

Profile

Wombling free

Cycling UK Vice President Josie Dew's son Jack is a chip off the old block, cycling, recycling and making good use of things folks leave behind

I WAS 10 when I first started taking bikes apart – the same age I decided I wanted to cycle around the world. My 12-year-old son Jack was 11 when, without any prompting from me, he started taking bikes apart. It was during last year's long school summer holidays when, bored of me on a repetitive mantra of "No screens! Use your imagination! Think of something to do!", Jack did just that.

He found an old Trek bike in a skip and set about doing it up with gusto. He got the brakes and gears going, resprayed it, and replaced the saddle and tyres with better ones he found in my bike shed. He added mudguards, rear rack and a bike computer, all of which I'd taken off an older bike years ago. Then he began riding it: on road, off road, uphill, down dale. He went on a bike tour with me to the sea.

Bike recycling

Jack then thought maybe he could save more bikes from ending up in skips or the local dump, so he made a 'wanted' poster for unwanted bikes, hoping to give them a new recycled lease of life. He cycled miles pinning up his posters.

The response was huge. Bikes flooded in, forming an impressive mountain of frames and wheels in our back garden. Jack then set to, mending, adjusting, cleaning, oiling, spraying and renewing until the bikes were good enough for him to try to sell. Much to Jack's amazement, people rang up from all over.

And on it's gone this way for months. Jack has loved saving bikes from being thrown out or left disused and rusting, while putting a useful bit



Litter picking & recycling

If you're disappointed with the amount of litter you see in the countryside, why not get involved with Trash Free Trails? Since 2019, volunteers have removed over half a million items of litter from the countryside. To find out more, visit trashfreetrails.org.

Meanwhile, if you know someone who has an old bike that needs refurbishing so they can use it again, and you don't have the skills or resources to fix it, point them to Cycling UK's Big Bike Revival: cyclinguk.org/bigbikerevival.

of cash in his pocket to boot. More recently he was asked to provide a small fleet of bikes to a local business with B&B cabins, so that they could rent them out to their guests. He was also asked to maintain them on a regular basis for a regular sum.

Litter collecting

Jack and I have always liked to recycle and reuse. I've always found an entertaining way to spend half-terms or weekends with Jack is to go foraging in roadside ditches for litter. When he was little, he used to do this on his John Deere 'tractor bike' that his primary school teacher was throwing out. It was a trike with two wheels on the front and one at the rear, onto which Jack attached an old crate (found in a ditch) to collect rubbish.

More recently he adorned an old Pashley trike with useful litter he's found (old car licence plates, tubs,



(Both photos) Jack collecting roadside rubbish on an old Pashley trike that he equipped for the task

window boxes and the like) to carry more litter. While others at school seem to fly off to exotic destinations at half-term, I tell him that scrabbling around at the side of the road in muddy ditches or clawing our way through a thicket of brambles and nettles to satisfyingly reach a discarded beer can or wine bottle or coffee cup or burger wrapper has surely got to be more fun than lying on a beach in Thailand or Croatia.

I'm not sure he always agrees with me but we often come home with some very useful rubbish we can recycle, upcycle or even just cycle; Jack once found the remains of a bike which he renovated for messing around on.

So, all in all, I can highly recommend turfed-out bike-mending and cycling litter-picking as very cheap holiday activities to do with children. Keeps them entertained for hours! 🍷