

The Hadrian's Wall gang

CHEERS! Matt Atkinson (centre) celebrates with Callum Brown (front) and fellow runners Phil Smith (left) and Lee Grant

by **Richard Mennear**

richard.mennear@northeast-press.co.uk

A DETERMINED dad is enjoying a well-earned rest after completing a gruelling challenge that saw him run the length of Hadrian's Wall during the night.

Matt Atkinson, 41, who is originally from Hartlepool, raised £3,000 after completing the 86-mile run in his target of 22 hours.

He didn't sleep during the challenge, barely ate and was forced to survive on water and energy tablets.

It left him battered, bruised and he also lost a few toenails.

But Matt said it was well worth helping to raise money for youngster Callum Brown, who suffers from cerebral palsy.

Callum, seven, lives in Seaton Sluice, Northumberland, and his family need to raise £70,000 to cover the costs of sending him to America for an operation to allow him to walk independently.

The youngster was at the finishing line alongside family and friends.

Matt, who spent 10 years with the Royal Artillery, said: "I had a lump in my throat when I crossed the finish line.

"It was lovely to see Callum and I gave him a big hug."

He added: "It was incredibly tough, the hardest thing I have ever done.

"The challenge is relentless, really gruelling and I described it as epic.

"We were chased by bulls, scratched, had to jump over barbed wire and were pitted in mud.

"We ran for 86-miles in total without any sleep for the best part of 40 hours.

"Eighty per cent of it is cross-country and you are up and down all of the time.

"At the end we all had problems with cramp, bruising and blisters and I lost some toe nails and skin off my feet."

Luckily the rain held off for the majority of the challenge and the sun was shining as they crossed the finish line.

Matt completed the run alongside Lee Grant, 32 and Phil Smith, 35, both from Ashington, while



another friend John Ford provided support along the way.

They all wore head torches to ensure they kept on the right track.

The trio started last Saturday at 9pm in Bowness-on-Solway, in Cumbria, and finished about 7pm the following day.

Matt added: "It was a massive challenge on so many levels.

"Mentally and physically it was draining but it was worth it."

Matt decided to help raise money for Callum's family because he works with his grandmother.

Matt left town aged 17 to join the Royal Artillery, where he served for 10 years including time as an instructor, before retiring in 1997.

The 41-year-old, who is now a director with Cleardata, is married to Christine, 40, who works in corporate hospitality.

The pair, who live in Newcastle, have an eight-year-old daughter, Millie.



Learning
charter
backed

FIRE brigade chiefs have cemented an agreement with union bosses as part of a prize of ongoing development staff.

County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service has established an agreement with the Fire Brigade Union (FBU) to support participation in life-long learning within building upon the Government's national learning initiatives.

The learning agreement was signed by the service's director of community protection, Stuart Errington, and organisation's FBU learning representative, Craig Pharoah.

Mr Errington said: "This agreement demonstrates how the service is committed to going development of all of employees.

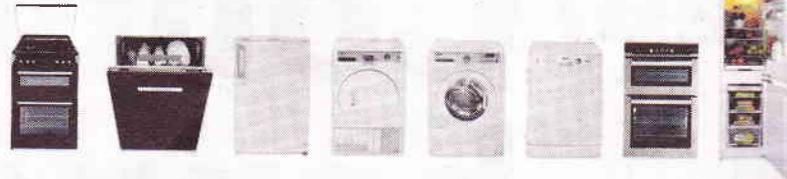
"Through working in partnership, both the service and the FBU can promote lifelong learning opportunities.

"The agreement will enable all employees to participate approved courses and qualifications covering a wide range of topics."

Mr Pharoah added: "We welcome the opportunity to work in partnership with the service to enhance and improve the skills and qualifications of employees.

"The learning agreement provides a sound commitment from the FBU and the service to ensure that all staff have opportunity to improve both their work and social skills.

The Blomberg Event seit 1883



Starting 16/7/12

ALL FREE Throughout This Huge Event
3 Year Warranty Delivery Install Removal

Any Blomberg purchase up to £350 enter our free prize giveaway.

Any Blomberg purchase over £350 get 10% back in Tesco vouchers.

Pop in for demo and enter the draw to win an 8kg washing machine. Other freebies to giveaway in store.

