



NEWS RELEASE

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Conquering fear at brain tumour campaign launch



Brave smiles from Olympic rower Mark Hunter MBE (right) as he gets to grips with his snake phobia at the launch of the 'Conquer It Together' brain tumour charity campaign at Dartmoor Zoo, aided by zoo owner Ben Mee

How far would you go to conquer a life-long phobia? A fear of flying or heights, perhaps? How about venomous snakes – or giant spiders?!

Newly-appointed patron to national charity [Brain Tumour Research](#), Olympic rowing champion [Mark Hunter MBE](#) rose to the challenge of getting up close and personal with creatures they fear the most for the official launch of a national campaign to raise £1 million to build a new 'Centre of Hope' dedicated to brain tumour research.

Last Friday's (August 30th 2013) at [Dartmoor Zoo](#) was organised by Brain Tumour Research to launch its annual [Conquer it Together](#) campaign, taking fundraising to a new level by challenging people to raise money whilst conquering a personal fear or taking on a new challenge to realise a long-held ambition.

Britain's first ever lightweight rowing medal winner, Mark Hunter admitted to a phobia of snakes - one of the top 10 animals that have normally-confident people running to the hills.

"I am pretty fearful of all snakes, in truth," he says. "It's the way they move and suddenly pop up – it freaks me out!"



While Mark usually avoids the reptile house when visiting zoos, he 'psyched up' successfully for his close encounter with the boa constrictor, while zoo owner Ben Mee (*pictured*) went head-to-head with Dartmoor's bird-eating tarantula!

"My new role with Brain Tumour Research is introducing me to people facing bigger challenges than this. People diagnosed with brain tumours, yet living their lives as best they can with an intensity of courage and determination I have never encountered before," says Ben.

“Brain tumours kill more children and adults under the age of forty than any other cancer yet receive less than one per cent of the national government spend on cancer research. That’s simply unacceptable.”

Dartmoor Zoo became the subject of the Hollywood film ‘We Bought A Zoo’ starring Matt Damon and Scarlett Johansson and now is fast-developing a reputation as a zoological and conservation research facility in its own right, working with 10 universities including Plymouth and Exeter.

For Ben Mee, brain tumours are a personal issue. He lost his wife, Katherine, at the age of 40 to a brain tumour, shortly after buying the Zoo in 2006.

“It’s a terrible disease with less than nineteen per cent of those diagnosed surviving beyond five years,” says Ben. “Compare that figure with the fifty per cent average taken across all cancers and it’s very clear something needs to be done about it.”

Mark took the opportunity to call on all of us to conquer a fear by getting involved in [Conquer it Together](#) too.

“It’s a great opportunity for friends, families, or your co-workers to embrace a challenge, be it mental or physical, and raise funds for Brain Tumour Research, in the process,” he says.

“Zoos like Dartmoor have daily close encounters like Ben and mine and you can get friends and family to sponsor you to confront your own animal phobias or try banishing a die-hard habit or take on a sporting challenge, pushing yourself to new limits.

“One thing is certain: You’ll feel great afterwards for facing your fears and conquering it together!”

Brain Tumour Research was launched in April 2009 to raise the awareness of and funding for scientific research into brain tumours and improve outcomes for brain tumour patients. It is the only national charity in the UK that is dedicated to granting 100 per cent of its funds to continuous and sustainable scientific research into brain tumours.

More about Conquer it Together <http://www.braintumourresearch.org/conquer-it-together>

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All images courtesy: **Alan Stewart/Plymouth University**

Brain Tumours – The Facts

- More children and adults under 40 die of a brain tumour than from any other cancer.
- 73% of brain tumour deaths occur in those under 75 compared to 47% for all other cancers.
- Brain tumours receive less than 1% of the national spend on cancer research.
- 16,000 people each year are diagnosed with a brain tumour.
- Up to 40% of all cancers eventually spread to the brain, with melanoma (skin cancer), breast and lung cancers being the most common to metastasise.
- Brain cancer incidence is rising: 23% higher for men and 25% higher for women in 2012 than in 1970.
- Brain cancer deaths are also rising, unlike most other cancers – these rose 10% for women and 15% for men from 1970 to 2011.
- Only 18.8% of those diagnosed with a brain tumour survive beyond five years, compared with an average of 50% across all cancers.
- 58% of men and women diagnosed with brain cancer die within a year compared to 5% for breast cancer, 35% for leukaemia and 7% for prostate cancer.
- Brain tumours kill more children than leukaemia or any other cancer.
- Brain tumours kill more women under the age of 35 than breast or any other cancer and 65% more women than cervical cancer.
- Brain tumours kill more men under the age of 45 than prostate or any other cancer
- Brain tumours are responsible for over 20 years of life lost.
- With more than 120 different types of tumour, brain tumours are a notoriously difficult disease to diagnose.

- Brain tumour research is woefully under-funded and treatments lag seriously behind other cancers.
- Our understanding of other cancers does not readily translate to brain tumours.
- Patient personality changes that can occur as a result of a brain tumour can cause massive family disruption.
- The commercialisation of universities and introduction of performance grading to determine funding, along with the merger of larger cancer charities focused on more pervasive cancers, has dramatically reduced the funds available for brain tumour research.
- Much more research is needed to discover the cause of brain tumours and to understand their behaviour.

Read our latest authoritative report here: www.braintumourresearch.org/published-reports.

About Brain Tumour Research

In collaboration with its member charities and fundraising groups, [Brain Tumour Research](#) jointly raised over £2.5 million in 2012 and now supports an annual £1 million programme of research into brain tumours at a dedicated Centre of Excellence in the University of Portsmouth. Indeed, the charity has evolved to become a leading voice calling for greater support and action for research into brain tumours in the UK.

[Brain Tumour Research](#) comprises the following 21 member charities who have united together under our banner: Ali's Dream, Anna's Hope, Astro Brain Tumour Fund, Brain and Spine Foundation, Brain Tumour Research Campaign, Brain Tumour Research and Support across Yorkshire, Braintrust, Brainwaves NI, Charlie's Challenge, Children's Brain Tumour Foundation, Children's Brain Tumour Research Centre, The Diana Ford Trust, Ellie Savage Memorial Trust, Ellie's Fund, Headcase, Katy Holmes Trust, Levi's Star, The Lisa Wiles Red Wellies Brain Tumour Support Fund, The PPR Foundation, Thorne Mason Trust and Trudy's Trust.

In addition, [Brain Tumour Research](#) has a fast growing band of fundraisers and fundraising groups across the UK including: 4Aurora, Aaron's Legacy of Hope, Aladdin's Lamp Fund, Alexandra's Angels, Charlie's Angels, Circle of Hope, The Dandy Trust, The Diane Wright Trust, Erin's Angel, Hazel's Light, Head 1st, Lisa's Gift, Maggie Harvey Trust, Naomi's Fight for Life Fund, The Mark "Bomber" Lancaster Trust, The Mark Cogan Foundation, MINE, The Robin Menary Foundation, Sophie's Wish, Taylan's Project and Twelfth Man.

We also represent an ever-growing body of supporters across the UK committed to raising funds for our cause.

To find out more about Brain Tumour Research go to www.braintumourresearch.org or call 01296 733011.