# Boy who underwent major heart surgery raises £1250 for charity that supported family

**Wednesday 23 August, 2017**

A local lad who underwent major heart surgery earlier this year reached the summit of Roseberry Topping to raise £1,250 for The Sick Children's Trust to say thank you for keeping his family by his side when he was in hospital.

Last November, nine year old Ronnie, from Saltburn-by-the-Sea, was given the devastating news that he had a narrowing of the aorta in his heart and would need surgery to widen the valve. But when Ronnie went in for the procedure, the surgery was not successful as the narrowing had become too restricted and it was revealed that he needed major open heart surgery.

Ronnie was admitted to Freeman Hospital in Newcastle upon Tyne – over an hour away from home – and underwent a four hour operation to fix his heart. Following his operation, Ronnie's Mum, Emma Smith and Grandma Carol were supported with free 'Home from Home' accommodation run by The Sick Children's Trust. **38 year old Emma, who works for Vision for Education, says:**

"When Ronnie's stepdad, Richard, and I were told that Ronnie had a heart murmur four years ago, we were reassured it was very common and he should grow out of it. To then be told last year that he was suffering from a heart condition was a huge shock. Ronnie has always been a fit and healthy boy, he loves his football and being active, so we never thought that it would have been possible that he was so poorly.

"Ronnie is old enough to understand what having a heart condition means and he knew he would have to have surgery – but he coped so well. He coped better than me! He was a little nervous about being put to sleep, but he was more worried about letting his football team down by not being able to play.

"The night following his surgery, we weren't allowed to sleep at his bedside. We live over an hour away from home and couldn't bear to leave his side. Thankfully we didn't have to as a lady from The Sick Children's Trust told us she had a room where two of us could stay in a place called Scott House. So Richard travelled home that night, while my mum and I stayed there.

"The Sick Children's Trust is a charity which provides free 'Home from Home' accommodation for parents with seriously ill children in hospital. And Scott House was amazing. It meant I wasn't pacing up and down the corridors all night waiting for news on how Ronnie was doing, but I could still be updated because there was a phone in our room that had a direct line to his ward. This was such a relief as I could get in touch with the ward throughout the night to see how he was, and in the morning they called me to tell me he was waking up so I could be there when he opened his eyes."

Four weeks after Ronnie had his heart surgery, he was playing his beloved sport once again and came up with the idea of fundraising for The Sick Children's Trust to say thank you for keeping his family by his hospital bedside. **Emma continues:**

"Ronnie wanted to thank The Sick Children's Trust for giving me and his Grandma somewhere to stay, as he was comforted to know that we wouldn't be too far away when he woke up. We told him about Scott House, and how there were lots of families in a similar situation to us – and worse. So he decided he wanted to help other children have their family right by their side when they were in hospital. We're very proud of Ronnie and what he's achieved.

"We'd also like to say a huge thank you to my work, Vision for Education, for being so supportive and understanding throughout Ronnie's treatment – which has been a huge weight off my shoulders. And we'd like The Worx Café in Ennis Square, Redcar, for supporting us by having a charity box in which their customers generously donated."

The Sick Children's Trust runs free accommodation across the country supporting around 4,000 every year across its ten 'Homes from Home'. **Scott House Manager, Andrew Leadbitter, says:**

"It's amazing to hear that Ronnie has been able to complete the Roseberry Topping climb, especially not long after his heart surgery! He's an inspiration and has taken everything in his stride.

"We'd like to say a huge thank you to Ronnie and his family for fundraising for us. As a charity we rely

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entirely on donations to keep our ‘Homes from Home’ running and thanks to Ronnie, we will be able to support more families, keeping them together when they need each other the most.”

To visit Ronnie’s fundraising page, visit: https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/emma-smith219

For further information about The Sick Children’s Trust, please visit http://www.sickchildrenstrust.org/

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