



Mystery on Mont Blanc

IT'S A MYSTERY THAT HAS remained unsolved for 65 years. But an intrepid bunch of Momentum fundraisers are hoping to find out exactly what happened to a pilot and his crew who disappeared on Western Europe's highest peak, Mont Blanc, during World War II.

The Mont Blanc Summit Challenge, which takes place from 28th June to 5th July, aims to raise funds for Momentum, one of Rehab's UK divisions, by attempting to climb the French Alps peak. The one-week trek will include three days learning the necessary rope, ice-axe, crampon and mountaineering techniques in the capable

hands of members of Chamonix's world-famous mountain rescue team, followed by two days' hard graft attempting to climb the summit of the 15,774-foot Mont Blanc by the Dome de Gouter route.

But in addition to raising funds for Momentum, climbers on the challenge also hope to solve the mysterious disappearance of 28-year-old Pilot Officer David Graham Chell and his crew who served with the RAF's Pathfinders 156 squadron. These highly-experienced aircrews had already completed 25 to 30 bombing missions into Nazi-occupied Europe during 1940/41. The Pathfinders flew ahead of the main bombing force to mark an assigned target.



Pictured above: RAF Pilot Officer David Chell, whose plane crashed over Mont Blanc on 7th November 1942. Walkers who are participating in next summer's Mont Blanc Challenge, organised by Momentum, have been asked to help solve the mystery of his disappearance as the plane has never been found.

Pictured left: Mont Blanc

Pictured below: A Wellington Bomber, the plane David Chell was flying when he and his crew vanished over Mont Blanc



David and his crew left Cambridge in a Wellington Bomber on 7th November 1942. They were en route to mark Genoa harbour, ahead of a bombing raid that sought to disrupt Nazi supply lines into Northern Africa, but the plane was seen crashing over Mont Blanc and the crew never returned. His grandson, David Chatfield, has spent 18 years trying to find out what happened and approached Momentum after reading about the challenge on its website. He is hoping climbers can shed some light on his late grandfather's last resting place.

Commenting on the search for his grandfather, David Chatfield says, "What happened may forever remain a mystery. We know from the evidence of other crews that night, that there was no gunfire or fighters at that stage of the journey. We can only assume that some malfunction in the aircraft caused the pilot to lose height in the high ground and crash."

Ewan Hastings, Events Fundraiser for Momentum, says, "When David Chatfield approached us to ask if we would keep an eye out for a sign of the bomber on our way up the mountain, we were happy to assist. I'll ensure that the people who attempt the challenge know all about this intriguing mystery and can, hopefully, shed some light on what happened on that cold November night back in 1942." ■

Who to contact

For further information please contact:



Ewan Hastings
Events Fundraiser
Momentum

(0044) 141 221 2333
ewan.hastings@momentumscotland.org