

DON'T WALK BY IT DIDN'T STOP WITH ELLEN



An annual event at the oldest domestic abuse commemoration site in the world that remembers all the victims, honours the survivors and resolves to end domestic abuse.

This booklet is dedicated to **Rosie Adamson-Clark** [1956-2024] and to all who have lost their lives as a result of domestic abuse, including those who have taken their lives by suicide to escape their suffering.

Special thanks are extended to the following for donating moneys to make this work and the accompanying film possible :

Unite NW Regional Committee

Unite National Women's Committee

Bolton Unite 0121 Branch

Bolton & District Trades Council

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plus a personal donation from Chris Smith

DON'T WALK BY

It Didn't Stop With Ellen

Visiting the world's oldest domestic abuse commemoration site requires boots and warm clothing, as it lies high up on Holcombe Moor above Ramsbottom, East Lancashire. Ellen Strange was murdered there by her husband, John Broadley, in January 1761 and since then locals have placed stones at the cairn in her memory.

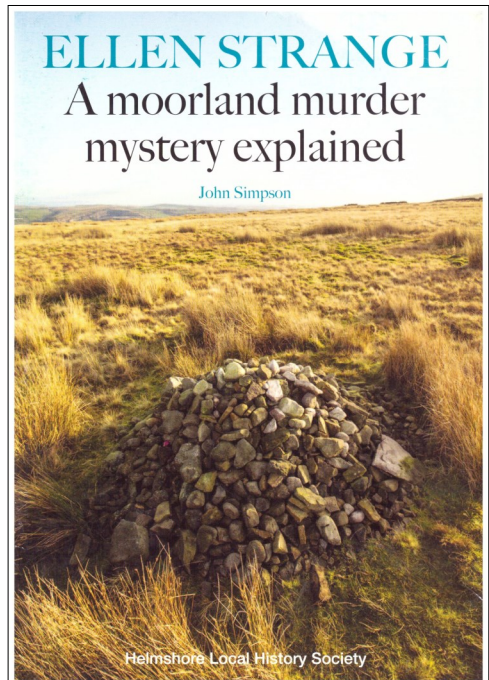
Inspired by a *Helmshore Historical Society* booklet by John Simpson, domestic abuse campaigners began in 2015 holding an annual memorial walk and service at the cairn which remembers Ellen.

At the same time they reaffirmed the need to continue to combat domestic abuse.

The ceremony, involving several speakers, consists of the laying of a wreath and the reading out of the names of all those who have lost their lives in the previous year.

Key to the occasion has been the support of the *Endeavour Project* from Bolton.

The event can be highly emotional and inspirational for attendees, who include domestic abuse survivors.



Returning from the cairn, there are refreshments and a chance to relax at the Emmanuel Holcombe Church. It was there in 2025 that the mystery was finally solved of where Ellen Strange had been put to rest. There is now a rosemary tree growing next to her grave, which is recognisable by a small engraved stone.

The event, held on the first Saturday in July, has encouraged the making of a number of films including *The Light That Still Burns*.



The walk itself has also been recorded by film makers Francesca Platt and Dave Hackney, and Mark Metcalf. In 2023, a Channel 5 programme took Bury-born BBC journalist Victoria Derbyshire to locations she had not heard of when growing up, and saw the TV presenter visit the cairn for the first time.

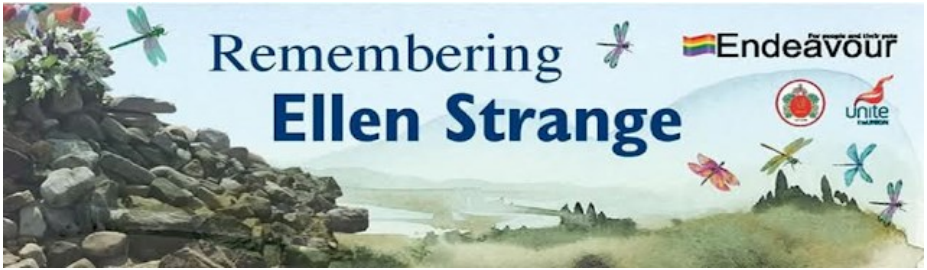
This booklet has - like the reprinted John Simpson work - been made possible thanks to donations from the trade union movement.

It is written and compiled by Mark Metcalf, an NUJ member.

It aims to show how the decision to remember Ellen Strange has proved to be inspirational and has aided the continuing battle to tackle the scourge of domestic abuse which sees one woman or girl is murdered every 10 minutes worldwide.

Alongside the true story of Ellen's murder, this work – edited from much longer interviews – contains the voices of survivors, a senior Greater Manchester Police officer with responsibility for tackling domestic abuse, the Endeavour Project, trade unionists and a church reader.

The full transcribed interviews are to be housed at the Endeavour Project and at selected academic institutions and available on request.



DON'T WALK ON BY

The *Ellen Strange Commemoration Walk* has taken place annually since 2015 up on to Holcombe Moor, Ramsbottom, where since 2019 the names of all those who have lost their lives in the previous years as a result of domestic abuse are read out.

Among those killed were 13 children – eight girls and five boys.

The list does not include the number of suicides linked to domestic abuse, which have overtaken partner homicides in the last few years.



2018-2024

They were killed in multiple murders by family members.



Seven hundred and nine killed during this period – 686 female and 23 male.

THE TRUE STORY

Taken from John Simpson's booklet, first published by Helmsshore Local History Society in 1989, ***Ellen Strange – a Moorland Mystery Explained***.

The booklet explores the myths that had built up over centuries regarding Ellen's death, and reveals the truth. The complete booklet can be downloaded at <https://markwrite.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/ellen-strange-booklet.pdf>

On 28th January 1761 a group of fourteen 'good and lawful men' from the townships of Tottington Higher End, Tottington Lower End, Walmersley and Haslingden were summoned to Stake, a farm perched on the edge of Holcombe Moor not far from what was then the road to Holcombe.

Also present was Simon Dearden, coroner and attorney-at-law from Rochdale. Their task was to hold an inquest on the body of a woman who had been murdered two days previously not far away on the moor. With the inquest completed, the body was carried down and buried in the churchyard at Holcombe.

The woman's name was Ellen Broadley.

The inquest jury declared that her husband, John, 'not having God before his eyes but being moved by the instigation of the Devil' had assaulted his wife 'at the first hour in the night' on 26th January.

They went on to say that he 'violently, feloniously, voluntarily and of malice aforethought struck, kicked, strangled and squeezed, suffocated and mortally wounded' his wife and that she had 'instantly dyed' from her wounds. [*The National Archives. PL26/291, County Palatine of Lancaster, Coroners' Inquisitions*]

John Broadley was a labourer from Clayton-le-Moors. He and his wife had probably been married for at least ten years at the time of her murder.

Among the records of the quarter sessions now in the Lancashire Archives there is a document dated 18th September 1751 which ordered the removal of John Broadley and Ellen, his wife, from Clayton-le-Moors to Huncoat, the place of their last legal settlement. This was done so that, as paupers, they would not become a charge on the township of Clayton.

Whether or not this order was effective, John had certainly moved back to Clayton by the beginning of 1761. Following the murder and the discovery of the body, he was arrested and taken to Lancaster Castle to await trial at the Lent assizes 1761.

Broadley was indicted for the murder of his wife by Lawrence Elton, one of the constables for the township of Tottington Higher End. Of course, there are no eye-witness accounts of the trial but the procedures were so standardised that we can get a good idea of the scene in the courtroom. First of all, the accused was called to the bar and addressed by the clerk: 'John Broadley, hold up thy hand.'

The clerk then read out the indictment and asked 'How sayest thou, John Broadley, art thou guilty of this felony as it is laid in this indictment whereof thou standest indicted or not guilty?' 'Not guilty', came the reply.' 'Culprit, how wilt thou by tried?' said the clerk. 'By God and the country', Broadley replied.

At this point, the prisoner would have had any irons or shackles he was wearing removed for the remainder of the trial and the jury was sworn in. Most of the twelve men who were present for the Broadley case were from villages around Preston, the two exceptions coming from near Ormskirk and Darwen. After they had taken the oath, the actual trial could begin.

The prosecution of the case may have been in the hands of Fletcher Norton who was king's attorney and serjeant-at-law for the County Palatine of Lancaster and whose name appears in the records of the trial. He was known by the nickname of '*Sir Bullface Doublefees*' and it was said of him that 'he has great knowledge and excellent judgement, but his patience is not equal to the other qualities.' [*Cokayne, G E and others, The Complete Peerage, vol. VI (1926), p.84*]

Several witnesses were called to give evidence against Broadley.

They were Lawrence Elton, the Tottington Higher End constable; Roger Welsh from Tottington Lower End; John Rothwell from Holcombe Head (a farm only a short distance across the fields from Ash farm); Roger Booth, a doctor from Tottington who had perhaps examined the body; Mary, wife of Joshua Smith; and Alice, wife of Henry Ellison, a Haslingden innkeeper. These witnesses took the oath and gave their evidence in open court. It was not the practice to write down such evidence and we will never know what they said. All that we can be sure of is that their evidence was insufficient to convict Broadley. Given the time and place of the murder, there were probably no eye-witnesses, a fact which may have influenced the jury in returning a verdict of not guilty.

On his acquittal, Broadley was made to kneel and the judge pronounced him discharged.

Acquittals for murder because of a lack of evidence were fairly common, and a similar case had happened in Rossendale fourteen years earlier. In June, 1747, Thomas Howorth of Wolfenden attacked his wife, Sarah. She lived for a few days after the assault, but eventually died from her wounds. Howorth fled, but was apprehended and brought to trial.

Like John Broadley, however, he was acquitted.

After his trial, John Broadley disappears into history, but he probably outlived his wife by only a few years: a John Broadley of Clayton-le-Moors was buried at Church Kirk on Christmas Eve 1768. *[Marie Ball, who has written a history of the Broadley family, suggests that this is the burial of John Broadley's father, also called John. She goes on to say that the son returned to Clayton le-Moors, set up in business as a grocer, married for a second time and lived until 1813]*

But why *Ellen Strange's* grave rather than *Ellen Broadley's* grave ?

To local people, who had perhaps known Ellen since childhood, she would have been Ellen Strange to the end of her days in spite of having been married for more than ten years. And so the name Ellen Strange rather than Ellen Broadley has come down to us.

This, then, is the true story of Ellen Strange. There was no young girl murdered by her sweetheart, but instead a married woman apparently beaten to death by her husband. Though the public records have given us the main features of the story, many details are unlikely ever to be found.

Ellen Strange's grave guards some of its secrets still.

2015-2025 TREK TO ELLEN STRANGE CAIRN

The initial trek to raise awareness of domestic abuse to a remote spot on Holcombe Moor where Ellen Strange was murdered was in November 2015. Torrential rain failed to dampen the enthusiasm but it was agreed to move the event to the summer. It has been held annually since, although in 2020 during the Covid pandemic, safety was prioritised and so only three people made their way on to the moors and laid a wreath and read out the two or three names of those killed every week in the previous year as a result of domestic violence.

*Carole Marsden leaves a stone at the
Ellen Strange cairn*





Sheila Coleman was the main guest speaker at the 2017 commemoration



Bridget Bell (front in white) was a guest speaker at the first commemoration event in 2015

The **keynote speakers** from 2015 onwards have been as follows :-

2015 – Bridget Bell (*Women Against Pit Closures*)

2016 – Carol Marsden (*Endeavour*)

2017 – Sheila Coleman (*Hillsborough Justice Campaign*)

2018 – Carol Marsden (*Endeavour*)

2019 – Rabiya Jiva (*Lancashire Constabulary*)

2020 – Linda Charnock (*Endeavour*)

2021 – **COVID**

2022 – Gemma Aitchison (*YES Matters*)

2023 – Shana Begum (*Best Me CIC*)

2024 – Andrea Egan (*UNISON*)

2025 – Jill Caldwell (*Endeavour*)

WHY REMEMBER ELLEN STRANGE?

Amina Ali, Michael Burton, Jill Caldwell, Linda Charnock, Andrea Egan, Jenny Heap, Janet Malone, Martin McMulkin, Mark Metcalf and Francesca Platt

I'm **Amina Ali** and I'm the community hub coordinator for the *Endeavour Project* which I first came into contact with as a victim of domestic abuse, when I needed support. This enabled me to remain in my home and get my life back on track. I later went to university.



When I first heard the Ellen Strange story I thought: 'Wow! a monument to a domestic abuse victim from the 1700s. And it's the only one. How's that happened? That's amazing. And it's up here, it's up north.' I say this because I am proud of my Northern working-class roots.

I remain fascinated by it. I'm thinking this should be more known. But also, maybe it's not the only one - it's just the only one we know of.

Maybe there are more women like Ellen Strange, out there, just waiting to be found.

About Ellen ...

We have been removed from so many things...

What if hers is the only one known and not the only one.

Because she wasn't!

Maybe she is the lone survivor of a patriarchal purge.

A man-made destruction of evidence.

Scriptures, and memories.

Documents and deeds.

*The scattered stones that carpet the moors,
may once have borne witness to others in unfortunate circum-
stances.*

Destroyed not by Mother Nature, but by the feet of men.

Testament to how moral wrongs are shaped into legal rights.

Amina Ali 2026

‡

I'm **Michael Burton**, and I am a reader at Emmanuel Church Holcombe.

As well as being involved in the church I am also very interested in local history and a walker.



So when the Ellen Strange team came from Endeavour, I started going up the hill to the memorial site with the walkers from Endeavour, UNISON, Unite and other organisations.

In time, I was asked to take part, offering one or two fairly simple but telling comments and prayers. It has always been a great pleasure to join in this special event, particularly as Ellen Strange is buried in our churchyard.

It was quite a difficult job to find out where we thought she was initially buried because it was many years ago that she had been murdered up on that hill.

It is very telling that people can go up there and think of the victims of domestic violence at the cairn and contemplate and pray whilst they are out there.

There is a song by Charlie Rich in which he sings *'Nobody knows what's going on behind closed doors.'*

That is very much part of my message, we do not know what people have got to go through with abusive partners.

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I'm **Jill Caldwell**, chief executive of *Endeavour*, a community domestic abuse charity founded in 1997 by Carole Marsden. Lived experience sits at the heart of everything we do.

We are not here for profit. We exist to support people in their homes, at their hardest moments. If the cupboards are empty or the electricity is off, we will work through that to make people's lives intrinsically better.

I joined Endeavour because of its ethos rooted in community. We understand safety is not just about crisis response, it's about dignity, stability, and being believed.

We know violence against women and girls is globally at epidemic levels. Every ten minutes, somewhere in the world, a woman or girl is murdered.

And in the UK, we must not lose sight that - for the second year running - [the number of suicides linked to domestic abuse has overtaken partner homicides.](#) What cuts deepest is that those we love, those we trust most, are often the people from whom we are most at risk. Abuse does not stand still.

Every day, there is a new twist and, currently, AI-generated images are being used to threaten, control, and humiliate victims.

As a service open to all, we work closely with education, workplaces, local authorities, housing associations, and the police. Yet we struggle to secure funding for specialist services especially for older people and for asylum seekers and refugees, those whose voices are often overlooked.

As for Ellen's story, I see Holcombe Hill from my kitchen window every day. If you strip Ellen's story back to its bare bones, it could be from almost any year – including now.

A woman has an argument with her husband. She removes herself to keep safe. He pursues her, attacks her, and leaves her to die. It happened in 1761. And you're left asking – why have we not moved forward?

At Endeavour, we often meet women at their lowest point. But it takes strength to endure and to leave. Women are strong.

Our role is not to rescue, it is to inform, empower, and walk alongside them as they move forward to safety on their own terms.

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I'm **Linda Charnock**, operations director at *Endeavour* - and I'm a survivor of domestic abuse.

Perpetrators don't come with labels or look like 'offenders'. They are men and women who come from all backgrounds and communities.

At first, they are often charming and attentive, knowing exactly what to say. That's how abuse begins, quietly, gradually, and out of sight.

My own experience drove me to support others facing the same lack of help I once did. Things aren't perfect now, but domestic abuse is taken more seriously than it was forty years ago.

One vital safeguard is the *Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme* (DVDs), known as **Clare's Law**. It allows people to ask whether a partner has a history of abuse, helping them make informed choices about their safety. At Endeavour, we work with dedicated police officers who support these disclosures with compassion.

The government has pledged to halve domestic abuse within ten years. That will only happen with significant and sustained funding. Right now, the housing crisis is trapping victims in unsafe situations. Without enough social housing or refuge spaces, many people cannot leave. Victims of sexual violence are also waiting up to five years for their day in court, delays that deepen trauma.

Endeavour, and services like ours, need funding not just for core support. We are constantly applying for small grants to provide basics: bedding, clothing, and toys. These things may seem small, but they change lives. When Martin McMulkin told me about Ellen Strange and the idea of holding an event on Holcombe Moor to remember her and all victims of domestic abuse, Endeavour backed it immediately. Each year, we take people up on to the moor. No one is excluded, and for those unable to walk, activities are provided at Emmanuel Church, so everyone can be part of the day.

‡

I am **Andrea Egan** of **Bolton UNISON Local Government Branch**.

My experience of domestic abuse initially came from a professional role within the council through calls or referrals about domestic abuse and the children involved.



I heard about the Ellen Strange story when I had contact with Endeavour a decade ago when, for UNISON members on a Saturday morning, I ran a group for empowering women.

I was interested in the idea around a commemoration of those that have been abused. Survivors are key. I attended the walk. I persuaded members to donate Easter eggs for children that Endeavour were supporting.

When I became UNISON president I nominated Endeavour as my charity. We have recently developed awareness-raising seminars with Endeavour as we know domestic abuse is an absolute endemic problem in the UK. We're picking up that responsibility that many of our stewards feel comfortable with, but we're not crossing that professional line.

So that's now grown into what we call the bystander training, which we've now extended to men because clearly men are part of the answer, part of the solution, part of the problem. It will be a programme that we will further develop.

‡

I am **Jenny Heap** and first heard of *Endeavour* through my own domestic abuse recovery in January 2024..

I had been through a horrific time.



A partner mentally abused me. He used spyware, was monitoring me and had access to all my phones, bank account information - everything. He even had a tracker in my car. He lived 40 miles away from me : we didn't live together. But it all came to a head after 18 months when he physically assaulted me and very nearly killed me. He hit me around the face and I was left with severe strangulation marks around my neck. Thank God I managed to escape.

Then I started my own recovery journey. I became a massive fan of going outdoors. One of those areas I started hiking to was Holcombe.

I didn't know there was a monument up there or any of the story. I had not heard of her. And actually, it was during one of those walks one day I came across that big pile of stones. And it didn't even come up on my Ordnance Survey map.

It got me intrigued. I actually visited it again. And I sat there and I felt really sad actually that I'm able to sit here and look , and you never got that chance, did you?

So now every time I go up on Holcombe Moor, I go past the Ellen Strange cairn and I went on the walk with Endeavour last year. It was very important that I went on that walk. We should never forget something like that. And I can't actually believe that is the only physical monument to somebody who's been murdered through domestic abuse.

Now I volunteer at Endeavour. I run a weekly walking group. That is my journey - which is unfinished.

‡

I am **Janet Malone**, a detective inspector with Greater Manchester Police — and I manage the child protection and complex safeguarding team in Bolton. This is a challenging place to work, and we get high volumes of demand for everything, including domestic abuse.



But, as someone who likes hard work and is driven to provide a good service to the local community, it's also a really satisfying role.

One of the biggest challenges is managing the welfare of my team. They deal with high volumes of upsetting work, and I have to ensure that they are looked after so that they can continue to investigate crime successfully and remain fit and healthy while doing so. Dealing with my staff with compassion and humanity enables them to do the same for our victims.

Combatting violence against women and girls is an organisational and national priority.

To do that effectively, we have to work alongside community partners such as Endeavour, to provide a holistic approach for victims and their families. I admire and respect the work that Endeavour do to ensure that no one gets left behind.

I live close to Holcombe Hill. I've only been on the official Ellen Strange walk once because of work commitments, but I visit the memorial regularly. The memorial walk was lovely, I really enjoyed it and I met some very interesting people.

I think it's really important to keep the memory of Ellen Strange alive, because it sadly has much resonance in today's society.

I last visited the memorial on Christmas Day 2025 before work. My daughter was with her father for Christmas, and I ended up at the cairn while out walking. It felt really poignant for me and made me thankful for everything I've achieved since leaving an abusive relationship myself.

‡



Martin McMulkin, an engineer, life-long trade unionist and Unite member.

10 — 12 years ago I had limited knowledge of the scale of domestic abuse that I now fundamentally realise is enabled by the very society that we live in.

Misogyny is at the root of almost all our criminal justice system.

Now I can look back to when I was young and I can see that in the society I grew up in that was the norm. Women were objects. They were talked about.

In my own workplace you couldn't walk down through it without girlie pictures up on the walls. I didn't fully understand what that was doing to women in society - but I do now.

I heard of Ellen Strange through a Unite project organised by Mark Metcalf that listed public monuments that honoured trade union and labour movement heroes. He wanted to republish a Helmshore Local History Society booklet by John Simpson on Ellen.

Unite NW agreed to provide £2,200 to do so and to pay for the buffet for a public commemoration on the moors.

It's grown since then. COVID appeared to have ended the walk but in the last few years the numbers attending on the day has grown to over 60.

Union funds have been vital - this film and an accompanying booklet are being made possible due to trade union branches.

‡

I am **Mark Metcalf**, a socialist since childhood.

I was brought up in a household and community where domestic abuse was common.



Then when I became a union shop steward at a large food factory I ended up representing women facing dismissal for taking time off work to deal with domestic violence.

In London I supported women's groups left angered by the failure of the Met Police to take domestic abuse seriously. In 1991, Stoke Newington Police left Vandana Patel and her violent husband alone in the station 'to talk through their difficulties' and he stabbed her to death.

When I read John Simpson’s marvellously-researched booklet that ended the myths about Ellen’s story I thought it was one that needed to be known more widely as it could also help in today’s struggles to combat domestic abuse and sexual exploitation.

I think we have succeeded but clearly there is a long way to go.

‡

I am **Francesca Platt** of the *Brightmet Butterflies*, a Bolton women’s support group who in 2025 planted a rosemary tree to signify love and remembrance at Ellen’s final resting place at Holcombe Church.

My personal knowledge of domestic abuse comes from friends who’ve experienced it.

And not just the violence side, but the coercive control and financial control and things like that.



It’s really, really common. And it doesn’t ever seem to get any better. The numbers don’t really seem to fall. **It’s good that there’s more support out there for survivors and stuff, but until we deal with the men that are doing this, then it’s not going to change.**

This is a big question.

I have attended the walks. It’s a public way of showing support for the struggle against domestic abuse. It’s emotional when you get up there.

For more information ...

Films

Ellen Strange – The Light that Still Burns

<https://www.bing.com/videos/riverview/relatedvideo?q=2015+film+footage+of+ellen+strange+walk&&mid=C0092F455E404307705EC0092F455E404307705E&FORM=VAMGZC>

Ellen Strange - A Moorland Murder

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2aDIUZt_Kek

Ellen Strange Holcombe Moor Memorial 2015

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=21bDgdwD4FM>

Remembering Ellen Strange Memorial Walk 2023

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s0_uhqtluoI

Articles

Victoria Derbyshire visits commemoration site

<https://www.burytimes.co.uk/news/23253922.victoria-derbyshire-returns-bury-discover-history-town/>

Film footage:- https://www.facebook.com/channel5uk/videos/2823542044445025/?extid=NS-UNK-UNK-UNK-AN_GK0T-GK1C&mibextid=2Rb1fB

Ellen Strange: Final resting place of murdered woman honoured

<https://www.burytimes.co.uk/news/25026364.ellen-strange-final-resting-place-murdered-woman-honoured/>

Booklet by John Simpson : *Ellen Strange – a Moorland Mystery Explained*

Published by Helmsore Local History Society in 1989 and republished in 2015 using funds from Unite North West Region. Download for free at:- <https://markwrite.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/ellen-strange-booklet.pdf>



*Final resting place for Ellen Strange
at Emmanuel Holcombe Church*



*Holcombe Church where Ellen
Strange was laid to rest*

This work would not have been possible without the assistance of **Bolton Trades Union Council** and if you'd like to donate to their funds you can do so at:-

Bolton and District United Trades Council
Account number 59020222 / Sort code 089018

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[07802 587598](tel:07802587598)

DON'T WALK BY IT DIDN'T STOP WITH ELLEN

There is an accompanying film to this booklet.

It can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/U9yjdbjhMWw>

You can also read this booklet at

[https://markwrite.co.uk/wp-content/
uploads/2026/04/dont-walk-by-final.pdf](https://markwrite.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/dont-walk-by-final.pdf)

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