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Hadrian's Wall epic for Martin

He might suffer from a condition that makes it painful to move, but that has not stopped Martin Symons from climbing some of the world's most famous mountains in his wheelchair and canoeing down a Spanish river for charity.

In his latest feat, the adventurous 41-year-old, who has a rare condition called Klippel-Feil Syndrome, will be completing a 100 mile coast-to-coast challenge along Hadrian's Wall in the spring in a special motorised wheelchair called a Boma.

Mr Symons, who lives with his parents and his sister Fiona in Springfields, Poringland, has an area of fusion in his neck bones and related congenital conditions, including being born with a cleft palate, hearing loss, underbite and scoliosis.

He has already attempted to trek to Everest Base Camp, and reached the summits of Ben Nevis and Snowdon, however his condition has deteriorated in the past few years and he can now barely walk 50m and needs a to spend eight hours a day on a ventilator to stay alive.

Despite these restrictions, Mr Symons hopes to raise more than £50,000 for the Lane Fox Respiratory Unit Patients' Association at St Thomas' Hospital, London.

He is now appealing for sponsors and people to provide accommodation with electricity for the ventilator, during the week-long trek along the Hadrian's Wall cycle route from Bowness-on-Solway to Tynemouth.

He said: "My physical condition is deteriorating and I now require a full eight hours on a ventilator each night, but in spite of



Major challenge: Martin Symonds in the wheelchair he will use on his coast-to-coast Hadrian's Wall journey. PHOTO: LOU HAMILTON

this, I am determined to help the Lane Fox Respiratory Unit. This unit has done so much to improve my, and so many other peoples', quality of life."

He added: "For the trip, we will require two support vehicles because I suffer very quickly from the cold and will need a vehicle with the cycling group in case of rain or other adverse conditions. We also need fuel costs for the vehicles - it is estimated that each vehicle will cover about 1,500 miles during the challenge."

His sister, Fiona Symons, 39, added: "He is very much looking forward to it and

the challenge in itself is keeping him very motivated and in a positive frame of mind. It has given him a major boost and he is now focusing on the fundraising."

Mr Symons will be filmed for a documentary during his trip by television company Create Lab, which hopes to show it on national television and at the Cannes Film Festival.

■ To sponsor Mr Symons, visit www.justgiving.com/coasttocoast2009, and for more information visit www.martinsymons.com

Sam Emanuel
sam.emmanuel@archant.co.uk

Constituent gives MP warm welcome

An MP got a warm welcome when he met a constituent as part of a national campaign to show how energy efficiency measures are helping people stay warm in their homes.

MP for Great Yarmouth Tony Wright is encouraging his constituents to take advantage of extra money the government put aside to help families through the winter.

Mr Wright's visits were part of the Warm Homes campaign, an annual drive

organised by energy efficiency charity National Energy Action (NEA), and sponsored by Warm Front scheme managers eaga and the Department of Energy and Climate Change.

The aim of the campaign is to raise awareness of the effect that increasingly high energy bills are having on householders, and the range of energy efficiency grant schemes and other assistance that are available for those struggling to heat their homes affordably.

Mr Wright said: "I am delighted to be able to support the Warm Homes Campaign. High energy prices are putting millions of households under significant financial pressure this winter.

"Improving energy efficiency goes a long way to help those struggling to heat their homes

"I urge everyone to contact the Warm Front team on 0800 408 2095 to find out if they are eligible for the scheme."

The place to live a longer life

North Norfolk has some of the longest-lived women in the country.

The latest figures on life expectancy show that women in north Norfolk have the highest life expectancy at age 65 in the region, and the 12th highest in any of the 432 districts in the country.

At age 65 they can expect to live on average to age 87, while their life expectancy at birth is 84.3 years. Men, by contrast, have a life expectancy of 78.4 at birth, and 83.5 if they make it to the age of 65, which puts men at 169th place in the table.

South Norfolk has the longest male life expectancy in the region at age 65 - 84 years in total. Yarmouth has the lowest life expectancy for men or women in Norfolk and Suffolk. Men can expect to live until 77 at birth, and women to 81.8.

The east of England average life expectancy is 78.7 for men and 82.6 for women.

Care home gets set for festive fun

A care home in Yarmouth is pulling out all the stops to provide a variety of events for its residents this Christmas.

Eversley care home will be celebrating the festive season in style with song, dance, drama, quizzes and a carol service.

On Saturday, a local theatre company will be visiting and performing an array of Christmas musical numbers.

The company, called Dusmagrik, is made up of performers of all age ranges from children and teenagers to adults.

Karen Thompson, from Dusmagrik Future Productions, said: "The Dusmagrik performers, who are aged between three to 21, are thrilled to be invited back to the care home. We have around 25 performers visiting Eversley in December and they have prepared a 45-minute concert which will feature both traditional carols and up to date pop songs. The residents enjoy the performances because they can get involved in the show by singing along."

Other events in December include a Salvation Army carol service at the Marina Centre, a visit from local bell ringers, a Christmas themed quiz afternoon and visits to the local pub.

UEA hosts free talk on rights

A lecture on public rights will take place next week.

The talk, which will mark the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, will be held at the University of East Anglia on Wednesday, December 10.

The event will anticipate the bicentennial celebrations of the life of the revolutionary Thomas Paine, who was born in Thetford and emigrated to the British American colonies in time to participate in the American Revolution.

Dr Lee Marsden from the school of political, social and international studies, will explore Paine's contemporary relevance to equality and diversity.

All are welcome to attend the free lecture - Talking Commonsense on the Rights of All in an Age of Reason or Unreason - which will be held in lecture theatre three, at 7pm. No booking is needed, but people should arrive in good time to get a seat.

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