



Noel on the summit.



Noel with porters.



Noel on his way to the summit.

**CHALLENGE:** Noel scales the sixth peak in his seven summits record bid

# Dromara's very own Action Man

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**DROMARA'S** very own action man, Noel Hanna, is back in the village after scaling the highest summit in Oceania – Indonesia's daunting Carstensz Pyramid.

Noel (42) is now just one peak away from a world record.

He featured in the *Chronicle* recently as he attempts to make the fastest ascent and descent of the legendary seven summits – the world's seven highest mountains.

The adrenaline junkie will be heading to the last one next December.

Noel has climbed three of the seven peaks with his wife Lynne. The pair have been married for three years and met through the sport.

"I needed somebody to go on an adventure race team to New Zealand in 2001," Noel commented. "I picked Lynne for the team – and then picked her for a wife!"

The couple are planning a return to Everest at the end of March to raise funds for Ulster Cancer Foundation.

Many married couples will be surprised to hear that the pair can tolerate each other on top of a mountain!

"When I'm away without Lynne there could be two weeks pass by before I can communicate with her."

"When we are together, anything that is said while we're on the trip is

forgotten by the time we get back home."

Noel's endurance addiction started back in 1997 when he was in the police.

He and a friend from the Courts Service decided to take on a challenge after their landmark 30th birthdays.

The challenge was a 100 mile run in the Himalayas and, soon afterwards, Noel was searching for his next high.

Noel stayed in the police for another couple of years but soon gave it up in order to realise his dream as an endurance athlete and expedition consultant.

He added: "In life, I don't want to let anything pass me by. If you feel there's something you desperately want to do, life's too short just to let it go."

Noel's latest climb proved to be his toughest challenge yet.

The 16,020ft granite face of the Carstensz Pyramid, in West Papua, was the sixth peak in the adventure.

It is regarded as the most technically difficult climb of the seven summits – only a few hundred climbers have ever under-

taken expeditions here because of the region's history of political instability and civilian unrest.



Pat (in grey jacket) and Noel in camp with porters.

## Noel prepares for final summit next December

IN December Noel and his mountaineering partner Pat are heading to Antarctica.

"I'm really looking forward to it – if my plans hadn't changed I would have finished the challenge by now which I'm a bit disappointed about."

"The last two summits are the two hardest logistically – getting in and out."

"It's not the climbing, but getting from the summit to sea level which is

the hardest part.

"I like to plan a few days to chill out in the country once I've completed the challenge."

So far, the world record attempt has cost between £70,000 and £80,000 – most of it from Noel's own pocket.

The sixth peak however, was sponsored by the Chicago-based investment firm and online brokerage PEAK6.

There is just one more peak stand-

ing between Noel and the record and, in December 2009, Noel and Pat will head to Mount Vinson in Antarctica for the final leg.

On December 25, Noel and Lynne didn't go out for the normal Christmas stroll.

"We spent Christmas and New Year on top of Slieve Donard," Noel said. "Pat was over for the New Year and he came up the mountain with us for it."

The local man made the climb with his good friend, Pat Singh, who is in his 50s. They spent three and a half weeks travelling through the bush where no one spoke English.

They ate the local cuisine – a form of sweet potato and bananas – and sucked on sugar cane.

Noel commented: "It was very good."

"We got to the top but then the hardest part was getting down to sea level."

"Trying to get the local people to understand English was really tough too."

"It was very hard getting them to understand what it was you wanted."

"They had aeroplanes and couldn't understand why we wanted to walk!"