

Paraglider's sights on an Everest first

By Tom Johannsen

An adventurer from the Shropshire border is aiming to scale new heights by attempting to become the first woman to pilot a solo paraglider from the top of Mount Everest.

Louise "Squash" Falconer, from Bronington, near Whitchurch, is in Nepal as part of a daredevil expedition to scale the world's highest mountain then jump from its 8,848 metre summit before floating back to the ground.

Speaking to the Shropshire Star from base camp on Everest, she said the prospect of jumping off the roof of the world was both "exciting" and "scary".

She said: "I'm really well up here at base camp and resting for a few days while we wait for a weather window to go for the summit.

"When you're on the mountain you realise it's a scary place but I'm so excited to be here. It's just a case of waiting for the right conditions now.

"Obviously there's nerves and feeling anxious, but I really want to be the first woman to do this because it would be a shame to miss the chance after bringing all my kit up here."

Charities

Louise, 30, who often spends time with her father and step-mother in Bronington when she is in the UK, has been acclimatising to the high altitude by climbing up and down to camp three at 7,100 metres.

She is raising money for three charities - Solea, the Treetops Hospice and Mount Everest Foundation for Sustainable Development in Nepal and Tibet. She is urging those who would like to support her to visit www.squashfalconer.com/index.php

Two years ago Louise, who has been known as Squash since childhood, rode a motorbike to the foot of Europe's highest mountain Mont Blanc, which stands at 4,810 metres, then climbed to the summit before paragliding down.

In doing so she became the first British woman to succeed at such a feat, but by taking on Mount Everest, now she is aiming even higher.

She said: "There are very few people who are paragliders and mountaineers, so I've been very lucky that my parents always supported me in chasing my dreams.

"I know Bronington and Whitchurch very well and that whole area is like a second home to me."

Louise said she hopes to do the high octane jump any time between May 13 and 25 but is keeping her fingers crossed it will be on May 13, which is her father George's birthday.

Mr Falconer said: "You really need some guts to do something like paragliding off a mountain as there's no turning back once you jump."



Louise 'Squash' Falconer, from Bronington



Louise aims to pilot a solo paraglider from the top of Mount Everest