

Llandudno to Cardiff walk will raise awareness of McArdle's

Walkers of the world back

muscle disease sufferer

WALKERS from all over the world are coming to Wales, to walk the length of the country with a muscle disease sufferer from Powys.

Andrew Wakelin, aged 61, lives right in the heart of the county close to Newbridge-on-Wye and loves walking.

But walking can be tough for him, as it is for other sufferers of the rare muscle disease, McArdle's.

From July 2 to August 2 he is taking on a personal challenge – to walk the whole length of Wales, from Great Orme Head at Llandudno, to the Senedd in Cardiff Bay, leading a group of fellow McArdle sufferers from all over the world on what's being called the Walk Over Wales (WoW).

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.

Growing up, Andrew couldn't do cross-country runs and was once hospitalised after trying a tug of war, but he carried on walking, even climbing

by **EMMA MACKINTOSH**

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Mount Kilimanjaro in his 30s.

It turns out that he was doing just the right thing for his illness – doing slow steady walking to keep his muscles from wasting away. Nowadays, the regime Andrew worked out for himself is recommended to newly diagnosed younger patients.

Andrew is the UK coordinator for the association that supports McArdle sufferers.

He says: "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."

Walkers are coming from Canada, Germany, the USA and Singapore, with

some McArdle sufferers who can't get to Wales doing simultaneous walks in their own countries.

There'll be a support car along the route and the walk has been carefully planned to use the best techniques for the disease. Andrew is even hoping he can persuade his own GP from Builth Wells to come along for a day.

Andrew says: "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 and of course boosting our own confidence and giving us a real sense of achievement."

For information or to donate, contact andrew@cwmclydisaf.freeserve.co.uk or call Andrew on 01597 860686.

