

LUCY SANDS TRIBUTE FUND – MT KILIMANJARO EXPEDITION

Carel, Caroline, George & Lizzie Bouwens and Will Fortescue.



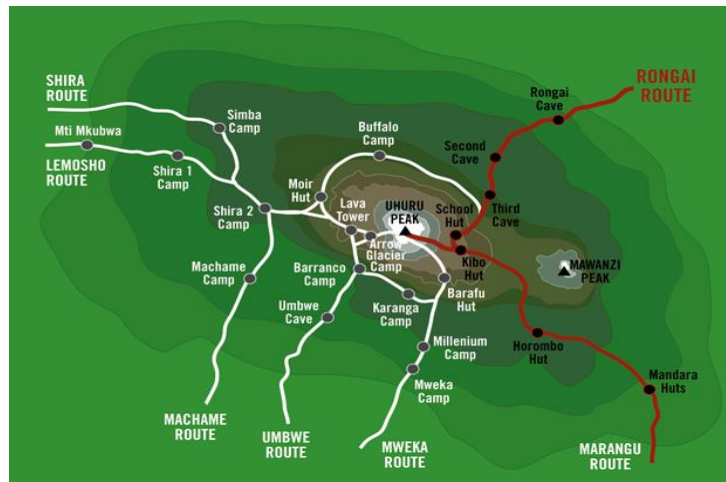
Introduction. The original idea to climb Kilimanjaro in aid of the Cancer Vaccine Institute came from George after he had accompanied children from Pembroke House School in climbing Mt Kenya in June 2013. Caroline decided that it would also be a good way of celebrating her 60th birthday. The rest of us were just pressed into joining them! The aim was to raise money for the Cancer Vaccine Institute in memory of Lucy Sands who died of cancer in December 2011.



Tuesday 4th & Wednesday 5th March - Assembly. Our expedition to Mt Kilimanjaro commenced on 4th March 2014 with Carel, Caroline and Lizzie meeting at Heathrow for our flight to Nairobi and onwards to Tanzania. Early on Wednesday 5th March, after negotiating immigration in Tanzania, where we had our fingerprints taken, were photographed twice and were entertained by Lizzie explaining why she was not in possession of her Yellow Fever certificate, we were off to Arusha through fertile pastures comprising coffee & banana plantations and maize & paddy fields. At The Outpost Lodge Hotel, a rendezvous and hostel for trekkers, we re-organised and packed our equipment for the climb. Before dinner we were joined by George and Will who had flown in from Nairobi. Fully aware of the hazards of dehydration we prepared with plenty of wine and beer.

Thursday 6th March – Rongai Gate (2,007m) to Rongai 1 (2,633m). At 8am we were met by our head guide, William Bwenje, who gave us a thorough briefing on the climb and in particular the route we would be taking. He explained that the Rongai Route (red on the

map) is the only northern approach to Kilimanjaro, offers less opportunity for acclimatisation and is perhaps one of the easiest but with a very tough final summit. He also told us that on average 60% of climbers are successful at reaching the summit, but it was not his intention that we fail. He told us that he had planned to omit a stop at the School Hut and that we would launch our bid for the summit from Kibo Hut. His reason for this was to



provide us the same start and finish point on the day of our bid for the summit, and as we would be departing after a short rest and lunch along the Marangu Route. Unfortunately this route has been nicknamed the “coca-cola” route from when Coke used to be bought along the way in tea huts. He told us that our caravan would comprise himself plus 2 assistant guides, a cook and waiter and 26 porters.

PORTERS. Porters are usually self-employed people who work where there is demand. For over a decade the Kilimanjaro Porters’ Association Project has been striving to improve the working conditions of porters and now each is restricted to carrying no more than a 20kg load. Consequently we were limited to 9kg that they would carry for us. Each day their loads were checked for weight to ensure that loads were evenly distributed, an issue that became particularly important when one porter, due to illness, was sent back escorted by colleague. Specific porters were charged with collecting and delivering our personal equipment, as well as carrying, erecting and striking our 2 man bivouacs. Each day the whole crew would pack up camp, overtake us on route and have camp established in a new location awaiting our arrival.



William briefed us on what personal equipment we should carry with us, including a minimum of 3 litres of drinking water. None of us had brought enough water bottles, perhaps hoping that we could re-use disposable bottles. In an attempt to keep the Park tidy the Kilimanjaro Park authorities ban them altogether, so we hastily planned a stop at a local supermarket.

At 9.30am we were off on our adventure but not until we had a group photo in our CVI tee shirts, fleeces provided by Savills & LocBox and woollen hats provided by Sundance Pools. We spent 3 hours on the road with a brief stop in Moshi to buy the complete stock of 1 litre water bottles in the Nakumatt supermarket. Our journey from Moshi was much slower as we crawled continuously uphill until we finally arrived at the Rongai Gate, which is the most northerly entrance to Kilimanjaro National Park, close to the Kenyan border. Here we met the crew that was to support us throughout the next 6 days. We handed our bags to our porters who weighed them immediately to ensure that we were within our limit. The bags contained everything we required for camping, so we retained small rucksacks with our immediate requirements, such as water, additional clothing, waterproofs, cameras, first aid kits. This was to be our first test on whether we had distributed our belongings correctly! After lunch William introduced us to our assistant guides (Philip and Wilbard), cook (Simon), waiter (Adam) and assistant waiter (Abdullah) and the porter (Octavian) in charge of transporting and servicing our one luxury, a portaloos. Finally we were briefed on our typical daily routine:

DAILY ROUTINE:

0630 – Reveille with coffee, followed by the delivery of a basin containing a small amount of warm washing water

0730 – Breakfast, usually comprising porridge, toast, egg to order, fruit and hot drinks

0830 – Depart for day's trek; camp struck and packed

1230 (ish) – lunch, typically: cooked meat, salad/vegetables, bread & cheese, boiled eggs, fruit

1630 (ish) – tea: biscuits, nuts and popcorn; warm water for washing.

1930 – dinner, typically: soup, lasagne/spaghetti with meat, salad, fruit

2030 – briefing for the following day and taking of pulse and oxygen saturation levels.

At 2pm, fully kitted out for trekking, we set off on the first leg of our journey walking through fields of potatoes & maize and through pine forest. The pace was exceedingly slow, much slower than we had anticipated. As was explained to us the purpose of this tedious pace is to ascend slowly in order to permit one's body adequate time to become used to altitude. There were a number of rickety shacks along the route which housed dogs, cows and goats and presumably people, but we didn't see any! After an hour it started to rain and there were occasional claps of thunder. So we donned very cheap ponchos which



we had bought off the internet. These served their purpose, especially by keeping rucksacks dry, but they ripped easily. Fortunately they were required on just one more occasion. The path we were following varied from a made up dirt track to a track of loose stone and rock. We crossed a couple of bridges where we found some of our porters buying soft drinks from an entrepreneur who had set up a stall. We didn't stop but very soon we were being overtaken by our porters. They certainly move swiftly and over such rough terrain; but then they are used to this type of going. The rain lasted about one hour and we had the opportunity to strip off our waterproofs and take in the marvellous views across to Kenya. As we ascended the crops gave way to scrubland of heather and ferns. At 4.45pm we arrived at our first camp site at Rongai 1 Caves. It had been set up on the edge of the forest and our bivouacs were pitched under the trees. Another group of trekkers, which we met at the gate, was overnighing in the same camp site. On our arrival, led by Abdullah, our porters welcomed us with a song in Swahili. Abdullah later professed to being a singer by profession, as well as a company director and all else besides! Nevertheless he led the singing extremely well and we all felt much elated by this show of comradeship.

The whole camp was set on black volcanic soil, which was damp from the rain.

Consequently it was getting into our tents, on our clothing and just about everywhere and there was little we could do about it!

However we had time to settle in before we were summoned to take tea.

Before every meal Adam, our waiter, provided a small canvas bucket and kettle of water with which we were to

wash our hands. There was soap but no towel to dry our hands. The result was that they were rubbed dry on our dirty clothing! He wouldn't let anyone enter the mess tent until we had gone through this routine. So programmed was he to this concept that at our very last meal he forgot to provide the water until after we had finished eating, but we still had to wash having eaten!

Our camp comprised 5 two man bivouacs (3 for us and 2 for the guides) and a largish frame tent that served as our mess and briefing tent. There were 2 large bell tents; one was the cook shelter, in which presumably, the cook and a few others slept, and the other was the sleeping quarters for the remainder of the crew; it was undoubtedly very cramped! Finally set to one side but not a great distance from the camp was a small tall tent in which contained our luxurious portaloo, for which we received a demonstration on its workings shortly after our arrival at Rongai 1.



Climate and Vegetation:

Cultivation (1,200m – 1,800m) Pasture & plantation, grassland & cropland. Heavy rainfall & volcanic soil support habitation.

Forest (1,800m – 2,800m) Lush vegetation drenched in heavy rainfall [78in/yr]. Macoranga Kilimandsharica and Olea Kilimandshiraca trees up to 30m. Impatiens Kilimanjari and Senecio Johnstonii are found

Heather (2,800m – 3,400m) Erica Arborea, Philippia Excelsia & Stoebe Kilimandsharica are commonest species of heather. Mist and fog near the forest.

Moorland (3,400m – 4,000m) Cool & clear climate. Regular frost & intense sunshine. Clusters of giant Lobelia Deckenii & giant Senecios Kilimanjari.

Alpine Desert (4,000m – 4,900m) Intense radiation, high evaporation with huge daily temperature fluctuations. Nights below 0°C & days over 35°C. Water scarce & soil thinning. Unfavourable conditions for plants except mosses, lichens and everlasting flowers.

Summit (4,900m – 5,895m) Arctic conditions. Freezing at night & burning sun by day. Oxygen is nearly half of that at sea level. Little protection from radiation of the sun. No surface water. Only lichens and everlasting helichrysum newii can survive.

Friday 7th March – Rongai 1 (2,633m) to Rongai 2 (3,491m). The “oldies” had an uncomfortable night sleeping on the ground; this was Caroline’s very first experience of camping in its true sense. Lizzie had suffered a stomach upset shortly after we arrived in Tanzania but was, thankfully, her normal self this morning. We were awoken at 6.30am and followed the standard routine; we had millet porridge for breakfast which was quite awful – we insisted it was removed from the menu! There was personal kit strewn on all available branches to dry in the early morning sun. At 8.20am we departed with William leading. The pace was even slower than that of



yesterday. Our route took us through heather and ferns which became sparser as we climbed. The route was quite steep in parts but not with such an incline that we couldn't tackle it easily. As we neared our destination of Rongai 2 Caves a low damp mist obliterated the sun and the temperature dropped significantly. At 1.10pm we arrived at our new campsite, which had been fully established by the very proficient porters. After lunch and a short rest it began to rain very hard. William had planned that we ascend a bit further and then return to camp but he decided to give us a demonstration of the emergency medical equipment that was carried everywhere that we went. We were first shown how oxygen would be used should anyone require it. William made it quite clear that our emergency equipment would be used for others on the mountain if it was necessary. In fact during our final ascent we came across a lady being frogged marched down the mountain by 2 people

whilst she was attached to an oxygen cylinder which was carried by a third person. William then explained the use of the hyperbaric chamber that formed part of the emergency kit; its colour and shape resembled a large carrot! Finally he advised us that a stretcher was carried in the event that anyone had an accident, such as a sprained or broken limb and so on. All this kit, and more, was carried by one porter who never left us when we were trekking or climbing.

As the rain had not abated once the demonstrations were over, William was content to skip the afternoon stroll but we insisted that it went ahead. So we marched out of camp in the pouring rain, in our ponchos, for a 90 minute trek ascending and descending 100m – “climb high, sleep low.” Caroline was not well, so skipped supper and went to bed early. That evening Philip, who was to lead us the following day, briefed us after which George produced some whisky and chocolate. We were in bed by 8.30pm – it was still raining!



Saturday 8th March – Rongai 2 (3,492m) to Rongai 3 (3,952m). The rain eventually ceased at 3am. We were allowed a lie in to 7.00am; a real treat. Caroline awoke feeling much better. The sun was up and it was very warm, so the clothing was out again on bushes and branches around camp to dry. At 9.15am we were off again for our trek to the next camp site at Rongai 3 caves. George was feeling the effects of sun burn on his neck; the back of one's neck is vulnerable to sun burn as the sun is high and we are continually looking down to see where we tread.

Shortly after we set out the heather moorland soon turned into alpine desert where vegetation is sparse and the terrain is rocky with loose stone underfoot. The temperature was exceedingly high. We made very regular stops for water and rest. As we approached Rongai 3 campsite, after 3 hours of walking, we were greeted by our personal porters who relieved us of



our rucksacks, a most welcome break, albeit for the last few hundred metres of our trek. Camp had been established at the base of a rock escarpment and as usual it was fully operational on our arrival and we were able to take lunch almost immediately. There was another group of trekkers at the same campsite and we met them as they descended from their acclimatisation excursion. They were destined for the School Hut campsite and would make their ascent from there at the same time that we are scheduled to make our bid for the summit. William told us that he had suspected that one of the porters had malaria and so he was accompanied by a colleague off the mountain; their loads would need to be re-distributed amongst the remaining 24 porters. Tomorrow we will complete the last leg to

base camp, at which there is no water source. So 12 porters were sent that day to deliver enough water for everyone for the duration that we are at Kibo Hut. The water was logged and stored by the custodian of Kibo Hut who is responsible for its security. This picture shows at least 5 groups of porters stretching out over the desert en route to our next destination, 3 miles away.



Water. *When we left the Rongai Gate our porters were carrying everything we required for the whole expedition, except for water. At home we take water for granted but in Tanzania, as with many other African countries, it is a precious resource. On arrival at each camp site, porters collected 200 litres of water from local streams and proceeded to filter and sterilise it. We were told that 80 litres were allocated for the climbers use (ie the 5 of us) and 120 litres was for the porters and other staff; readers can muse for themselves on how they used their allocation of merely 4 litres/day!*

After lunch we undertook another short excursion to acclimatise ourselves to altitude; it was fairly easy going but it was very hot. Previous trekkers have built cairns and we added to some of them. We met our porters returning from their water run and this allowed us the opportunity to see the route we would be taking. Willbard gave us the briefing for tomorrow's trek and he advised us that we would be stopping for lunch en route. As it was not permitted to erect tents outside camp sites we would need to have lunch *alfresco*. Fortunately it hasn't rained today and is unlikely to do so tomorrow. After each evening briefing, using a finger monitor, William checked our pulse and oxygen saturation rates and recorded both readings for the 5 of us.

Altitude Sickness. *Altitude sickness, also known as acute mountain sickness, is a pathological effect of high altitude on humans, caused by acute exposure to low partial pressure of oxygen at high altitude. It manifests itself as a collection of nonspecific symptoms, acquired at high altitude or in low air pressure. It is hard to determine who will be affected, as there are no specific factors that correlate with a susceptibility to altitude sickness. However, most people can ascend to 2,400m (8,000ft) without difficulty. Acute mountain sickness can progress to high altitude pulmonary oedema or high altitude cerebral oedema, both of which are potentially fatal.*

Sunday 9th March – Rongai 3 (3,952m) to Kibo Hut (4,710m). We were aroused at 6.20am today. We did not need to dry clothing and so on as it hasn't rained for over a day! We departed on the final leg of our journey to Kibo Hut; it was very sunny and extremely hot and thus we stopped every 20 minutes for water. The terrain was barren with little or no vegetation and the going was over loose gravel and rock. The porters very quickly overtook

us. Soon, in the distance we could see the School Hut and the group that had camped alongside us last evening making its way towards it. At 11.30am as we rounded a corner there was lunch awaiting us. As briefed there was no tent but a table had been set up and lunch was already laid out. Adam met us with the usual canvas bowl in which to wash our hands. Lunch comprised toasted cheese and tomato



sandwiches, which were quite delicious, along with the usual fare. We tarried for just one hour and were then off again, water bottles re-charged, ostensibly for a further 2 hour trek. But shortly we saw the Kibo Hut not far from us and we all became very excited. The complex is located on the saddle of land between Kilimanjaro and Mawenzi Peak. We saw several parties making their way to the hut along the Marangu (Coca-Cola) route which approaches from the south east. We arrived at Kibo Hut at 1.20pm. The weather had again been very hot and sunny and we all had to take extra precautions from the glaring heat. William advised us to remain standing for 10 minutes to avoid too much blood getting to our brains after the exertion of our walk.

There were several other groups assembling at Kibo Hut, preparing for the final ascent, consequently there was a lot of noise and excitement.

After dinner we received our briefing from William, who was clearly the guide to lead us to the summit. He briefed us on what to wear and suggested that we start off with several layers of clothing as it is easier to peel off layers than it is to put clothing on. However he also recommended that we put some additional clothes in our rucksacks. He also told us that we should commence our ascent with a bottle containing warm drinking water as cold water is more difficult to drink. Furthermore he told us that our water could easily freeze and therefore should wrap it in any extra clothes that we intended to carry. He told us that the climb would be very tough and that we needed willpower and determination to guarantee success. He said that we would be called at 11.30pm so that we could commence our final ascent shortly after midnight. The plan is to reach the crater ring at Gilman's Point (5,703m) at sun rise, after 6 hours, and then proceed to the summit which would take a further 2 hours. After a short time at Uhuru Peak, he said we would commence our descent which should take 4 hours. We would take a short rest at Kibo Hut before taking lunch and then departing down the Marangu Route on a 2 stage journey to exit the Park. We all went to bed quite promptly dressed in our climbing clothes so that we didn't need to dress when we were awoken. Finally after taking our pulse and oxygen levels William confirmed that there was no medical reason why any of us could not tackle the summit.



The route we took up the mountain to Gilman's Point, as it sweeps left then right, can be seen in the centre of this picture, with the Kibo Hut in the foreground.

Monday 10th March – The Ascent to Uhuru Peak (5,895m). We were awoken on schedule at 11.30pm on Sunday and were given hot water for our bottles. We departed under William's guidance at 10 minutes past midnight. There was the 5 of us, William, Willbard and Philip and 2 porters bringing up the medical equipment. Carel was suffering from a mild headache as we started out which didn't bode well. We commenced our climb with a bright moon 2 days into its 2nd quarter. This was most welcome as we were able to see the track along which we walked very slowly. However we all had head torches so that we could see where we were treading. We traversed over loose stone and scree. We could not see Gilman's Point but we could see the lights at Kibo Hut below us getting smaller and smaller as we progressed up the mountain. We made regular stops for water. Soon the gradient increased and the climbing became more difficult. At about 1.30am the moon set however the sky was clear and the stars provided us with very limited natural light. We could see the lights of 2 groups ahead of us, but it was impossible to gauge how many were in each or how far ahead of us they were. We slogged on in the darkness, stopping even more regularly for water and rest. Will was beginning to feel the effects of the altitude and was suffering from awful stomach pains; George and Lizzie were marvellous at encouraging him on. Carel's headache had not abated. The climb was becoming more difficult for the oldies as they became tired. After about 4 hours it appeared that we were gaining ground on the group ahead of us, but still we could not see the top. Will was still struggling, but soldiered on stoically. The terrain now changed and we found ourselves traversing and stepping through rocks. This slowed us down significantly, but the youngsters wanted to crack on ahead of us. We were very close to the group ahead of us and it appeared that the group ahead of them was descending. It was agreed that Philip and one porter could go ahead

with the 3 younger members of our group whilst William and Willbard with the medical equipment remained climbing with Carel and Caroline. We caught up with the group in front just at the same time as the group ahead overtook us on their descent. There were 2 climbers in that group and they didn't appear very euphoric! So now all of us were in the lead group. We clambered on; the climb was surely drawing the energy from us. George, Lizzie and Will reached Gilman's Point ahead of Carel and Caroline and very kindly greeted the latter with great cheers and applause. The time was 6.20am; the sun was just appearing over the horizon.



There was not much space at Gilman's point and there were others there sharing the limited room when we arrived. Inexplicably Will was now feeling completely restored to normality but Carel was feeling nauseous and temporarily dizzy. We still had 200m to ascend but we had a purpose to our mission and we had to overcome all adversity. So we set off for the summit promptly. The path around



the crater ring was difficult. In parts we walked over ice and packed snow along very narrow paths. After 45 minutes we reached Stella Point (5,756m), which is where the south eastern route meets the crater ring. Here William produced a thermos of warm sweet tea which was welcomed by most of us, but Carel just didn't feel up to it! The amount of snow and ice had dwindled making the going marginally easier. We continued on for another hour. Utterly exhausted we all met up just before we reached the summit and walked together to Uhuru

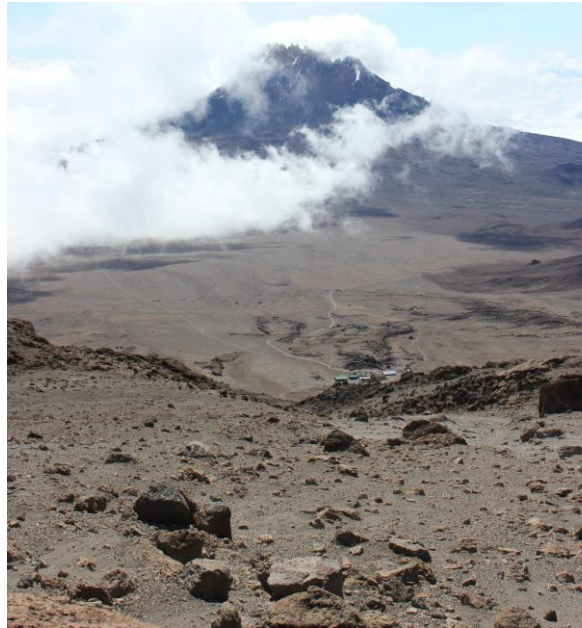


Peak, the highest point in Africa. The time was 8.20am East African Time. We were all elated that we had succeeded in our objective and had achieved it together. It was bitterly cold, with the temperature in the order of minus 10⁰C complemented by a strong cold wind, undoubtedly making it feel colder. Will had used his new head camera to take a video of our final few steps. Carel and George produced their cameras so that the guides and/or porters could take pictures of us all at the

summit. But it was so bitterly cold that we didn't wish to remain there too long, although the thrill of being there would have tempted us otherwise. We only learned later, when we were off the mountain, that there is a metal box below the sign board containing a visitors' book, so sadly we failed to leave a message for others to see!

Our return around the crater ring seemed to pass by, but now we were allowed to walk much faster than had been the case hitherto. The youngsters went ahead of the oldies but we all met up at Gilman's Point before we commenced the final descent. Lizzie's fingers were very cold and close to being frost bitten. William held them to his bare chest and he gave her some hand warmers; these 2 remedies seemed to do the trick. We departed in 2 groups again.

The descent was hardly much easier than the climb, although the young raced ahead leaping through the loose scree. Descending such a distance takes its toll on old knees and Carel and Caroline didn't reach Kibo Hut until just before midday, perhaps 45 minutes after the others had arrived. About 300m from the hut they were met by porters who relieved them of their heavy rucksacks, hugged them and shook their hands whilst congratulating them on their achievement. It was as though they were welcoming returning heroes. It certainly didn't feel that way from our perspective as we were absolutely shattered and with sore knees. When we got into camp we just flopped into our tents for a long overdue rest. But the tents were very hot and sleep was difficult. At 1.15pm we were summoned to lunch. At 2.30pm we were off again, this time for Horombo Hut (3,720m) which was our overnight stop before we exited the Park on the following day.



Monday 10th March – Kibo Hut (4,710m) to Horombo Hut (3,720m).

We commenced the 9 mile trek on very good paths but as we reached the lower more fertile parts of the mountain the going became more difficult over boulders and rough ground.

Caroline's knee was now very painful and our progress slowed significantly. We broke into 2 groups again and Carel and Caroline finally arrived at Horombo Hut at 5.45pm. Tea was closely followed by dinner at



7.00pm. We were offered spaghetti carbonara, followed by fillet of beef and then banana fritters – quite scrumptious!

The briefing that evening was conducted by Willbard who was to lead us tomorrow to the Marangu Gate, with a stop for brunch at the Mandara Hut. (Brunch is not an amalgam of breakfast and lunch as we know it, but more a mid-morning “snack” comprising bread rolls, buns and fruit with hot drinks.) As usual our pulses were taken along with our oxygen saturation just to ensure that we had no ill effects of the ascent to the summit. We had a little whisky and port whilst agreeing the final plan of how and who would hand out the tips to the porters and other staff. We then retired to bed for some very welcome sleep.

Tuesday 11th March – Horombo Hut (3,720m) to Marangu Gate (1,847m).

We were awoken at 6.00am. After breakfast there was the tipping ceremony along with a song and dance of farewell from the porters and other staff. We set out at 8.10am on the final leg of our amazing journey. We were assured that the going would be easy, but soon it became rough with boulders and rocks in the path. This didn't make it any easier for



Caroline, whose knee was very painful; she and Carel therefore descended very slowly and arrived at Marandu Hut at 1pm, some 2 hours after the scheduled time.

It was quite clear to William that Caroline would find it extremely difficult to complete the second part of the journey and so he decided that she should complete the descent by car at the first opportunity. George, Lizzie and Will continued the walk through the forest where they had the chance to see some Colubus and Sykes monkeys.



We all finally met at Marangu Gate at 3.45pm where we were issued with our certificates and had brunch. Will's parents had very kindly arranged for a bottle of fizz to await our return, which was a lovely gesture and much appreciated. We returned to the Outpost Lodge where we had a celebratory meal before departing our own ways the following day.

Conclusion. We hope in this short article that we have given you a feel of what we went through in our adventure to scale Mt Kilimanjaro. At the time of writing, between the five of us we have raised over £13,000, an amount we never considered. We are all hugely appreciative of the support that many people have given to our cause and thank everyone from the depth of our hearts for your generosity, support and encouragement. This was certainly a big challenge which perhaps we never appreciated would be quite so demanding. However we have done it and are all much exhilarated by our success. *Would we do it again?* Carel and Caroline would certainly not, but are delighted to have done it. The others have plenty of time to contemplate that question.

Was it worthwhile? A categorical "YES." We have seen how immunotherapy helped Lucy in her battle against cancer and how it improved the length and quality of her life. We are convinced that the work the CVI funds will see a breakthrough in the use of vaccines to fight various forms of cancer. We just hope that the trials that Lucy agreed to participate in will eventually result in long lasting and beneficial outcomes for other cancer victims. Our expedition, in memory of Lucy, is our small part in achieving that dream.

