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Big Bike Revival
awards heroes the
‘Real Yellow Jersey’

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The 'Real Yellow Jersey' is for everyday heroes



In 2019, ten people were gifted one of Cycling UK's inaugural 'Real Yellow Jerseys'.

In doing so, we recognise ordinary people who've used cycling to transform their lives. Moreover, we want to celebrate people who are getting back on their bikes, changing their lives and helping others do the same. They're the real heroes of cycling!

The Real Yellow Jersey is a symbol of everything that's to be celebrated about everyday cycling and an encouragement for more people to get in the saddle.

We gave the 'Real Yellow Jerseys' to people across the country who'd taken part in the Big Bike Revival, our initiative for helping people overcome barriers stopping them from cycling, such as lack of skills, financial hardship, disability, cultural background or health issues. Each 'jersey knit' garment took eight hours to complete.



The Real Yellow Jersey is awarded
to exceptional people who have
used cycling to change their lives
and those of others.

The
BIG BIKE
Revival

Champion on Champion

Since 1919, the Tour de France has presented a yellow jersey to the overall leader and it has become an iconic sporting symbol. Cycling UK's 'Real Yellow Jersey' recognises that cycling isn't just about sport; it's an everyday activity for leisure, transport and health, and part of a solution to many of society's biggest problems, ranging from climate change and air pollution to obesity and mental health issues.

The Real Yellow Jerseys have been given the backing of two Tour de France yellow jersey winners; Sean Yates, who won his jersey in 1988, and Chris Boardman who wore yellow at the 1994, 1997 and 1998 races. Chris Boardman, now policy advisor for British Cycling, said "The Real Yellow Jersey for everyday heroes of cycling really shines a light on how cycling can turn lives around, improving health, fitness and wellbeing, and I applaud all the recipients for their achievements."

Sean Yates, who also played a pivotal role in helping Sir Bradley Wiggins become the first Briton to win the Tour de France in 2012 said, "The yellow jersey in the Tour de France remains the ultimate symbol of cycling sporting success. So, it's fantastic to see ten inspiring individuals from all walks of life honoured with their own real yellow jersey recognising how cycling can make such a massive difference to people's lives."

If you're taking part in the Big Bike Revival, tell us who you would like to nominate as a Real Yellow Jersey everyday hero. bigbikerevival@Cyclinguk.or

Meet our inaugural ten 'Real Yellow Jersey heroes and read their stories in full.





Hero

Janet Baird

Janet stopped riding her bike after losing her cycling twin sister Margaret. 14 years later, the Big Bike Revival helped her get back on her bike - and now she's even ditched the car.

Janet and her twin sister, Margaret, from Harrogate, Yorkshire, began cycling when they were 11. Cycling became an important part of their lives. They biked through their teens and into adulthood, often venturing out on amazing charity rides. But in 2004, after 40 years cycling together, Margaret tragically developed serious complications after suffering a stress fracture in her leg and died in hospital.

Janet was left heartbroken. She had not only lost her cycling buddy; she had lost her twin sister. She stopped cycling altogether and totally lost her confidence. But gradually she felt ready to make a change. “You don’t forget losing someone, but I had started to feel better about things,” she said. “So slowly I began to think about getting back on my bike, thinking I’ll try and see if I can get my confidence back.”

In 2018, Janet was convinced to go along to a Big Bike Revival event in Harrogate run by Resurrection Bikes. “There were crowds of people there all happy and confident,” she said. “I got to know the project and felt so inspired by all the work Resurrection Bikes were doing. It was a buzz of activity and I felt I was back in my own world.”

Janet is now back in the saddle and full of renewed enthusiasm. She’s encouraging her friends to get on their bikes and campaigns for more cycle routes in her local area. She’s even given up her car and relies on “bike, boots and bus” to get around. “It’s free and it doesn’t pollute. It’s a big bonus for everyone. It’s so good for our health. We should be encouraging more people to get out on their bikes and cycle more. I have to admit, I am nervous every time I go out, but it’s getting better. I feel cycling is so therapeutic and a positive way of keeping fit. It’s not all about the Lycra. I don’t have special gear – apart from a good helmet. I’m just so glad I’m back on track!”





Hero
Caitlin Bartlett

Before, Caitlin had experienced bike shops and other cycling environments as intimidating - now she's a qualified cycle mechanic.

Four years ago, 29-year-old Caitlin Bartlett, decided to try to learn how to fix a puncture. Although she had cycled on-and-off for almost all her life, she wasn't able to solve simple mechanical problems. *"I felt intimidated almost every time I entered a bike shop and I was pretty terrified of getting a puncture! she said. I was on the verge of giving up and thought maybe cycling is just not for me."*

But, three years ago she started learning bike maintenance at Broken Spoke Bike Co-op in Oxford, and now works there as a qualified cycle mechanic. She explained, *"The people were so friendly and encouraging, they let me explore my own bike and guided me. The emphasis was on learning and no question was too silly! It really helped to shift that sense that I didn't know anything and, fundamentally that I could learn bike mechanics."*

Caitlan coordinates the monthly 'Beryl's Night' workshop sessions that teach women and transgender people about cycle maintenance. Beryl's Night, named after 1960's cycling legend, Beryl Burton, is a monthly drop-in evening workshop that has been running since 2012. The Broken Spoke team believe that removing barriers to cycling is fundamental to enabling more people to cycle more often, especially those under-

represented like women, transgender people, people of colour and those on low incomes. *"Cycling environments however are still too often gendered and intimidating which puts off, rather than encourages."* Caitlin said.

"There is still so much work to do to make cycling an everyday reality for everyone," said Caitlin. "I'm proud to be part of such an incredible group of people doing their best to be part of that change. No-one is born with a spanner in their hand!"

Big Bike Revival's grant funding has contributed towards the work at Broken Spoke. *"Over the years, hundreds of women and transgender people have learnt mechanics, many have gone on to ride regularly with other local clubs, or to more confidently cycle everyday knowing that if they get a puncture or other mechanical, they can fix it!"*







Hero

Joan Reynolds

87-year-old grandmother Joan got back into the saddle after not cycling for 65 years with the help of her local cycling group showing everyone that you're never too old to ride a bike. Joan hadn't cycled since she was in her teens.

Then, three years ago she learned about Cycling UK's Big Bike Revival events and felt inspired. Together with her close friend Janet, 83, they decided to push their boundaries and try something a bit different. She said: *"Sometimes I get these funny ideas and just ride with them. Literally! 'Big Bike Revival' events helped me with advice about the right type of bike to get and have given me lots of guidance on how to maintain and look after it, which is important for me to stay safe - especially at my age. If I got injured it would be much more serious."*

"I've got quite short legs and even though they gave me their smallest adult bike to try it was still almost too big for me." Since then the Walsall Arboretum group have purchased a bike in Joan's size that is kept for her when she attends the group. It's even affectionately called 'Joan's bike'. *"I was a bit wobbly at first,"* said Joan, *"but soon started to get the hang of it. We went a short distance around the Arboretum, I can't remember exactly how far but up to the large gate. I can honestly say I thoroughly enjoyed doing it and trying something different. I'm chuffed to bits."*

Joan is keen to keep cycling when the weather gets a little warmer and really enjoys the friendships she's made with the group. *"Being with each other and cycling is great,"* she said. *"Everyone is really nice."*

"I'd recommend other older people to give it a try. You'll be surprised the difference it makes, if you don't try, you won't do it." *"When you get going it's great, you don't want to stop then, you just want to keep going."*





Hero

Joy Anibaba

Joy never learnt to ride a bike as a child, but five years ago at the age of 50 she took to two wheels with the help of the Big Bike Revival and has never looked back. She's now supporting others to do the same as a ride leader and key figure in her local cycling community.

Growing up in London in the 1970s Joy's parents were concerned about increasing traffic levels and didn't want her on a bike. Despite always wanting to learn, Joy's focus was on education in her early years and it wasn't until she turned 50 that she learnt how to ride.

Since then Joy has found cycling to be a real life-changer and considers getting out into the fresh air on two wheels a great way to beat stress.

"I'm just literally concentrating on cycling and the surroundings," explained Joy. "I notice things that I wouldn't notice in my normal day to day."

"I think it's probably the closest to being present that I ever am."

Cycling has also benefitted Joy's physical health. She is diabetic and has high blood pressure but cycling regularly has helped her lose weight.

Joy is now a key figure in her local cycling community, helping set up a new cycling group in Birmingham, Joyful Bellas and Fellas, training to

become a ride leader and inspiring others to take up cycling.

"If you're not into cycling already, it can be a bit intimidating to come out," said Joy. "But when you're coming to join a group and that group is welcoming and supportive then it's more encouraging."

"It makes people feel like; 'yes I can do this.'"





Hero

Judith Swaffield

After the death of her mother in 2017, Judith went looking for something to bring joy and happiness back into her life. Through the Big Bike Revival, she found support at a local cycling group.

Judith, like many people, had cycled as a child, but rarely as an adult. When she finally got back on a bike after losing her mother, it was the first time in over fifteen years.

She had spent seven years as her mother's full-time carer after she developed dementia. *"Caring can be very solitary and isolating,"* explained Judith, 53. *"At times it's very hard. But we're giving from the heart so it's bound to take a toll on us."* When her mother passed away, she began searching for new experiences to help her to cope with her loss.

Interested in doing more physical activity, she heard about the Big Bike Revival rides organised by Transition Southampton and dug out her flashy orange bike that had been sitting unused in the garage. The sedate pace of the rides, which took place in parks and along quiet roads really appealed to her, as well as the chance to meet people and feel supported by a group.

Since joining the cycling group in 2018, Judith has pushed herself beyond what she thought she could achieve and credits the support and

advice she gets from other cyclists. *"You really feel like people are looking out for you,"* said Judith. *"I was really touched by the other women, it's a real sisterhood. I was really touched by their enthusiasm and support."*

"Also, it's an achievement. You get on a bike and you pedal away and you come home and you think, I did something today, I got out there, I've kept fit a bit and I've made some friends and I've been out and I've enjoyed myself. It uplifts you." Judith is also keen to maintain her cycling momentum, always looking for where the next ride will take place. *"There are lots of amazing things out there that you can do,"* said Judith. *"As I've found through the cycling network in Southampton, the support from the women has been wonderful."*





Hero

Linda Rackham

Linda was struggling to find an activity that was right for her to help manage her diabetes. But after joining a local cycling group she now has the confidence to cycle to work and has even completed the 28-mile Tour De Broads.

"I used to cycle everywhere before passing my driving test some 30 years ago," Linda said. And like so many others around the UK, the bike was then confined to the shed.

At the age of 50 and managing type II diabetes, Linda was looking for a form of exercise to help manage her condition, and one that was right for her. Linda tried running, swimming and going to the gym but never got past a couple of weeks. She then heard about Big Bike Revival rides organised by Park Pedal and decided to give cycling a go. *"I didn't think I could do more than the two laps of the broad but hoped that maybe I could start cycling to work on the days I could. The first week was cold, but once I was on the bike I soon warmed up. Two laps seemed a long way, but I wanted to come again and do it faster the week after."*

"I felt this was something I could actually enjoy doing again."

Cycling with a group has given Linda the confidence she needed to keep going. *"I felt a bit nervous the first time,"* Linda said. *"But with the*

support around and seeing children doing it gave me the encouragement I needed. Park pedal has helped me in so many ways. My confidence has grown, I now know I want to ride more. They not only lent me a bike but also gave me different bikes to try before buying my own bike."

Linda has now bought her own hybrid bike and is cycling regularly. She has also encouraged friends and family members to join her. She even recently completed the 28-mile Tour de Broads.

"Cycling has brought me a new group of friends," said Linda *"With 28 miles done, 30 or even 35 doesn't seem impossible."*





Hero

Farzana Khan

Mother-of-three Farzana set herself the challenge to learn to ride a bike before she turned 40.

Thanks to help from a local Community Cycle Club who took part in the Big Bike Revival she is now enjoying cycling with her children.

Paediatric dietician Farzana was not always able to ride a bike but was determined to learn before turning 40 so she and her children could enjoy cycling together as a family. With her husband, brother and sister already able to cycle, it's something she'd always wanted to do.

"I think it was fear that prevented me from learning as a child," she said. "I remember my dad trying to teach me when I was 13, and he was saying 'just let go' and I just wouldn't. After that I never revisited it." Last year her two eldest children were riding with stabilisers, but not yet able to balance on their bikes she felt it was time they all took the next step.

Farzana and her two children, aged nine and five at the time, were taught by Mumtaz Khan, founder of Onna Bikes in Bradford, and Farzana recognised that having a group where her whole family could learn together made the world of difference.

"Mumtaz has been fantastic," she said. "She's been a pillar of support. Without her I wouldn't have felt as confident, and I would've kept thinking that at my age I should really know how to ride, people might make fun of me. But honestly the

group was amazing, really down-to-earth; anyone can come".

"They're so friendly and make me feel welcome – it's such a diverse group of people whether it's gender, race, religion or creed, they're all there enjoying riding together." Farzana began learning in 2018 and now at the age of 39 has set herself a new cycling challenge.

"I wanted to learn to ride before I reached 40. I've definitely achieved that, but my aim now before I turn 40 is to get roadworthy. That gives me another six months."





Hero

Rebecca

Keen cyclist Rebecca, from Bradford, thought her cycling days may be over when she was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 2016, but thanks to a more suitable bike she's not let her condition get in the way of her life-long passion.

Rebecca's father recently suggested that it might be time for her to stop cycling, because her MS badly affected her balance. Her response? *"You are joking dad. That is my life, you got me into it, I'm not stopping it now."*

Rebecca took to cycling at a very young age and even spent her very first wage packet, at the age of sixteen, on a new set of wheels. After being diagnosed with MS, a lifelong condition affecting the brain and/or spinal cord, Rebecca didn't want to stop cycling. She joined a women's cycle club in Bradford called Girls Gotta Ride. The club aims to attract black and Asian women, as female ethnic minorities are vastly underrepresented in cycling.

"They cycled by the side of me, encouraging me to carry on," said Rebecca. *"My favourite thing about cycling is that I'm out free and I can feel the wind."* Far from letting her condition slow her down, Rebecca has now expanded her cycling world by training as a cycle mechanic. Rebecca said: *"I learnt in three days, which was quick! They said it normally takes a week to learn to fix a bike from scratch."*

She volunteered first at the Bradford Bikery, a local community bike project running Big Bike Revival drop-in sessions. And now helps to fix people's bikes at the Bradford Capital of Cycling. Rebecca now rides an electric bike which she hopes will allow her to continue to cycle for many more years.





Hero

Martin Williams

Martin was homeless, addicted to drugs and suffering from anxiety and depression before the Big Bike Revival scheme helped him turn his life around.

Martin, 45, from Birmingham was homeless, addicted to drugs and suffering from anxiety and depression before being put in touch with the Big Bike Revival group, New Roots. After attempting to take his own life in 2017, New Roots gave him somewhere to live, provided support for his mental health needs and helped him overcome his drug addiction. Martin then rediscovered a love of bicycles after being taught cycle mechanic skills.

"I had my own bike as a child," said Martin. "By being involved in the cycle group, I feel like it's given me another reason to avoid drugs as I'm working hard at something positive."

Martin now looks forward to working at the workshop where he fixes people's bikes, passes on the skills he's learnt to others, and upcycles bikes for people who would not normally be able to afford a bike. Martin has been drug-free for the past 18 months and through his volunteering work feels like he now has a positive outlook for his future.

"I feel like I have a real purpose and motivation knowing that this work is not only helping others towards a more positive lifestyle, but it makes me feel good each day," Martin said. "I want to get up, go out and be around people and do something

productive. Being at the group has helped with my depression and anxiety, I used to feel isolated and vulnerable while getting involved with the wrong people."

"I enjoy being with the people I work with, and I like to see the looks on people's faces when we give them a bike they can use. I like to think I am helping other people's lives too. I would like to get my own business eventually and now I feel I can do anything."







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**Nominate your
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everyday hero**

by contacting Cycling UK at:
bigbikerevival@Cyclinguk.org



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