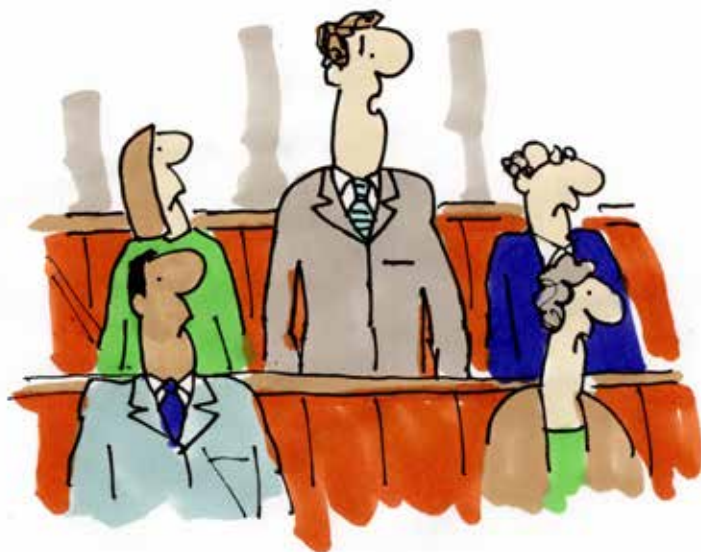
have probably done something at some time or other that brings a degree of shame. Just imagine if your worst disgrace had been recorded and was about to be broadcast on social media in the most hostile way imaginable?

Great Briton

Peer back in time to 1943 when Churchill was our wartime prime minister. He ended up as a saviour. But would he have survived if the loans from chums, his incontinent casino gambling, his egregious tax-avoidance, his drinking and his serious ill temper towards staff had been recorded on camera and paraded on social media? Would he have survived when, for example, everyone was on strict rations and pictures of him, singing music hall ditties while scoffing smoked salmon, grouse and rich puddings – all washed down with vast quantities of champagne and claret – had been shared with the nation?

**"Smartphones
have changed
the world and
that's the thing."**

I want to apologise to the House
for having been filmed sucking a
boiled sweet while driving....



Of course, in those dark days, there were no smartphones to cause mayhem and it was, luckily, a different world. So, today – thanks to Churchill – we can speak in English, not German, and we can KBO (“keep bugging on”, which was a favourite sign-off of his) in freedom.

The late Julian Critchley, former MP for Aldershot, was right when he said that the only thing people in public life can safely do is to suck boiled sweets.

And not even that’s safe nowadays.

Rage, Rage...

12 September – Day 10: Weybourne to Overstrand

“A Robin Red breast in a Cage / Puts all Heaven in a Rage” wrote William Blake in 1803, in his famous “Auguries of Innocence”. No one can know what he might have written in response to seeing dogs being walked on deserted beaches or in empty fields, on leads!

Of course, dogs should be restrained near busy places or where there is livestock. However, keeping overweight dogs restricted on leads and waddling along on a permanent basis is unfair. Dog owners should learn how to get their pets to return as soon as commanded, but, for heaven's sake, set them free to leap and dance for the joy of being alive.

And, oh yes – we've seen a number of people walking with dogs peering out of prams! Well, I suppose it takes all sorts...

Battery Hen

To continue the poetic theme, Dylan Thomas was right when he wrote we should not “go gentle into that good night”.

Some care homes are excellent, and others are not. I visited Helen in hers recently. She's a beautiful woman of great character who, with her doctor

husband, carved out a magnificent life as a nurse and missionary in the Australian outback. Now widowed and in her early nineties, her energy levels may have been sapped by time, but her mind is sharp and clear.

Helen told me quietly that since Henry died, her will to live is faltering. “I hoped death would come easy,” she confided, “but it hasn't!”

There's no real conversation in the home to stimulate her apart from workaday chit chat with Romanian carers. Someone told her “mobile phones

don't work in your room” and she accepted that as fact. Mine worked perfectly.

Because she's a member of the church reticent, she never complains. Grey gloom hovers like a shroud.

“Dylan Thomas was right when he wrote we should not ‘go gentle into that good night’.”

Government legislation allowed care homes to gold-plate lockdown rules – and in so doing, they made darn sure that even the great escapist Houdini would be stymied. Walking up and down stairs is risky – as is doing most things – so why allow risk? Homes operate in our litigious society, and they are afraid of being sued by vengeful and greedy relatives. It's in their interest to say, as to a dog, "Sit!" So, Helen does just that.

Helen hasn't been on an outing for over a year. In the distant past, she used to climb in the Welsh mountains. Today, her legs have atrophied, and she can only just stagger to the loo. I guess the home is doing the best it can by keeping her like a battery hen on £5,000 per month until her savings are finally pecked dry. But what then? Best not to ask.



Helen might just as well be in any nick's hospital wing and chained to a bed. Same ghastly result but at least the nick's free. Now here's a thought for the future – announce you are an arsonist and boom! Broadmoor hospital wing, here we come!

“Old age should burn and rage at close of day;

Rage, rage against the dying of the light.”

Best Before

I knew Clement Freud – Clay to his friends – when we were in parliament together. Did I like him? Well like is the wrong word for he was possibly an abuser, and I could see that he had something of the night about him. His humour was original, lethal, quite cruel – and relentless. When Scots-born Teddy Taylor with a broad accent was bussed in for election in Southend, Freud arranged for him to be followed by an interpreter.

Clay's constituency included “Bury St Edmunds”. He couldn't resist a

campaign with the slogan, “Dig up St Edmunds”. When someone once suggested, “Let's run upstairs and make love,” his repost was, “Only one of those suggestions is possible at the same time!”

His advice to the elderly who were worried about their mental health was this: “If you go into the kitchen and you can't remember why, don't worry for we all do that. But if you go into the kitchen and you can't remember what the kitchen is for, then you have a problem.”

When I last lunched with him in his Marylebone flat, Clay showed me his great uncle's election poster in a US senatorial campaign. “Bring back slavery!” it read – I think it was from 1863, in Alabama.

“And he nearly won!” chortled Clay.

A while back, I visited Burford Priory where Clay is buried. The gravestone reads, “Sir Clement Freud, 15 April 2009, and underneath: “Best before”.

Waddle We Do About It?

13 September – Day 11: Overstrand to Walcott

There they were, two obese parents with two small, plump children in tow, waddling along the Norfolk Coast Path.

What a tragedy! Tony Blair's present views on our obesity problems are spot on. Over the last decade of walks, Jane and I have watched with growing incredulity how people are growing fatter and fatter. The problem is that obesity has become the new normal. Since so many appear to be getting larger, few seem to be noticing what's happening around them. I suppose teachers and doctors feel unable to comment for fear of causing offence. The healthcare bills for heart conditions, worn-out joints and diabetes are overwhelming.

A new tax on fatty foods must be the answer, however unpopular this may prove to be.

Woke World

Noel Coward once said to Ivor Novello, "Ivor, Darling, if you ever hear that I've made rude comments behind your back, rest assured, the rumour is entirely true – I have!"

ZANE often observes the activities of large charities with interest to see

if there's anything a small charity like ours can learn. It's been an interesting study. Many charities have created "Human Resources" departments, with staff who presumably spend donated money on woke issues such as "gender recognition" and "progressive ideologies". They give much space in their reports to "environmental and social" issues, or to another preoccupation, "biodiversity" – whatever that may be. Others proclaim to be at the cutting edge of "inclusion, diversity and purpose", while one claims a social duty not to spend all its donations on humanitarian relief – which is what it was set up to do – but a significant proportion on combatting climate change.

And what can ZANE learn from one of the best-known charities, which has decreed that instead of "woman", we should instead say "people who menstruate"? Apparently, it may be better to write "Womxn" (as a mark of "solidarity and inclusion") and we should avoid using the acronym

Scuse me, I just need to speak to
that person who menstruates



“BAME” (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) and instead use “BIPOC” (Black, Indigenous and People of Colour). It seems that both these former terms are outdated. And now we have to offer our preferred pronouns after our names – “He/Him“, “She/Her” – or perhaps even “It”!

Granny Again...

Granny told me that unless you can say nice things, you should say nothing at all. Well, although I won’t do everything Granny said, I will at least try to be brief.

Will ZANE change its conservative ways? The answer is, of course, an emphatic “no”! We have always relied simply on common sense

in the way we operate. We believe in “Do as you would be done by”. Showing integrity in all our dealings and doing what’s written on our tin – which is to spend donated money wisely and on the issues that our supporters want their money spent on – are the things that matter to ZANE. Over the years, we have been privileged enough to develop a solid relationship with our supporters – one that is built on trust – and ZANE does not propose to play fast and loose with that trust by wasting money on fashionable nonsense.

We are told that all institutions turn “left” in time unless there are people around who stop the drift. ZANE forges its path looking neither left nor right, but straight ahead.

Firing Squad

DEFRA authorised an investigation into why black, Asian, and other minority groups see the countryside as a “white environment”. Now I hear there is to be a study on racism in the countryside. It is bound to be damning, encouraging victimhood on the part of ethnic minorities and making it a win-win for them. But if the report concludes that the countryside is not “racist”, then the work will be condemned as a “whitewash”. So being human and wanting to be paid, the report’s members will form the usual firing squad and find racism in hedgerows and up trees.

I understand the Leverhulme Trust is funding some of these reports. William Lever (the trust was established under his will) was a hard-bitten businessman who made his money out of Sunlight Soap. He must be spinning in his grave.

Allow me to be helpful... If I and my family emigrated to India, we might discover that most people living there aren’t white. I suppose, I could wander around loudly condemning the population and shouting “hate crime” – if I could find anyone who would quietly listen to me (doubtful). But I think I’d probably see that I was being unrealistic and plain rude. I could well be stoned – or banged

up by unfriendly police who might reasonably conclude I was deranged.

Being a friendly and decent society brings problems. Everyone comes to the UK because of our virtues, and then a vociferous minority abuses these virtues. Then another group of fanatics abuses us further because our society doesn’t resemble the country they left.

What a nonsense it all is.

Antiques Road Show

I saw a Desperate Dan look-alike with a shiny bald head on the weight machines at my gym. I decided to try the equipment out and made a new friend.

Henry is a delightful Pole working at BMW – it’s daft to judge by appearances – and he told me about himself.

The next time I was exercising, I saw that

Henry and a friend were both staring intently at me while muttering. Later, I asked him who his friend was?

“I had to persuade him to come to the gym,” he told me. “He’s 55 and thought he was too old to exercise and would surely die. I told him that I have a friend who is ancient... and I persuaded him to come and look at you!”

The gym has a nubile recruit. Perhaps they should put me on commission?

“Being a friendly and decent society brings problems.”

When Time is Over

14 September – Day 12: Walcott to Waxham

Norfolk's coastal path has to be one of the great triumphs of nature in the UK. We walked along it for six glorious miles today, the sea churning beside us.

What's astonishing is that the magnificent beaches are more or less deserted. They stretch for miles, with beautiful, litter-free sand and great, rolling waves. Why don't holidaymakers follow the advice of the eighteenth-century Doge of Venice, who wrote, "Why should I travel when I have already arrived?"

We passed the lost village of Eccles-on-Sea, which is now mostly submerged. Locals told us that walkers occasionally hear the church bell of old St Mary's tolling dolefully. And then we read of how one night, after a raging storm, a horrified passer-by saw skeletons standing erect in the churchyard, their polished skulls staring out to sea. I just hope that's true!

"Why should I travel when I have already arrived?"

We were delighted to see a small seal cub inching his (or her – how can you tell?) way to the sea.

Front Page Folly

Some years ago, in the *Times* letters column, I recall a concerned reader pointing out that there hadn't been a picture of Princess Diana on the front page that day – was she ill? Well, the same thing seems to be happening to Princess Kate. There she was today, all over the front page – with a bruised finger...

Sometimes, I want a break!

Deathmin

Prime Minister Balfour once said, "Nothing matters very much, and most things don't matter at

Whoa.. Whoa.. Who's speeded up the escalator?!"



all." ZANE supporters know my commentaries concentrate on the issues that matter – and so we come to death. None of us is going to get out of this life alive, and at this late stage, it's time to get serious! If not now, when?

I spend a good deal of time – as doubtless, dear reader, do you – at funerals and the memorial services of my friends and relatives. It's so easy to get hardened to the miseries of life. I recall the late actor David Niven saying, "Life is such a sod, you have to laugh or you will be crushed". What else can we do but try to get on with our own little lives as best we can?

But however often we attend the services of those close to us, however stiff we pretend our lips may be, and whether we have a faith to sustain us or not, death remains a profound shock. The late Queen Elizabeth said, "Grief is the price we pay for love."

When the scenery on the little stages on which we jig and prattle away suddenly vanishes, just how are we meant to react? Please don't say, "You will of course, get over it", for grief's not a common cold.

How long does it take to get used to the gaps in our new stage set? How do we dredge up the courage to continue the dance? Now the light of our life has been extinguished, who's

going to bother to talk to us with any real interest? Who's going to care when we face extreme old age? Who do we shop or dress for now? And although we may be able to find someone else to do something with, will we ever be able to find someone to just do nothing with? Can we ever rekindle the fires of love and mutual interest that have been extinguished, so only grey ash remains? What's the point of going on?

The shock of death is partly the way in which the world keeps on spinning without missing a roll. How do we face the gloomy clutter of dying without complaint? Incidentally, I have a file marked "Deathmin", and respectfully suggest you might do the

same. And I have recently come upon Rev Matthew Hutton's *Your Last Gift*, an excellent book about getting your affairs in order.

Then comes the reading of the will for, of course, where there's a will, there's always a relative.

Gloomy old man that I am, I raised the issue of planning for death the other day with four close friends who all happen to be vicars. We discussed the details of the endgame. We all know that death makes money with many firms competing for the business.

"Tell me," I started. "As professionals, do you really care whether you are buried or



cremated, and why do you care?
Would you prefer to be shunted
down the aisle by half a dozen bored,
retired policemen wanting a smoke,
or do you plan that family members
will do the lifting?

“And do you need a fancy coffin with
mock brass handles, or will a cheap
pine job – or cardboard – do?

“Do you need a hearse with someone
wearing a frilled top hat prancing
around – and the next day delivering
a hefty invoice – or would you prefer
a simple service and then to be
buried at sea? Or how about a quiet
service in a country church and to be
laid to rest among the grey, slanted
graves?

“Have you written your funeral
wishes (please don’t include Sinatra’s
“My Way”) or, as you will be pushing
clouds, will you leave that for others
to deal with? Will a family member
read the eulogy or will that be the
vicar’s job?

“Do you mind being forgotten?”

One said that crematoria were
dumbed down to such a degree –

probably so as not to offend people
of any faith, or of none – that they
reminded him of a dentist’s waiting
room. Another said the fire part
made him think of the Nazi gas
chambers and he hated the idea
of being ground to ashes. Nor did
it help that it’s usually raining at
crematorium services. And he didn’t
much like the strict time rules, either
– 30 minutes then, “Next!”

Drop of Anguish

The anguish of death is summed up
by American poet Emily Dickinson in
her poem “XXXIX”:

*“I shall know why,
when time is over,*

*And I have ceased to wonder why;
Christ will explain
each separate anguish
In the fair schoolroom of the sky.*

*He will tell me what Peter promised,
And I, for wonder at his woe,
I shall forget the drop of anguish
That scalds me now, that scalds
me now.”*

Money, Money, Money...

15 September – Day 13: Waxham to Caister-on-Sea

It was another morning of hard walking as we made our way towards Caister. We came across two groups of seals lazily wallowing in the beach sunshine, grunting and wheezing as we passed.

One kind supporter wrote in to ask why I don't provide a more descriptive account of the walk, especially as we are in such glorious surroundings? The reason is that this is Jane's preserve – she writes

the scenic commentary, which you will find from page 54 onwards. I can't do both, which is just as well because Jane makes an excellent job of it, far better than I could. And this leaves me free to happily dwell on my favourite subjects.

Leading the Way

Thank goodness it's considered bad manners to mention Brexit these days. The subject only reminds us of arguments that are – like Marley in *A Christmas Carol* – as dead as a doornail.

Damn it, man... We never mention
Brexit in this house!





My friend Miles Morland tells me he is no longer as nervous as he used to be about our ability to make our way in a non-EU world – and that’s because of the UK’s extraordinary dominance in industries that require “brain” capital as opposed to the strength the continent has in industries that require “money” capital. The UK either leads the world, or is a close second behind the US, in education, law, accounting, investment banking, fund management, information provision, entertainment, music, theatre, advertising and financial services. These industries require little investment and are wonderfully profitable.

Morland gave as an example a beverage company called SABMiller, which was bought by Belgian multinational drink and brewing company AB Inbev. The deal generated fees of £1.9 billion paid to only a few London-based people whose sole capital investment was a few square metres of office space. That was twice as much as Renault’s 170,000 hardworking people made in profit in the whole of 2021 after billions of euros of capital investment. Nice work if you can get it.

One example of the UK’s “soft power” can be seen in the names of those people being called to the English Bar. Many are from places

like Nigeria, China, Malaysia, India or the Caribbean, with a very English education planted in them that they will carry around for the rest of their lives. If that’s not “soft power” then I don’t know what is!

Goosing Attila

Until Dame Alison Rose’s downfall – which, of course, came after she was caught giving the BBC details of Nigel Farage’s history with Coutts – we were told she was a talented CEO of NatWest.

Her job didn’t seem to be particularly demanding. Evidently, some of her time was spent telling other people

less rich than herself, or those she didn't approve of, just "to butt off" and find another bank. This must have been fun if you get your kicks out of humiliating others, but giving the finger to the great disruptor Nigel Farage was an unwise career move – rather like goosing Attila the Hun on his bad hair day!

Now Dame Alison didn't start NatWest. In fact, it's part-owned by us taxpayers after it had to be bailed out after nearly going bust in 2008–09. Rose took no appreciable financial or career risks in her role with the bank, so could someone please tell me why she was paid £5.2

million and is likely to benefit from a vast farewell handout? All this is 25 times more than the prime minister or the chancellor receive, not to mention top leaders in the army or the police, senior civil servants and leading surgeons! If the answer is that banking and financial services have always been special cases, and that this figure is the norm, then a radical reform of financial services pay structures is overdue to bring them into line with the remuneration of other equally valuable leaders of our community. It's our money that's being wasted on the likes of the wilting Rose.

I want to run a bank when I leave school... you will get paid too much!



Life Lessons

16 September – Day 14: Caister-on-Sea to Gorleston-on-Sea

The day was fine with a pale blue sky – and all was well with the world.

I watched a small boy of four or so busily building a sandcastle. As his doting parents looked on, he carefully fashioned turrets and a moat with a tiny spade. Then he crafted a deep ditch, the full works. In around 15 minutes, it had become Edinburgh Castle! Producing a couple of tiny plastic soldiers, he proudly planted one on each turret. Then sitting back with a vast smile, he admired his handiwork.

The wave came without warning. It smashed through the fortifications, and instantly the walls were mud and the soldiers vanished. In about 20 seconds, all that was left of the little boy's careful creation was a shapeless mound of sand.

He cried out, scalded by shock and dismay. His mother swept him into her arms and cuddled him, and I heard her say in consolation, "I'm so sorry, Timmy. Life's often like that!"

**"I'm so sorry,
Timmy. Life's
often like that!"**

I reckon with such a blessed mother, that boy will fly!

Lies and the Rack

A sergeant major was reviewing a parade and noticed a soldier talking to his neighbour.

"Arrest that man!" he shrieked at the corporal, pointing vaguely at a suspect.

"Him?"

"No!"

"Him?"

"No!"

"Him?"

"No, but he'll do!"

Andy Verity sets out a scandal in his book *Rigged*. Cast your mind back to the 2008–09 banking crash that nearly destroyed world financial markets – the eye-watering losses were, inevitably, paid for by the taxpayer while the abusing bankers walked away vastly rich. But, of course, such was the fury that there was a raging public appetite for someone, anyone, to

be jailed. (For detail read Michael Lewis' *The Big Short*).

But who? Vast greed and purblind folly aren't necessarily criminal. The desire for vengeance ended up focusing on who rigged LIBOR – the London Inter-bank Offered Rate. This is the interest rate average calculated from estimates submitted by London's leading banks.

Who would be easy meat? Without exception, the senior management muttered, "Not me Guv" and played Macavity, while the traders on the desks were duly charged.

Judges had to be seen to do something, so they just invented a

crime! They decided that any LIBOR rate set that made a profit for the banks was, simply, criminal. Thirty-eight traders, working in both the US and the UK, were subsequently prosecuted. An allegedly inept "expert" witness – with little idea of what he was talking about – was duly found, and 19 were jailed. Families were rendered destitute, and lives were wholly ruined.

It's now been discovered that the traders were following a direction from the banks' management to vary the LIBOR rate, and that the management was under pressure from the UK government – and even from the Bank of England. Of course,



no help was offered to the poor sods at their trial. Banking small fry are considered expendable.

But lo! After 10 years of campaigning, US appeal courts have declared there was no fraud or criminality! And it was all a mistake. So very sorry!

We await UK judges to declare the same.

Breaking Lives

Amazingly, some of the victims now deemed innocent originally pleaded guilty. Why did they do that? Surely, they only have themselves to blame?

I'll tell you why. Up until 1741, English prosecutors used the rack to "persuade" unwilling prisoners to confess guilt. They only had to show someone being racked, with their bones nicely popping, to extract a gibbering confession.

Of course, that was then, and this is now. What's the medieval rack got to do with US court processes today?

Easy! Imagine you've just been indicted in the US courts. You're offered a plea bargain. Ninety per cent of those prosecuted in the US end up in jail unless they have an

endless moolah supply to throw at lawyers, you're told. But listen... there's a way out. If you plead guilty and give the "right" evidence to convict your chums, you won't end up wearing an orange jumpsuit and eating soggy pizza in a Florida prison for the next 20 years (and with no time off for good behaviour). On the other hand, if you plead guilty, you'll go to a nice country jail in the UK for a year, and that'll be that!

What would you do? It's a cruel world – and I'd probably lie too.

The US "plea bargaining" system is the modern

equivalent of the rack. But instead of breaking bones, it breaks lives.

Pray for those caught on the modern-day rack.

Career Path

Earlier today, we got to talking about career progression. I reckon there are three clear stages:

- 1: I can't wait until I'm important enough to be included in meetings.
- 2: I feel so important being in these meetings.
- 3: I will do anything legal – and several illegal things – to get out of these meetings.

**"Pray for
those caught
on the
modern-day
rack."**

Happiness

17 September – Day 15: Gorleston-on-Sea to Lowestoft

Today, on the final day of our walk, we attended a service in the magnificent Norwich Cathedral. We gave thanks – for our safety, for those who gave us generous hospitality, and for the support of our friends and our wonderful family.

Jane and I are much blessed by GRACE, an acronym for “God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense”.

A Tale of Two Mothers

A close relation confided to me that one of his major worries for his children is their love of their “screens”. The addictive nature of phones and other devices is yet another manifestation of the Law of Unintended Consequences – they incline to stop children from thinking and participating socially. It’s a growing problem.

Walking down a Norwich street, I saw a woman pushing a pram, completely preoccupied with her mobile. Meanwhile, her two children lolled backwards, bored and blank-faced. Further along, I noticed another woman talking to her children in a small park. She was laughing and – I think – telling a story. The youngsters were bouncing up and down as

they listened, laughing back at their mother.

Need I say more? The contrast between these two scenes spoke volumes...

Be a Leaf

The American Constitution grants to all citizens the inalienable right to be “happy”. But what on earth does that mean?

When the late Anthony Clare, Professor of Clinical Psychiatry at Trinity College Dublin, was asked to define “happiness”, he claimed that the most important thing is to

have something at the core of our lives that we are passionate about – something that so involves us and is so absorbing that we can forget the iron-clad fact that none of us is going to get out of this life alive.

**“have
something at
the core of our
lives that we
are passionate
about”**

Number two is to be a “leaf upon a tree”. That means being an individual, in the sense of realising we are unique and that we matter, while at the same time knowing that we are part of a bigger organism, perhaps a strong family or a community. Apparently, some interesting experiments have been conducted on “networks”. It seems that the people best insulated against certain ghastly diseases – typically cancer and heart disease – are part of a community or group so that they feel socially involved.

One of the sad losses connected to the abolition of hunting is that it has wrecked strong country communities – after all, there are few enough of them. (Incidentally, please don’t

write to me supporting the abolition of hunting for I am making a wholly different point about the loss of community). A lack of community leads to great loneliness.

If you ask how many friends someone feels close to, those with the biggest list of mates are always the happiest, and those with the smallest list by far the unhappiest. It’s bleeding obvious, really.

Clare said that number three is to avoid introspection and an intense preoccupation with yourself. One litmus test to is recall when you meet new people, do they ask about you or do they merely talk about themselves and the miseries that tattoo their parched lives?

Anyway, that's enough about me...
Time I was off



If you drift about carrying a tank of worries to pour on anyone with a pulse, don't be surprised if people duck when they see you coming. Who can blame them? However, if you project good feelings, then you are bound to attract friends much as a flower draws a honeybee. Often, when people proclaim how unhappy they are, the reason is they are projecting misery like a grey mist. Do you remember the "ITMA" ("It's That Man Again") character, Mona Lott?

Turn with the Times

Professor Clare's fourth point is that we shouldn't spend time looking forward to things – "time's winged chariot is hurrying near" fast enough as it is! We should live in the moment and be prepared to embrace change and turn with the wheel. That doesn't mean making massive changes, such as moving house every couple of years, for that's plain daft.

However, we need enough variety to keep life stimulating. A close relation of mine had "her views", but through a combination of laziness and fear, no matter how much the facts might have changed, she clung to them as if they were water wings in a choppy sea.

A bishop said to a church warden at his leaving party, "Ah, Mr Jenkins, after 60 years, you must have seen a lot of changes in your time."

"Yes," the old man grunted sourly, "and I've resisted every single one of them!"

What's Your Cause?

I reckon that the key to happiness can be summed up as a battle to fight, a maiden to woo and a cause bigger than us to live for.

My answer to the last item in that list is ZANE. What's yours?

Buccaneers and Bureaucrats

18 September – The Day After

Readers will know that my five subjects – money, sex, politics, death and religion – are an endless source of fascination to me. So now, let me turn to the final one in that list!

As I gave thanks at Norwich Cathedral yesterday, and reflected on our walk and ZANE's work, I started thinking about my previous working life. During that time, in which I started various businesses, charities and societies, I was often struck by the link between their problems, and the church and Gospel.

The fact is that Jerry Pournelle's baleful "Iron Law of Bureaucracy" may be seen in action everywhere. This insightful law from the US philosopher says that, given time, bureaucrats seek to control all enterprises by smothering them with rules and regulations. In doing so, they stifle much of the creative work put in place by the founders of the enterprise – and they usually conclude by getting shot of the founders. Job done!

The Iron Rule dominates almost every time (though not in ZANE... yet!) – and why? Most business managers – let's call them the "bureaucrats" – can never rest easy until, with a sigh of relief, they are able to get rid of the

scary, risk-taking buccaneers in their organisations. Then they celebrate such victories by imposing a raft of new safety-first rules and regulations on the enterprise.

Untamed Revolutionary

So, what does the "Iron Law" have to do with the church? A great deal. Two thousand years ago, Jesus wasn't a mere "buccaneer", he was the ultimate revolutionary! The pharisees were, of course, the bureaucrats who lived rich and "safe" lives. They gold-plated petty rules and regulations and imposed them on everyone they could. They were all about control – do you see the connection with Pournelle's rule?

Of course, the pharisees couldn't abide the uncontrollable Jesus or his insufferable message. He disregarded most of their daft rules and lived and died to make "all things new" (Revelation 21:5). Jesus especially loved the weak, the addicted, the lost, the morally dysfunctional and sinners like me. The pharisees found this intolerable, so they contrived to have Jesus tried in a mock court and then he was crucified.

For the last 2,000 years, many in the church have tried to tame Jesus, dumbing down his disruptive message and not mentioning his resurrection

too much. Of course, Jesus won't be tamed, and he wasn't, in the Anglican sense, "respectable".

As I looked around the thinly attended service yesterday, I wondered if the congregants know they're sinners who need Jesus' forgiveness? This is at the very heart of the Gospel, and it's not often discussed. They all looked like deeply respectable people, and all bureaucrats for buccaneers are few – retired magistrates, charity workers, teachers, accountants and lawyers – worthy people like that. Since I imagine they are all "well behaved" – and not into group sex or robbing banks – perhaps they don't see themselves as sinners? Unless they read the Bible, they may conclude that Jesus was only a great preacher – and that his message is about morality, good behaviour and mending the church roof? Perhaps they see God as a Ho Ho Ho Father Christmas whose job it is to give everyone the present of salvation? So – as they say nowadays – "No worries!"

Many vicars do their best to stop their congregations morphing into a sort of women's institute with religious bells on, but it's a difficult task. It's easier by far to talk about Jesus in Bullingdon Prison, where the inmates harbour no illusions that they're respectable. They know they're at the bottom of the pile, that they're sinners, and that they're in desperate need of forgiveness and a saviour.

So, be on your guard and remember Pournelle's Iron Law!

How to Survive the CoE

The church can be a minefield. I hope members of the church ministry find the following pointers useful:

1. Outside your intimate family, never take off your clothes, at the exhortation of anyone, however senior or holy they may be.
2. Be wary of those with "charismatic leadership" with numbers of oh-so-dedicated followers.
3. As a curate, take great care to find a kind and intelligent vicar to be your pupil master – for all too often, skimmed milk masquerades as cream. Getting this wrong can lead to an acute career setback and loss of confidence.
4. Never join a church about to embark on a major building project for this can absorb the energy of the ministry team and congregation for a generation.
5. Never hug or kiss anyone outside the family. Shake hands vigorously instead.
6. Never pay effusive compliments to anyone of either sex – and suspect anyone who pays such compliments to you. Don't share personal secrets with anyone outside the family.
7. Never start your own "The Tom Bloggins International Ministries", and don't join anyone else's, either. The egos of such people can be hubristic, and this so often leads to Nemesis.
8. Remember that churches attract disruptive oddballs like bees to a honeypot. Be on your guard,

for these people can mercilessly exploit your good nature. Others may make fatuous complaints to the church authorities or to the media – these may well be taken seriously by leaders, who are often more concerned with protecting their own backsides than looking after you.

9. You can spend 90 per cent of your time on the problems of 1 per cent of the congregation. Remember, you are primarily a pastor, not a friend. A degree of professional detachment is essential.
10. Always throw a lifejacket to someone drowning but never jump into the river yourself.
11. Never talk about party political matters because all secular issues are complex. The great writer-preachers of our time – such as Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Billy Graham, John Stott, CS Lewis, Michael Green and Tim Keller – never mentioned current political issues but stuck to the Gospel. If you break this rule, any lay person with a deep knowledge of the subject may think you're talking simplistic rot! And by declaring your political views, you are likely to lose at least 50 per cent of the support of your congregation. For example, unless you are a retired banker or accountant, you probably know as much about money matters and social security benefits as the chairman of the stock exchange knows about the Trinity. NET ZERO!

Endgame

This has been one of our finest walks, a combination of wonderful countryside and unstinting hospitality from generous ZANE supporters. As I mentioned before, it's not our custom to individually list those who have been so generous to us, but you know who you are. Thank you from Jane, Moses and me, for you have turned what could have been a weary drudge into a great pleasure.

At home, our 14-year-old cat, Kariba, was pleased to have the last word:

"I suppose it's good to see you back again," she purred, "but I can tell you, I certainly haven't missed your miserable children's ghastly dogs chasing me all over the place. I'm not as young as I once was, and they scare me. I've warned you before that I may well be driven away... Perhaps you think I'm nothing but a clapped-out old moggy? Well, it's fair to say I have life in me yet! I can still shake a leg and I have more admirers than that old, neutered Moses – who in my view, is more "Poo" than "Cocker", and is really no more than a fancy-priced mongrel! So, consider yourself on notice – and appreciate me while you still can!"

Last, our grateful thanks to our back-up and administrative teams, to gifted cartoonist Tony Husband, to Tom van Aurich for the design, and to our excellent driver and friend Richard Moyles, who endured us with good grace, looked after us with great kindness and drove us with impressive skill.

My Side of the Story

by Jane Benyon

Once again, I kept an account of our daily walks – and so here is my version of events. While Tom prefers to dwell on his favourite subjects (sometimes wandering off-piste!), I have written about the routes we followed, the characters we met and the interesting things we saw along the way. I hope it will give you an idea of this beautiful part of the country.

Day 1

Swaffham to Houghton

Our fourteenth walk – and this time, Norfolk provides the beautiful setting for our adventure. Kind supporters Charles and Angela have joined us for a couple of days, travelling all the way from Oxfordshire.

The first leg took us along the Peddars Way. This ancient route, probably pre-Roman, is part of the Icknield Way and was used by the

Romans as a trade route to the coast. It's certainly very straight, Roman style! We walked through an area of large, well-kept farms, mainly arable, which were empty post-harvest. One field had two beautiful Aberdeen Angus bulls, which I felt must be show-class, and we saw a vast field of pigs, all looking very contented in the sunshine.

We approached Castle Acre, a pretty town of Georgian houses famous for its priory, large church and





castle. The priory was visible from a distance, an impressive and well-preserved ruin. It was sacked by Henry VIII during the dissolution of the monasteries, but large sections are still standing. It's built mainly of flintstone, but the pillars and doorways are made from stone imported from Caen, in France, during the eleventh century. What an impressive feat! I hadn't realised that Norfolk has no stone outcrops – and therefore, no quarries. Some local churches have round, rather squat towers, which made them cheaper to build as the flintstone didn't need stone or brick cornerstones.

We passed through a ford, much appreciated by Moses, before reaching Castle Acre. After lunch, in a rather run-down pub garden, we spent half an hour walking around the outside of the priory. Then we were off again, on a straight bit of

tarmac road with a steady incline. It was now getting hot, and the combination of baking tarmac, no wind and high hedges was rather wearing. Suffice to say, we were all very pleased to climb into our air-conditioned car, including Moses.

Our hosts have a swimming pool, perfect after such a hot day!

Day 2:

Houghton to Great Bircham

We spent an excellent evening at the farm where we stayed last night, near Gateley. The hosts, a charming couple who are both over 90, are still hands-on farmers.

This morning, we picked up Charles and Angela in Bircham, where they left their car for the day. They had breakfasted in an excellent local store and cafe, so our driver, Richard,

agreed to return and purchase pre-ordered sandwiches for our lunch.

We returned to the Peddars Way, though this time we were walking off-road, down tracks and farm lanes. It was a far more pleasant experience, although bicycle tracks made walking difficult in parts. I always find these ancient tracks rather evocative and romantic, and found myself imagining the many people and vehicles the route must have witnessed over the past 2,000 years!

High banks of mainly brambles and lines of trees provided us with plenty of shade. We grazed on plump, sweet blackberries as we went – it's been a good year for them.

It was another scorching day, rising to 25C by the afternoon. At midday, we returned to the Bircham stores to eat our sandwiches, sitting comfortably on outdoor chairs, and

to use the loo. It's a very popular place and shows what can be done with imagination, which was so lacking in the pub we visited yesterday.

The walking this afternoon was more open, and I began to get a sense that the sea was nearby – though not yet in view. Refreshed by our lunch break, we made good progress, and the end point came faster than anticipated.

We said goodbye to Charles and Angela, who return to Oxford tomorrow, and drove to our hosts for the night.

Day 3:

Great Bircham to Holme-next-the-Sea

We had another happy evening and a good night's sleep. Awaking to more blue skies, we knew it was going to be



another hot day – but a light easterly wind brought some relief from the heat.

Our route down the Peddars Way was very similar to yesterday's, mainly along a rutty track between hedges. It was just Tom and me today, and we made steady progress, lunching in the village of Ringstead. We passed several large pig farms with hundreds of breeding sows and their offspring, and saw a crop I haven't seen before, with pale blue flowers. At first glance and from a distance, it looked like lavender, but it's apparently borage, used as an animal feed. Very pretty.

We were finally rewarded with a fleeting view of the sea as we walked into Holme-next-the-Sea. It was only 3pm, a record so far!

Day 4:

Holme-next-the-Sea to Thornham

We were greeted this morning by a grey mist, what the Scots would call an easterly "haar". The forecast predicted hot sunshine reaching 28C, but the mist didn't lift all day. We walked through an ethereal landscape, the sound of the sea in the distance – though it still wasn't visible. The mist was probably for the best, as there was no shade along the path and there wasn't any breeze. We would have sweltered in the sunshine.

My son-in-law had planned for the morning route to follow a big circle – probably a way of keeping our mileage up over the completed walk. It took us along the side of Old Hunstanton golf course, empty at this time of day in the fog. Having seen barely a soul over the past three days, we now passed a constant stream of dog walkers. They all seemed to have their dogs on leads while Moses gambolled in front of us.

We passed through some smart new housing developments, which I imagine cater to the growing retirement population who enjoy the golf and the sea air. Eventually, we made our way down to the beach, with high tide around 11am. Moses enjoyed a time fetching sticks in the sea while Tom got into a deep conversation with an ex-army major and his wife. Having completed our circle, we lunched in Old Hunstanton, and met up with a couple of ZANE supporters who were joining us for the afternoon.

The afternoon walk took us through a conservation area, well-maintained with information boards detailing what to look out for. In some areas, tall wooden posts have been erected, apparently to conserve the sand dunes from erosion. One board described two prehistoric Seahenges, similar to Stonehenge but made of timber. However, with the visibility being so poor, or perhaps because the sea was so high, we couldn't see a thing!



As the coastal path snaked away from the seashore, we found ourselves in a massive area of salt marshes. They must look spectacular in the early summer when the plants – many of which were unfamiliar to me – are in flower. The path had recently been rebuilt on stilts, giving easy access to wheelchair users. The area is a bird sanctuary, with a beautiful freshwater lake teeming with waterfowl – though unfortunately, the poor visibility made it difficult to identify them.

We eventually came to the pretty village of Thornham, where we said goodbye to our companions. Michael was very pleased with how well he had done, having broken his hip some months ago.

Day 5:

Thornham to Burnham Overy

We spent another pleasant evening in the company of supporters. This morning, we found that the mist had lifted and visibility was vastly improved.

After making our way back to Thornham, the coastal path took us away from the coast and out into the countryside for three miles in a circuitous route to Brancaster. Here we had to negotiate roadworks – the road was narrow and there was no traffic control in place, so cars had to pass each other with difficulty, while pedestrians could only make what progress they could.

Several signs told us that our intended route along the coastal path

was closed for duckboard repairs – it was a two-mile stretch, and the proposed detour was certainly not appealing. Then we met a couple coming the other way who assured us it was passable, although the duckboards were broken in places. Apparently, the notice had been up since 2022, with no sign of work being carried out to date. So, we took their advice and ignored the signs.

The path was certainly in poor condition and the boards were pretty rotten, but clearly, the locals have given up waiting for repairs as we met several people coming the other way. The sign at the other end stated that the work, started in December

2022, was rescheduled to begin in April this year and that the notice would be removed by August 2023! Not a very impressive local council, or whoever looks after the coastal path in this area.

We had lunch in Burnham Deepdale, a busy sailing harbour, before resuming our walk on a beautiful stretch of salt marshes along the sea wall. It was a perfect afternoon – although warm, a gentle sea breeze kept us from overheating. There is something very special about the light in this part of the world, and you can understand why it is frequented by so many artists. There were plenty of egrets and gulls

Be careful, Tom... some of these are a bit dodgy



Doesn't the mist do strange things to your eyes, Tom?



whirling around, and we saw three small deer with large round ears, which we later learned are Chinese water deer. Having escaped from deer parks, they have made their home on the salt marshes.

After a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon, we met Richard beside a beautifully restored windmill owned by the National Trust.

Day 6:

Burnham Overy Staithe to Wells-next-the-Sea

This morning brought us another thick mist, which became denser

as we approached the sea. Richard drove us into the village of Burnham Overy Staithe. Our intended start point would have meant walking along a busy A-road in the fog – something we had promised ourselves we wouldn't do anymore.

Once again, we walked along the well-maintained sea wall. We passed lots of local dog walkers, though we were a bit frustrated by the poor visibility. After leaving the salt marshes behind, we struggled through the sand dunes leading to Holkham Beach. This vast stretch of sand probably covers at least four miles. As it was low tide and we

were on soft sand, we walked some distance to the firmer sand next to the sea. It made for easier walking and Moses had a great time fetching sticks from the water.

The beach was practically empty except for an occasional nudist sunbather visible through the mist! There was evidence of horse activity and it's obviously a popular area for an early-morning canter.

Reluctantly leaving the beach, we made our way through a wooded area of fine specimen trees to the Lady Anne's Drive visitor centre, part of the Holkham Estate. It's a popular tourist destination and was bustling despite the murky weather. After lunching with Richard, we continued along the wooded path to the beach road that runs down to Wells-next-the-Sea. A wide water channel was teeming with pleasure boats of all

sizes and shapes. The village is an attractive and popular seaside resort.

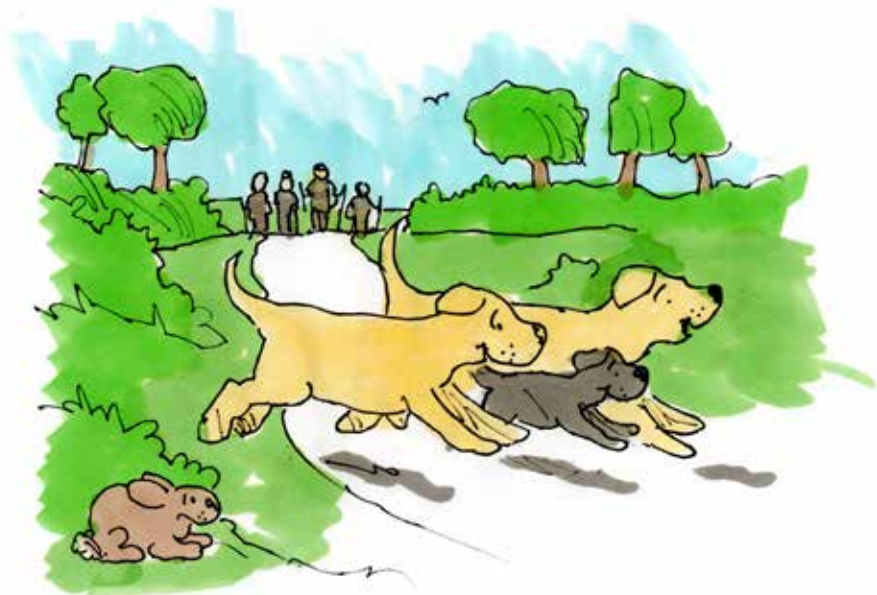
After a short break for an ice cream, we headed off to our host, who lives just outside the village. We are staying here for three nights, which is a joy as it means we can unpack and do the washing!

Day 7:

Wells-next-the-Sea to Blakeney

Today was another scorcher. The dense mist had lifted, and we wondered what changes in the atmosphere to disperse a fog like that from one day to the next without any sign of wind.

So, it was back to the salt marshes with little protection from the heat for us or Moses – who, at least, could find the occasional pool in



which to cool himself down. The temperature had risen to 28C by the time we reached Morston, and we were feeling pretty drained. We were joined for lunch by our host for the weekend, her two Labradors and a mutual friend of ours who had driven down from Scotland with her dog.

The remaining couple of hours of walking were mitigated by a gentle breeze, and the arrival of the boisterous young Labradors cheered Moses up no end. Our stopping point was Blakeney, a busy seaside town full of Saturday tourists.

We're very much looking forward to our day off tomorrow.

Day 8:

Rest Day

It was so wonderful not to have any deadlines to meet today and we enjoyed a blissful day off. We had a guided tour around Holkham Hall, a fascinating property dating back to the twelfth Century. It is still the family home of the Earls of Leicester – Robert Dudley, a favourite of Elizabeth I, is probably the best-known of these.

Our kind host gave a lunch party for us and in the evening, we went out in a friend's sailing boat. Its electric motor made for a silent and peaceful journey as we toured around the island off Burnham Overy. We gathered a bucket of samphire that covered one of the inlets and had it for supper with butter. Delicious!



Day 9:

Blakeney to Weybourne

We were joined today by our friend Brigit and her boisterous golden Labrador. It was another glorious day, but a fresh sea wind made conditions much more pleasant than Saturday's.

We left Blakeney and walked along the sea wall towards the delightful village of Cley-next-the-Sea. A number of watercolour artists were busily painting the colourful houses on the waterfront and the beautifully restored windmill. We fell into conversation with a few of them and were impressed by their talent.

The village itself is charming – many of the flint houses are ingeniously decorated with different-sized stones, and we came across lots of artisan shops, including a smokery. Then it was back down to the sea wall and the beach, which was covered with pebbles banked up in great piles. Walking on these was difficult, so we made our way to the sand at the

Look Jane, a Sea Otter!... Jane?!



sea's edge. The dogs had a wonderful time gambolling in the waves, the Labrador running rings around Moses.

Richard found us a place for lunch in Salthouse, which meant climbing back over the mounds of pebbles and then back through the salt marsh to reach the village. We ate at Cookie's Crab Shop, which is a tiny place with outside seating, and enjoyed a delicious plate of mixed shellfish at a very reasonable price. The only problem was that it was cash only, but between us, we managed to scrape together enough to pay the bill!

Making our way back to the sea, we enjoyed a lovely walk along the beach, as the pebbles began to disappear. There was great excitement when Brigit spotted a sea otter – I was disappointed to miss it.

We saw a number of fishermen along this stretch, their long fishing rods on poles. They told us they catch sea bass, bream and herring on a good day, which seems surprising so close to the shore.

We finished at Weybourne, where we said goodbye to Brigit.

Day 10:

Weybourne to Overstrand

We spent last night in Blakeney Manor Hotel, generously paid for by a supporter. While Moses slumbered in our room (we tried not to worry about what he was getting up to), some other supporters kindly provided us with dinner. Unfortunately, the fire alarm went off three times around 3am, which made getting back to sleep difficult. For breakfast, we had delicious kippers

smoked at the shop we passed in Cley-next-the-Sea yesterday.

The weather had changed, and we were greeted by grey skies and a strong wind. We found the seashore deserted. The mounds of gravel had disappeared – from soft sand at Holkham Beach, to pebbles between Blakeney and Weybourne, and then back to soft sand again, it's a mystery why this happens so suddenly!

The coastal path left the beach, taking us high up onto the cliffs ahead. The salt marshes were behind us now, and we found ourselves walking along the edge of farmland, with pretty wildflowers even at this late stage of the year. I was particularly attracted to the tall vetches, with their different shades

of mauve and purple as well as the more common yellow.

The rain was drumming down as we arrived in Cromer. We passed rows of static mobile homes, all beautifully maintained with colourful pot plants on their verandas. Cromer is an attractive Edwardian resort, though its rather tacky seaside entertainments looked miserable in the rain.

Since we had packed lunches, provided by the hotel we stayed in last night, we decided not to stop in the wet and to push on to the end of our walk. The coastal path took us down to the seashore again, on treacherously steep steps – I took them very slowly, clinging on to a side rail. Slipping in the rain would



have been all too easy. Back on the beach, the sand cliffs towered above us and we were concerned we wouldn't be able to get back up before the tide turned. Luckily, a man coming the other way assured us we had plenty of time.

By the time we arrived in Overstrand, we were soaked to the skin – and hoping that our hosts would have facilities to dry our clothes!

Day 11:

Overstrand to Walcott

The rain disappeared and we were gifted with another beautiful, sunny day. We are so lucky.

We made our way along a beautiful sandy beach, a cooling breeze in our faces. It was invigorating to walk beside the crashing waves, the

sea still rough after yesterday. The sandbanks towered above us, at least 100 feet high in places. I noticed signs warning against climbing on them because of the danger of erosion. It suddenly dawned on me that instead of being sandstone cliffs they are made only of sand that crumbles in one's hand when touched! No wonder there is a danger of erosion – I had totally forgotten that there is practically no stone in Norfolk!

There were many more seabirds around today. Cormorants sat on top of the wooden sea defences, stretching out their wings to dry. As well as the usual black-headed gulls, there were larger herring gulls with differing arrays of plumage, from white to a speckled brown and white – which I imagine belongs to the young ones. There were sandpipers



in profusion and enchanting little sanderlings ran along the beach in flocks. Moses tried to chase them – each time they flew for a short time, and then started running again.

We had lunch in Mundesley before resuming our beach walk. Moses was sending us up the wall, barking because he wanted us to throw sticks. There was no wood to be seen, so I gave in and bought one of those ball throwers that everyone on the beach seems to have. For a short time, he was happy until he punctured the rubbish ball, and it sank in the sea – then it was soon back to the barking!

We met a young seal, sitting in a wet pool on the beach. It started shuffling towards the sea, and I grabbed Moses. The creature looked distressed and was breathing heavily. Looking back, I could see it returning to its hole in the sand.

We passed beneath what I am told is the largest gas distribution centre in England. The huge site dispenses gas coming from the pipelines under the sea. It also sends gas back across the North Sea to Europe.

We ended a fine day of walking at Rudram Gap.

Day 12:

Walcott to Waxham

It's been yet another very hot day with no sea breeze, and we were tempted to take off our shoes and paddle. This would have meant carrying our heavy walking shoes,

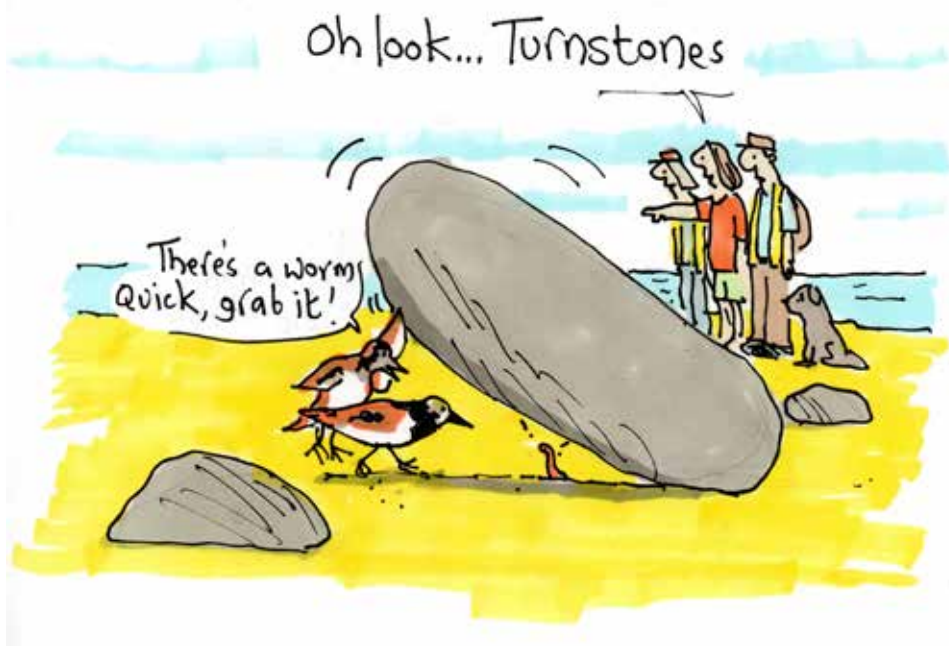
though, and then having to deal with sand-covered feet when it came to putting them back on...

Great piles of boulders lie along this stretch of coastline, some up against the sand cliffs, others placed at right angles to the shore, and others positioned in lines out to sea creating calmer pools inshore. This is an attempt to protect the land against erosion. The boulders were apparently brought over from Norway in huge barges some years ago. It must have been a vast undertaking, as there are tons and tons of them!

I spied a group of birds, new to me, standing amongst the stones. A lady was filming them with a very sophisticated-looking camera, and I asked her what they were. She told me they are turnstones, so-called because of their habit of flipping over stones in search of things to eat.

We stopped at Sea Palling, where we were met by Jane whom we had supper with last night. She kindly brought us a picnic, which we ate sitting on the sea wall, and then she joined us for the rest of the day's walking.

We passed the tiny hamlet of Eccles. Apparently, this was once a sizeable fishing village but most of it fell into the sea following ferocious storms in the seventeenth century. The story goes that St Mary's church collapsed, and the only thing left standing by the nineteenth century was the rounded church tower – which



eventually landed on the beach. It remained there for a century and was used as a lighthouse until it was finally swept away by another storm in 1895. We come across a huge, rusted bell on the beach and wondered if it came from the church.

Our stopping point today had no road access for Richard, so we continued to Horsey Gap where he could pick us up in the car.

Day 13:

Waxham to Caister-on-Sea

Having spent three days walking along the beach, I suggested we walk along the coastal path at the top of the sandbanks to get some idea of the countryside. We found it to be fairly uninteresting scrubland though, and

having come across a sign saying that seals were likely to be on the beach for moulting, we returned to the shoreline. Sure enough, there they were!

We passed two large groups of seals of all sizes and ages, lolling on the sand or swimming nearby. There must have been around 50 in each group. The smell was very pungent, and I kept Moses firmly on his lead. These were grey seals, but some of them had mottled colouring and we wondered if perhaps they were the oldest ones.

Some of the pups still had their white fluff on them. Apparently, they are weaned from their mothers as soon as they lose this fluff and then they must fend for themselves. They do not receive any survival training and

40 per cent of them perish from lack of food. Talk about the survival of the fittest! I thought of the little seal I saw two days ago, and wondered if it would survive...

We finished our walk at Caister-on-Sea, which seems to consist of rows of holiday mobile homes.

Day 14:

Caister-on-Sea to Gorleston-on-Sea

We were joined today by our son Oli, his wife Lois, their daughters Amelie, Annabelle and Eliza, and their large Labrador, Otis. They came

up from Cambridge this morning and did well to arrive by 9.30am. We spent a delightful morning with the children and dogs paddling in the sea and throwing endless balls. The children were disappointed not to see any seals, but we were now on the outskirts of Great Yarmouth, which is probably not ideal for them.

We had a happy lunch, with lots of chat and laughter, in an old Edwardian hotel overlooking the sea. The rest of the day was spent navigating the streets of Great Yarmouth. Like Cromer, it must have been a fine seaside resort in the early twentieth century, and although full of the usual tourist clutter, the centre

The seals look happy enough





has a certain style about it. There was some sort of fete in town, with many of the streets closed to traffic and lots of street entertainment going on. We eventually crossed the River Yare, following it back down towards its mouth. We walked along a road flanked by warehouses and boat-building sites before arriving at the large harbour of Gorleston-on-Sea. It must once have been an important shipping terminal but sadly there wasn't a ship in sight.

We said goodbye to our family, telling the children how proud we were of them for completing the full eight miles today.

Day 15:

Gorleston-on-Sea to Lowestoft

Our last day was grey and blustery, and we set off assuming the walking would be easy. Out of Gorleston-on-Sea, with its wide-open beach, we saw a sign saying "No dogs between May and the end of September" – but decided to ignore it as there was no one around.

Our route would take us along the clifftops and past a golf course we were told. We found a gate and steps up to said golf course, but it was firmly locked, so we continued along the seafront. High tide was at 10.30 am but there was a strong wooden barrier by the sea and plenty of dry

sand behind it. There were lots of people on the beach, so we felt fairly confident. Then we asked a lady playing with her dogs if it was safe to walk on, and she assured us it was. She came that way every day, she said, and there were steps leading up not much further on.

Well, she was right about the steps – but beside them was another pile of boulders stretching for around 100 yards, and the sea was now in front of them! We attempted to climb over them but then thought better of it – and Moses certainly wasn't going to follow, sensible dog. I tried to walk in front of the stones but got soaked in the process. There was no alternative but to retrace our steps to Gorleston. We met other walkers, much younger than us, who were prepared to

negotiate the rocks – but youth was on their side!

It was now pouring with rain, which added to our misery. On the way back, we were frustrated to see the steps leading up to the golf course that we should have taken. We rang Richard and he picked us up and took us to a hotel that allowed us to change as well as have a welcome cup of coffee. Eventually, we made our way into Lowestoft, none the worse for our little adventure.

Having completed the walk, we decided to visit Norwich Cathedral as it was on our route home to Oxford. We were lucky as a service of evensong was being held, in memory of the Battle of Britain. We enjoyed some sublime music and singing, a fitting end to our journey around Norfolk...

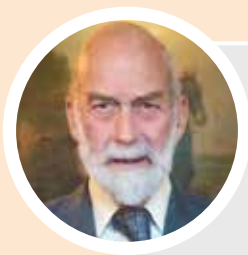




“ ZANE is a brilliant charity working in the failed state of Zimbabwe, caring for the old and lonely, providing medical treatment and supporting communities. You can choose where your money goes.

Dame Prue Leith DBE DL
Cookery writer and restaurateur

”



“ I have supported ZANE for many years as they do excellent work amongst the vulnerable in Zimbabwe.

HRH Prince Michael of Kent GCVO

”



“ ZANE is really in touch with the people it assists. ZANE's work is wonderfully moving . . .

John Humphrys

Author, journalist and radio & TV presenter

”



“ ZANE is a wonderful charity. [ZANE] is about service and it's about love . . . what is special is that ZANE forms relationships with everyone it helps.

Rt Hon the Lord Paul Boateng

Former UK High Commissioner to South Africa
and Labour cabinet minister under Tony Blair

”



“ I much admire ZANE's valuable work amongst the poorest of the poor in Zimbabwe, particularly amongst pensioners and for its clubfoot programme.

Rt Hon Andrew Mitchell MP

Minister of State for Development and Africa

”



“ I am deeply impressed with the work of ZANE; one of those charities that make a little money go a long way.

Baroness Royall of Blaisdon

Principal of Somerville College, Oxford
Former Labour leader of the House of Lords

”

This could be me: it could be you

Alan Bond, 85, worked as an accountant throughout his career. He and his late partner, Val, prudently invested their savings for retirement. But in an all-too-familiar story, they awoke one morning to find their entire savings and pensions had vanished in a bout of spiralling inflation.



The stress of discovering they were now destitute resulted in Val having a heart attack and dying. Alan just about managed to carry on working until he was made redundant. Then he was forced to sell his house and possessions at fire-sale prices.

When ZANE first met Alan, he was desperate. There are limited social services in Zimbabwe and he couldn't afford healthcare insurance. He had run out of insulin for his diabetes and was mere hours away from falling into a diabetic coma.

ZANE paid for Alan to see a doctor and arranged to cover his monthly insulin costs. ZANE also covers his rent and provides a regular food parcel. As a result, his physical health has improved greatly.

Alan is hugely grateful to ZANE:

"Without ZANE's help, I would have died," he says. "The ZANE team have been so kind and loving. They enabled me to face life again. Please thank ZANE's donors, for without their great generosity, I wouldn't be here."

** Names and images have been changed on grounds of security.*

Reasons to support ZANE

1. ZANE provides aid, comfort and support to 2,090 impoverished pensioners with nowhere else to turn. Only those genuinely in need of assistance receive it.
2. Donors can choose which area of ZANE's work they wish to support.
3. ZANE was the Telegraph Group Overseas Charity of the year.
4. ZANE is looking after around 500 aged and frail veterans and their widows. These people fought for the Crown in WW2, Malaya, Korea and Aden. Without ZANE, they would be living with insufficient food and no healthcare.
5. ZANE runs education programmes in the high-density areas assisting women and children living in extreme poverty.
6. ZANE funded the first clubfoot correction programme in Zimbabwe. Fifteen treatment centres have been established and over 5,400 children have received treatment to date.
7. ZANE funds the provision of prosthetic limbs for victims of landmine explosions and treatment for people with hearing loss.
8. ZANE's funds are subject to rigorous audit and ZANE is proud that since its foundation, it has never lost money to collapsed banks, middlemen or corruption.
9. An independent consultancy reviewed ZANE and the report stated:
"The charity thrives on its responsiveness, flexibility and lack of bureaucracy. Operationally, ZANE is frugal, focused and effective in delivering aid to the needy."

If you want to save a life, then please support ZANE



“ZANE's work in Zimbabwe provides an essential lifeline of support for those who cannot help themselves. It is a wonderful charity and the money goes where it's needed.

Lord Hastings of Scarisbrick CBE

Chairman, ZANE Council of Reference
Vice-President of Unicef

”



Zimbabwe A National Emergency

You can make a donation by phone or online
020 7060 6643 www.zane.uk.com

Reg Charity No 1112949