

May 2018 Special Newsletter

I don't know where to start, but here goes:

Russell Curwen R.I.P. 14/12/1968 to 05/05/2018

Many of you knew Russell better than I did so please forgive me if I miss something out. When I spoke to Russell's Mum, she asked if I would put something in our Newsletter, hence the following:

As you all know, Russell was killed in a Road Traffic Collision on Saturday 5th May 2018 whilst taking very urgent samples from Westmorland General Hospital to Lancaster Blood Sciences. He was so badly injured he passed away, even though there was a Paramedic at the scene at the time of the collision and the Air Ambulance took him to Royal Preston Hospital.

The duty Controller that evening was Helen Jones and she couldn't understand why Russell had not texted her to say he'd delivered, but soon found out and to say Helen was upset, is a massive understatement.

All Controllers feel responsible and no matter how many people and how many times they are told that they're not, it makes little difference.



The North Area Manager, Robert Clarke and Fleet Manager, Simon Hanson attended the scene, and Vice Chairman, Lee Townsend, went to Royal Preston Hospital to meet Russell's parents to help in any way he could, but how do you do that? It's almost an impossible task because of their grief.

I am not a religious man, I have seen too many cases like this, even though The Bish keeps trying to get me onside, things like Russell's death keep pulling me away. It's unfair when good people, like Russell are taken from their families and friends so suddenly.

There was a poem written by an author, Jack London, which sums life up:

I would rather be ashes than dust!

I would rather that my spark should burn out in a brilliant blaze than it should be stifled by dry-rot.

I would rather be a superb meteor, every atom of me in magnificent glow, than a sleepy and permanent planet.

The function of a human being is to live life, not to just exist.

I shall not waste my days trying to prolong them.

I shall USE my time.

Volunteers Who Care"

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What I knew of Russell, was that he was fun to talk to and a good rider, but he worked with **Karen Carton** and Karen and Russell became friends, so Karen has put together the following, which was probably written whilst wiping tears from her eyes:

Every once in a while, someone walks into your life and makes a real impact, for me, Russ was that person. Most friendships take time to grow, spanning over many years, ours didn't. Before he became a member of the Medical Support UK team (Bike Link at that point) I only knew of him as a fellow blood biker and although he was a 'friend' on Facebook, I had never actually met him.

All of that changed in early December 2016, whilst I was parked on the car park at RLI awaiting my next job. This chap strolled over and introduced himself..... And then he smiled, that big beaming gentle smile we all know belonged to Russ. I instantly liked him and within the first few weeks of him becoming a colleague, we were also firm friends.



We chatted a lot.....like fish wives to be honest and we had many odd (very odd) discussions about all sorts of things. Very often we 'googled' anything we didn't know between us.

Most notable was our 'Squirrel' conversation. Even though I had told him the reason Red Squirrels were at risk from Grey Squirrels, he decided that actually it was because the Grey Squirrel bullies the Red Squirrel out of its home, beats the Red Squirrel up and the Red Squirrel dies because it's cold and hungry and has no home. There was no way I could persuade him otherwise and when he realised he could edit Wikipedia, I had a hard job talking him out of adding his theory to it! He always remembered that Grey Squirrels were introduced in 1870 and would drop it into conversation every so often to prove it.

He was also very proud to know where the saying 'on tenterhooks' came from and I believe he tried to educate

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a few of his friends. I don't think they were as impressed as he was but that could have been because there was beer involved....

Russ was an accomplished rider. He had already passed his IAM Advanced and completed his Blues & 2s training when I first met him but in October 2017, he passed his IAM Masters, and he passed it with a Distinction. When I asked him how it had gone, he simply said "Do you know what? I'm a little bit proud of myself" and that was Russ, never blowing his own trumpet or bigging himself up. It never went to his head (on occasion he would point out he was a Master and I'd have to put him firmly back in his place) and he was never complacent when it came to safety and being aware of his surroundings.

Russ was extremely proud to be a member of NWBB L&L and also very proud to work for Medical Support UK. In his eyes he was helping people and helping to save the NHS vital funds. He didn't do it for the glory, or for a Thank You or a pat on the back. He did it because he just wanted to help people. That was Russ in a nutshell. He cared about everyone, but he didn't suffer fools gladly. He had an immense sense of right and wrong and if something wasn't right, *(Biscuits made for Russ by Controller Helen Jones)* it didn't sit well with him and he wouldn't rest until whatever it was, had been rectified.

Russ was very particular, about everything he did. Everything had to be in its correct place, from having a clean car (he washed it religiously every Saturday morning), to having his equipment (including a kettle) in place in the boot. Everything he did had to be done by the book and to the best of his ability. He stressed if he made even the smallest of errors but if he did, it was usually something that could be easily rectified.

He would ring me (if he had had to transport an unsavoury smelling passenger) and wretch down the phone, yet if I had one, he would ring me in fits of laughter and wretch with me, in sympathy.

When we signed on in a morning, over the radio, he knew if I was in a bad mood and would always call and ask "have we got our grumpy knickers on today" and usually, within 5 minutes we'd be laughing at something daft.

Today has been the first day without a phone call to/from Russ. He was not just a work colleague and fellow Blood Biker, he was a very dear friend, more like a brother. He was my 'work husband', I was his 'work wife'. I know I am not alone in saying I will miss him. He was a kind, caring considerate man with a huge heart of gold, who lit up the lives of all who knew him, and the world is a darker place without him.

The following from Steve Dunstan:

I only knew Russ for a little over two years since he joined blood bikes, but I have abiding memories of a lovely bloke. He was always the first volunteer for extra shifts and the first to apologise if he couldn't help out when we were short of cover. He was extremely conscientious and always anxious to make sure that he was "doing the right thing" so we had many long phone calls talking about blood bikes and his passion for riding bikes.



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Right from first meeting him it was clear that he was a larger than life character who loved having a laugh and exchanging banter with his friends and colleagues. I'm sure that all of us will have been the subject of Russ's cutting wit and sharp sense of humour – I know that I have. I only managed to get one over on him once.

He had parked his fleet blood bike outside the Royal Lancaster Infirmary and gone inside to make his delivery when I turned up and parked behind him.

I vividly remember him crying with laughter as he walked out of hospital to find that I had switched his Yamaha blood bike for a similar looking but quite different Triumph. As realisation dawned he turned round to where I was hiding, pointed his finger at me and, with tears of laughter, said "I'll get you for that you swine!"

I guess I'm safe now!

Cheers Russ

Flowers for a friend:



We are all hurting, especially those closer to Russell, Think of Him. He is now truly our,

“Angel on Two Wheels”

We have set up a Just Giving page to help with funeral costs, please pass it on:

<https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/russell-curwen-shift-over-stand-down>

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