



YOUNG ARCHER

To the 'Roof of Africa'

Last summer, Priya Pattani, 16, her brother Premal, 14, and their parents Hema and Krishna, who run Pristine Dry Cleaners in the High Road, took on a once-in-a-lifetime challenge. Here, Priya recalls their adventure.

Our challenge was to climb Mount Kilimanjaro, known as the 'Roof of Africa' and at 5,895m the highest freestanding mountain in the world.

The purpose was to raise funds for a school in India for boys and girls. At present, schooling is provided for years 8 and 9 but the school aims to expand classes from year 6 through to year 12.

The seven-day climb was gruelling and we were filled with fluctuating emotions. Our cousin Krupa, 21, who had climbed this mountain previously, joined us, and our group of five climbers was assisted by two guides, one chef and 17 porters. Each porter was only allowed to carry 20kg, under park regulations.

The crew assisting us were very experienced, caring, helpful and above all men of honesty and integrity. The hospitality was five-star: every meal was a delight. In fact, as our family are all vegetarians, the crew decided to live on the same diet for the climb period.

Spectacular route

Climbers choose from several routes; we selected the Machame Route, which is very popular with everyone. Beginning on the south-western side of Kilimanjaro, the trail passes through some of the mountain's finest features, including the cloud forest of the southern slopes, the dry and dusty Shira Plateau and the delightful senecio-clad Barranco campsite.

To reach the summit we headed for the lengthy, long-winded climb up the Barafu trail, with the Rebmann Glacier edging into our field of vision before we pushed up the crater's southern rim to Uhuru peak, the highest point.

The summit night was particularly memorable. This demanding and exhausting section of the climb began at 10pm and average temperatures were around

-10 degrees. Our penultimate base camp, before the summit of the Uhuru peak, was 4,600m. The altitude contributed to low levels of oxygen so we could only walk 'Pola Pola', African for 'slowly, slowly'.

Sunrise at the summit

The night was pitch-dark and all that was visible were the perky head lamps, illuminating the corkscrew path ahead of us. The sound of the porters' melodic vocals was motivating and interesting, keeping us awake on a night when there was no coffee.

Actually reaching the summit, encompassing an early morning sunrise, was the most emotional moment for all of us. Tears, hugs and fist-clenching gestures were not uncommon. We celebrated with our crew and were most pleased that we all touched the summit as

a united family. United we reached; divided, God knows what would have happened.

For more information and our fundraising web page, please visit www.virginmoneygiving.com/team/pattani4



The Pattani family on the 'Roof of Africa'.

Little Jack sees a whole new world

In October, David Hillel Optometrists in the High Road held Children's Vision Day to highlight the dangers of children not having their eyes examined at a young age.

Jack, pictured, received glasses to correct his squint. Jack's mother, an East Finchley resident, said: "I hadn't realised the importance of getting Jack's eyes examined so early. Apparently Jack is one of many babies born with a squint, and even more develop one before they are five years old."

David said all children should have their eyes examined from their second birthday onwards. They needn't be able to read, and the service is free.



Dodgy builders are back

By Janet Maitland

The Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) is warning residents about a pair of bogus builders who trick people out of thousands of pounds by claiming they have a water leak. *THE ARCHER* reported on this scam last October after several elderly residents were targeted over the summer. Another incident has been reported.

On 9 January, a man was walking to his home in Park Hall Road when he was approached by two men in a white van who followed him to his front door. One of the men claimed that they were fixing a water leak at

his neighbour's house and needed access to the man's property to check he wasn't having similar problems. The potential victim didn't let him in but went to find his landlord's details to give him. When he returned to the door, the men had disappeared.

The main suspect is described as a tall white man of about 40 with curly fair hair, wearing a high visibility yellow jacket with 'Balfour' written on it.

Previous form

In one case last summer, fake builders entered the house of an 84-year-old resident and showed her water running down an internal

wall. The resident was so alarmed she went straight to the bank to get the £4,600 deposit the men demanded for doing the work. The men are thought to have lifted tiles on her roof and then poured water through the hole.

In another case the men tricked an 87-year-old woman, but staff at her bank became suspicious and called the police when she asked to withdraw £4,200. Several people avoided becoming victims by checking with neighbours or shutting the front door on the men and calling the police.

Police advise you never to let 'tradesmen' who cold-call at your door enter your home. If they persist, close the door and inform them that you are calling the police, then call 101 and inform them what has happened. The SNT would also like to hear about it if these men try this trick on you. Call them on 020 7161 9014. In an emergency, always dial 999.

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