

Paul Kirtley's Blog

Wilderness Bushcraft • Survival Skills • Outdoor Life

Paul: This is the Paul Kirtley podcast episode 17. The Paul Kirtley podcast, Wilderness, Bushcraft Survival Skills and Outdoor Life.

Welcome, welcome to Episode 17 of my podcast. Seventeen has a little bit of special resonance for me. My birthday is on the 17th of January so whenever the number 17 crops up it jumps out at me just a little bit more than usual. So very, very happy to have reached 17 podcasts.

And as with the usual form of the Paul Kirtley podcast, this is another long form interview with an outdoors person, an adventurer and one that is becoming a household name in the UK, certainly. It's Alastair Humphreys, who is well known for his concept of micro adventures. But long before he coined that term and spent his year of micro adventure, he had done some very big adventures not least of which was cycling around the world, which took four years not long after he graduated from Edinburgh University. And it's nice to get another Edinburgh graduate on my podcast too.

So after that he went off and did various other big adventures including rowing the Atlantic Ocean, he's done expeditions in Greenland, he's walked across the Empty Quarter desert, and that was with another previous guest on the Paul Kirtley podcast, Leon McCarron. They dragged a cart a thousand miles across the Empty Quarter desert following in the footsteps of one of their heroes, Wilfred Thesiger. And that's a great podcast to listen to as well with Leon McCarron and Tom Alan and I'll link to that here in the show notes.

But after making some really quite big adventures as I say, Alastair had his year of micro adventure blogging and then turning that into a book. And since then he's also had some more grand adventures and that is the title of his latest book. So without further ado, I'd like to welcome Alastair Humphreys and we talk about all manner of things. And this is interesting not just for people who want to adventure, but also for people who are thinking about making a living from outdoorism and adventuring because we share some interesting points here and some interesting

perspectives and share some tips with each other and also with you.

And I think it's an altogether very interesting insight into what motivates Alastair, how he keeps going, how he decides what trips he's going to do, what he does when things go wrong on the trips, as the invariably do, and also what his latest adventure is going to be. And I can guarantee it's not what you'd expect. It's on one level hilarious, on another level completely frightening. It would terrify me what Alastair's going to do next and he's about to start it just as this podcast comes out in early July. So have a listen, see what we talk about, see what Alastair's up to and enjoy my discussion with Alastair Humphries.

Well, I'm very, very delighted to welcome Alastair Humphries to my podcast. How are you doing today, Alastair? Hi.

Alastair: Hi. Thank you for having me. I'm very well. It's pouring with rain and I'm therefore very happy to be in my shed and not out on an adventure today.

Paul: Fantastic, fantastic. Well, I've seen a few videos that you've done from your shed, a little piece to camera. Can you tell us a little bit more about your shed? Because I think it's probably the envy of quite a lot of guys out there or at least a lot of guys have a dream of a man shed somewhere in the garden. It seems like you've realized that dream.

Alastair: Yeah, like lots of people I like the idea of sheds and cabins and I aspire one day to have a proper cabin somewhere properly remote but until then a shed in the garden is what I've managed. And I got it because I write books but I always struggle to concentrate and make myself work but equally, I struggle to stop myself working in the evenings. And so when I got my first ever royalty for a book a couple of years ago I spent it all on a shed to write on and it's been brilliant. I love working in here. It's really loads of private, messy space to get some work done.

Paul: Excellent. I've seen from your little videos you have a map of the world on the wall, is it for inspiration, for planning?

Alastair: Yeah. I've got a big map of the world. It's a two-meter map of the world. It's actually had to move to the roof because the walls got full. It's for yeah, planning and daydreaming, really. It's a nice thing to have.

Paul: So it seems like writing is going hand in hand with your

adventuring. Have you felt as compelled to write as you felt compelled to adventure? You say you find it difficult to write or at least settle down to write, but is it something you feel compelled to do? Compelled to share your adventures that way?

Alastair: I think I wanted to be a writer before I wanted to do adventures so it's almost the other way around for me. I used to, I still do love reading. It's one of my favorite things in life and I read lots of books and I've always read lots of adventure books and reading adventure books got me dreaming of doing adventures. And so, when I set off for my first big adventure, which is cycling around the world, I knew from the start I wanted to write a book about it. I had a very, very vague daydream of becoming a travel writer but I'd say that was about as realistic as a 10-year-old boy dreaming of being a professional footballer. But it was that sort of the daydream I had when I set off.

Paul: So it felt like a vocation from quite a young age then, in that sense?

Alastair: Yeah, I love writing. I love it except as everybody said, I find it very hard. I find it hard to sit still for long enough just to write it down. I find it very frustrating when what you write is absolute rubbish and it takes a lot of polishing to make it half decent. I find the process of starting with a blank piece of paper and writing the first draft of your book so you try to write 100,000 words straight off as fast as you can. I find that part really painful.

Once I've got my rubbished first draft then I quite like the editing and the publishing process. But the first bit I find pretty torturous.

Paul: Did you have any little routines? Or do you sort of do five hours of time-wasting and then guilt yourself into doing it at three o'clock in the morning? Do you have any particular... Because I've spoken to various writers over the years and listened to interviews with writers and everybody seems to settle, even if it's quite a torturous process, everybody seems to settle on something that works eventually. You've clearly got something that works because you've put nine books out now.

Alastair: I generally waste huge amounts of time like we all...as anyone who has access to the internet is able to do. I have a thing on my computer called self-control, which is a sort of app thing that blocks websites of your choice and even if you delete it, the whole program, the

apps is still blocked for as long as you say. So that keeps me sane. So I usually put that on for a couple of hours and then blast out trying to write 1000 words or so. And then, yeah, that's me. Don't release that fact.

When I'm in serious writing mode I try and do 1000 a day, which actually, if you put your personal effort into is incredibly easy to do.

Paul: And is that something you do first thing in the morning? Or do you have a routine in that sense?

Alastair: No, I usually fluff around until my self-loathing overcomes my idleness and then I go into a bit of a frantic frenzy and blast it out. And then like all things once you get some momentum going it starts to become a bit easier. I spend quite a lot of time on trains and planes and things going off to do talks in different places so I like those times. Those times when you're offline are really good times for getting some writing done.

Paul: Yeah. I find that about plane travel in particular, that it's a good space where I have time to think. I come up with good ideas. I always have a notebook with me, at least on a plane, because it seems to be quite fertile times. And forced offline time, as you say, it's very good. I should travel more in that sense then.

Alastair: Yeah. And forced offline time is a very helpful thing. And actually, when I built this shed I really am denied about whether it should have the internet or not, for exactly those reasons. And then my idle side won over and I do have the internet which I justified on the grounds of productivity, as in I'm talking to you via the internet now. But if I didn't have the internet I'd certainly get more books written.

Paul: Indeed. Indeed. Let's go in reverse then Al, your most recent book. Can you tell us a bit about the concept there with your Grand Adventures book that you've had published recently?

Alastair: My most recent book, actually, to explain Grand Adventure I actually really need to say that my previous book was Micro Adventures, which is a whole book about trying to get people to do very small adventures to figure out what it is in their life that stops them having adventures and to try and work around that and just get them to do something tiny on the premise that doing a tiny adventure is better than doing no adventure at all. Once you've done a tiny adventure, hopefully, you've enjoyed it, you've got confidence, you've got some momentum

and then next weekend you can go do something slightly bigger. So that was the premise of Micro Adventures. Basically trying to encourage people to use their weekends.

And in my grandiose mind I then have the idea that since everyone was now converted to doing micro adventures and everyone was now excited about doing adventures of some sort, the next thing to do would be trying to encourage people to carry on that momentum and do something a little bit bigger, to look towards was a big adventure. My starting premise for the book was that if you put aside £20 a week, every week for one year, by the end of the year you've saved £1000. And I found that sum really exciting because it's a series of small steps that are not particularly painful in themselves but lead to something massive.

I can afford £20 in my life, it's not a huge amount of money for me. I can manage that, it's like an evening in a pub with my friends. So I can save that a week, but £1000 to me still seems like a lot of money. If I found £1000 on the pavement I'd be very excited. So that's a lot of money and you can definitely have a very big adventure with it. And given that a lack of money is one of the main things that stops people having the adventures they'd like, I thought this is quite interesting that if you put aside whatever sum you can afford per week, it doesn't have to be £20, what you can afford per week, but you do that every week for a year, by the end of the year you've definitely got enough money to go have a proper adventure.

And that idea really excited me so I set about trying to then think about all the other stuff that gets in the way of people not having adventures: The lack of time, family commitments, not knowing about equipment, not knowing where to go, not knowing if they wanted to go by bike or by donkey. And I started trying to answer all these questions which I did in the form of interviewing, we had 85 contributors in the end of other adventurers who had gone off and done stuff. And the main message of that, I think, was that the book managed to cover all sorts of different people, men, women, young people, old people, single people, people with families, disabled people, just trying to show to lots of people that they too can go and have adventures.

And the one resoundingly thing that kept coming from almost every interview I did was that nearly everybody was a bit of an idiot when they started. They didn't really know what they were doing but they made themselves begin anyway and then figured stuff out long way, which I found very reassuring because that's exactly what my experience of

adventures was and it's generally what I try and reassure other people of who've never done anything and are worried a bit. I say, "Don't worry, everyone's an idiot at first, you just got to start and that's when you begin learning."

Paul: Yeah. I think it's probably almost impossible not to be an idiot at the beginning because you just don't have the experience, do you? And you're only going to be forged by your own experience, really, so you have to start off not...you might have a vague idea of what you don't know but you certainly don't know it and you just have to go from there really, so yeah.

Alastair: Yeah. And you have to not be ashamed of that because of course, you don't know it because you've never done it before and you have to actually try to be excited by it and to see all the excitement and the possibilities of learning new stuff and all the fun things that will come around. And you'll be able to laugh at your mistakes and things. And also learning to ask people for help. People who are experienced I find are generally very gracious with their time and expertise in helping people who don't know what they're doing.

And most things, certainly in my adventuring world, stuff like riding bikes a long way or crossing deserts really aren't rocket science. You don't need vast amounts of learning to be able to go in begin stuff.

Paul: No and I guess a lot of those journeys are repeating the same thing, day in day out, putting one foot in front of the other or getting on your bike with your panties full and doing some miles, a little bit like writing a book, I guess. It's just putting a little bit in every day, repeat, rinse and repeat isn't it? And you get there eventually.

Alastair: Yes. I cycled around the world once. I was on the road for four years. And often when I do talks, people come up to me at the end and they say, "Oh, I did a bike trip once and it was nothing like yours, of course. It was just one week or two weeks," and I always say to them, "Your trip was exactly the same as mine." If you've been on the bike trip for I'd say, a week, then you know everything there is about the feelings and the emotions and the skills of cycling around the world. So it's definitely pretty simple unlike I suppose, what you do, which does require years of learning and practice. And I guess you'll never consider yourself a master in it.

Paul: No, I think you're right. You never consider yourself a master in it

because there is always more to learn. And the core thing for me about bushcraft, in particular, if we're talking about bushcraft is that at the heart of it's a study of nature. People get hung up on the equipment particularly when they're beginners as they do whether it's fishing or golf or cycling.

Alastair: Cycling around the world.

Paul: Cycling around the world. Whatever it is, people get hung up on the equipment. But at the end of the day, you don't need a lot and actually the more you know, the less you need. But it is at the heart of it a study of the trees and the plants and the animals and the annual cycles and natural navigational, of all of those things and how they tie together. And that does take time to accumulate but there is also always more to learn.

And for me, it's heartening to hear what you said about people not being discouraged because I find the same in my world. You see people very polished with their technique, very polished with, I don't know, friction fire lighting or really good with foraging for wild foods or whatever it is and people who might be a little bit off put by that but you can still start. And it's the...I think it's the same with a lot of things, you know.

You watch a really well-developed martial artist, for example, performing a technique and you might, on the face of it, be put off by that but you just have to start and learn the basic techniques and you can get to a reasonable level of proficiency quite quickly then. And I think it's the same with anything that people look at the people who are good at things and then they're put off by where they perceive themselves to be in comparison to that.

And I'm the same as you, I try and encourage people just to start and start with things they want to learn how to do and try and apply them in a little bit the same way that you do, you know. Don't think that you have to be on a big trip or in a big situation to apply these skills. Try something the next time you're out for an overnight camp. Or even in your back garden, you can practice a lot of things. So yeah, I think what you say about micro adventures and just starting generally resonates across to what I do as well.

It's quite interesting, did you intend to spend four years when you set off to cycle around the world? And did you even set off to cycle around the world or did you set off to see how far you'd get?

Alastair: I did set off to cycle around the world. I would like to be the sort of personality who would have been able to just head off on a bike out into the world and just follow my nose and explore until I felt I'd had enough. But if I did that I would get, as soon as I got tired and bored I'd want to come back home and watch TV. So I need to have some sort of goals, some sort of target to go for, which in my case was cycling around the world. I thought when I set off that it would take me about three years so it was a bit slower than I had imagined.

Paul: Was that simply just because you found more of interest to stop and spend time looking at as you traveled or was it because you just didn't cover the miles or you had technical problems? What was it that meant that it took a year longer than you thought it might?

Alastair: It was that when I set off I didn't realize that I was interested in people and cities. I thought that what I wanted from the trip was wilderness and the physical and mental challenge of being out in the wilderness. But the further I went the more I actually became interested in humans and humans tend to invite you to stay and visit their house and cities. I've started to enjoy cities for the first time in my life. I did a lot more stopping than I'd imagined that I was going to do.

And I don't regret that at all. Some people cycle around the world very, very quickly and that's become quite a popular thing to do and it's almost...That's really a physical sporting challenge really, whereas what I was doing was just exploring the world. That just happened to be on a bicycle, it might as well have been on a pogo stick for all that matters. It was just a means of getting out to explore the world, really.

Paul: Yeah, no, that makes sense. That makes sense. And it's interesting as well, I know you know Leon McCarron very well. He said a similar thing about himself becoming very interested in the human story on his journeys as well. It seems to be a common theme of people who go out there maybe initially seeking solitude but finding real interest in the human beings they meet along the way.

And also, I think as well from having listened to stories of yours and read stories of yours and also people like Leon is that how kind humans generally are as well when you're traveling. We have this, I think if we spend too much time at home we have this opinion that the world is a scary place, and I guess some parts of it are but the world's a scary place and people are bad and we should all just stay at home. But that's

very much the opposite you find when you hit the road really, isn't it?

Alastair: Yeah. I think cycling around the world taught me that the world is a far better and kinder place than the BBC News or indeed the EU referendum debate might lead you to imagine. So I just found a lot of kindness in the world. I also found that I got interested in learning from different places in the world and different cultures, different countries just do stuff differently to the way I've always done it in my life. And I started to find the different ways of living normal life quite interesting.

And also going a long way away helps you learn a lot about your own country and culture and family and things. And I found that was a surprise to me. I hadn't really factored that part of the trip in, the fact that one of the interesting aspects was it takes going halfway around the world to really get a handle on yourself and your home and your family and your own country but I found that really interesting.

Paul: Yeah, it gives you a real sense of perspective and context. And are there any other real learning points that you remember from that first trip, that first big trip that you did, cycling around the world? Is there anything else that changed either, you know, that it was a mental shift or a shift to how you then prepared for other subsequent adventures of, you know, varying scales?

Alastair: Gosh, yeah, there were so many things. I mean, on a simple level I learnt self-confidence. I've never done anything big before in my life. And if you've never done anything big then you tend to think that you can't do something big. And finishing the trip made me think, "Wow, I've actually done something big. If I've done that, what else can I do?" So it gave me a much more positive mindset and it gave me much more confidence in what I might be able to do if I put my mind to it.

I began the trip because I was interested in a physical wilderness experience. I wanted to see how I could cope cycling thousands of miles across deserts and mountains. And after a few months, I realized that if you ride a bike all day, every day you become incredibly fit and strong and good at riding a bike a very long way. And once I'm quite good at something I tend to get bored of it so the challenge of seeing if I could cycle a very long way quickly paled into the shadows really because I knew I could do that.

And what I hadn't factored in or hadn't really considered at all was the mental side of the experience of having a goal that wouldn't be realized

for four years and of spending every day on my own trying to make every tiny decision in my days myself, being a stranger everywhere I went, always being an outsider and on top of that all of the doubts and fears of worrying about failing the trip and scary stuff happening along the way. So I really, really underestimated the mental scale of a project like that.

And I think in all the expeditions I've done since then, they're physically grueling at times but it's the mental battle I find the hardest.

Paul: That's interesting. That's very interesting. Is there anything you do to prepare for that or is it just an awareness of the fact that you know that it's gonna be mentally tough that sets you in the right frame of mind from the start?

Alastair: I think it would have been helpful for that first trip if I'd been aware that that was going to be a hard thing because it took me rather by surprise. I think it's one of, in many ways, one of those things that it's hard to prepare for and the best way to prepare for it is just by doing it. So the more that I do stuff, the more that I know I'm going to find it difficult and I'm gonna be scared and bored because a lot of places are often quite boring, I find. [inaudible 00:24:27]

Paul: Sorry to interject there, but I know what you mean. The big ones, it becomes that process of repeating yourself day after day in a space that has the same three species of tree or no trees. Yeah, I completely, I completely concur with that.

Alastair: It sounds like a really love-to-hate thing to say. If someone got dropped in the middle of the Sahara Desert today with their phone in their pocket, the first thing you'd do is say, "Wow, this is amazing." You take 50 photos of sand dunes and then you walk for three months to see nothing but sand dunes and of course the more cultured person than myself would see the nuances in the sand and the different colors and the different changing of the dusk and the dawn and the effect the wind have on the sands and all these small details.

But you know, to be honest when you're just slogging along and you're knackered you're eating rubbish food, your feet really hurt, you do you start to think, "I am really bored of this desert." And I don't think I'm gonna get many philosophy awards for this sort of mindset but that is the way I find, often quite find in the wilderness.

And that of course is part of the appeal, is can I continue to be motivated? Can I continue to find stimulation when it actually needs to come from within a little bit, rather than just the outside world being there to amuse and entertain me? Which is kind of what happens when you sit in front of Twitter all day instead of writing your book. You're just waiting for the outside world to frivolously entertain you. The deserts require a bit more effort from yourself.

Paul: Yeah, it's an interesting parallel to how you might approach your life in general, I think, there in terms of self-motivation and finding what you want from life. I may be paraphrasing slightly here but I think it was in your Empty Quarter film with Leon where there was a bit that you did to camera where you said something along the lines of, "Why can't I just be normal? Why do I feel the need to come and do these things?"

Why do you think you can't be normal in that sense? And is there almost seems to be this sort of dichotomy bits of banging your head against the wall of doing these difficult things that are a struggle and yet if you sit in your shed for too long you just get itchy feet.

Alastair: Well, the reason, of course, is that when you bang your head against a brick wall when you stop banging it feels really nice.

Paul: Yes.

Alastair: And perhaps that's the answer. Now I get very...You know, there are some people in the world who are very, very happy permanently out in nature, in the wild, sitting under a tree, watching a caterpillar, and that would keep them interested for years. And then there are people who are very, very happy in the city where they live, doing their work, going home on the weekends, mowing the lawn. And they are very, very happy people.

And I envy both those groups of people because I seem to get frustrated by normal life and I feel the calling to go and push myself really hard and challenge myself and try and do stuff that's difficult. But when I'm out there doing that stuff that's difficult I generally think, "This is so stupid. I should go home and do something more useful for the planet." So yeah, I'm not sure I have many good answers on this stuff.

Paul: Well, maybe it requires another difficult journey for you to meditate on that.

Alastair: To figure it out.

Paul: So, I read in your bio that you cycled across the UK off-road as a teenager and that clearly you had an enjoyment of cycling. And I guess as a teenager and then a student having a bike is relatively inexpensive and it's an inexpensive way to see the world. When you then went on to choose other larger adventures that you did subsequently, how did you choose those? Did you go out just looking for things that were difficult to do or just things that inspired you or had you another list of adventures that went back to being a teenage boy and wanting to go out and do some of those things?

How did you then decide what you wanted to do? Because you've done all sorts, whether it's you know, you're canoeing on the Yukon, sailing across the Atlantic, rowing across the Atlantic, and there's a list of other things that we can delve into. But how did you then make the decisions about what to do next?

Alastair: It's a cocktail of things, really. The most recent addition to it is that since all of this has become my job, I feel I have to throw into the mix the question of, is what I'm gonna do next, will that make an interesting story? And that's the newest addition to the mix. Early on it was wanting to do stuff that was different. Once I cycled around the world, I then knew I could cycle very long way and I just never felt any interest to go do another big bike trip because I knew I could do it. So I wanted to do different things.

For example, I chose to walk across southern India because cycling is slow, simple, cheap and quite painful and walking is even slower, even cheaper, even simpler and even more painful so it was extrapolating some of the things that I liked from a good journey. I crossed the Empty Quarter desert with Leon because I loved Wilfred Thesiger's book, "Arabian Sands" so that was just directly inspired by another story I've read.

I spent years training for a South Pole expedition because it was a part of the world I'd never been to because the trip was very big and difficult and therefore exciting and also no small measure because it was inspired by the books I'd loved reading of adventure. The Shackleton/Scott Era of Expedition was impressive for its journey but also for its literature. And the book, "The Worst Journey in The World," not only has the best title of any book but as I think one of the best adventure books ever.

Paul: Yeah, it is. It is. I'd agree with that completely. And maybe I'll put some links to these books in the show notes of this podcast for people to pick up a reading list as well. Because yeah, I think if people haven't read that book then they should definitely.

Alastair: Yeah. It's interesting, the book side of things. One of the most popular blog posts I've written was one called Adventure Reading 101, which is just my recommended reading lists people for travel adventure. People often ask me for suggestions so I just put a list up and said, "Go read all of these."

Paul: Good idea. We'll link to that, it this will save me making a separate list. Cool. So you prepared physically for the pilot trip. Do you tend to prepare physically? I know speaking to people who've done long distance hikes and it's certainly true for some of the things that I've done as well, you can walk yourself fit or you can paddle yourself fit as long as you're not trying to beat some sort of time record, the cycle around the world really, really quickly approach to things, where it's just a physical challenge, you're doing a time-trial almost as it were.

If you're just going to make a journey do you tend to think, "Well, I'm quite active generally, I'll get myself fit," or do you in certain circumstances say, "Right, I need to prepare for three months or six months or 12 months?" What do you do?

Alastair: It's exactly as you've said. So in some trips, say for example cycling around the world, I did zero training because I figured if I was gonna go cycling 46,000 miles then I really didn't wanna spend any more time on a bike than that. So I didn't do any practice, which meant at first my legs and my backside were in a lot of pain. Something though like rowing the Atlantic where from day one you need to be physically up to the task, that does involve spending a lot of time sitting on a rowing machine, trying to get yourself fit and strong.

Although for big expeditions like that you have the challenge of trying to be fit and strong but also trying to be as fast as you possibly can at the start line because you're always operating on a calorie deficit so it's a strange situation of people trying to get very fit and then going and just eating junk food and pies and trying to get fat. When I was training for The Atlantic I used to go to the fish and chips shop every day at 11:00 a.m. to have a pre-lunch fish and chips.

Paul: Really?

Alastair: And there were some adverts, there were horror things at the time, some Starbucks had released some sort of Christmas skinny frappuccino latte whatever, with 1000 calories and instead of being horrified I just went straight to Starbucks and got stuck into that.

Paul: With a couple of straws and just sucked up, yeah.

Alastair: Exactly.

Paul: No, it's interesting you know, having read some of Ronald Finks' is "Polish Stuff." I mean, it's incredible how much weight people lose on those calorie, you know, even if they're trying to get the calories in on the trips just the calorie deficit and the amount of exertion is really taxing. You know, I think they lost four or five stone, he and Mike Stroud when they did that big polar crossing. It's quite incredible to think you start off as a strapping 15-stone guy and you come back weighing just a bit over 10 stone. It's tough.

Alastair: Given that we have a critically obese nation, perhaps that's what people need to do. It seems that the NHS just needs to set everyone off to go to a polar expedition. It's probably cheaper than treating them for diabetes.

Paul: Possibly, even if there were a few frostbite cases. Possibly right. Possibly right. So you did the Marathon Des Sables, where did that fit in the whole timeline? I was speaking to Mark Hines recently, I don't know if you know Mark.

Alastair: Yes, I do know Mark. He can run a lot faster than I can.

Paul: But when I asked him about what preparation because that was the first ultra that he'd done and I asked him what preparation he'd done and he didn't do anything other than just run. And I know some people have really complicated sort of preparations for ultra running but he just went out and ran and built up the mileage and ran with a backpack and that seemed to do him fine. Did you do any particular preparation that was massively different to that?

Alastair: I did the same but I also did something far more high tech than Mark, which was trying to simulate Saharan desert heat in Richmond Park in London. So I would go running wearing as many clothes as I

could and wearing bin bags made myself massively sweaty.

Paul: Right.

Alastair: The hard part, yeah, you have to run a long way but the uniquely difficult part of the Marathon Des Sabels is the heat, especially if you're a tall, pasty white guy and also the water management. Generally speaking on runs your encouraged to guzzle loads of water and there's always lots of water available but this trip involved water management. They do issue you water but I had to be very careful and disciplined about my water management in order to make it last through the day. So that's a different aspect to a normal ultra-marathon.

Paul: Was this before or after you'd done the Empty Quarter trip?

Alastair: It was before. I cycled around the world and I got home from that I had no inclination to do anything difficult for about two years. I was in a far bigger physical and mental slump than I realized at the time but when I eventually picked up the first thing that I went to do after that was the Marathon Des Sabels.

Paul: Right.

Alastair: And what was interesting about that was just the mindset really. I set off on the bike trip just thinking, "I'm not a physical guy at all. I'll see how I get on." but getting on to the bike trip I thought, "Right, I now know that I'm able to suffer." So I went out to the marathon feeling far confident and I actually did quite well in it I think just because I learned that I was able to do more than I'd realized I was beforehand.

Paul: You know, that's interesting. Again, speaking to Mark, we spoke about several different ultras that he'd done and generally some research that he'd been looking into and of which people do well in those sorts of events and he said, "It's not necessary the fittest people who do the best although fitness helps in terms of how quickly you finish, if you do finish. But it's not a predictor of whether or not you'll finish, it's more a case of whether or not people are able to put up with the suffering."

And he said, "The most interesting thing was that people who have had lots of problems like horrible blisters, vomiting, stomach cramps, all these things they're often the people who finish whereas people who have had no problems other than they've had enough of it, they quit.

Whereas the guys and girls who seem to have more problems and yet just put up with them are the ones who finish is somewhat counter-intuitive. So I think knowing that you can suffer is possibly one of the key things to get you through those things."

Alastair: Definitely. And the more you suffer the more then you are able to endure next time. And suffering is a pretty dumb thing to do but I do think it is very useful a transferable skill in terms of just making you feel proud about yourself and giving you self-confidence, which I think is quite helpful for doing more normal things in life.

So yeah, I think the art of suffering and persevering and also being able to be in it for the long game so to think, "I'm in total and utter agony today but if I don't give up then in 10 or 20 years' time I'll be proud of this moment." And that takes some slightly bizarre mindset in order to be able to defer your suffering now on the hope that at some unknown point in an unimaginable and noble future this will somehow make me happy. It sounds quite dumb but I think it works.

Paul: I think it's the same as having there been some quite significant psychological studies done about looking at how kids, there's that classic study where there was it a cake or some sweets?

Alastair: There's sweets on the table and you have one now and two later.

Paul: Yes.

Alastair: Yeah, and that basically predicts their entire life, doesn't it?

Paul: Yes, yeah, which is remarkable. And I think as well what you say ties in with Leon's idea of type one fun and type two fun where Type One fun is where you're having fun now and Type Two fun is it's fun later at some point when on reflection.

Alastair: Yeah. You just need to stay away from Type Three fun which is not fun now and never will be fun in the future.

Paul: So speaking of that trip with Leon, I re-watched the film recently actually. I had seen it before but you kindly were giving free copies away recently so I got a copy of the DVD from your evening a little while ago. That seemed to me, and again, you know, it's a 50-odd minute film and I know how much editing goes in. You had 30-odd hours of footage and

you end up with a 50-minute film so there is a lot of things that aren't in the film. But it seemed to me from the outside that you kind of just built this cart and thought, "Well, screw it. We'll see what happens." Was that one of the trips that you didn't really prepare for very much?

Alastair: No, that you might be surprised to learn was one of the trips that I was prepared for.

Paul: Okay.

Alastair: That was me being prepared. Yeah, to put it in context, I wanted to walk across this desert. The ideal way to have done it would be with camels. I couldn't afford camels. I couldn't be bothered to spend months of my life learning to handle camels. I didn't want to just pay someone to do the camels for me because then I'd just be essentially their clients on a holiday. And I didn't have the patience for all of it so that ruled out the camels.

So then I went for the masochistic human camel option of building a cart and pulling it. And I intended to design and make a very good decent cart and I put in some serious brain work to make the best cart I possibly could. The problem was that my brain work wasn't very good and my cart absolutely useless, which as you see in the film, you'll realize both...the good lesson of this is that if we'd built the perfect cart we'd have set off from day one, we'd have gone walking through the deserts and we'd have gotten to the end and that would be that.

What actually happened was we set off from day one, the cart was useless and we then set off on this mad few days of heading through all the back streets welding shops of Salalah in Oman, just really poor, rubbish, little workshops filled with Bangladeshi guys and Filipinos who have got infinitely more common sense and imagination than me. They managed to weld this and whack and batter a decent working cart for us. And that actually became my favorite and most memorable part of the entire experience, that the mistake led to.

Paul: Interesting, interesting.

Alastair: But yeah, you're right. It was pretty useless, wasn't it?

Paul: It became apparent fairly quickly in the film at least that the lack of steering was going to be an issue.

Alastair: My theory was because we were gonna walk across the desert and the desert is just straight, you get from here to there, you don't need to steer, you just go straight. So that might give you an idea of my level of common sense.

Paul: Well, that might have worked, I don't know. Maybe you've got a different perspective on that now but certainly dragging out of town on the tarmac clearly was problematic. The grip from the tires and the fact that you just wanted to go in a straight line was at odds with the way you wanted it to go. That was fairly clear, yeah. It must have been very...

Alastair: It was a disaster.

Paul: Well, at least you weren't just sort of dropped somewhere and without access to welding shops.

Alastair: Yes, yeah. And I suppose that's the sensible point to make. And most of the trips I do if you make a mistake aren't so catastrophic that you're just gonna die. You just end up with a bit of inconvenience and discomfort and some valuable learning experiences.

Paul: Are you familiar with the concept of the Hudson's Bay start? A lot of the voyagers, the fur traders that used to head out basically in the spring just after the ice melted. They'd take trade goods with them in these 35-foot birch-bark canoes. They'd paddle out into the wild to trade with the First Nations for furs, bring the furs back in before the winter for the Hudson's Bay Company. And there was another big competitor as well, a Northwest Company.

But what they used to do was when they'd first head out, they used to do a very short first day and then camp and then by the time that they'd done that first short day and camp they'd have realized if they'd forgotten anything, if everything was working all right and it wasn't very far for them to go back if something was not right rather than going headlong, you know, sort of 16 hours of paddling into the wilderness before they've realized they've forgotten their cooking pots or whatever it was.

Alastair: That is very, very good advice.

Paul: Yeah, cool. So one of the questions that I had from, and you've sort of answered this to a certain extent, but one of the questions I had from a listener, Dave Woodcock sent in. He said he'd like to know how

Alastair comes up with his ideas for his adventures. And we've covered that to an extent but if there is anything you want to add to that please, please do.

How he motivate himself to complete such physically strenuous tasks? And we have covered that to an extent. This is the other bit that feeds on from that that we've maybe not talked about, what his family and friends think about them and him doing them.

Alastair: I think my family and friends, certainly when I began were slightly amused by it because I really was not historically a particularly adventurous person. So I was never the sort of crazy, reckless child or the gung-ho 17-year-old heading off to Kazakhstan cherry picking. So I was never really the sort of thing I'd do so I think my friends and family were a bit bemused and surprised when I said suddenly that I was gonna go cycle around the world for four years.

And I think certainly my family were worried that I was wasting a university education and I should be getting a proper job and then of course worrying about my safety. But I felt very safe in the world and that set them at ease. I've come home and I've gradually turned my adventure into a job. I pay my bills, I pay my taxes I think that's appeased my family. And now actually that generally they're quite proud that I'm doing something that I really love with my life so that sort of I guess worked out all right in the end.

The motivation side of things, we've touched on quite a lot of the aspects, but a couple that I would add is that I have a couple of rules myself, which is that I'm never allowed to give up when I'm cold, tired, wet, scared, hungry, in the rain or in the dark. I can only give up after a good night's sleep on a nice sunny morning after a really big breakfast. And that usually solves most problems. And then the second rule I have is if I've passed rule one then rule two is I'm only allowed to give up when I've thought of a better idea, something better, more useful and more rewarding to be doing with my life. And that usually filters out temporary bouts of weakness.

In terms of having ideas, I'd say I don't have many skills in life but I think I'm learning. Perhaps that is one of my talents or skills. It surprises me when people ask how do I come up with ideas because that's just so easy for me and for most people it isn't. I guess the way I come up with ideas is first, I read loads of books that gives you lots of things to imagine and daydream and ponder and copy or replicate or to spin off

from. I have a giant map of the world sitting above my head all day so I can look up and then immediately I'll just see now, Tahoua in Niger or Zahedan in Iran and immediately those two cities I've never heard of instantly gets me excited and curious about them.

So I look at mountain ranges and rivers and deserts and I think if you went from there to there that would be quite a nice route. And then I try to think of continents or countries or environments in the world that I've never been to and I try to think of means of transport within those places or start some adventures that I've never done before and that starts to help me narrow down the ideas. Plus there is so much online. There is vast amounts of a book-writing, time-wasting potential on the internet of wonderful websites and magazines like Avant and Sidetracked and all sorts of adventure things that just start to set the imagination going.

Paul: Are there any way that you've had an idea and gone quite a long way down the route of thinking about it, planning, researching, reading and decided that that's just a bad idea?

Alastair: No, I don't suppose so because normally I often have about 10 different projects in my life going on at any one time, anyway and it usually comes down to the one that starts to occupy my curiosity the most. So as we said earlier, when you're sitting on a plane for an hour looking out the window, do I find my mind coming back to this one? And it gets to a point where it just starts to seem too exciting not to do. So there is usually quite a lot of filtration before I commit to something.

Paul: Right. No, that makes sense. That makes sense. And the other thing that interests me is the physical side. Just to pick back on something you said earlier that you didn't before you did your cycle ride you didn't consider yourself to be particularly, I can't remember exactly how you phrased it but particularly athletic or particularly physical. But after you've done something big that you felt like you could do other big things.

Again, this is always good for people to hear because I think sometimes people think that people such as yourself who go off and do remarkable things and write books about them, they somehow are gifted in some way. Were you a particular sporty child or did you...I mean, I know you went to Edinburgh and studied there, were you more academic and then happened to find yourself being able to do these physical challenges as well?

Alastair: No, this is a really big point for me because I have read all these books on adventure, I love the idea of them but never really registered that I might be able to do it. Because almost by definition anyone who's published a book about adventures have done something quite exciting and crazy just to make it see the light of day. So it never really registered that I might be able to do a journey like that.

And I certainly wasn't great physical or adventurous. I liked being in the outdoors. I did quite a bit of camping and stuff growing up. I really liked normal sport but I was a bit rubbish at it. And honest I start to like outdoor sports because they're more egalitarian than football or cricket whereby if you don't get picked for the team you don't get to play whereas anyone's allowed to go run up a mountain and the only thing that varies is how quickly you get up there. But everyone is able to suffer to whatever degree they choose.

And I realized that these sort of outdoor things mostly revolve around effort and I was always willing to put in a lot of effort. And then start to pique my curiosity, the thinking of, "Wow, I quite like running up mountains and if I run a bit harder I can go a bit further." So that started to get me into physical stuff. But I've never won a race in my life. I've run quite a lot of mountain races and fell races and I'm always fascinated about the person who comes first. It must be amazing to enter a race and to actually win it. And that, has never in my life, crossed my mind. Whenever I enter races I never pay any attention to the race briefings because I know I'm just gonna be following the bloke in front of me. So yeah, I'm definitely not super hero mold.

But I think, sorry to interrupt, I think that's a really, really important thing for people who are thinking of adventure to take into the skills the realization that I or most actually, nearly all the adventurers I know are not superhuman people. Most of us are not particularly talented, it's just a choice of saying, "Right, this is what I'm gonna go and do."

Paul: No, I think that's a really important point. And I think going back to what you're saying about skills and just getting started before, I think it's the same a lot with the physical side of things. Now clearly, like you said if you're going to row the Atlantic Ocean maybe you need to do some physical preparation for that. But a lot of the things that we're talking about, the human powered things, you can just start doing it can't you? And if you do it in a small way then you'll build up the specific fitness and you'll build up specific skills and then you can do bigger things if you want to.

Alastair: Yes, absolutely.

Paul: No, it's important. One of the quotes that you have on your blog, on your bio, I think is from geographical magazine and it says, "Humphreys is slightly bonkers and this is a wonderful thing." Now clearly you must have somewhat agreed with that otherwise, it wouldn't be on your bio.

Alastair: I love the royal geographical society and I love the esteemed publication of geographical magazines so it amuses me that they said that. Yeah, I mean, websites are boring if people just put up a quote saying, "Humphries is incredibly talented and handsome." I think that is huge but I'd have to dig quite deep to find that one. But I think it is nice.

Paul: No, I think it's nice.

Alastair: You don't wanna take yourself too seriously.

Paul: No, well, I think that's another important point. I think a lot of the media like to put up adventurous people on a pedestal again, try to set them apart. What is it that sets these people apart from normal humanity? And I think that can make for overly serious discussion about what's fun about doing these things as well.

Alastair: Yeah. And also then it makes people less willing to acknowledge their weaknesses or their failures or their shortcomings, which then makes the whole thing become seem ever less attainable to normal people.

Paul: Indeed. Indeed.

Alastair: In terms of quotes on websites you need to be very careful what you believe though because everyone's just fishing around for the nice bit. I did a book a while ago about walking through India, which is actually the book I'm most proud of. But Geographical wrote something along the lines of, "This book was not interesting." So I've just taken the word interesting and put that on my website, so now it says, "Interesting, Geographic."

Paul: Very selective quotation.

Alastair: Exactly. But you wanna be careful about these things.

Paul: Well, I have to admit that's not one of yours that I've read so I'll have to add that to my reading list particularly if that's the one you're most proud of. Why is it the one you're most proud of? Just the writing or the arc of the story that's in there? What is it that you're most proud of?

Alastair: Firstly, it's definitely a book that some people would read and hate and it's a book some people would read relate to like and I like that aspect of it. It's my introspective attempt to try and explain why I do these sort of things. So it's about me walking across India but I've made the whole book to be just the story of one day on the road. Ideally, one day on any road on any journey by anyone, anywhere, anytime and just trying to explain the different motives I have.

I'm also proud of it because I decided, and this is not good idea, but I did it anyway. I decided I wanted the book to stand or fall purely by myself. So I wanted if it was good, that was down to me and if it was bad, down to me and I couldn't blame my publisher or my editor or anyone, all these other people that it's normally quite nice to have to blame. So nobody read the book for me at all, nobody edited it, nobody proof-read it, no one gave any suggestions. It was just me. And then one day I press published and it was available to send. And I found it quite scary, this vulnerability of that. It was satisfying.

Paul: Was that a self-published or did you have a very understanding publisher?

Alastair: No, it was deliberately self-published.

Paul: Right.

Alastair: Because at the time I had a normal publisher then but it was a choice to self-publish this one.

Paul: Okay. Okay. Well, actually that brings us nicely on to one of the of the listener questions, which was about how you first got your first few books out. I think there are other people who fancy writing books out there and they wonder about that side of things. Of course, the adventure side is fantastic and we can talk more about that, but I think people you know, they've seen that you've put a lot of books out and you've been successful as an author. What's your experience with that?

Because I hear things from different people, some people say it's very

difficult these days. The economics are terrible. Other people say it's worthwhile. Some people say it's worthwhile just to get your name out there and then you do other things on the back of it. What's your experience with writing books about adventure as part of the process or as a standalone thing? Is it worth doing?

Alastair: I agree with all of the above points.

Paul: Right.

Alastair: I wanted to write a book about cycling around the world primarily because I wanted to write a book. So I wanted to have the experience of sitting down, try and tell a story as well as I could and that appealed. The prospect of then seeing it in print appealed, the excitement of ever seeing it in a shop really appealed, the prospect of seeing someone reading on a train tickled my vanity. And actually, that's one of my secret vain dreams that I still always hope for is and it's never happened to me.

So I guess what I'm trying to say is I wanted to write a book. And I think that's really important. You need to want to write a book.

Paul: You wanted to be a, I mean you said that earlier, you wanted to be a writer. And that's clearly part of your motivation. Maybe I didn't phrase my question brilliantly but you know, for somebody who wants to adventure but thinks they might have a story to tell, do you need to want to be a writer to write a book or is there a value in...is it part of your business model if you didn't want to be a writer in the first place? I guess is what I'm trying to ask.

Alastair: Well, I think the first thing is you need to want to do an adventure because then you go do that and that means that your adventure is from the heart and authentic and exciting and immediately puts you in a better place to write a story about it. Writing this book is, in terms of my career is, what I noticed when I first had a book out was I could say I'm an adventurer and author. It just makes you sound a bit more important. It gives you a bit more credibility. So I found that helped me in terms of getting speaking engagements, that helped early on. So it does help in that sense.

I mentioned speaking engagements because speaking is what pays for my life. I've written nine books and there's no way I could live off them. So unless you're will J.K. Rowling I would suggest that writing books is

not gonna pay for your life. And she's a good cautionary tale because of course her books got rejected by all and sundry and she was totally skinned and she just kept writing because she loved it and because she believed in it. And eventually quality gets through. But it's certainly not a thing to do for money.

It's a hard process. And I think a lot of books that people love, the books every newbie perfectly from the type books of wandering happily off around the world, having gentle adventures. They would really struggle to get published these days. So it's certainly hard to get published. Advances are generally pretty terrible these days as are royalties so that's another reason not to do it financially.

But on the plus side, it is easier than ever to self-publish a book. There is no stigma these days in self-publishing a book. The quality of self-published books is fantastic. You get as much space on Amazon as J.K. Rowling does when you self-publish so it's more egalitarian than ever. You don't need to worry about trying to get your book in bookshops, which you will fail to do and they hardly sell any anyway. So much as I love independent bookshops, it's Amazon which has made my role as a self-published author possible.

My experience of writing a book was I cycled around the world, came home, bought a computer, sat down, started writing, wrote a few chapters, sent off to loads of agents to try and find an agent, and that's usually the first starting point. I got an agent. I got very excited. She took off to a load of publishers and failed. They all rejected it and then my agent dumped me, which I was very sad about. She was brilliant. She was a Robert McFarlane's agent too. I love his books.

Paul: "The Wild Places."

Alastair: Yes, exactly. Yeah, and "The Mountains of the Mind" and "The Old Ways." So I then was on my own so I then got very depressed and I then decided eventually to self-publish it, which I was scared to do. It was a very vain thing to do really. For publishers to tell you your book is rubbish but you to say, "No, you might be experts but I know better. My book's really good. I'll print 1000 of them, they'll sit in my living room till I've sold them all."

So it's a bit of a risky thing to do but I wanted just to finish the story. So I self-published it and then on the back of that it sold moderately well within my tiny little niche and the publisher picked it up. And then they

republished it, they did my second book and then I had to publish it.

There are pros and cons in how you publish it. Either you get horrible royalties from a publisher or you get far better ones on your own. If you're looking to start out then I would seriously, seriously consider both options with equal weight because there's huge pros and cons with both options.

Paul: That's interesting advice. That's interesting advice. So, forgive me because I don't know this, you self-published the first one, you self-published the book on walking through India, are there others that you've self-publish or have the rest been through your conventional publisher?

Alastair: Yeah. So I self-published the first one which I retrospectively normally published. And I wrote a few books with that publisher and then in the middle of that relationship I decided to self-publish this India book just because that's what I wanted to do. Because I was starting to get a big online audience, you get loads more money and you can be as quirk as you want.

And then after that, I went back and did a couple of more books with the same publisher and then I got exposed, in publishing terms, my break when I wrote "Micro-adventures," which got picked up by a big publisher, by Harper Collins. And they, unlike lots of small, very nice publishers, Harper Collins have got cash and people to throw at production values and marketing and things. And that certainly helped with my last two books which are both being with Harper Collins.

Paul: So that brings us neatly onto Micro-adventures. Clearly, they saw a potential in that for them to pick it up in the first place. Did you set about that book in a different way to how you'd set about your previous books? I mean clearly, you had a very clear concept there in terms of micro adventures. Was there anything else that you intentionally did to set aside from maybe your previous writing efforts?

Alastair: Well, the book came quite a long way down the line so it began by doing as a blog thing. So I did a year of micro adventures on my blog when I spent a year just having micro adventures which felt like a real risk to me. I was just starting, just about starting to make my living out of speaking about big adventures and here I was declaring that was gonna spend a year just knocking about in suburbia. And so I was quite worried about that but luckily the idea resonated and the blog didn't quite, people

weren't interested in it and I put together a book proposal but it still had to even though I had quite a lot of content on my blog and some magazine articles and stuff to back it all up, it still took a year before we found a publisher to agree to publish it.

So even then it's a long process and even though I had quite a few books by then, I had a little bit of validity to what I was doing and I had all this blog stuff out there with videos and pictures and web statistics to show people, it still takes quite some convincing to a publisher. The main difference in this book was that my other books had all just been a narrative about what I was doing whilst this one was heading more into the guidebook realm.

And I had quite a lot of big arguments, long argument with the publisher before we agreed on it. I essentially wanted to write a sort of my usual woefully, pretentious, self-obsessed narrative about me having a year of micro adventures. I don't know if you know the book "Waterlog" by Roger Deakin. He went all round Britain swimming in places for years.

Paul: I know the author, I don't know that particular book.

Alastair: It's a beautiful book and my idea was to write micro adventures like that. A year of me going around, having micro-adventures, blah, blah, blah. And the publisher wanted me to do a guidebook so essentially 100 best micro-adventures to do in the UK, turn left out this gate, walk down here for 300 meters, go sleep on this hill. And I was very adamant I didn't want to do that and what we ended up with, mostly thanks to the publisher's wisdom, was a very happy compromise, which was me trying to write nice stories but being very much more guidebook based.

I've now come to realize that lots of people who have read "Micro-adventures" almost nobody ever says, in fact only one person, my dad, has ever said to me that he enjoyed reading my book. Basically, everyone else just looks at the pictures and then goes to sleep on a hill. And it's taken me as an aspiring writer some time to come to terms with it but I get upset that all of my hard work no one actually reads.

Paul: Oh well, I think it's the same with blogs, isn't it? You can spend, I find this with mine, you can spend hours writing thousands of words and craft a blog post and you put 10 photos in there and you can say that the average time on the page is one and a half minutes and the clearly just looked at the pictures and didn't read any of the words.

Alastair: Exactly.

Paul: But would you say that your blog has been instrumental in your success, lastly, whether it's specifically with the book or just more generally? I mean, you have a really good website, from my perspective. It's nicely designed, there is a ton of stuff on there. Whenever I go on there I find things that were always on there but I've not seen before. You put a lot of stuff on there.

Alastair: So round about 2009 I made a conscious decision that I was gonna try and not only enjoy being a bit of a bum and a vagabond, which is what appealed to me about being an adventurer, but I decided that I wanted to make this my job. And if I wanted to make it my job then I needed to do some work. Essentially I pay for my life by speaking about what I do and therefore I needed to get people to know about me so that they get me to speak. And the way it decided to try and do that was through my blog.

So I essentially I treated my blog as a halftime job so half time of the week I would be dedicated to writing articles. And for about, I think it was almost two years, I tried to do about five blog posts a week and tried to make good stuff and also try and tell the world about it by starting to do all social media stuff, which is essentially just showing off about yourself on the internet. And so anyway, I started to take it seriously like a job. I paid someone, a guy called John Summerton, I paid him good money to make my website look good and look professional. And yeah, I just started to take it seriously.

My website is essentially the way that people who don't know me learn about me and get that perception of me and find out about me and hopefully find me interesting enough to either buy a book or book me for a talk. Essentially that's the key to my job, is my website.

Paul: So it's a real crucial part of the picture then?

Alastair: Yeah. It's absolutely crucial. I think if you want to make a living doing something, and this is the same view, you need to do two things. First of all, people need to know about you in order to book you. And then secondly, what you give them has to be good so that they're happy and will tell other people about it.

Paul: Yeah. Indeed. Indeed. Clearly, you enjoy the process of writing.

Do you find, compared to writing a book that it's nice to have that short form outlet as well with the blog?

Alastair: Well, it's just so easy. If ever I'm so opposed to be writing a book that is when my blog output increases dramatically. Because it's so easy. I'm being, "What should I write about? Okay, I know. Five hundred words, choosing a rucksack for an adventure." I'll do and that counts a day's work. Yeah. But what's interesting about the people on the internet is they're not stupid and the stuff that I really work hard at and the blog post I write that takes two days to do, they get a lot more traffic and they get repeat traffic over years. Whereas when I sit down and think, "I'll write 500 words about the best rucksack," no one ever reads or comments on it so then it just disappears because I didn't put any effort into it.

Paul: Yeah, it's true.

Alastair: So I made a big conscious decision to start blogging. The next time I went through a very conscious decision in the same way it was with filmmaking. I saw that filmmaking was starting to become or films were becoming more common on the internet, YouTube was starting to explode and camera technology was becoming better and cheaper. And these two things collide, really, whereby any of us you have a smart phone have all the tools we need to make a film good enough for Hollywood and with YouTube you instantly have the place to reach a billion people. So that seemed like an opportunity.

So I deliberately started to film the things that I did and trying to learn to make films about it. And in terms of blogging, I think that's the direction that I'll be trying to do more stuff of. I'll be trying to do more video-based content from my website because that's proving quite popular.

Paul: Yeah, I mean I've found exactly the same. I had a YouTube channel. I've had a YouTube channel for quite a long time but initially I really just used it to try and drive traffic to my blog so I put up a few quick how-to videos and said, "If you'd like some more good stuff go to my blog." Whereas now I'm treating it very much as a channel in its own right that I think about what I want to produce for that, what I wanna put on there, and put different types of content on there. And that has grown my subscriber base there on YouTube quite considerably over a relatively short space of time since I made that conscious decision to do that.

So yeah. Again, as you say the internet is just people and people are not stupid. And when you're putting an effort into something people will recognize that and pay you more attention, definitely. Definitely.

Alastair: And I think the other thing to be aware of on that note is that there are only a certain number of people who are interested in what you do.

Paul: Yeah.

Alastair: And that sounds a very obvious thing but it used to annoy me that say, I don't know, 2000 people would watch my video whereas two million people would watch a video of a cat falling out of a tree. I used to beat myself up about that, whereas I just realized that this is the world I'm in. Two thousand people are interested in adventure so I either make it as good as I can for those people and I accept that that's the base I have to use to try and make my living from or I go into the kittens and trees business.

Paul: Yeah, it's a different thing altogether, isn't it? And I think you're right, it's not just about numbers as well. It's about depth. It's about how much attention people are giving to your material. And if you've got 2000 people who pay complete attention to most of what you do then that's better than putting one viral video of a kitten out and never getting any traffic on anything else.

Alastair: Do you know the notion of 1000 true fans?

Paul: Kevin Cali, yes.

Alastair: Which is people don't know that the essence is that if you have 1000 people who are properly passionate about what you do, as in they come to your talks, buy your books regardless, and crucially, evangelize about you have till then makes it a part of and then you have enough viable business.

Paul: To make a living, yeah.

Alastair: And that's a far better thing to try and write a blog for those thousand people than to write a blog thinking, "How could I find a million people?"

Paul: Absolutely. I think that was early on for me when I started doing

what, rather than working for somebody else doing what I do now but working for myself and making my own way in the world with my blog and all of the other things that I do. That was one thing that I read quite early on and that was instrumental for me. I think a little bit like you're saying, people just needing the confidence to start with adventures as well. If you realize that you don't need to have a readership of a million, you don't need to have a YouTube channel with 250,000 subscribers, you can just start with a few and go from there. And even if you don't get to millions and millions you can still make a viable living out of it as long as you're producing good quality stuff.

I'll link to that in the in the show notes as well because it's not particularly long rate, is it? But it's very incisive and for me, it was quite formative in its thinking that, yeah, you can do this of a niche within a niche almost, you can still do it.

Alastair: Yeah. And I'd to that Seth Godin's book, "Tribes." Both of those I think are very helpful for anyone wanting to start something online to grow. It really doesn't matter what that something is, it's possible. But I think those two things that help you be realistic but also give you some directions.

Paul: Yeah. I've read most of what Seth Godin's written and that was a good one. And the other one for me that's some quite old now but his "Permission Marketing" book as well just about using emails to communicate with people. It's simple but it works.

Alastair: Yes, yeah.

Paul: Because you have a good mailing list, as well. That's the other thing I noticed you do with your blog. You do send out an intermittent, occasional newsletter.

Alastair: Yeah, I've been building up a newsletter for many years now in a fairly gentle way. I hate when you go to those websites to have these pop-ups [inaudible 01:16:52] but I hate those but...

Paul: They work.

Alastair: They work ridiculously well to the point where I've embraced annoying my website visitors because they work ridiculously well. I think I have phrased my along the lines of I'm really sorry about Paul but, and that's the truth. I am sorry it happened there but they do really work.

Paul: Yeah. It's quite an English way of putting it, isn't it?

Alastair: Terribly sorry.

Paul: Yeah, no they work, they work well, definitely. Definitely. Now, another question that I had from a few people and it's something that I was interested in myself, and we've just been talking about putting out nice books and putting out nice blog posts and video content, but one of the questions is, could Alastair talk a bit more about things that went wrong on trips and how he deals with that? Such as weather, breakdowns in remote places, illness, injury.

And this is from John Horsley he says, "I love seeing the glossy perfect trip videos that get posted but I'd love to know about the other things that go on, on the ground day-to-day as well." We've talked about the cart story, the cart debacle already but do you have any other things that are memorable that just went wrong but you somehow overcame them?

Alastair: Well, yeah. My "Around the World" books are full of examples of incompetence and things breaking and visas being refused and getting lost and getting sick and all these sorts of things. In India, the river that I chose to walk the length of India, I arrived in the dry season and they had no water in it. One of my favorite micro adventure video is when I tried to paddle a heightened pack raft from source to sea. It was only when I got to the sea that I realized that I had pack rafted down entirely the wrong river.

Paul: I'd not seen that one, Alastair, sorry.

Alastair: Yeah. And I don't ever shy away from including all this stuff probably because it's true but also in the example of that river one it just shows that generally mistakes don't really matter. People get really hung up about their mistakes but, you know, the river is a great river and who cares which one it was. I suppose mistakes and things are useful to hear about there in terms of people who are worried about significant things happening.

And I might sound like a bit of a buffoon but I try to think, particularly going to wild places, of if something goes wrong here what am I gonna do about it? And when I was walking across India or cycling around the world, what I was going to do about it, this sound silly but it's true, what I was gonna do about it was just hope or assume that somebody would

help me just in the same way that if I went walking through London today, I don't really worry about what will happen if appendix burst because I know if it bursts someone will help me and then an ambulance will come along.

I think that's genuinely how I deal with my problems when I'm in places with humans around. In the wilderness areas now, crossing a desert or rowing in the ocean, I tend to carry a satellite phone. Although that gives you quite a natural connection with the outside world which in many ways compromises the expedition I just feel if something went really wrong and I've chosen not to have a phone in the name of purity, I just feel and look like a little bit of an idiot.

Paul: And you've got kids now as well, haven't you? So I think that changes people's perspective on those things as well, do you think?

Alastair: Yeah, it's less able to be quite as much of an idiot. If you were on an expedition say skiing to the North Pole then you want to make sure that none of your kit breaks, you have the exact amount of food, you cut the exact mileage each day because if you don't you will fail or die. But if you're wanting to do something like road to the Sahara or cycle to Siberia or go on a motorbike, you almost want leave some space within your planning for unknown stuff to happen because that's when the interesting adventures happen and the exciting things and often the memorable encounters.

So it would be foolish to deliberately want to make stuff go wrong but it's kind of the point really.

Paul: Yeah. I think it was interesting you saying about pack rafting down the wrong river because that's only a mistake if you want it to be a mistake, if you see what I mean. It's a mistake versus maybe what you planned to do but that was albeity in the first place. Whereas clearly dying of hypothermia or what have you in certain circumstance, that's just physics whereas the rest, I guess it is almost you have to split into two types of mistake. One is, this was my plan. It didn't go to plan in terms of these things but that doesn't really matter. And then these are the critical things to cover because if it doesn't work then I'm going to die, if that applies at all.

And I think if you make that distinction then you've got a lot more freedom for flexibility and maybe less rigidity in the planning in the first place.

Alastair: Yeah, that's what I meant to say. All of that.

Paul: Perfect. But I think it's an important distinction to make that people make a plan and then that plan could have been anything but it just happens to be the plan and then they get stressed when it doesn't go to that plan, even though that was chosen fairly arbitrarily in the first place.

Alastair: Yeah, and general adventures by and large are pretty average things. I'm gonna cycle to Beijing or why don't you go cycle to bulk regions, Brazil? It really doesn't matter. It's just choosing some end point that gives you sufficient excitement boldly getting out the door. That's all that really matters. And then what happens along the way, that's the adventure.

Paul: Indeed. Indeed. So "Micro-adventures" clearly helped people do that and it's been a big success and a lot of people know you as a result of that. And I think the book's done well, ranked highly on Amazon. And then you switched tack back to the grand adventures, where are you at now with your personal projects? Are you working on micro adventures? Are you working on grand adventures? Are you mixing it up and doing both? What are the current things that you're doing?

Alastair: I don't really know. I really want to have another good idea and go and do that good idea. Because I've been banging on about micro-adventures for ages and the last thing you ever want to be is the person who is still banging on about something when everybody else has got bored. So I would like to feel and I've said enough about micro-adventures and that people can get on and go sleep on the hill if they want to. But that's what people keep coming back to being interested in and asking me about it so that is what I think my most interesting idea that people are most interested in so which perhaps is a roundabout way of saying there's probably some horse left to be flogged before it's totally dead.

Paul: Do you think people can easily relate to that? I think you've done what you wanted to achieve, haven't you? And that you've made it more accessible to people. You've made it more relatable to people. Skiing to the North Pole or running across the Atlantic or walking unsupported across Greenland or Iceland or whatever, it catches people's imagination but most people are never even gonna contemplate going to do that, whereas going and spending the night on Kingdom Scout or something is well within most people's potential.

Alastair: Yeah. I think that accessibility and the fact that it's achievable is exactly why people are interested in it. And in that sense I feel I've said all I needed to say because what I don't want to start doing is giving out specific recipes of, "Here's this hill go and climb it." It's more trying to just give people the idea to find something near to them and go and do it.

But on a more slightly, I guess, pragmatic and slightly grubbier note, these brands and companies are becoming very interested in adventure at the moment, which is a trendy thing and which is very handy for me and because most brands aren't trying to encourage someone to go to the North Pole, they're trying to encourage someone to do whatever it is that involves their products but do it in an adventurous way, micro adventures has been quite of interest to different brands.

And so I've been doing some micro adventure stuff for different brands, which people have various personal thoughts about the rights or wrongs to do now. But it certainly helps pay the bills and also it helps me reach a new audience too.

Paul: I think that's important. I think reaching new audience is always important. My personal view on working with brands is that it's fine as long as they're brands that you'd be happy to use, anyway. I think that's my personal ethic on that.

Alastair: Yeah. So I am hoping then to come up with some genius idea but I'm afraid I haven't done that yet.

Paul: You did your cycling, the [inaudible 01:26:47] trip in Scotland which you said you were very proud of or you really enjoyed doing or was very fulfilling. I can't remember exactly how you phrased it. You talked about that at your filmmaking workshop seminar the other week as something you've done relatively recently that you enjoyed doing.

Alastair: Yeah, I spent a week last Easter cycling around Boris in Scotland, these remote mountain huts that anyone can stay in for free. And I did that because I like riding my bike. I did it because I love these Boris and wildebeests of Scotland and because I like filming. So all the things that I love. So that I put them together into a short film that's about eight minutes long. What was really gratifying was that none of this seemed to have any particular business use, it's a horrible phrase but I suppose that's the truth. None of it seemed to have much use

except that it's just something I loved and that excited me.

And what was gratifying is that the video I made of that has been my most popular video, which is a really important reminder to myself but I do need reminding that if I just go and do stuff that I love, adventurous stuff, and I do it as well as I can and tell a story honestly and with enthusiasm then people will like that. And if people like what you do at some point some brand will come along or someone will come along and say, "We like what you do, please can we give you some money to go and do more of it?"

So that Boris trip is a really good reminder to me to just do stuff that I love, do it well and then hopefully someone will pay for my bills along the way.

Paul: Yeah, that's fair enough. I think there's an authenticity to that, which is hard. You can't fabricate it, can you? You can't manufacture that. I think if you've got that or that people can tell that you're enjoying it and you're doing it for the right reasons and it's something that you love then again, people are not stupid, the internet isn't stupid, people will pick up on that and it certainly comes out in that.

And I think for me as well, I mean, I found myself a while ago just planning trips that I could do with customers. And after a while you think, "No, I want to go and do a trip for me, whether or not I tell the world about it, I want to go and do trip for me." And I think it is easy to get stuck in a rut mode of right, I'm almost like I'm on this hamster wheel now. I have to keep coming up with good ideas that I can write a book about or tell a story about or make a film about. And that then starts taking some of the joy out of it a little bit and you have to remind yourself that you should do it for the joy sometimes as well, regardless of whether you can see a business use for it or not.

Alastair: Yes, yeah. I think generally, this sounds slightly hippy-ish but generally if you do that then somehow the universe or something will ensure that some cash comes along to pay for your next cup of tea.

Paul: Indeed. Indeed, it does. So in some ways it's quite nice to hear that you don't have the next 17 years planned out for adventures.

Alastair: I don't know what I'm having for my lunch yet.

Paul: And I guess you're in that post-book phase as well, so you've got

nothing to tantalize us with other than the most recent book. And clearly we'll link that in the show notes as well and I think people will enjoy that. And it's doing quite well so far, isn't it? As far as I can see on Amazon rankings and...

Alastair: Yeah, "Grand Adventures" is very well. Yeah, it did very well in its initial launch. I knew all along that it wouldn't do as well in the long run as "Micro-adventures" but it's done much better at the start than I imagined. I thought you were all see most about projects and things but I do. I am planning for the trip that I can tell you about that's...

Paul: Oh yes, please. Just anything. Just what are you up to?

Alastair: This is also a link in a bit, my favorite ever book is "As I walked out One Midsummer Morning," by Laurie Lee, which is about this guy who in the 1930s he walked across Spain. And it's my favorite book because it taught me a lot about writing and things to aspire to writing but it also taught me a lot about the way I like to travel, which is traveling very simply, very slowly, offering yourself up to spontaneity and the random stuff that happens along the way.

So it's been a important book for me. And he walks through Spain like a proper vagabond just paying for his life by playing his violin. And I've always got this book and I've always thought, "If I went and did that trip that would make a great book and a great film." But I've always been stumped by the fact that the violin is so integral to his story and I can't play the violin at all. So this is a slight flaw.

Paul: And it's not an instrument you can learn overnight either, is it?

Alastair: It's not, no. But then I started thinking, I thought that the point of adventure should be about doing stuff that's difficult and uncertain and it frightens you and that involves personal challenge and risk and if all that is true then it would be a bit silly for me to go and row across another ocean because I know I can do it, or walk across the desert because I know I can do it. And what I should really do is do something that is uncertain and something that really scares me. And so at Christmas I bought a violin and since Christmas I've been having violin lessons and in two weeks' time I'm off to Spain to go follow in Laurie's footsteps but with no money or credit card, just relying on my basking skills.

Paul: Fantastic. I love the idea. I've not read that book. It's not a book I'm familiar with but again it's another, I've got a couple of good

recommendations, one of yours, here "The India" book and I'm gonna add that to my rather long list already, I have to say. You're probably the same, that you tend to buy more books than you find the time to read.

Alastair: Yeah, massive pile of unread books.

Paul: Yeah, but I'm always happy to add more so I'll add that one. Is it coming out?

Alastair: Well, I've never played in public so this is...so I do a lot of speaking in public, which over time I've got used to but the prospect of me to play music or sing in public is one of my greatest phobias in life. But I've never played in public and so when I get to Spain in two weeks' time the prospects of having absolutely no money and having to rely on my musical skills to pay for my next meal, unlike I come out for quick bush craft course with you in the next two weeks means that I'm really terrified.

I just wanted to let you know how bad I am by giving you a little ditty. Have you had a musical performance on your podcast before?

Paul: We haven't. This is a first for you then, first public performance and the first for us in having a musical performance on the podcast. So I can't think of a better way for both of us to try something new.

Alastair: Well, here we go. And you can tell me how much money this will earn me.

I'm so on. Do you recognize the tune?

Paul: Vaguely. Vaguely.

Alastair: That is the Muppets show theme...

Paul: Yeah. Well, I thought the first bit sounded like the Muppets so then it kind of, if I'm being brutally honest, and then it kind of deviated a little bit. But yeah, it did sound like, the first few bars definitely sound like the Muppets.

Alastair: Okay, there we go. That's my best piece, the Muppet show tune.

Paul: Excellent. Excellent.

Alastair: So a bit of polishing to do.

Paul: Right. Have you have you been down the fish and chips shop putting on weight ahead of this trip as well?

Alastair: Yeah. I think that would be the wise thing to be doing. Because I know absolutely nothing about bush craft at all. And I'm always a bit ashamed when people often ask me in my talks if I can rub two sticks together to light a fire and I can't. But it's made me think, actually, just how little I know about the planet. The fact that I'm gonna walk through Spain and presumably they'll be all sorts of stuff I could eat along the way, but because I don't know about that, I'm entirely reliant on what I can either earn, beg or steal. Which is missing out a huge swathe of the planet.

Paul: Yes. I think it does make you realize once you start looking into what resources are out there, it makes you realize what's there. I think it certainly makes you feel more comfortable in wild places where there aren't, or even relatively urban places, when you start talking about food. Certainly something that I get a lot of satisfaction from in knowing, you know, one of the things I say to people is you go into the woods and you stop seeing just a bunch of trees and you start seeing friends almost and it just makes you feel more comfortable there immediately.

And even if you're not, every time you go camping, every time you're not foraging for your food and rubbing sticks together and building shelters and navigating by the stars but you know you could and you have the skills to do that, it just makes you much more comfortable to do the other things that you're doing as well. So for me there's multiple levels, multiple layers of benefit from knowing those things. But of course, as you say, there's the practical level of being able to find a bit of food along the way as well, which is always useful.

Alastair: Yeah. Especially when you can't play the violin.

Paul: Although there's a bit of a dichotomy there because presumably you're gonna have to be in places where people are going to be able to hear you're playing and so maybe you're gonna have to be, I don't know the route that Laurie Lee took, where do you start? Where do you finish?

Alastair: I start in Northwest Spain in Camino, De Santiago, the Compostela and then head through from that towards Madrid.

Paul: Okay. So up in Galicia at the top then, okay.

Alastair: Exactly, yes. Are there plenty of berries on the trees there?

Paul: A lot of the trees and plants up there are not dissimilar to what you get in the UK. There are some that are different. And yeah, I think it is quite a rich environment up there. So I've been up there, I have friends who live in Madrid who holiday up there and I've been to stay with them just up on the coast there. Some of the best potatoes in Spain apparently, I'm told, are grown in Galithia because of the richness of the soil. It's good soil there, good, healthy plants.

Alastair: Well, my morals definitely extend to stealing a handful of potatoes.

Paul: There you go. There you go.

Alastair: And I can recognize a potato as well so I've mastered that skill.

Paul: Excellent, excellent. Let's get those starches and then see what else you can find.

Alastair: Yes.

Paul: So you start literally beginning of July is that you start or not.

Alastair: Yeah, on the 7th or 8th of July. So I don't want to go. When I started the violin I knew it was gonna be difficult. The last month or two I've started to realize that the start line is thundering up very, very fast, faster than my practice is getting me there. I am just, "What will be, will be."

Paul: Yeah. No, that would scare the hell out of me, to be honest with you. The adventure side of things doesn't, you know, just walking places and sleeping rough or whatever, would be fine but standing there on a high street capping with an open violin case hoping for a few coins to pay for your dinner, that would be that, yeah, that would be scary.

Alastair: Even as I talk about it, I feel nervous and that reassures me that I'm on to a good thing.

Paul: On to a good thing. Well, I'm fascinated to find out what happens,

whatever it is so I think in terms of generating some interest as well that it's got the right vibe right from the start. And how long do you hope to be out for?

Alastair: I'm just going for a month.

Paul: A month?

Alastair: And I'll just see how far I can get. What I'm hoping is that I can just get to a point where it becomes a viable lifestyle whereby I think, "Wow, if I can a Euro day I could live," and that would be really satisfying.

Paul: Yes. No, that makes sense. And I think again, a little bit like we've been talking about with the skills of journeying, if you're playing violin for however many hours a day, you're gonna get a lot better at a in a month, aren't you?

Alastair: Yes, that's for sure. Yes, necessity in that.

Paul: Yeah. Well, I think it's the same as all the other things that we've talked about whether it's cycling, your legs aches and your bum aches to start off with but then you get good at it. It is the same with the violin, no doubt. So are you gonna take new tunes and try and learn them as you go and practice or?

Alastair: No, I've got a repertour of pieces. I've got about eight song and I'm just gonna try and get those to the point where they're actually good.

Paul: You're gonna hone those.

Alastair: Yeah.

Paul: So lots of sore fingers in the next couple of weeks, is it?

Alastair: Well, you might not believe this from what you just heard but I've been practicing hard ever since Christmas and it's been really enjoyable to start something that I'm totally useless at but with a clear reason to persevere and to practice and practice and practice and to be so much better now than when I started. I found that all really exciting.

Paul: No, no, I sort of joked a little bit. It was recognizable as the Muppets. My brother spent some time learning to play the violin. My

brother is seven or eight years younger than me and he was playing the violin when I was in my teens and he was starting to learn. And it just sounded awful for months and months and months and months and months and months and months. I know it's not a quick process to get to the point where you're turning out any sort of tunes, so yeah. No, good luck with that. I'm intrigued to see what happens, that's fascinating.

Alastair: Yes, I'm excited as well.

Paul: Cool, cool. So where will people be able to find out about that? Will that be on your blog? Will it be in a book or do you not know yet?

Alastair: Well, I'm hoping it will become a book. That depends on how many misadventures I have along the way and how interesting it becomes. If it goes all to plan then it would be boring and there won't be a book. I'll definitely be filming it. This is some touch on what we've been talking about. I'm trying to do this trip because I want to do it and because I'm passionate about it and therefore I don't want the whole trip to be around the blogging and all that sort of stuff.

Paul: Yeah.

Alastair: So I'm just going to probably do one pitch or show a little video clip a day just on my phone that will get automatically shared to Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and my website and that's it. I just want the trip to be the main part of this.

Paul: No, that makes sense. It's all too easy for those social media and just general media side of things to just swamp what you're actually trying to do so that makes sense. And so people can link to all of those, they can find those from your website, is that right, Al?

Alastair: Yeah. If you type Alastair Humphries into whatever it is you're interested in to that you'll probably find me. So I've spent too much time mucking around the internet when I should be out learning how to forage for mushrooms.

Paul: Or play the violin. Cool, cool. And if people wanna say hi, how is the best way to do that? A lot of people say Twitter but I don't know.

Alastair: Yeah, Twitter is the best way for instant, fast responses or Facebook. Or if you go through my website you can find my email as well if you have some detailed questions to ask.

Paul: Sure. Sure. But only if they're detailed and not been answered elsewhere. I've read the preliminary briefing on your website about whether or not people should email you.

Alastair: Well, I really genuinely like getting emails but what I don't like is when people send me an email just demanding my time and expertise without them putting down some effort themselves.

Paul: Yeah, using the search bar on your blog first or whatever.

Alastair: Someone sent me an email saying, "I'd like to get to cycle around the world. Please send me full details of equipment, route, (with timings), budget and everything else I will need to know." And their name at the bottom. In my head I thought one thing and then I just pressed delete.

Paul: Yeah. I'm in the same boat. I have people asking me some really good questions and I like to get those. And then people who could use Google or even the search bar on my blog and they'd get a much better answer than I'd ever be able to write to them in email. Yeah. Cool, cool. Right.

Well, thank you very much for your time Alastair, that's been a fascinating ramble through various aspects of your life, from what you do. And hopefully listeners have found that interesting and if they have they will let you know through one of the means we've just talked about. And we look forward to hearing about your misadventures through Spain, playing the violin and what else you've got coming up after that. So thank you very much, I much appreciate your time Alastair, thank you.

Alastair: My pleasure. Thank you for having me, Paul.

Paul: No problem. And maybe we do a round two at some point as well.

Alastair: Yes.

Paul: Yeah, cheers.

Alastair: Cheers.

Paul: Thanks again to Al. That was really, really enjoyable and I hope

you enjoyed listening to that as much as I enjoyed recording it. Thanks to AI for his time. He's a busy guy and we look forward to hearing how he gets on, on his latest adventure. I hope that gave you good insight into what motivates AI and how he goes about doing what he does and his philosophy behind doing what he does. I hope that gave you some insight if you're interested in making your living or some of your living from outdoor life and sharing adventures with people.

And if I could ask you one favor, if you enjoyed this podcast please could you share it with your friends? Let people know who might also enjoy this podcast because I do this for the love of it. People like AI come on because they love sharing their experiences. Clearly, they do it for some visibility as well with the relevant audience but at the end of the day we all love doing what we do. And hopefully if you love the podcast too you'll share them with other people who might also get some enjoyment and some value out of them. So if you could do that it would be most, most appreciated. Thank you.

Just share it in your favorite social media platform. Come over to my blog paulkirtley.co.uk and share the link into your Facebook group or on Twitter or on Google Plus or wherever else you're active. That really, really helps me out. And that's all I ask in return for producing these podcasts because people do sometimes ask me, is there a way of paying for them or contributing or giving me a payment via PayPal? No, there isn't. That's not why I do this.

As I'd say, my primary reason for doing is the love of it and sharing this with an audience who appreciates it. Because it's hard to find this information elsewhere. It's hard to find long form interviews with people of the likes of AI and the other guests that I've had on previously and we'll have on going forward.

So thank you again for listening, I really, really appreciate it. Thanks for sharing this and I will see you before too long on episode 18. Take care.