# Former soldiers and firefighters to cycle 90 miles from Nottinghamshire to Lancashire hospice following death of former Army Staff Sergeant.

A team of former soldiers and firefighters will tackle a tough 90-mile cycling challenge from Nottinghamshire to Lancashire to raise funds for a lifechanging hospice.

St Catherine’s Hospice, in Bamber Bridge, Preston, gave former Royal Artillery Staff Sergeant Dave Topping palliative care before his death from cancer in September 2021 aged 61.

The challenge will see the team of 11 set off from the fire station in Mansfield on Saturday, May 14 before cycling the 90-mile route to the Lancashire hospice.

It has been organised by Dave’s brother Mick Topping, 59, a former watch manager at Mansfield fire station who also served in the Royal Artillery with his brother.

Mick, who has lived in Mansfield for more than 35 years, had the idea following Dave’s funeral in September last year.

He said: “The care my brother received whilst in the hospice was tremendous, nothing was too much trouble, and the staff were so attentive. Not only that, the emotional support and advice Dave’s wife Cath and our family received helped so much at such a difficult time

“I thought I should do something in memory of Dave and aimed to raise some funds for the hospice, which needs £5 million each year to support people like Dave, and thought that I would ride from my home in Mansfield to Preston.

“I mentioned it at his funeral to some of the Army lads, and it snowballed from there. Dave spent 24 years in the Army and there was a fair few soldiers came to pay their respects, then I mentioned it to some of the firefighters I ride with in Mansfield and I soon had 11 riders.”

Dave, a father of two and grandfather of four, lived in Leyland, Lancashire, with his wife Cath until his death from cancer in September 2021.

Some of the cyclists are travelling quite a distance to the start to help raise money, including from London, Hertfordshire, South Wales, Shropshire and North Yorkshire.

The ride will take them through Chesterfield, Baslow, Stockport then over the Manchester Ship Canal near Old Trafford, before following the A6 west of Bolton to Bamber Bridge.

It is expected to take about eight hours to complete, with a couple of food stops and more than 4500 feet of hills to climb.

The team has a good support group following the riders just in case they have technical/physical issues and to help return the bikes and riders to the start line.

A group JustGiving page was set up in order for people to donate and spur the riders on, with almost £2,500 raised so far.

[Jason Davis is fundraising for St Catherine's Hospice Preston (justgiving.com)](https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/dave-topping-charityride?msclkid=2744c254d0f611ecb01ed221f5c3752e)