



PILOT CYCLES TO POITIERS WHERE DAD WAS CELEBRITY RUGBY PLAYER FOR PROSTATE CANCER



Cheered off by St. Ambrose College rugby players with Matt Smythe centre to the left of the bike are fellow cyclists and support team Graeme Lightwood, Michael Stockwell, David Nicholls, Gareth Gildea and Kieran Tames.

Hale airline pilot Matt Smythe is embarking on a 1000km cycle ride in memory of his rugby loving father Mike who died from prostate cancer 18 months ago.

Both father and son are former Sr. Ambrose College rugby players and the Catholic grammar school in Hale Barns was one of the stop off points before the main drag down to Richmond and then Poitiers in central west France, where the combative three quarter was a hugely popular character and player.

The journey started at Broughton Park, where he played in his youth and then took in Sale where he was a regular in the Seventies after his French adventure.

Son Matt, 34, who has three friends cycling alongside with a support team of three further enthusiasts travelling behind, is aiming to raise as much money as possible for Prostate Cancer and Macmillan Cancer Support but as importantly raise awareness of the disease and the need for prompt and professional assessment and diagnosis.

Matt said: "My dad wanted to live and had gone to seek medical advice, but was only given the rectal digital examination, without a blood test. Initially he was told the pain in his back was a slipped disc but it was only when he went to Trafford General for an MRI that they discovered his cancer had spread. 71-years-old was far too young for a man with such a zest for life."

Matt said: "I feel men should demand the same level of attention as women. Women have regular screenings for breast and cervical cancer but men have to ask for help and then it seems, certainly in the case of my father, that the service is not as comprehensive as it might be."

"I want to raise money for dad and I want to see the places that he enjoyed so much in his life, especially Poitiers where from all accounts he was something of a celebrity, but I also want to make men aware of the need for regular testing and the medical profession realise that men deserve a full service too."

Both Mike in the sixties and then Matt in the nineties represented St. Ambrose with distinction on the rugby field with Matt saying: "This is where I made my life long friends and how most of us ended up playing together for Ashton on Mersey Rugby Club and I know dad loved the school too."

St. Ambrose College Director of Sport Nigel Handy said: "I coached Matt but Mike was before my time, but if he had anything of Matt's drive and ambition he would have been a very good player. Everyone at the College fully endorses his campaign to raise awareness of prostate cancer which remains one of society's taboo subjects, but quiet killers."

To contribute the website is www.virginmoneygiving.com/ptp1000. They are also on social media Facebook @ptp1000 and Twitter @pedal1000.

The team are planning to complete the trip in just seven days, cycling around 100 miles per day and had already raised nearly £5,000 before departure.