

Ian West: Looking back, snippet corner – March 2019

Banjo's Snippets, Four months completed.

Well I have now completed my first 4 months and if that is anything to go by the remainder of the walk is going to be just as 'fabulous'. I may or may not have mentioned in my newsletters some encounters because I wanted to save them for this section.

The walks and the people I have met have been 'brills' but these are the highlights for me.

On my walk I came across a sweet old lady, near Herne Bay. She said "Good morning and you are?" I introduced myself and told her what I was doing, she replied "My name is Gladys and I was born here 83 years ago". I said that it was a pleasure to meet with her. After trading some stories I wished her well. On leaving she put some money in my hand, she said "It's not much but I hope it helps". Not to be rude I said thank you, every penny counts regardless of how much. I put it in my bag and said thank you and best wishes to her. In Great Yarmouth I went to the bank to put money into my charity account which I collect on my way. I went into my bag to get the money that Gladys had donated; I was amazed to see that it was old money she had given me. Yes it was £15 of the old money so I smiled to myself. After talking to the cashier she changed it for me. So Gladys, I bet you have big mattress at home.

Dave is another saviour of mine who came to my rescue near Lowestoft. He pulled up next to me in a van and told me to go to the top of the hill and wait for him there. "What size are you?" he asked me. I replied that I was a size 7 and before I could say anything he zipped off. I reach the top of the road and some 10 minutes later he turned up with a new pair of boots (photo enclosed) a thermal top and socks. I asked him what I owed him, he replied nothing just look after the next person in need that you meet. I explained what I was doing and what I was raising money for and he said "well done and here's a tenner". Many thanks Dave from near Lowestoft.

Another exciting day was when I was on the great Pilgrims way going to Canterbury. Beautiful views, scenery and tranquillity were the order of the day. I only came across four people with dogs, two 4x4s and a council worker filling in a 4ft hole that appeared with all the rain that we had. He said that the walk has to be maintained because it's a public right of way.

Also the pub I came across called the Dirty Habit, what a great name to call a pub. I loved my stay at Port Talbot which was very nice indeed with friends. I had the honour of seeing a Banksy painting (photo enclosed in my updates) on a garage wall, truly amazing.

To finish off my snippet corner I would like to do a small piece about Guide Dogs for the Blind. I just want to get it across what a great job they do and inform people on what work is carried out to make the dogs as good and wonderful as they are and what training goes on.

Guide Dogs for the Blind info:

The cost to support a Guide Dog from birth to retirement is £56,800. The cost is made up of the following six stages:

1. Breeding a guide dog puppy £3,600

The charity hand-pick the best dogs around to breed the next generation of world-class guide dogs. Most of the new-born puppies will go on to become working Guide Dogs by the time they are two years old. If a dog is not suited to becoming a Guide Dog, it could move to work with another assistance dog organisation.

2. Puppy walking £5,300

Aged seven weeks, Guide Dog puppies are placed with a volunteer puppy walker for around 12-14 months of puppy walking training. Puppies are house trained, taught basic obedience and familiarised with our busy world.

3. Early training £22,000

The mature puppy enters its formal training at one of Guide Dogs' training schools. New trainees learn how to guide by walking down the centre of a pavement, avoiding obstacles, stopping at the kerbs and crossing.

4. Advanced training £10,400

Having mastered the essentials, each dog is matched with a prospective owner and undergoes further training tailored to the owner's specific needs.

5.Partnership training £3,300

Finally we bring dog and owner together to complete their training, forming a new life-changing partnership.

To breed and train a guide dog costs £44,600

6.Supporting partnerships £12,200

Guide Dogs for the Blind continues to support their dogs during their time working as a guide. This covers the cost of food, vets' bills and ongoing training.

A guide dog owner may have as many as eight guide dogs in their lifetime bringing the total cost to more than £450,000.

- Every hour, someone in the UK starts to lose their sight.
- Almost two million people in the UK are living with sight loss that has a significant impact on their daily lives. By 2050, there could be nearly four million.
- Guide Dogs is working to give people with sight loss the confidence and skills they need to live the life they choose.
- Guide Dogs rely on donations from the public to keep their life-changing services running. In 2016, less than 1% of our income came from government funding.