

Leith man marks 10th anniversary of his mum's death by cycling from the UK to Turkey

A former Leither is marking the 10th anniversary of his mum's death by cycling over 2300 miles from the UK to Turkey.

Stewart Kerr, along with two friends Andrew Jackson 'Jacks' and Martyn Heale, have set off from Dover and will cycle throughout Europe for the next two months.

The trio will arrive at their final destination in Dalyan, Turkey on the anniversary of Stewart's mum's death.

Catherine was cared for at the Marie Curie Hospice, Edinburgh for three weeks in October 2014. Stewart is marking the milestone by taking on the gruelling challenge to raise funds so that other families can experience the care and support they did.

Stewart, 62, is a keen cyclist. He moved full time to Dalyan six years ago. He said: "Marie Curie made a horrible situation bearable. My mum was strong and accepted she was on her final journey.

"For us as a family it was heartbreaking knowing we were never going to see her again. The staff made mum – and us – feel so welcome and treated us all with loving care and support. I'll never forget that which is why I wanted to do this challenge

in memory of mum and to raise funds for Marie Curie.”

The weight of each of their bikes and kit is 33kg and they’ll be staying in campsites as well as rough camping for the next two months where they’ll pass through France, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Serbia and Bulgaria. They’ll cover 2300 miles and 65,000 feet of climbing cycling.

Stewart added: “Every day we will need to assemble and disassemble our camping kit. We’ll be carrying stoves and dried food with us and we’ll be able to stop off at cafes and supermarkets to refuel. It’s important that we eat enough food to help with our energy levels.

“There is the risk that we can get robbed, have mechanical and illness issues, so we’re hoping to get through the challenge unscathed and will take each day as it comes.

“Cycling through mainland Europe will have flat terrain, but once we arrive in Turkey, it’s going to be mountainous. Coupled with the humidity it’s going to be mentally and physically tough to cycle for at least seven hours a day.

“We are aiming to complete the challenge in eight weeks, but it could take us 10 weeks – we’ll just need to see how conditions play out.

“The reality of what we’ll be doing has hit home. But I’ve got the support of my two friends with me 24/7 and of my family, and I’m doing something to help others in memory of my mum, so when the going gets tough having this thought will help me get through it.”

Fiona Bushby, Community Fundraiser, Marie Curie Scotland, said: “Fundraisers really push themselves to the extreme to help raise funds for Marie Curie. They know the impact Marie Curie care and supports makes to their lives and to their loved ones. It’s always there and never leaves them.

“What Stewart, Martyn and Jacks are doing is phenomenal. It’s not an easy challenge in the slightest and they’re giving their all for the next two months. We wish them all the best and will be following their adventure.

“Thank you so much to them and their generous supporters. It means Marie Curie can continue being there for other families when they need us most.”

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