

Reaching the Summit

Alzheimer's Society is the leading UK care and research charity for those who suffer with this disease and other dementias, their families and carers. As this was the chosen charity partner of my employer Hays plc, it was a



privilege to attempt to climb Mont Blanc on their behalf. I was duly set a fundraising target of £3,750, which I had to raise by June 2013 when the big climb was due.

Grand Couloir and holding your nerve on the narrow Bosses Ridge at 4,500 metres. The week began perfectly with three days acclimatizing, donning crampons, grabbing ice-axes and

climbing two craggy summits at 3,700 and 3,900 metres respectively. These were great fun with lots of challenging height exposure. We then returned to the Chamonix valley to turn round and head up La Dame Blanche herself.

La Dame Blanche

I undertook many different fundraising activities, including collection tins in the Milton Co-op and The Lamb Inn, but by far the most fun was organizing the “What you want to be when you grow up Party”, held in February 2013. I was helped enormously by the ‘dream team’, which consisted of Lara Peniket, Emma and Dave Hillyard, Deb Jenkins, Jim Hey and my lovely wife Rachael. Together we raised over £1,200 on the night largely due to guests consuming over 900 bottles of beer and 120 bottles of wine.

By the time I left for Mont Blanc on June 16th, we had already raised £4,000; the pressure was really on to make it to the top.

Mont Blanc, also known as La Dame Blanche, at 4,810 metres (15,782 feet) above sea level, is regarded by many as the highest mountain in Europe. Our plan was to ascend via the Gouter Route, which means dodging rock-fall in the

Tough and Hugely Rewarding

Unfortunately the weather deteriorated fast with severe thunder storms echoing round the mountain-tops - not a place to be in that kind of weather. However, three days later, Richie, my climbing partner and I ascended to the Gouter Hut at 3,800 metres. At 3am on Sunday 23rd June, we took our chances, despite a forecast for very high winds. We actually climbed through the wind, emerging just before 7am on to a relatively calm summit, with the most stunning views imaginable.

Tough and Hugely Rewarding

As any mountaineer knows, getting to the top is only half-way and the descent was just as fantastic as going up, with down-climbing the Grand Couloir being a highlight. It was as tough as anything I have done so far and more fun that it is possible to put into words. By 3pm that afternoon, we had descended all the way to the valley and I was enjoying my first beer in three months!

Meanwhile, the funds continued to roll in. My employer agreed to match-fund everything we raised and I am delighted to tell you that thanks to the generosity of all those who contributed, we raised over £15,000. The amount we raised then triggered a further payment from Hays to Alzheimer's Society of over £40,000, bringing the total to a whopping £55,000. Liz Monks, Director of Fundraising at Alzheimer's Society said:
"We are so grateful to Dan for taking part in the Mont Blanc challenge and raising such a huge amount of money in support

of Alzheimer's Society... As a charity, we rely on the generosity of individuals like Dan, who gave up his time to help us continue our vital work. The money raised by Dan and his friends will enable Alzheimer's Society to continue leading the fight against dementia."

It therefore just remains for me to say a MASSIVE 'thank you' to all of you who helped raise so much money for such a deserving charity. And where next? Well, I've always had a secret desire...the Matterhorn – watch this space!

Dan Rogers

A Cold December Night 1950

The ground underfoot was thick, chunky, crackling ice, inches deep. Snow covered the roads and fields with no defining marks. Mother said we must walk up to Rock Cottage to make sure her parents were okay; no phones in those days, just the public red box. We wrapped up in our warmest coats; mine was dogtooth tweed

it cost a bit in those days and was probably bought at a bob a week from London House. (I sent it to the appeal for the 1952 Lynmouth sea flood disaster.) I think Mother sported some sort of rabbit fur, which was popular before the war. With our terrier Skipper, on a lead for once, we set off from St Michael's Close, arm in arm, when Mother lost her footing and shot me and the dog into the road. After a moment we righted ourselves and pressed on through the village- absolute nothingness as nobody was about. A light



in the Red Horse, another small light in the Shaven Crown, up past the Court, by The Lamb and on up Little Lane to Rock Cottage, probably just over a mile.

Granny opened the door, giving Mother a welcome shot of brandy and me a mug of hot Oxo.

After exchanging pleasantries and

orders for shopping and doctor's stuff we commenced our downward journey. The air was now much colder, the icy conditions underfoot made us slip, trip and fall our way through Upper Shipton. Once again the snowy blizzards started, making it impossible to see and the wind blowing and tearing at us as we hung together with the dog and back home to the comparative comfort of St Michael's Close with our electric light, kettle for hot soup and bed.

Phyllis Clarke