

Legacy leaver

JOHN BEDFORD

*Now in his late 80s, John is still busy repairing bikes at his shop. He spoke to **Emma Morris** about his cycling life and the legacy he's leaving Cycling UK*

At 87 years old, John Bedford has no plans to stop riding or fixing bikes anytime soon. Cycling has been a central part of his life since he was 13, when he bought his first bike from Curries. More than seven decades later he is still busy with bikes, spending six days a week fixing them at his shop, Park Cycles.

John joined CTC, now Cycling UK, back in 1952. At the age of 14 he embarked on his first tour abroad, cycling 200 miles overnight from Loughborough to Dover to catch the ferry to tour in Europe. He remembers he didn't know anybody who had been abroad, and he was caught riding down a Belgian motorway as he hadn't seen one before! That first trip through France, Belgium and the Netherlands sparked a passion for touring adventures.

Alongside becoming a trained engineer and working in education, John began fixing bikes from home as a side business, using his passion for cycling and his engineering mind. He moved around for work but always joined the local CTC group, where he enjoyed making new cycling friends. He led rides and walking tours for YHA, too.

When John settled in the Midlands, he met his late wife, Beryl. John taught Beryl to ride a bike, and she quickly caught the cycling bug. The couple immersed themselves in North



John still spends six days a week at his shop, Park Cycles
Below left: Late wife Beryl during one of their winter tours

Birmingham CTC – John as secretary for 21 years and Beryl as treasurer. John said: “We threw ourselves into the club and cycling. Every weekend we'd be exploring somewhere new. Beryl just loved it.”

John would ensure a welcoming cuppa was waiting for Beryl at the top of difficult, hilly climbs. He prided himself on riding ahead to pop the camping kettle on, ready for Beryl's breather.

They took more than 90 cycling holidays abroad together, including trips to Czechoslovakia while under communist rule and 20 trips to the USA, where they were very fond of the bike racks on the front of buses, which made it easy to get around.

When John was made redundant at 55, he and Beryl turned their bike shop into a full-time venture – John fixing and Beryl running retail. Park Cycles became even more of a beloved community hub, and their new lifestyle meant they could shut up shop when it suited them for cycling adventures.

At 87, John is still at the shop six days a week, inspiring newcomers to explore local trails and eager to keep learning new skills. He has seen cycling change a lot over the years, and he's had to learn new things to keep up – for example, how to fix new BMX models and the latest e-bikes, which he really enjoys.

Now John wants to give back after a lifetime of riding. On seeing an advert for legacy giving in Cycle magazine, John realised it was the perfect way to help and inspire the next generation of cyclists and to protect cycling for the future.

After providing for his family, John wanted to continue encouraging riders just as he has always tried to do as a ride leader, club secretary and at Park Cycles. He said: “Cycling has always been a big part of my life. It has given me so many friends, new experiences and great tales to tell. This is my way to continue inspiring people to cycle.” ●

Your cycling legacy

Will you join John in kindly leaving a legacy? Over a lifetime of riding, you've seen the joy, freedom and friendships cycling can bring. Now is your chance to be remembered as you inspire the next generation to discover the joy of cycling.

To learn more on how to leave Cycling UK a gift in your will, please visit cyclinguk.org/giftinwills. Or for a confidential chat speak to Emma Morris on **07584 345489** or email legacy@cyclinguk.org.

Below: Touring in the Rocky Mountains with Beryl. They made 20 trips to the USA

