

Team hits the heights to climb 130 mountains in 15 days



FIONA RUSSELL

A CHARITY team has completed an epic journey ticking off 130 Scottish mountains in aid of sick children.

Archie's Mountain Challenge saw a relay of walkers and runners complete all of the country's peaks with a height of one kilometre or more within 15 days - finishing on the 1,100m summit of Beinn Ime in the Arrochar Alps in Argyll on Sunday.

It is believed to be the first time the mountains have been summited in a non-stop, man-powered journey.

The team has raised in excess of £20,000 for the Archie Foundation, a charity that supports sick children and their families in the north of Scotland.

Paul Fettes, an anaesthetist at Ninewells Hospital in Dundee, who came up with the idea, said: "I'm absolutely delighted by what we have achieved and how it has inspired so many people to join in."

"In total the challengers climbed almost 10 times the elevation of Everest and travelled the equivalent length of Britain on foot, bikes and in kayaks."

"It has also been an amazing fundraiser and many thousands of pounds will go towards the Archie Tayside appeal for a new

paediatric surgical suite at Tayside Children's Hospital. This will have huge potential benefits for both children and their parents."

Archie's Mountain Challenge began on May 30 at sea level when the walkers dipped their toes in the North Sea near Dingwall in the Highlands.

Over the following two weeks, around 50 walkers, runners, cyclists and paddlers covered a total distance of more than 900 miles to link together the 130 summits on the Scottish mainland.

These included the most northerly, An Teallach, near Dundonnell; the most westerly, Ladhair Bheinn, in Knoydart; the most easterly, Lochnagar; and Ben Ime, the most southerly and the final peak of the challenge.

A cuddly Archie Foundation rabbit mascot fitted with GPS tracker was carried to every summit.

Mr Fettes said the changeable weather proved challenging for the team, adding: "In the first part of the challenge we worried about hypothermia and walkers being swept away by high winds. We even had to miss some mountains due to adverse conditions and

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PANORAMIC: Archie's Mountain Challenge participant Russell Duncan at the top of An Teallach, near Dundonnell, with the GPS-fitted rabbit mascot.



CROSSING: Challenger Kate Annan gets a lift on the back of a kayak.



PEAK PROGRESS: Archie's walker Tim Gomersall enjoys the sunrise as he crosses the ridge of Stob Ghabhar towards Glen Etive near Glen Coe.

return to them at a later point.

"Then the second half of the challenge was the complete opposite with concerns about dehydration and sunburn because of the high temperatures.

"I am impressed by how

everyone has coped and by the incredible enthusiasm shown by all who have been involved."

The father-of-three now wants to take the challenge a step further and create a new classification of "Archie's" mountains.

He said: "All mountain classifications in Scotland, such as the Munros and Corbetts, are measured in imperial heights, over 3,000ft and over 2,500ft. But what about the more modern approach of metric measurements? When I

came up with the Archie's Mountain Challenge I decided to change the approach to mountain bagging and walk the '1km-up' peaks."

Mr Fettes said he hoped the new Archie's list would have great appeal to walkers, in particular those looking for a shorter challenge list than the 282 Munros or the 221 Corbetts.

He added: "The 130 Archie's feel like a thoroughly modern goal and something achievable for a wider

range of people, such as families.

"If we have the Archie's officially named it will also continue to raise awareness for The Archie Foundation. The charity does so much incredible work in the north of Scotland to make hospital experiences for children far more relaxed and positive."

The Tayside Children's Hospital appeal needs to raise £2 million. The total raised by the Archie's Mountain Challenge will be announced at a later date.

NewsBrief

Inquiries continue into fatal collision

THE family of a woman killed in a road crash have said she will be greatly missed. Rose Ann Moir, 66, of Montrose, died in the collision on the A92 at Inverkeilor in Angus on Friday. A Police Scotland spokesman said their inquiries into the circumstances of the incident are ongoing.

Helicopter makes a priority landing

AN offshore helicopter made a "priority landing" at Aberdeen International Airport after a cockpit warning light came on. Emergency services were called out to meet the Sikorsky S-92 on the runway as a precaution. The aircraft, carrying 17 passengers, touched down safely at 10:45am yesterday.



No Burley inquiry

SKY News presenter Kay Burley will not be investigated over an interview with the boss of Alton Towers. Burley's report received 1,816 complaints when she questioned Nick Varney.

Sixth man charged in sex abuse probe

A SIXTH person has been charged in connection with an investigation into claims of historic sexual abuse. Patrick Vernon Marshall, 66, of Surrey, is charged with 17 offences relating to abuse of under age boys: 16 counts of indecent assault on a boy under the age of 16, and one count of gross indecency with a boy under 14.

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