



Cycling back to being me

A tricycle borrowed through CTC's Cycle Champions project helped **Caroline Waugh** rediscover her independence

I'm a sociable single mum of two living in Sheffield. I also have a disability caused by brain damage, which I sustained in a Road Traffic Accident when I was 21. Far worse than learning to walk again was coping with my life when my husband later packed his bags and drove off in my mobility car, leaving me alone with the kids (then aged six and two). I cried every day for 16 months.

I'd been used to being driven everywhere. To get the groceries now I catch the Tesco bus, which runs once a week. The first time I did it I struggled with all the shopping – my balance isn't good. Getting off, I slipped and fell. I lay in the mud in tears. The driver parked the bus, picked me up and walked me home.

For the past year, I've been putting my life in order, with help from my wonderful friends. We try to go swimming twice a week, but it's the first thing to get cancelled. I'd like to walk the kids the mile to school for exercise, but there are too many kerbs to go up and down. I'd end up in casualty. So I go on my mobility scooter, even though I am under the age of 60 and my hair isn't blue.

Recently I started thinking about using a tricycle. I vaguely remembered a guy who had one. Maybe I could ride one? I sat on the idea until May this year, when I surfed the 'net to see what was available. The trikes were so expensive, however, and I didn't even know if I could ride one.

Then I got an email about a group that works with Independent Living Sheffield, who search out disability-related stuff. I asked them for help. Could they find me a trike to borrow? They gave me the name of a guy who was to change my life: Steve Marsden, who



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it up. Later the same week, swimming was cancelled again, this time because the pool was closed due to flooding. It reinforced my need for a trike: I need an activity that I can fit into my own day, which doesn't depend on anyone else.

Anyway, I'm cycling now and I'll keep doing it. I've even joined CTC. It's a Friday night as I finish this and I'm having a party at mine to thank my mates for all their help. They've read this too. Some of them cried. But I'm happier than I've been in ages.

works for CTC.

Steve came to my house at the start of June. I explained that I wanted to be able to get to school on a trike. 'Have you tried one?' he asked. I hadn't. He asked me to come to Endcliffe Park the following day, with a packed lunch. He would take a trike there for me to try. I didn't sleep a wink all night I was so excited.

Next day – despite me waiting in the wrong place – I met up with Steve, joined the rest of the group, and got on the tricycle. And I could do it! That night my legs were on fire, which I took to be a good sign because it meant the blood was pumping round. I have had a bit of a problem with circulation since my RTA.

I so wanted a trike now. A week later I was back at Endcliffe Park. What a fantastic day! I cycled for what seemed like miles, up hill as well. And folk were genuinely nice to me, and not out of duty, or pity, or even because it was their job. One guy offered to lend me his trike, which had two seats on the back for kids, and another – Fred – offered to fix

For more about CTC's Cycle Champions, see www.ctc.org.uk/cyclechampions