

THE CHANGARAWA PROJECT



The Kili on the Ben

Between 30th May and 1st June, five of our trustees rounded-up friends, family and dogs to undertake the charity's biggest ever collective fundraising exercise.

The challenge: to climb the height of Mount Kilimanjaro on Britain's highest mountain, Ben Nevis. Kilimanjaro is 4.5 times the size of Ben Nevis, meaning 4.5 ascents would be required! Or the slightly easier option; climb in a team of 4.5 people to complete one ascent (or Kili as they became known), in 48 hours. The groups arrived in various stages during Friday afternoon and stayed either at the local YHA, B&Bs or a wonderful self-catering cottage, which became Kili HQ and where 24 hours of cooking rapidly began. With walking boots packed, the catering squad prepped and a favourable weather forecast, the first climbers set off on Friday night to begin the marathon task, and the start of a wonderful weekend. All teams (including two dogs and a baby) completed at least one Kili each, and two people made five ascents climbing the full height of Kilimanjaro!

The full team of participants were Mark Baylis who planned the whole crazy enterprise, Rose Baylis, Johnny Acton, Luke Edwards-Stuart, Robert Watkinson, Nina Curry, Adelaide and Rob Carlow, Louise Johnson, James, Laura and Tom Gilbert, Jaki and Geddis Grudzinskas, Walter and Maureen Marlowe, Diane Simpson, Mikie and Laura Robarts and Caro and Martin Walford. Not forgetting baby Peggy Carlow and 2 dogs!

To date we have, incredibly, raised approaching £15,000 and we thank you tremendously for your generosity! This money will go a long way to help maintain funding to all parts of the project. We leave you with personal accounts of the event, which was mentally, as well as physically, tough and a selection of some rather wonderful pictures. Please head to our Facebook page to view the whole 'Kili on the Ben' album and extended versions of the stories: https://www.facebook.com/TheChangaraweProject/photos_stream



Caro: Martin and I travelled by train with Jaki and Geddis Grudzinskas, Maureen and Walter Marlowe and Diane Simpson, plus a huge quantity of homemade energy bars, enriched flapjacks and cakes donated by Sarah Gore-Langton and Rosy Squire. Jaki had a delicious casserole for about 15 in her luggage to start the weekend off on Friday night. We were staying in an excellent lodge and a cottage, which were bang next to the Hostel, and made a great catering HQ for all the climbers to refuel and set off again.

Mark Baylis and Johnny had already set off when we arrived and came back in after their first climb at about 11.30pm. Di Simpson and I were on the night shift and, after feeding Mark and Johnny with pancakes of bacon,

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maple syrup and eggs, we then fed 2 more shifts at about 1.45am (Luke and Rob) and 3.30am (James, Laura and Tom Gilbert). Mark and Johnny went straight up again after their feed, completed 2 more climbs by 2 different routes and returned to base again at about 11.30am! They had completed it in a very fast time and were absolutely exhausted.

Luke and Rob went up for a second time, as did Tom, and Laura, while James went to bed. After the overnight feeding sessions, I got up after the older men's group - Martin, Gedis and Walter - had already left, as had Rose and Nina Curry. Maureen and Jaki had got up to do the 6am breakfast shift, while Di Simpson and I slept. Later on in the morning, Jaki and Maureen set off together and, after lunch, I decided to go as far as I could, as I was feeling rather tired from lack of sleep! The weather was glorious. Di went for a walk and some drawing time by the river. I found the walk pretty tough because of the constant clambering over rocks, plus the mountain was extremely busy with a constant flow of people in all directions. I went up for a bit over 2 hours and was pleased to meet Martin and Walter coming down with Rose and Nina, and came back down with them. We also met the entire Robarts group (5 adults, a baby and 2 dogs) on their way down. After that it's all a bit of a blur of young coming and refuelling, or relaxing and going off again. The Gilbert family were night owls and all of them went up again on Saturday night. We left them food ready to reheat in the microwave, which they apparently did at 3am!! I'm glad to say we didn't hear them.....My memories of the weekend are primarily of the incredible atmosphere among the Changerawe team and the amount of laughter and mutual support. Plus the extraordinary achievements of all who climbed, whether it was the young going up multiple times, or the over 65s (or 70!) going up once. It was a magnificent and unforgettable weekend.

Rose: We have done 35 Bens in total, which is easily 8 full Kilis! Amazing! My first ascent on day one was in glorious sunshine with my friend Nina. On the way up, we met Luke and Rob who had already done 2 ascents, and my husband Mark and Johnny who had done 3. At the summit, we met my father and Walter and we all walked down together in spectacular sunshine with views across the highlands. It took us 10 hours in total due to our slower pace, but it was really fun to walk in a multi-generational group and to have time to enjoy the great views on a rare day of sunshine in the highlands. The base camp cooks made food all through the night for the other walkers going up and down all night, among whom were Laura and James who did two ascents during the night. On day two I set out with Mark, Johnny, Rob, Luke and Maureen. We had cloud and snippets of rain all the way. We approached from the north side to spare our legs the rocky descent of day one and the boys were also by that stage on their 3rd or 4th ascents.



Martin Walford descending



Catering team



Caro with Laura Robarts

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Maureen walked up to the start of the north face while Johnny and I peeled off a bit earlier and crossed a bog to get to the path that led onto the main path up to the summit. Both of us were slightly stiff and sore, but we made it up okay. We met Tom who had just come off the summit for the 5th time! He looked tired but very much still moving. Poor Johnny then had to run down as he nearly missed his flight. I did the last three hours on my own, back down through the bog! Very pleased to have hot pancakes from the catering team at the bottom. Mark, Luke and Rob got to 1150meters, just under the summit at the north face, and had to come back down due to snow and the lack of a clear route. Mark did his 5th ascent on Monday morning, going back up

to the 6th zig zag at around 1200 metres to top his total up to the full Kili height in 5 ascents! He had his best run yet, doing it in 2 hours 20 mins. It was a fantastic weekend!



Johnny and Mark after ascent one Rob at the start of ascent number three

Diane Simpson: I would like to sum up again that this was such a great and worthwhile event. There were a lot of laughs, but always the backdrop of it being something well worth doing. A real effort was put in to raise real money to help real people. I'm no mountain climber, but did put my all into making pancakes!

Mikie and the Robarts Team: Laura and I took a reasonably soft option, relying on the watertight excuse that we were taking a 10 month old baby, her parents Adelaide (our daughter) and Rob, plus two dogs. We were joined by a niece, Louise Johnson, who had nobly travelled up from London to provide moral support.



Di Simpson making pancakes



Rose on ascent number two



Rob and Mark

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We set off just before 10 and the dogs thought they had died and gone to heaven, doing several Kilis in the process..... the rest of us found it somewhat tougher, apart from Peggy who enjoyed being carried and held court to countless passers-by who seemed to consider a baby on the hill quite startling.



Baby Peggy enjoying the journey



Team Roberts meeting Martin and companions

We made it to the top shortly after one and, as we were going up the final stretch of snow, we met Martin and companions (Gedis, Walter, Rose and Nina) coming down. We caught up with them again on the second half of our descent, this time joined by Caro and Maureen who were (so they said....) going up. Total time elapsed was exactly 8 hours including baby and dog retrieval stops. It was a brilliant day, helped by good weather, but distinctly tough on the legs due to the large steps on the way down which had us moving gingerly for several days afterwards. Quite glad to read all the warnings about cliffs and gullies AFTER we got down! And well done to the younger elite team who showed us oldies up as complete wimps.

Jaki Grudzinkas: Nurse Rose told me that the reason I had no physical aftereffects following my hike up and down Ben Nevis nearly two weeks ago was because I'm slightly old and batty. Perhaps she thought I had only imagined my eleven hours in the sun and fresh air on the mountain. In truth, I can hardly remember now just what a fantastic time I had, but I've got the goddam pics to prove it. I set off at 11am with my new kitchen buddy, Maureen Marlowe, after we'd done breakfast duty, Maureen flipping pancakes, me flapping about unruly coffee machines. Finally, red lippie applied, new sticks in hand, I was ready for the mountain. Three old codgers, Martin, Walter and Gedis had set off earlier grumbling about the tortures invented by the FWC (First Wives' Club). About one hour into our climb, Maureen returned to base, I was then alone and it was one step at a time - and that's how you get up the mountain. But I can't tell you why.

I really did wonder if I would make it to the top, but some stubbornness within me surfaced, especially when I passed the old codgers coming down and quite a few other wibbly-wobbly shapes. If they could do it, I could. The exhilaration of arriving, the thrill of the views, led to the joy of heading down at last, which was swiftly replaced by a plodding vigilance. I knew I would be in deep trouble from the old codger who is my husband if I did something stupid, carelessly, now that it was six hours since I had set off.

And here we come back to the beginning. I think Nurse Rose was right. Being tired, old and batty, I took the wrong path towards the end of the descent and added a cooling-down hour to my trip. It was a much easier route and the last 30 minutes at dusk, along a flat soft track, through woods by a river, were totally uplifting. I got into a rhythm and thought I had become invincible. Definitely delirious, but well worth it.

The end!