

# Walk over Wales reaches Meirionnydd

DOZENS of people worldwide who suffer from a rare muscle disease have united to walk the length of Wales, and this week they crossed Meirionnydd.

Andrew Akelin, 61, who has McArdle's disease, has been leading the group of fellow McArdle sufferers on what's being called the 'Walk over Wales' – or 'WoW'.

The challenge is to walk from Great Orme Head to the Senedd in Cardiff Bay between 2 July and 2 August to raise awareness of the disease.

On Monday, the team crossed the Barmouth railway viaduct at 11am.

A traverse of Cader Idris followed the next day before the group headed towards Machynlleth and carried on south.

Andrew, UK coordinator for the association that supports McArdle sufferers, said: "It's always been my ambition to walk over Wales, and I was planning a quiet solo challenge, taking a month to cover the mountains from one end of the country to the other.

"But then it all changed! I can't believe that when they heard what I was doing so many other McArdle sufferers and supporters wanted to come to Wales to join in."

McArdle is a rare metabolic disorder that means heavy exercise is painful and can cause muscles to seize up and break down, even leading to kidney failure.

But Andrew carried on walking – even climbing Mount Kilimanjaro in his 30s – and doctors now recommend his tactic of slow, steady walking to keep muscles from wasting away.

Other walkers taking part in the challenge have come from Canada, Germany, the USA and Singapore, as well as Wales and England.

Unfortunately, some may suffer from the disease worse than others, and may be wheelchair-bound, and therefore can only manage to do small parts of the 210 mile walk.

Andrew added: "I never knew why I couldn't keep up with my friends as a youngster, and I probably did a lot of damage to myself trying.

"I was 30 before my McArdle Disease was diagnosed, which is typical.

"We know more about the condition now and can give young sufferers good advice, so it's really important that children get diagnosed early and learn how to avoid damaging themselves.

"I hope our walk will raise awareness, as well as collecting some sponsorship money



**Andrew Wakelin with Stacey Reason from Toronto, Canada and Dan Chambers from Sandiago, California who are walking from the Great Orme Head to the Senedd in Cardiff Bay**

for the McArdle charity, and of course boost our own confidence and give us a real sense of achievement."