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V E R O N A

Ex-Royal Marine completes epic cycle challenge

Pennant is always keen to acknowledge the achievements of those who go the extra mile to raise awareness or money for Service-related charities. Here we record the culmination of a remarkable series of cycling challenges completed by a former Royal Marine in his 80th year.

In September 2024, in a remarkable feat of endurance and dedication, former Royal Marine Jonathan Thomson completed his fifth and final epic cycling challenge for PTSD Resolution, the charity for Veterans' mental health.

Pyrenees 24 was a gruelling 700km challenge with an elevation gain of 10.92km – the equivalent of cycling from London to Edinburgh and 1.23 times the height of Mount Everest from sea level. The achievement marked the culmination of Jonathan's committed fundraising efforts, which

have raised more than £153,000 so far – enough to fund therapy for more than 180 Veterans and their families.

Pyreneen challenge

On Wednesday 18 September, Jonathan and a team of committed cyclists, completed their final fundraising challenge through the French Pyrenees. The costs were covered by the team, so all the funds raised have gone directly to PTSD Resolution and its 200 therapists.

The intrepid cycling team comprised Jonathan, former Royal

Navy pilot Jim and former Royal Marines Matt, Jez and Bill.

Since 2020, Jonathan and his fellow pilgrims have completed five gruelling challenges for PTSD Resolution – collectively cycling 4,900km with a 58km climb – across Scotland, the Orkneys, Shetland, Wales and the Pyrenees.

Last year's effort, in Jonathan's 80th year, was his second adventure across the Pyrenees. But he is quick to put his achievement in context. "Too many of our Veterans of all ages, and some men and women who are still



serving, suffer the evil effects of post-traumatic stress disorder [PTSD]," he says. "This wrecks their lives and deeply affects those of their families and close friends. It is also a major cause of suicide. PTSD Resolution provides well-proven treatment for this condition, which is why we continue to cycle on their behalf."

With more than 4,000 referrals to date, registered charity PTSD Resolution is dedicated to assisting UK Veterans, Reservists and family members who are struggling to reintegrate into everyday life.

Founded in 2009, it is accredited by the Royal College of Psychiatrists to the Quality Network for Veterans Mental Health Services. It provides free, prompt therapy, with treatment available online or by phone.

Chief executive Charles Highett says: "Jonathan's incredible efforts over the years have made a significant impact on our ability to provide crucial mental health support to Veterans. The donations raised will potentially transform not just Veterans' lives, but those of their families and communities too."

"Jonathan's dedication embodies the spirit of service that continues long after leaving the Armed Forces."

And they're off...

For the seven-day Pyrenees 24 challenge, riders set off on a crisp, autumn day, 11 September. They cycled through landscapes rich in



PTSD Resolution: how to donate



The Pyrenees 24 donation page remains open for those wishing to contribute to this worthy cause. If you would like to support PTSD Resolution and help more Veterans access crucial mental health services, visit www.PTSDresolution.org

history and natural beauty, taking in ancient châteaux, serene forests and vast mountain vistas. And although each day presented its own challenges, the team's determination to succeed never wavered. Here's a summary of their journey:

- Day 1: gentle 51km warm-up, climbing 885m through villages
- Day 2: 96km covered, with a climb of 1.7km battling rain and low clouds through the forests of Ariège
- Day 3: another 96km ride, including 1.8km of climbing and encounters with local wildlife amid the early autumn chills
- Day 4: the most challenging day, covering 115km and ascending 2.6km over high mountain passes
- Day 5: a 102km descent through Mediterranean oak forests, climbing 1.3km
- Day 6: a gruelling 124km ride battling strong headwinds across high plateaus, with a total climb of 1.1km
- Day 7: the final 99.7km stretch, climbing 1.4km and following old railway lines.

Mission accomplished

Following the conclusion of the journey on 18 September, Jonathan expressed his heartfelt gratitude to all those who have supported his efforts over the years.

"This has been our last expedition ever," he announced, reflecting on the extraordinary experiences and the generous support received.

Jonathan was also a deserving finalist in the Inspiration Award category of the Soldiering On Awards in October 2024. The award aims to honour a person who has overcome significant challenges, injury or disability, and whose ongoing or past outstanding achievements are an inspiration to others.

Jonathan was on a shortlist of three finalists selected by a judging panel, who then progress to a public vote.

Pyrenees 24 may mark the end of Jonathan's strenuous cycling expeditions, but the impact of his remarkable efforts will continue to resonate in the lives of the many individuals he has helped transform over the years. 📍