

Brian Adcock



Brian is the Managing Director of Castle Triathlon Series. Their charity partner is MacMillan Cancer Support and they raise tens of thousands of pounds a year from the triathletes taking part in their races undertaking their challenge for the charity. In December last year Brian turned 50 and decided that he wanted to run a 50 mile ultramarathon in his 50th year with MacMillan as his chosen charity. Brian talks to us about what drives him to undertake these challenges, how he gets his family involved and gives anyone who might be thinking about doing their first physical challenge for charity some tips on how to get started.

TELL US A BIT ABOUT WHAT DRIVES YOU TO DO YOUR CHALLENGES?

If you don't start talking about these things I find they never happen. So I just start talking about things, and then my wife gets annoyed as I keep talking about it, and then eventually I have to do it – that's kind of the way I approach things!

I'm still, for my age, pretty fit and healthy and I've always wanted to climb an 8,000-metre mountain, and there are 14 of those. I don't want to do Everest because it's become a bit too commercial for me. But I'd like to climb another mountain called Kangchenjunga which is at the eastern end of the Himalayas and it's kind of one of the satellite peaks of Everest. You get to it via a very different valley, so you don't go to base camp you go to a place called Darjeeling and then walk up a different route, and it's a bit like expeditioning 50 years ago when not many people were doing it. That's a medium-term goal, I'd like to do that by the time I'm 55, and I'm currently 50.

Shorter term goal is to trek to the South Pole, because obviously I'm an idiot, and I want to do a route called the Messner route which is basically the edge of the land mass into the South Pole, it's about 600 miles. It's a bit of a "big man's sport" - someone my kind of size (and bear in mind I'm six foot four and 16 stone) would expect to lose about three to four stone as you're pulling your pulk (sledge) into the centre. You can expect to travel about 20 miles a day, so it's basically a 30 day trek pulling your pulk. We would be a self-supported, team of about eight (we'd love to be sponsored by Carrington, hint hint) and we will be doing that, ideally in November of 2021 but it might be November 2022.

The idea is to get the first commercial flight for expeditioners out there in mid-November and then have completed by Christmas and back in time for my birthday. We've got six out of the eight people selected, and we're planning to go to a Norwegian island called Spitsbergen, to the Norwegian Polar Institute this coming December to do a week of pulk hauling practice. So that's my short-term goal.

And then my longer-term goal is that when I'm 60 I want to have retired and my wife and I are going to sail around the world. I've sailed yachts pretty much all of my adult



IF YOU DON'T HAVE A PLAN THEN YOU'LL NEVER GET THERE.

life, I learnt how to sail with the Royal Marines (I was in the marines about 20 years ago) and I've got my day skippers licence but I'm going to do my ocean yacht master over the next few years. I'm doing my theory in November of this year and then the plan is to build up my hours and my sea time so that I can take my practical yacht master exams and have my ticket so that when we come to sail around the world I actually know what I'm doing! There is no requirement to have your own ticket, you can just buy a boat and go but I'd rather know what I'm doing.

We would look to take two or three years overall. We'd probably take the boat and sail down to La Gomera in the Canary Islands and then join a race called the Arc Race which goes across the Atlantic to the Caribbean, it happens every year (although not at the moment!). It normally sets sail in the middle of September. It means that for that first ocean crossing we'll be in the structure of a race and rescue and other companions are not too far away so it's a relatively safe way of starting. Then we'd winter in the Caribbean and fly back to the UK for important occasions, and since we'll be in the Caribbean in what could be hurricane season then we can stay put for a while (other than flying back) and won't be in a rush. We'll hopefully take different friends of ours on different legs as we go around the world.

All these things cost money of course, I would go tomorrow if I'd made all my money and had retired, but I've got to pay for school fees and all my other outgoings as well as try and create pots of money, gain sponsorship for expeditions and all the rest of it so it's a bit of a juggling act. But if you don't have a plan then you'll never get there.

HOW DOES YOUR FAMILY GET INVOLVED IN YOUR CHALLENGES?

I've always done lots of activities with the kids, we decided that when they were eight they would all have to come away with me and do a mini expedition, and when they were thirteen they would do the same thing, and then when they're 18 they have to do the same thing again. So Floss and I (the eldest) are planning what we're going to do for her 18th trip at the moment. We've done three day cycles, we cycled Hadrian's Wall with Esther when she was eight. Floss and I cycled from here (Bough Beech in Kent) down to a friend's house in Portsmouth when she was eight for three days. Arthur I did a sail run event which we made up ourselves, we had a couple of other guys who helped us sail the boat and then they would drop us off at various points along the South West coast and then we would run. We ran five miles the first day, ten miles the next day and fifteen miles the next day. We just sort of made up little expeditions like that.

Last year as a family we climbed Kilimanjaro which is not a hard mountain to climb but it's quite high, Esther was 13 and made it to the top when there were plenty of people turning around and not able to cope. They're quite hard core (You're not joking!!!!!!!)



I WANTED TO
DO A PHYSICAL
CHALLENGE
WHERE I COULD
RAISE SOME
MONEY FOR
MACMILLAN
CANCER
SUPPORT.



Arthur also decided he wanted to join me in my 50 miler. Arthur isn't your usual 17 year old lad, he has a place he can go to in his head where he doesn't seem to worry about the physical aspects of what he's doing, he just goes off into his little place. For most kids of 17, the thought of even running five miles is quite hard for them to get their heads around. He went out to a party after we finished our 50 miler whereas I could barely walk home from the pub!

As an inspirational family watch, I would recommend that everyone watch the eco-challenge which is the world's hardest adventure race, and last year they did it in Fiji. It's basically a ten day race across the island of Fiji and they have a thousand team apply, you have to be a team of four, it's about \$15,000 to enter but you have to put in a ten minute video about why your team should be part of the race. The programme is partly about the race and partly about the teams in the race, we've been watching a family do it and we want to do it as a family. Me and the three kids would race and Caz would be our support person, which she's quite happy to do as her knees are a little bit shot. (interviewer seems so inspired by this that she's planning on asking Nicola, Mike and Al to make a team with her).

TELL US ABOUT YOUR 50 MILE CHALLENGE

The fifty miler came about because I was 50 back in December and I wanted to do a physical challenge where I could raise some money for MacMillan Cancer Support. I don't have a "cancer story" but they're the national charity partner for the triathlon and we've had a lot of cancellations of events this year and so I wanted to help them raise a bit more money.



IT'S ABOUT THE
JOURNEY TO
THE EVENT AS
THE EVENT
ITSELF.

It was great. Like all of these things; it's about the journey to the event as much as the event itself. Getting to the start line in one piece and all the training that you do, and the people you do your training runs with. We started training for it pretty much as lockdown started. A friend of mine from the Royal Marines got stuck outside of Dubai as he was in the Congo when Dubai went into lockdown. He called me and asked me if he could come and stay for a short while, thinking he would get back into Dubai the next week – but he stayed with us for 100 days. And so a guy I went through training with in the Marines 30 years ago became my training partner and we started doing a lot of runs, then longer runs, then the kids got interested and involved and that was when Arthur decided that he quite fancied doing the 50 miles.

We just built our distances up and we looked at a route that would connect up the South Downs and the Ashdown Forest that would match the required 50 miles. I put the pin down in Eastbourne and traced a route from there, it was mostly off road, it's about 43 miles off road and seven miles on road and it's an absolutely stunning route, so much so that we're actually going to incorporate it within the triathlon event next year and make it a commercial entity. As part of the training we would do different sections just to link the whole thing up so that we knew the route in its entirety, both from a navigational point of view and also knowing what the terrain would be like, and how it all fitted together.

We wanted to get a slightly longer run in and we were going down to stay with a friend down in Plymouth and so Arthur and I did the Royal Marine's 30 miler that I did as part of my Commando tests together. You start in Oakhampton and finish down on the southern side of Dartmoor. I'd forgotten how hilly it was but we managed to do it in seven hours and it bought back quite a lot of good memories, and at that point, which was four weeks prior to doing the fifty miler, I knew that we were in good shape and that we were going to make it.

We just had to put in a couple longer distance runs and went on holiday to Scotland for a week and we climbed up Ben Nevis and then we ran a bit of the West Highland Way and then we just knew we were ready. So come the day of the race we knew, whatever it threw at us we would be able to complete the fifty miles. On the day of the race the first fifteen miles was into a really strong headwind, and although we'd only done fifteen miles it felt like we'd done about 30 we were pretty knackered. Because I'm quite big and I sweat a lot I lose a lot of salt so unless I replace it I cramp a lot. I started getting cramp at about 22 miles which was a bit embarrassing as we'd had a couple of our mates turn up to run with us and I was basically in bits, I didn't think I was going to make it to the end. But I managed to get some salt down myself and despite throwing up at about 23 miles because of the salt water I had to take in I was okay to keep going and I just started feeling gradually better because I knew that I'd got my salt levels back and then I just got quicker and quicker as the run went on.



THE HARDEST
THING WITH
ALL OF THESE
THINGS IS
ACTUALLY
SIGNING UP
FOR
SOMETHING.
A GOOD WAY
OF GETTING
STARTED IS TO
SIGN UP FOR
THAT EVENT
AND GO FOR IT.

We got to Fletching (about 30 miles in) and there's a fantastic pub there called the Griffin and we met about 30 people for lunch (socially distanced of course!), and about ten of those ran with us after lunch. As we headed out from the pub I was feeling quite strong, and then we started meeting more and more people that had come out of our village. To the point where we got to the final pub at about three miles away and there were about 60 people there, about 20 of whom ran with us down to the final pub, the Wheatsheaf. So it was a bit like Forrest Gump or the Pied Piper! We didn't put a lot of planning into getting people to turn up but if you attach yourself to a good idea, then people follow.

DID COVID AFFECT YOUR CHALLENGE AND THE FUNDRAISING?

I didn't raise as much as I would have liked, our target was £50,000 and I only raised £7,000. There are so many fundraising e-mails and personal challenges going on at the moment, which is great but I think it did affect the amount I raised. There was a real lack of corporate support that was apparent too, which you can understand given the current climate. And at some point you do have to realise that you can't support everybody that's doing something for charity, you can end up parting with huge amounts of cash without even realising it. We're going to do the expedition to the South Pole for charity as well, but we haven't really decided which one yet. Watch this space!

DO YOU THINK IT'S IMPORTANT TO DO CHALLENGES FOR CHARITY?

The challenge itself is usually the main driver for me, but it also seems like a great idea to combine that with raising money for a good cause.

DO YOU THINK IT'S IMPORTANT TO HAVE THE CHARITY SIDE OF YOUR TRIATHLONS? DO YOU THINK IT DRIVES PEOPLE MORE?

Our relationship with MacMillan means that we give them 200 free places. And we worked out that on average a triathlete will raise £300 for them. So you can see that there's £60,000 straight away and that's without counting the fundraising of anyone outside of those free places.

HOW DO YOU THINK THAT UNDERTAKING THESE MAD CHALLENGES ADDS TO YOUR LIFE?

Do they define me? They probably do! I'm passionate about my job and putting on events but I think what really flips my switch is to go and do expeditions in difficult environments and challenge myself. I haven't got a death wish, but I have a good engine and I am very well connected with good people who are good mates and are experts in their field. I just turn up, sort out some of the finances and I've got a good engine so I won't let them down in terms of being a burden.



**JUST SET
YOURSELF A
CHALLENGE
AND FIND A
WAY TO DO IT
ON YOUR OWN
OR WITH
FAMILY AND
FRIENDS.**

IF SOMEONE WAS READING THIS AND HAD NEVER REALLY DONE A PHYSICAL CHALLENGE OF ANY KIND FOR CHARITY, WHAT WOULD YOU SUGGEST TO THEM?

The hardest thing with all of these things is actually signing up for something. I think if they just pick something six months in advance of where they are now, and sign up for it and start talking about it – before they know it they're actually doing it. Because they talked about it so much, it's in the diary and they'll get the training in. It's really just the getting started, and a good way of getting started is to sign up for that event and go for it.

Make it attainable, you don't want to sign yourself up for the South Pole if you've never been outside of your village. Sign up for something that's going to be hard, where you'll have to push yourself and you'll have to train for it as there's no point in doing it if it's too easy. Just go for it and see where it takes you. One thing you'll have heard is that your body is far more capable of doing things than you actually think it is, and it's always your mind that holds you back.

Hopefully the people reading this don't think I'm just a gobby idiot who will never achieve anything but you've got to have dreams. And Covid, albeit a pretty horrible time right now, shouldn't hold you back. You don't have to do an organised event; the 50 miler wasn't an organised event, it was just us driving down to Eastbourne Pier and getting on with it. Although by the end of it, it felt like it was an organised event. Just set yourself a challenge and find a way to do it on your own or with family and friends...or come and join in at the Castle Triathlon series in 2021!

For more information about the Castle Triathlon Series (who also organise running and open water swimming events) please go to www.castletriathlonseries.co.uk.

If you would like to donate to Brian's fundraising page for Macmillian Cancer Support you can donate here www.justgiving.com/fundraising/brians-505050.



CARRINGTON
WEALTH MANAGEMENT

One Chapel Place • London • W1G 0BG

t. 020 7078 4849 w. carringtonwm.co.uk

