

## Comment &amp; interviews

# CYCLE SHORTS

**THIS MONTH** EMILY CHAPPELL'S CUSTOM BIKE, MAKING TRACKS OFF-ROAD, AND A BIG BIKE CELEBRATION



Photo: Joolze Dymond

Grandson Robert (4) loves cycling

## Local Hero

## ERIC WATERS

Born-again cyclist Eric is an enthusiastic tourer who shares his love of cycling with his four-year-old grandson, Robert. **Victoria Hazael** spoke to him

**ERIC REDISCOVERED** cycling ten years ago. 'I first really got into cycling when I joined local club Wheel Easy, which was set up for "people who don't wear Lycra",' the 67-year-old Harrogate resident said. 'I fitted that category, having not cycled much before, so I enjoyed meeting similar people and discovering local short rides. Twelve months later, I took early retirement so had more time to cycle.'

'I was looking for a personal challenge, and soon progressed from shorter rides of about 15 miles to longer rides of over 60 miles. This then extended to trips abroad to experience cycling in other countries. In 2011, I planned

a trip to cycle from Italy to Harrogate, including the full length of the River Rhine from its source in Switzerland to the North Sea.'

In tackling this trip, Eric raised £8,000 for charity and, incidentally, became the first cyclist in 2011 to cross the newly cleared St Gotthard Pass in the Alps. Metres of snow were piled high above his head on either side!

Eric's further adventures – including crossing the Himalayas on the world's highest road – were temporarily curtailed in 2013. A freak accident on his friend's tandem left him needing a hip replacement. While recovering, he was advised to avoid impact sports like running and squash but he could still ride a

bike. Four months after the operation, he cycled over the Pyrenees.

Eric's enthusiasm has been infectious. His wife and daughters have joined him on trips and rides as, latterly, has his grandson Robert, now aged four. Robert was just one year old when the Tour de France came to Harrogate in 2014. 'Even at his young age, Robert was swept up by the atmosphere and occasion,' said Eric. 'He loved it.'

As part of the legacy of the Tour, 12 months later Harrogate's roads were closed and cycling events were staged for residents. Eric decided to enter his family into the one-mile family-friendly circuit around the town centre.

'Robert was the youngest participant that day – there he was, only two years old, cycling the whole circuit on his balance bike. The crowds were cheering him on along the whole course; he had the most memorable time. In fact, one lady who saw him go past walked the whole course to find my daughter and Robert to say how happy she had been to see him loving being out on his bike.'

After this, Robert was even more hooked and Eric soon suggested he try a bike with pedals. He mastered it in about 45 minutes. This year, he was due a new bike. So when Cycling UK launched the 2017 Big Bike Revival in Harrogate at end of April, Eric took Robert along to get his next bike from bicycle recycle centre, Resurrection Bikes.

'Robert has so much enthusiasm for cycling, it's a pleasure being able to share the experience with him. We are fortunate we have great routes nearby, including cycle paths along old railway tracks, so we often go out together on a 15-mile round trip.'

Robert has learnt his cycling etiquette well from his granddad, and puts a smile on everyone's face as he calls out 'Cyclist coming through!' to walkers they pass on their rides. His balance bike, meanwhile, has been passed on to his sister, Eric's granddaughter.

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