

'Just one guy' with 21,000 miles to go...

EWAN McGregor and Charley Brockman did it the easy way – a 19,000-mile motorcycle ride with a support crew in tow.

But one Huntingdonshire motorcyclist is hoping to beat that distance with nothing more than a Tigger toy for company.

Student doctor Chris Targett, known to family and friends as Tigger, is going to be setting off on a six-month solo trek of Europe, Africa and Asia totalling 21,000 miles next February in aid of charity.

The 33-year-old says it has been his dream to tour the world on a bike since acquiring his first run-around while studying at King's College London aged 19.

Chris hopes to raise £100,000 for Cambridgeshire charity Magpas and African medical charity Riders for Health. Despite a crippling spine problem that forced him to drop out of his medical studies for five years, Chris says he can make the distance.

He is seeking support from businesses who can help sponsor his petrol and living costs, and has also written to Long Way Round co-stars Ewan MacGregor and Charley Brockman for some advice.

By GAIL ANDERSON
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The pair in 2004 took three months to ride from London to New York, via western and central Europe, Ukraine, Russia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Siberia and Canada. And in 2007 they followed that up by driving from John O'Groats to Cape Town.

But Chris is adamant he is not following in their treadmarks.

"They stole my thunder. What they had to do was challenging, but they did it with new kit and support. It is going to be a bit more challenging for me – I am just one guy."

"But I have always had this trip in the back of my mind. I cannot wait to do it - I have been waiting for 10 years."

Chris, who finished a three-month stint as an A&E doctor at Hinchingsbrooke Hospital this month and is currently doing locum work, has already plotted his route.

He will be following the Nile in Africa passing through Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi and Mozambique, before flying his bright orange KTM 990 Adventure, nicknamed Sir Humphrey, to Nepal.

From there he will travel through

India and Pakistan, within 20 miles of the Afghan border, and his route will take him through Iran, still in a volatile state following last year's uprising.

But Chris, who wants to be a specialist in A&E because he likes "the sharp end of medicine" is unfazed about the dangers.

"It is the scale of the project that will catch people's imagination. It is an adventure and the risk and the danger which is making me really excited about it."

Chris will be setting off from his home armed with three boxes and a bag, which will include a tent, sleeping bag, emergency food and water, and a collapsible chair, essential for stretching out his back during rest periods.

A former national high jump champion, Chris suffers from a degenerative spine condition which has caused him to lose an inch and a half off his height.

But he says he will be able to cope with riding hours at a time on his bike: "I can do it. I have got the right sort of bike - it is big and comfortable."

INFORMATION: To sponsor Chris or find out more go to www.tiggerstravels.org



TARGETT TIME: Chris Targett wants to raise £100,000 for charity by travelling 21,000 miles on a bike.

Hinchingsbrooke pulls out of academy bid

HINCHINGSBROOKE School will be the only Huntingdonshire secondary school not opening in September as an academy. Headteacher Keith Nancekievill confirmed the school had to pull out of a bid to become an academy because of a "seemingly intractable property issue".

As part of its academy status, control of the land and buildings must be transferred to the school. The charitable trust, which currently owns the land and buildings, wants conditions to be included in the property transfer agreement which are "unacceptable" to the Secretary of State for Education. In a letter to parents, Mr Nancekievill wrote: "This is a huge disappointment to the school. However, it would be irresponsible of governors to make commitments they may not be able to meet in the future." All seven secondary schools in Huntingdonshire had been given the go-ahead to become academies.

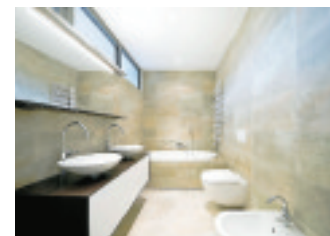
Straw catches alight

THREE tons of straw caught fire at a processing unit in Tilbrook.

Crews spent over two-and-a-half hours bringing the fire under control at Sundown Products in Station Road, Tilbrook on Tuesday (August 2) night.

They were called at 9.41pm and when two crews from St Neots arrived at the scene at 10.03pm they found straw on fire in one of the facility's grinding tubs. Shortly before midnight four further appliances were called to bring more breathing apparatus to help tackle the fire, which was brought under control an hour later. A fire service spokesman said the cause of the fire may have been stones, which are sometimes found in the straw, sparking off the equipment.

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