



YOU DON'T KNOW

Episode 6: Stepping Out

David Turner: **DT**

Lizzy Turner: **LT**

Transcription by Christabel Smith and Lizzy Turner.

Intro:

LT: Hello and welcome to episode six of You Don't Know, 'Stepping Out'. This is the final episode for this year. 'Stepping Out' is based on walking; mine and David's walking, and our thoughts and ideas around why we enjoy it. Walking has been quite a big part of our making of this series and it's quite a big part of our relationship as well.

For the recording for this episode we went for a long walk and we had a conversation along the way. I won't give too much away because that will become apparent as you listen. But the conversation we have on the walk is the reason for this episode being slightly different from all the others, in that we won't be back at the end for a chat. Because we spoke so much during the recording we didn't think you needed to hear anymore from us.

I also wrote a poem in response to this walk and conversation, and this is what forms the basis of the book which accompanies this episode.

DT: And as you'll hear, the poem threads its way throughout the recording you're about to listen to. The book itself is handmade and a hand-typed copy of the poem. It takes the

form of a concertina book, which we've wanted to do for quite a while as part of this project, and it seemed like a really good way of finishing it off. The book/print is available for £6 plus p&p from our website, link in the description. That link will take you to our website where you can also find a full transcript of the episode, and transcripts of all previous episodes.

We've decided, because it's the final episode of the year, and essentially the end of the project, unless we decide to come back next year, which is looking increasingly likely, we've put together a special offer on our website shop, which is a bundle of all the prints that we've made this year, episodes 1-6. This is available for £52 plus postage, but that is only available in the UK due to restrictions with posting abroad.

All prints are available in that bundle at a reduced price, and if you take into account that you're not paying for individual postage on each of the items, it's a saving of nearly £20. So do that. It's nearly Christmas, I don't know if you celebrate Christmas, I hate it too. But you can still buy presents for people out of a sense of horrendous obligation.

LT: And as always, 10% of all sales will go to Eat or Heat food bank in Walthamstow.

DT: A massive thank-you to anyone that's listened to any of the episodes during this year. It has been a bit of an odd year, so it's been nice to try and connect, even digitally, with people. It has been really great that people have shared episodes with friends and told people, family, colleagues, whoever, dogs in the park, about the project and that they should listen.

It would be really useful if you could keep doing that as we have no budget for advertising and it's increasingly difficult to spread the word about small, independent, weird podcasts like this. So, if you could keep telling people, we would love you forever. That's it from us, here comes the recording. We will probably speak to you in 2022.

Cue the annoying 'synthy' link music...

Stepping Out:



[00:04:18]

[The recording begins by fading in with the sounds of two people walking outside along a quiet road. The sound of their footsteps crunching can be heard, as well as the sounds of wind, birdsong and crows cawing. At one point the sound of a backpack being unzipped can be heard, and the sound of a car passing. The background sounds continue beneath the following long section of conversation, with the crunching footsteps the most prominent at times.]

[A suspenseful synth track fades in over the outdoor background sounds, and continues beneath the following poem section before fading out. The cawing of crows is prominent. The outdoor sounds continue.]

LT:

There were quite a few poets at the hospital
They'd meet walking in the forest grounds
and write home about each other
Pieces of best work came from there
the chemistry of semi-freedom and grief
and ordinariness
from beneath the arms of beech trees

LT: John Clare, the famous poet, lived here in Lippitts Hill Lodge, 1837 to 1841.

DT: So where are we?

LT: We are at Lippitts Hill, outside Lippitts Hill Lodge, which is close to High Beech, by Epping Forest.

DT: I always say we're in the top of Epping Forest, but I think we might just be in the middle of it. Lippitts Hill is just a lane that runs through the forest. We're outside an old farm building, which you know more about than me.

LT: I know a little bit more about it. It's the site of Dr Matthew Allen's High Beech asylum, which we will now call a psychiatric hospital, which was an early example of a psychiatric hospital, which was more patient-centred and treated its patients more nicely. They had a lot more freedom to walk around in the forest and enjoy the peaceful environment... probably without these parakeets.

[The sound of several parakeets squawking can be heard for a short time beneath the conversation.]

DT: I was going to say, I bet in the 1830s there weren't many parakeets about.

LT: But the poet John Clare was admitted to High Beech hospital. I think it's debated as to which building he was actually living in. This blue plaque we're looking at now says he lived here at Lippitts Hill Lodge.

DT: But is this just the only existing building?

LT: It's the only remaining building here. In 1841, after suffering a decline in his mental health, John Clare decided to leave the hospital and instead of doing one of his usual walks into the forest, he walked much, much further, trying to get home to Northamptonshire. He walked all the way from here to Northborough in Northamptonshire and on to Helpston, where he was from.

DT: The idea today is that we're going to do our own walk, but we're not going north towards Helpston, we're going to go south towards Camberwell in South London. We're not going to say why at the moment, that should explain itself as we go along. It's probably important to say, just in case there are any diehard John Clare fans... you can be a diehard John Clare fan can't you?

LT: The people who like him really, really are obsessed with him, yeah.

DT: We are not recreating John Clare's walks, that is not the point of this. It's just an inspiration. We're going to talk about walking in general and why we like to walk, which we do a lot. Lizzy's interest and fascination with John Clare is just a starting point. We're not walking to Helpston.

[Lizzy and David laugh.]

LT: Not today.

[The sound of Lizzy and David's footsteps continue for a short time before the synth track fades in. The track continues over the background sounds, beneath the following poem section, before fading out.]

LT:

Not much proof of them joining up but
I'm thinking about the transition of two
from walking alone to walking together
"Then trace thy footsteps on with me"

DT: So John Clare walked to Helpston in 1841. Why did he do that?

LT: He obviously was very unwell. He thought he was walking home to his childhood sweetheart, Mary Joyce, who sadly had already died a few years before; forgetting it was actually his wife who was still at home. So she met him, tried to look after him for five months or so, and then he ended up being admitted to Northampton asylum, which is where he spent the rest of his days, and actually where he wrote some of his most profound poems, in my opinion, despite being unwell.

DT: I didn't know who John Clare was before I met you. Having spent seven years, six years, making Lunar Poetry Podcasts, a lot of people always assumed I would know as much about classical and romantic poetry as I did about the contemporary stuff I was talking about with the living poets. That isn't the case really. I know a little bit, but it isn't really my area of expertise and I think if you hadn't been talking to me about John Clare, I would have done the same that I did to everyone, which was be really adamant that I shouldn't have to know who these people are.

[The sound of two people with two dogs walking past in the opposite direction can be heard. The dogs can be heard panting, and one of the people says hello to Lizzy and David.]

Some good dogs there. Good boys, running boys. Or girls!

[Lizzy and David laugh.]

It probably was, I say probably, it definitely was far more interesting hearing about him being in hospital and walking, and his obsession with walking and what that meant to him. I definitely found that more interesting than talking about his work. I don't think I've read much of his work.

LT: Yeah, I think if you understand those things and have a sensitivity to those subjects, it's easy to feel an affinity with him. It sounds a bit mad, but I feel like it's him as a person that I'm drawn to, even above the writing.

DT: I suppose the commonly held belief is that, he's sort of held up as a bit of a rambler's champion isn't he, as if he was somehow trying to retain everyone's right to freedom and walking, but I don't know, the more you've told me about it, the more that seems not to be true.

LT: No, it was just a normal part of his life. I think there is that side to it. There are so many different aspects to his work, I think different people claim him in different ways, so obviously he's known as a nature poet and a walking poet, but also he wrote such profound things about mental illness and despair, and I don't feel like that is really held up enough in its own right. Also, his love poetry as well is really beautiful. A strong theme in his general writing though was about enclosure of the countryside and having the freedom taken away and having his roots cut off, and that was a deeply hurtful event, which I think perhaps contributed to his mental health decline.

DT: There was an interesting thing you read last night to me about the idea of how we now see walking as a leisure-time activity, whereas in the 1830s to '50s, whenever he was doing most of his walking, that was still most people's main mode of transport, unless they had a horse to ride on. And how he wouldn't necessarily have been alone when he was walking, because that's just how everyone got around.

[The sound of a person riding past on a bike and its wheels crunching on the ground can be heard.]

LT: That's it. This big, long walk that he did is the focus and people think oh wow, no one would do that today, when actually it was normal in the 1800s to spend days walking. Everybody was walking, who was able to, obviously. There's this idea that you would be isolated on a walk through the countryside, when actually you would encounter hundreds of people because everyone was there. That's where people would meet and they would be working or just passing through. It's a bit of an incorrect image really to imagine him lonely and wandering. I mean, he definitely did do solitary wandering through the forest, but on pathways through the country he would be meeting loads of people.

[The sound of Lizzy and David's footsteps continue for a short time before the synth track fades in. The footsteps of a person running past can be heard. The synth track continues over the background sounds, beneath the following poem section, before fading out.]

LT:

I'd like to believe in a bird's eye record
of every one of us in here (the forest)
and how we went and when
and what was said and kept
I wish they can see and hear us now
because I feel safe with them
Sometimes you have to tell me to slow down

DT: He must have been quite settled for a while in Epping Forest. It's probably important to say that, even though he was in what was then called an asylum and what we would now refer to as a psychiatric unit, he wasn't locked there against his will was he?

LT: No. He was there for a while and it seems like, from his writing, that he was quite satisfied and at peace, and clearly enjoying his wandering about in the forest around there.

From what we know of the place, it sounds like it was nice, at least compared to places that existed before that. He wrote a lot about High Beech itself and how much he loved the scenery. There's a really interesting theme that comes out of a lot of that writing, and I was talking to you yesterday about this as well, there's a dual aspect to his isolation there.

At times, he seems to really embrace it, and he talks about being hidden away, he describes it as a 'green palace', and seems to enjoy the idea that he's there and the rest of the world is far away, or below him, below this hill. Then at other times, he's clearly terrified at the thought of being isolated and hidden away and forgotten, which perhaps correlates with his mood swings that he appeared to have.

DT: Yeah. It's funny because when you were reading that stuff to me, it made me think immediately about the amount of people I have spoken to with a wide range of mental health issues, and this idea that quite often, in times of trauma and crisis, but not exclusively, this idea of feeling as though you've been pulled out of yourself and you're raised up and watching yourself.

And again, I don't know much about him, and it's only from what you've read out to me and told me, but this idea of 'elevation' and isolation and solitude seems to be quite a recurring theme in what a lot of people have talked about when they're stressed or paranoid, or even when they're manic and they're feeling good and they've got lots of energy; this idea or feeling of being sucked out of yourself and being hyper-aware of what's around you.

But the paranoia that that can bring, because it's easy to imagine that you can feel like you're being watched, because you are, because you're watching yourself. And the confusion that that brings. The separation, this sudden separation and tearing between mind and body, and it almost becomes physical through that imagining of being raised up. And you can imagine that in a place, because geographically you're quite high up in Epping Forest, in various places you can actually feel like you're on top of the whole of...

LT: ...the world.

DT: The whole North-East of London, essentially.

LT: I can quote the lines he wrote about it. He said: "I love the breakneck hills that headlong go, and leave me high and half the world below."

[00:21:11]

[The sound of Lizzy and David's footsteps continue for a short time before the synth track fades in. The track continues over the background sounds, beneath the following poem section, before fading out.]

LT:

And I thought about different passages on walking
(a passage is text and away and a journey)
and meeting the universe

and at what point is a walk a journey?

[Lizzy and David can be heard stopping to look at something, then after a short time their footsteps resume. The sound of a page in a book being turned can be heard.]

LT: I thought because we were talking about how people walking wouldn't necessarily have been in solitude, I'm going to read a couple of passages from this lovely book by Ronald Blythe called 'At Helpston: Meetings with John Clare'. He says, "We cannot comprehend how peopled the countryside was. I went for a walk not long ago, about six miles, and never met a single person in the fields or gardens, and hardly any cars in the narrow lane; but had I walked in my grandfather's time, there would be groups of people hedging, ditching, doing things, children playing, hundreds of people going for walks, courting couples, etc., because the fields really were where everybody met.

[The sound of several people walking past and speaking can be heard briefly. What they say is inaudible.]

Our footpaths are either deserted or protected or threatened, or deliberately walked on by self-conscious ramblers and others, and many still exist for their original purpose, which was to make beelines across farmland to moors or along coasts or to work, and vast numbers exist on local maps, but not in real local knowledge. Many have grown into lanes and the lanes themselves have grown into roads. A lane is defined as a narrow way between hedges and banks. A footpath is the narrowest way, trodden between crops of wild plants.

John Clare mourned the loss of many of them after Helpston was enclosed. Indeed, he raged and ranted about it; justly, at what for him was the sacrilege of destroying one of the holiest places in any village, that way along which his people had walked for centuries, a sanctified route to work, a sanctified route to love, a sanctified route to companionship and to things that were infinitely precious to a person."

[The sound of a cycling riding past can be heard.]

He also writes, "Footpaths did not guarantee solitude. We make a mistake sometimes to think that Clare, by simply walking away from the middle of his village, found solitude. There was always somebody up a tree or under a bush or just tiffing about, as they used to say, with a scythe, or hiding away with a sweetheart or a book, or usually just routinely travelling to the workplace. He would sensibly have always chosen the narrow way, but it was not a lonely way."

[The sound of a couple of people approaching whilst having a conversation, then jogging past, can be heard. A separate person running past can be heard. The sound of a motorbike passing in the distance can be heard. The sound Lizzy turning a book page can be heard. The background sound of this section then crossfades with that of the next section.]

[00:25:15]

[Outdoor background sounds of a different, and noisier, location fade in. The sounds of fairly heavy traffic passing can be heard and they continue through the next section of the audio. Lizzy and David's footsteps can occasionally be heard during this section as they walk on the pavement beside the road.]

[The synth track fades in over the background sounds, and continues beneath the next poem section before fading out.]

LT:

"I guess it's true that people always arrive at the right moment, at the place where someone awaits them."

DT: So we're out of the forest now, in Leytonstone, hence the traffic. You were just talking about – when I say just talking about, it was about two hours ago now – you read that quote about footpaths and how they transform from footpaths to lanes, and then lanes into roads. Also how all footpaths, unless they are regularly walked on, will just be forgotten about because that's the maintenance of a footpath, the use of it isn't it.

So this is September 2021. A year ago, or what were we, six months into various kinds of lockdown in the UK, we downloaded a walking app because we'd been walking a lot and thought it might be fun to measure how far we were going. Fun is completely the wrong word. Interesting, maybe. We downloaded an app that was recommended to me by my friend Tom and interestingly, I didn't know this before we got it, but the walking function on it defaults to footpaths all the time.

[The sound of music from a passing car can be heard.]

As much as possible it would try to put you onto footpaths and verges and keep you away from main roads, or any roads really. But interestingly, when we tried to use it in the countryside, it would always get us into problems because often the footpaths weren't maintained were they.

[The sounds of traffic reduce after Lizzy and David have turned off of the main road onto a quieter road.]

LT: No, they were completely grown over in a lot of places.

DT: Or there were horses in the way.

LT: Cows.

DT: Or fences. It's interesting, the idea of what it is to have freedom again through walking, and whether that actually exists. Because, over year of walking, what did we get in the end, 950 kilometres that we'd recorded. It was often quite a battle to be able to walk where you wanted, either because of geography or man-made barriers or traffic.

[The sound of a young child speaking can be heard. The sound of a gate squeaking can be heard.]

I suppose for the last year and a half of people being restricted in where they can go or what they can do, it might have actually been the first time that footpaths in the countryside and outdoor spaces were populated in the same way since John Clare was walking about.

[The sound of a person riding past on a bicycle and ringing their bell can be heard.]

LT: Yeah, it was often quite busy still, wasn't it? There were always people to say hello to.

DT: Quite often, especially on the canals, you could barely get down them sometimes, there were so many people about.

[The synth track fades in over the background sounds and continues beneath the next poem section before fading out.]

LT:

When you think about walking
ideas come up about leaving, arriving
direction, forgetting and finding
getting lost and located
(Freedom and boundaries the bookends
Is speed the defining quality? Rhythm)

LT: It's been that way today, hasn't it, even in the forest? There were loads of people, cyclists, dog walkers.

DT: I'm glad there weren't as many mountain bikers as normal.

[The sound of a woman and young child walking past and speaking can be heard. The sound of a man speaking can be heard, slightly further away.]

[The synth track fades in and continues for a short time before fading out. Lizzy and David's footsteps can now be heard more prominently. The speaking man and child can be heard conversing.]

[The synth track fades back in over the background sounds and continues beneath the next poem section before fading out.]

LT:

Sometimes our footsteps fall in time

LT: Having Covid and lockdown happen definitely made a change in our reasons for walking, didn't it? Because we started having to do it for exercise, not just because we like wandering around.

[The sound of wind in the trees can be heard. More traffic can now be heard.]

DT: We've always enjoyed walking, but it changed the motivation I suppose.

LT: We didn't plan our walks before, did we, so much?

DT: No. But we had to start planning whether we would need to eat on the walk or drink, because few places were open. Trying to maintain social distancing or whatever.

[Several people can be heard separately walking past and speaking.]

LT: And also, living beside the wetlands in Walthamstow, and realising that was where everybody was trying to get their exercise, after a couple of times.

DT: The wetlands and the canals were suddenly, like I said before, you couldn't really walk down them and maintain social distancing.

LT: No, it wasn't really safe enough at that time.

DT: No, and it's not to blame anyone else, because they didn't have anywhere else to go either.

LT: They didn't have a choice, yeah.

[The sounds of several children shrieking can be heard at a slight distance.]

DT: The layout of Walthamstow, where we live, near Blackhorse Lane, there are huge reservoirs that run down one side, which are now the wetlands, and a nature reserve.

[The sounds of the ground crunching underfoot, and a pigeon flapping away can be heard, as well as several people conversing at a slight distance. More regular traffic can now be heard.]

It forces you to head in one direction, you can't cut across that part, you can walk through between 10 and 5 during the day, but it's hard to just cut through. You're sort of forced in one or two directions to start your walks all the time, and then to the north you've got the A12 and the North Circular to cross over if you want to get to Epping Forest. There are these man-made structures, barriers now, which are controlling the way you walk around Walthamstow. But interestingly, there are man-made structures now that they are trying to claim back as nature in some way, which still force you to navigate in a certain way.

[The synth track fades in over the background sounds and continues beneath the next poem section before fading out.]

LT:

And when you're found, or you find
or meet, or you've arrived
then what is walking after that?

LT: Something I would say is that we're not fussy about where we walk, are we? We cover a lot of different environments. It's not really about the landscapes necessarily.

[The sound of loud energetic music playing from a car can be heard as it slows down beside Lizzy and David and then moves past.]

DT: It's interesting to think about why you want to walk, and what your motivations are. Because there's a massive difference isn't there, between walking to get somewhere and just going for a walk. And we do both of those, and we don't have a car. And even before all the Covid stuff, we would always avoid public transport if we could, because we prefer to walk. But I was thinking last night about how it's often easier to communicate while you're walking, as well. When you're walking side by side and you haven't got the pressure of eye contact, and you can often be more honest with people. It's sometimes easier to talk about things.

LT: That's true. You can do more easily what you would naturally do, which is look around. You can just look at where you're going. Do you think the action of walking helps you to think?

[The sound of music playing loudly from another car can be heard as it slows down beside Lizzy and David and then moves away.]

DT: Yeah. There's no way of testing it, but I don't think this project would have gone in the same way had we not spent so much time walking. Most of it has been talked about while walking, hasn't it. We've got quite a small, poky little flat, and I find it quite restrictive in there. Although we do make stuff in there, I don't think it's the best environment for thinking in, it feels a bit claustrophobic maybe.

[The sound of passing traffic is now much heavier.]

LT: Yeah, we don't do our talking in there, do we?

DT: We just sit there staring at the walls.

LT: Pretty much!

[Lizzy and David laugh.]

DT: We'll probably talk about that a bit more when we get closer to the river, and over the river. And by that, I mean the River Thames.

LT: When we're on the correct side.

DT: On the right side of the river. When we first met, a lot of getting to know each other was done walking wasn't it.

LT: Yeah, it was something that we just did straightaway. But I can't remember if it was something we talked about.

DT: Neither of us had any money, we couldn't go anywhere!

LT: Yeah! We'd both been doing it alone anyway and then we were together.

DT: We couldn't afford to go to the pub.

[A woman can be heard walking past in the opposite direction and speaking expressively into her phone.]

LT: No. I'd forgotten that. Also, I'd never really walked around London with someone from that area. I always joke about, it's like you're doing David Turner's Walking Tours, but it's true, you've told me a lot of stories about the history and stuff that you know about everywhere we've walked around, and that helped me to understand it a lot better and understand it through your perception.

DT: I think it helped me understand it a bit more as well. Having been born in London and then I went to secondary school near Cambridge, nothing fancy, I just ended up living there for a bit, and then came back to London and then six or seven years in Norway.

[The sound of a person holding a large bunch of keys and locking or unlocking a shop door can be heard.]

I didn't really know what London meant to me at that point, except it being the place I wanted to live and stay, and it's where my family are from. We'll definitely come onto this a bit later as well, but there was a lot of other stuff I was trying to work out in my head and I probably just needed time to walk about.

[The sound of a group of people talking and laughing can be heard as Lizzy and David walk past them.]

Prior to meeting you, I'd spent three months doing nothing but walking all day, every day. I was signed off sick from work.

[The synth track fades in over the background sound and continues beneath the next poem section before fading out.]

LT:

Think conversations side by side

beyond company, beyond arrivals, and maps
Because when I found, I didn't know
the walking could continue

[The synth track fades back in and continues beneath the next poem section before fading out.]

The walk he took when he could no longer walk alone

LT: We do spend quite long periods not speaking on our walks sometimes.

DT: They're very long walks, aren't they? I don't think I would want to walk with someone for four hours if they also wanted to talk for four hours.

[Lizzy laughs.]

LT: Me too.

[The sound of several people can be heard talking separately and in different languages. The sound of a man carrying a crying child and trying to calm them down can be heard.]

[The synth track fades in and continues beneath the next poem section before fading out.]

LT:
Sometimes I would like to walk somewhere
but I just can't.

DT: But you saying about going for long periods without talking, that's what I mean about just sitting face-to-face with someone, there's much more pressure to start communicating with people. It doesn't really give you much chance to think, because it can feel quite judgemental, the whole situation, regardless of who the other person is.

[A person walking past and laughing loudly can be heard.]

But walking side-by-side gives you the opportunity to just keep your mouth shut for a bit, or think. It's weird, but it's also rare to find people you can be around that allow you time to think and be quiet.

LT: Yeah, that's true.

DT: Because quite often a person's need for you to talk is for them to not feel self-conscious about nothing being said, and then there's just this perpetual backwards and forwards of just saying stuff for no reason, just to make the other person comfortable.

LT: Yeah. I find it interesting, the reactions from other people when we say what we're up to when we're walking, and how far we've gone.

DT: It freaks a lot of my family out.

[A child can be heard walking past, laughing, and saying "Look at that, look at that, look at that!"]

But I do wonder as well, beyond people's amazement with, and aversion to, the kind of physical exertion it takes to walk for a few hours at a time; I think a lot of it is that people have maybe forgotten what it's like to do activities where they're just in their own head for quite a long time.

LT: Yeah, that's a good point.

DT: And this is not a moral judgement on people's priorities and all of that, but my aunt Vi can't believe it when we say that we've been walking for a few hours. But like I've said to her, if she was going out shopping for the day, clothes shopping, and she had a distraction, she would easily walk the same distance in the amount of time. But you wouldn't think about it and you wouldn't necessarily notice. But it's like, some people can't contemplate just walking and just being in their own heads and nothing else happening, regardless of the fact that other stuff is always happening anyway, there's always something to look for.

LT: Yeah, it can be quite a difficult thing to confront. A lot of people don't like their own company either, and maybe don't have anyone else to go walking with.

DT: Yeah. And I think a lot of the time, for myself, I'm just as guilty as everyone else of getting home and putting on the telly, or looking at my phone too much, and looking at the computer. And going out for long walks sort of forces me to not do those things, and slowly ideas, for projects or whatever, you can run things over in your mind a lot more easily. It's funny because I remembered last night, I used to make a joke about when we first met and people asked who you were or what was going on, like people do, when they just want to get the gossip. And I would always say 'oh, you know, we're just stepping out together', because that's what my nan used to say, a sort of euphemism for 'courting'-

LT: Courting!

DT: ...or 'dating', or whatever.

LT: [Laughs] That's nice.

DT: But it's interesting isn't it, that used to be the way that people courted. Because you couldn't be trusted to be at home together, or in private, so a way to be alone but also around other people was to be out walking.

LT: Yeah, well it was referenced in one of those passages that I read earlier wasn't it.

DT: 'Couples courting', yeah.

LT: Couples courting, and meeting there, yeah.

DT: Because you could be alone together and have a conversation, but the villagers could keep an eye on you.

[Lizzy and David laugh.]

LT: The man with the plough!

DT: I suppose what's quite interesting now with walking as well, when you live somewhere that keeps changing so rapidly all the time, as London is, how you navigate the place. Quite often, people are split into two camps, in that they're either relatively new to London and everything to them is set in stone, and that is just the city they've moved to, so everything is either present or sort of newly opened; and then if you talk to people who've been in London a long time, or are from London, quite often they navigate the city around places that don't exist anymore.

[Several vehicles can be heard passing by on the road and running over a loose drain cover.]

LT: [Laughs] Yeah, you do that a lot.

DT: Pubs, or pie and mash shops that don't exist anymore.

LT: That's a really interesting thought actually, navigating by the non-existent. I suppose that way of navigating, with things that aren't there, is probably uniquely a class thing isn't it, because it's places that you've loved, that your family have lived in, that are now being torn down, or have been torn down. Do you think?

DT: Possibly. Maybe not exclusively, but there's definitely a heavy bias towards it. Because you're right in that, I was born on a Peabody estate in Pimlico, and that part of town has changed very little because they're listed buildings and it's a protected area.

LT: Yeah. And they're kept in families.

DT: Yeah. Whereas for the other side of my family, that were from Elephant and Castle and Southwark way, it's changed dramatically because whole housing estates have gone, yeah, in a way it wouldn't happen in an affluent area. Whole communities are ripped up, and they would never be middle-class or higher, they would only ever be...

LT: The history isn't preserved, or considered worth preserving in the same way.

[The sounds of traffic gradually reduce as Lizzy and David turn off the road to walk through the Olympic Park in Stratford. Their footsteps can be heard more prominently again.]

DT: It's interesting to think about what's happening around Elephant and Castle, which is sort of where we are heading today, the regeneration and gentrification. And where we are now, we're just walking through what was the Olympic site for the 2012 Olympics in London. And this was all marshland, a former industrial area, and now you've got the velodrome on our left, which erm... Did Stratford ever really cry out for a world-class velodrome? I don't know.

LT: [Laughs] I don't *think* so.

DT: But I've written about it a lot, especially around Elephant and Castle, I do have memories of walking through the underpasses there with family, when I was younger, and feeling as though it was very unsafe. Because it was really poorly lit and you could just feel the tension from the adults you were with. But there's a massive leap from making an area safe for the people who have always lived there, to turfing them out and having sourdough pizza everywhere.

LT: Yeah. It's extreme.

DT: And then there's the language that's built up around that, and we've always talked about it a lot, but they talk about 'decanting' estates and relocating people.

LT: Urgh.

[The sound of two people walking past and talking can be heard. The sound of a vehicle sitting with its engine running, before driving off, can be heard.]

It's disgusting and upsetting because it's, unfortunately, such an apt term to use. They are just tipping the estate up and pouring people out. That is what happened.

[00:49:23]

[The sound of various people talking and children shrieking can be heard. The synth track fades in over the background sounds and continues beneath the next poem section before fading out briefly.]

LT:

Walking or writing out of madness
(exiting from, and as a result of)
and doing it otherwise. Is there a difference
when you're always yourself
and the action the same?

[The sound of a family walking past with a buggy can be heard, with a young child speaking. The man says to the child, "Yeah we're here for- yes, good memory Zach! Very good memory!" The sound of a very large vehicle can be heard banging and rattling as it passes. The footsteps of someone running past quickly can be heard.]

[The synth track fades back in and continues beneath the next poem section before fading out.]

LT:

There doesn't need to be a difference
Freedom or trappedness
within or without

[The background sound of the previous section crossfades with outdoor sounds in a different location. There is more traffic and more people are walking on the pavements. A man can be heard walking past in the opposite direction and shouting, "I walk with London's elite, I walk with London's elite, yeah? Simple, innit. Simple!" Various sounds of people talking and bicycles passing can be heard. Music playing from a car can be heard as it passes.]

DT: So we're crossing Tower Bridge, and as always happens when you're going from north to south over the Thames, in a minute it's going to transform like the scene in 'Who Framed Roger Rabbit?' when it goes from black-and-white and they end up in Toontown.

LT: [Laugh] And it's all colourful and musical!

DT: South London is the technicolour to North London's dreary, 1930s... what was Mickey Mouse called? Steamboat Willy. They're all just bobbing along to 16 frames per second in North London. Herky-jerky.

[The synth track fades in over the background sound and continues beneath the next poem section before fading out. During the poem section the background sound from Tower Bridge crossfades with background sound from a different outdoor location.]

LT:

Inside or outside
Lonely or populated
Conscious or oblivious

[00:53:15]

[The background sound continues for a time, including the sounds of consistent traffic, music playing from different cars, bicycles passing, and lots of different people speaking, in various accents. The sound of a 'party bus' passing, with loud music playing, can be heard.]

LT: Party bus...

[The sounds of traffic lessen suddenly as Lizzy and David turn off the main road and into Burgess Park. Several children can be heard shouting, and one of them says, "Look, come Isla! There's a dead bee – he's dying, he's dying!" The sound of parakeets squawking can be heard again.]

DT: It don't matter where you are in London now, there are parakeets squawking everywhere. We've come and cut through Burgess Park because there is just no way of getting from Tower Hill to Camberwell without the roar of traffic. It's busy today, innit?

[The sound of a family and various other people walking past and speaking can be heard. The sound of sirens can be heard.]

LT: Yeah. My legs are just starting to ache now.

DT: We must have been walking for about five and a half hours now. But we're nearly there. So we're on our way to Denmark Hill and we're going to the Maudsley psychiatric hospital, where I spent some time in the spring of 2014 when I had issues with the stability of my brain.

[Lizzy and David laugh.]

LT: That's a way of putting it.

DT: Yeah we'll put it like that now shall we. This was all about three months before I met Lizzy, at the Poetry Café in central London. And the reason we've done this walk is, and I'm not in any way comparing myself to John Clare, it's just, being in the Maudsley for five weeks on a secure unit, it's where I started writing again, and probably walking in the way that I'm doing as well. It just seemed a natural link, with Lizzy's interest in John Clare and Lizzy's interest in me.

[Lizzy and David laugh.]

Not really.

LT: Yes really!

[The sound of various adults and children can be heard passing and talking, with one of the children bouncing a ball as they move past. Other children can be heard playing in the background.]

DT: Now with like, seven years', or more, gap between having been in the Maudsley, I can now describe it as an interesting time, rather than a horribly emotional time, even though it was really safe and secure. But interestingly, the staff there, part of their way of getting you ready to get back out into the world, is to encourage you to get out for walks during the day. So either accompanied by the staff, or friends and family who could sign you out for an hour after you'd been there for a while. I'd go for walks around Camberwell Green, which for anyone who knows it, will know it's not as idyllic as it sounds. It's basically bus stops isn't it.

LT: It's not Epping Forest.

DT: [Laughs] No. I mean, it would've been at one point, it would have been the countryside. London would have ended at some point down the Walworth Road, and Camberwell Green was like the opening towards Dulwich and the countryside, and that way.

[A woman and child go past, the woman walking and the child on a bicycle. The woman sounds as though she is trying to keep up, and can be heard saying, "You've got two wheels... and two legs. I've only got two legs."]

But when we did meet, I suppose that's where we first started walking wasn't it, it was round- you were working in Kennington, so we were either walking around Kennington, or around Camberwell, down to Peckham, stepping out together.

LT: All over. Yeah, getting to know you and getting to know that area is all interlinked for me so, it feels like home to me now.

DT: And when I was thinking about it last night... So, there were gendered wards that we were on, so it was all men. And there was a guy there who had an impulse and a compulsion to walk. He couldn't sit still, and he walked up and down the ward. And for some people, you could tell that his movement was almost mesmerising, and for some people, it would just wind them right up. It would infuriate them that he wouldn't stop.

Obviously when you're in that environment, you're there for a reason as well. Sometimes, some behaviour that would seem traumatic in the outside world, it doesn't in there, because it's just what people are going through and they're just working through what they're doing. But watching this guy walk always made me really uncomfortable. It didn't annoy me, it just made me feel a bit worried.

When I came out, I then realised that most of us that had been on the ward all lived really locally, and I was constantly bumping into a few people who were on the ward with me. One guy, he was enormous, he kept jumping out from bus stops at me, scaring the life out of me.

[Lizzy and David laugh.]

He was convinced it was hilarious, but it wasn't. He jumped out behind a bus stop at me once in the middle of the night in Peckham, and my friend nearly died, he nearly had a heart attack.

LT: [Laughs] It just used to happen all the time for a few months, didn't it?

[During the next section of speech Lizzy and David walk through an underpass, and David's speech echoes while they are in the tunnel.]

DT: Yeah, just bumping into people round Camberwell. I once bumped into this guy who was always walking in Paddington, which is a long way from Camberwell. He had obviously walked over there and didn't look like he was going to stop walking. And it really made me realise why it worried me so much in the hospital, because for someone like me, who's inclined to try and escape a lot of the time, as freeing as it is to be able to walk places, it

always worried me that one day I might start walking and then never stop. And then what's to stop you? And there's a contradiction there, isn't there. It's not always a positive thing, that idea of 'what's to stop you', you know.

[A parakeet can be heard squawking loudly.]

LT: No. It was one of John Clare's worries as well. He seemed to think that he could walk into oblivion, like there was always an abyss, an infinite abyss, and he might just fall into it if he strayed too far.

DT: Yeah. The Maudsley definitely represented a space, like, it was quite... For a while, it was really secure and a safe place to be locked up at night. Because I didn't want to be able to just walk around and walk off anywhere. But I hadn't realised, that wasn't like a worry or a fear that I'd realised in my head, but it just came to me when I saw this guy in Paddington.

[A woman can be heard talking on her phone as she walks past. She says, "I- I like him too, but I just- I don't mean it in a way like, *every time*..."]

I suppose it's like people who hate- not hate, hate's a strong word... People who get annoyed at their parents because they see themselves in their parents. It worried me the most because I could see I could easily do that myself. But I suppose there is a security in walking together isn't there, because you know you are always going to go back.

[Lizzy and David laugh.]

LT: Yeah, you help each other get back. Going back to the Ronald Blythe book, he describes John Clare's long walk as "the walk he took when he could no longer walk alone." And he says, "one of the horrible ironies of his life was that he, the walker, was incarcerated for so long. It's one thing to walk on footpaths, and quite another to walk in the grounds of an asylum."

[The synth track fades in over the background sound, which has crossfaded to an increased sound of the flow of traffic, and continues beneath the next poem section before fading out.]

LT:
Have we come to any conclusions?
I don't think we need to

DT: Here we are, six hours and 30 kilometres later, at the Maudsley Hospital.

LT: Does it still feel weird to you, to stand here?

DT: I don't know, I don't really have many memories of it as a building. Only the room out the back. The ward I was on was at the back of the building anyway, so I never really looked at the front that often. It's just a building, innit?

LT: Yeah.

[The sounds of traffic passing are loud, and almost drown out the next section of speech. The stopping and starting of buses can be heard, as well as ambulance sirens passing.]

DT: I mean, I sort of knew when I suggested we do the walk that it would feel pointless coming here. I knew it would be noisy as well. [Laughs] We're opposite King's College Hospital, so there are ambulances and police cars flying about constantly. But like we were saying at the beginning, it just felt like a good excuse for a walk, and a long one, and maybe a route we wouldn't do normally.

LT: Yeah, I don't think we were ever looking to form any conclusions. Just, the same with our walks, it's just exploring, isn't it?

DT: It's just a building. Shall we go to Auntie Vi's for a cup of tea?

LT: Yeah! That's where all journeys end. [Laughs]

DT: Yeah. I'm not walking.

LT: [Laughs] No.

DT: We'll get a bus.

[The sound of a phone ringing inside a car can be heard. The background sound continues for a short time before fading out.]



End of transcript.