

Four Peaks Challenge 2007



We set off from Marlow at 1.45am on Friday 13th July, arriving at a wet and cold Pen y Cae car park and ready to start our first climb, Mount Snowdon, at 5.25am.



1 hour 50mins later and we were at the top of the 3,560ft Welsh peak, wet but with a quick climb under our belt and an even quicker descent. By 8.55 we were back at the car and ready for a welcome hot coffee and bacon sandwich before heading to Holyhead to catch the fast cat ferry to Dublin!



Arriving on time in Belfast we headed north for the border and were in good spirits with some time to spare...until we hit the town of Newry in Northern Ireland! Traffic had got the better of us and by the time we reached the rainy, windswept Newcastle car park we were behind time and needed a quick climb on a mountain none of us knew!



The climb was gentle to start with as we made our way through woodland following the river into an open bowl surrounded by a seemingly never ending climb. We were an hour into the climb and the weather had deteriorated, we needed to step up the pace if we were to stand any chance of completing the climb and reaching Belfast in time to catch the Stranraer ferry.



This was a low point for the team as we really began to understand the extent of the challenge we had taken on. Poss took the brave decision to let Stuart, Colm and myself go on without him, if we could conquer the 3,414ft Irish Peak and get back down in 2 hours we were still in with a chance. We dug deep and 40 minutes later hit the summit! Just time to place our stones on the cairn and then back down in what must a record 1 hour and 5 minutes – we had done it, the challenge was still on!



The ferry to Stranraer gave us some rest and a welcome hot meal but heading off at 01.30 the next morning after our second night with very little sleep was tough, the 220 mile drive to Ben Nevis even tougher, especially with stray Deer almost ruining our chances before we even reached the Scottish mountain. Putting on wet walking gear is not much fun but at 05.25am in a cold and wet Scottish car park it's not funny!

Setting off to scale the 4,406 ft of Ben Nevis we all started to feel the effects of little sleep and whatever food we could eat 'on the go'. We were tired and still being rained on but were desperate to keep on track for the challenge. I have to admit that I certainly struggled on Nevis, physically I was still OK (and surprisingly blister free) but mentally was struggling to keep going. I have never completed a long distance run or marathon but I can only describe my own feelings as being close to the 'hitting the wall' effect that people refer to. It was time to dig deep and rely on the team to keep me pushing on for the summit.



The weather was really closing in with the temperature dropping, the wind speed increasing, visibility reducing and of course the continued rain, we were even now having to traverse snow patches!



Thankfully, after a surprisingly good 2 hour 40 minute climb, we hit the top! Huge relief all round and just enough time to place our stones on the cairn, take a quick photo and video before heading back down, in only 2 hours 5 mins, to the best McDonalds breakfast I've ever tasted!



By 10.30 we were on the road again heading South for the Lake District and our last peak, the imposing Scafell Pike (3,206ft). Traffic kept our time slow so once we arrived at the Wasdale car park it was straight on with our backpacks and we were off again, Poss this time leading the way and providing a great 'hare' for us to chase! If we could complete the climb in less than 5 hours we would beat our 40 hour target. We were feeling confident!



And at last, a dry climb...or so we thought! The cloud was low but at least the rain kept off however, the river was running so fast and deep that in order to cross we had no choice but to wade through the swollen waters and soak our feet and boots!

We were not to be put off though and despite wet feet, sore knees, aching legs and various other ailments, we hit the top in a staggering 1 hour and 40 mins!



Just time for a celebratory beer and to place our last 'stone for Harry' before our final descent and, at last, a view to take your breath away...



We had managed the final climb in a total of 3 hours, so at 19.25 on Saturday night, in Wasdale car park we completed our challenge.

In just 38 hours we had driven 864 miles, crossed the Irish Sea twice and climbed to a combined total height of over 14,500 feet, and back down again, in just 14 hours!

We would like to say a huge thank you to everyone that has supported us in this challenge through their kind words and generous donations. And in particular to Richard, Judy, Marie, Jenny and George Mills who spurred us on with their amazing enthusiasm for what, at times, looked to be an almost impossible challenge.

Nigel Banks, Stuart Butler, Colm Farrell and David (Poss) Postlethwaite.

| Mountain | Climb Time | Descent Time | Total |
|---------------|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| Snowdon | 1 hour 50 Mins | 1 hour 40 Mins | 3 Hours 30 Mins |
| Slieve Donard | 1 hour 40 Mins | 1 hour 05 Mins | 2 Hours 45 Mins |
| Ben Nevis | 2 hours 30 Mins | 2 hour 15 Mins | 4 Hours 45 Mins |
| Scafell Pike | 1 hour 40 Mins | 1 hour 20 Mins | 3 Hours |
| Total | 7 Hours 40 Mins | 6 Hours 20 Mins | 14 Hours |

Please remember that you can still help raise money to support Meningitis Research through donations to this or other 'Team Harry' challenges by following the links on www.harrymills.co.uk