

Malcolm Margolis

The founder of Cycling UK-affiliated group Harrogate Wheel Easy was awarded the British Empire Medal in April. **Julie Rand** spoke to him



Above: Malcolm with the Lord Lieutenant of North Yorkshire, Johanna Ropner (left)
Bottom: with his wife Gia

Cycling UK member Malcolm Margolis received the British Empire Medal in April. He was nominated for his amazing voluntary contribution to cycling: Malcolm and wife Gia founded Harrogate Wheel Easy in 2006 and have seen it go from strength to strength.

"We set up Wheel Easy after retiring from working in sports retail," he said. "We realised that there weren't any local groups for people like us who just wanted to cycle for leisure – despite Harrogate being where Cycling UK was founded back in 1878!"

Getting started

"We put an advert in the local paper," Malcolm added, "and 35 people turned up. Obviously there was a gap to be filled! We didn't know much about running a cycling group but found other Cycling UK members – in particular, Dave Preston – who stepped up to help.

"We now have 270 members and run rides every Sunday and Wednesday for between 60 and 80 people, with 30 to 40 different regular ride leaders! The group is intended for riders who are not super-fit or who want to get back into non-competitive cycling – hence our strapline: "a club for people who don't wear

Wheel Easy

Founded by Malcolm and Gia in 2006, the group now has 270 members. The group's website is: wheel-easy.org.uk

lycra – and some who do".

One of Wheel Easy's members is Paul Tindle, who joined at the beginning. He said: "Wheel Easy has enhanced my retirement, kept me fit and healthy, and given me a real interest to follow. That interest has led me to develop new skills by attending maintenance courses and qualifying as a cycle instructor.

"I now cycle most days either for leisure or as a form of transport, and have toured throughout the UK and abroad. Without Malcolm and Gia starting and developing Wheel Easy, none of the above would have been possible."

Malcolm said that the secret of Wheel Easy's success was continuously attracting volunteers to help out. "We put out frequent requests for ride leaders so we can put on a range of different rides catering to different demands. There's no fancy names, just Slow, Medium, Medium-Plus, and Long. Our rides range from 15 to over 100 miles, but faster riders are catered for by other groups in Harrogate."

Reaping rewards

Malcolm has been awarded a Certificate of Appreciation from Cycling UK for his efforts in 'Going the Extra Mile' for cycling, and the group was runner-up for Best Cycling Group at Cycling UK's Volunteer of the Year Awards 2018. How did he feel about being awarded the British Empire Medal?

"Thrilled. It's very nice to have some recognition and it spurs me on to complete other projects. For me, BEM stands not just for British Empire Medal but for 'Be Empowered', because that's how I feel. The citation says the award has been given For Services to Cycling in Harrogate, but I have no idea who nominated me. There were, I think, only three awards for cycling in the New Year's Honours, including one for Geraint Thomas, so I'm very proud to be in his company. Having the letters BEM after my name can't do any harm and, I hope, will help me have more credibility so I will be able to achieve more."

As well as Wheel Easy, Malcolm has been a long-term volunteer campaigner on environmental issues and he was instrumental in enabling people to cycle on The Stray, 200 acres of parkland in the centre of Harrogate. He was also heavily involved with Sustrans in the creation of the Nidderdale Greenway – a popular five-mile cycle track from the town to Ripley along a disused railway path. Malcolm is still busy lobbying and fundraising to get the route extended. ●

