

Daniel Jackson - Climbing Kilimanjaro in aid of Childreach International, September 2017

On the 4<sup>th</sup> September I met up with the other 16 members of the group at Heathrow before flying out to Kilimanjaro airport. Arriving early in the morning of the 5<sup>th</sup> we deposited our bags at our hotel, had breakfast and then immediately got on a bus to visit the school that Childreach International are developing. The most impressive addition was a kitchen building that allowed the school to provide the children with at least one hot meal a day. More classrooms had been built while the existing classrooms were fitted with windows and better roofs that allowed teaching in all weather conditions. Finally, large water reservoirs had been installed that provided clean water for the children to wash their hands, the aim being to instil good habits through repetition at school that they will then take with them. Childreach's involvement has been having a huge effect; since they started work the school has risen from a 151<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> in North-East Tanzania.

Once we had finished talking to the teachers we all went outside to play with the children. Since they are currently on holiday, they had come in with the sole purpose of seeing us. Half of us ended up playing football with a group of them while the others formed a large circle and learnt some African chants and dances; we taught them the Hokey Kokey in return. We unfortunately had to leave far too soon but it was a heart-warming experience and important to see that the money we had raised was being used in such an effective way.

From there we went back to the hotel for a group dinner before making our final preparations for our assault on Kilimanjaro. We all packed day bags that contained clothes we might need for the following day, any snacks we wanted and at least 3 litres of water. Everything else we didn't need for the walk the next day such as sleeping bags was packed in a larger bag for the porters to carry. The first few days walking were uneventful – the pace was deliberately extremely slow to avoid any chance of early onset altitude sickness. Generally, the strategy was to ascend for most of the day then descend for the last half an hour to hour; walking high and sleeping low is meant to be the best method of acclimatising to the altitude. The first time I felt the altitude was at 4600 metres in the form of a headache that's impossible to get rid of, but sleeping lower meant I was fine in the morning. The day before summit we got to our camp at about 5pm, had a quick dinner and then went straight to sleep. We were woken at 11pm for our final ascent. The temperature had dropped to -15 degrees so we were all clad in all the layers we had, and we were told to blow back the water in to our CamelBaks once we had drunk to stop the water freezing in the tube. It was then a slow, painful 7-hour trek to the top with altitude beginning to hit in earnest. About half the group were sick at some point while I don't think I've ever felt so tired; it became a mental battle to shuffle one foot in front of the other. Most of us did however make it to the top, where we enjoyed some incredible views before being whisked back down the mountain to more amenable altitudes. We met up with those that had had to turn back during the night before heading back down the mountain.