

Seven-a-day



Seven families a day are bereaved by road crashes in Great Britain

In 2008 road deaths fell to the lowest ever recorded. While this is good news, we should not forget the extent of the loss that comes with these deaths. Here are seven accounts, written by the families, of the emotional devastation caused by seven of the deaths that happened on Britain's roads last year. These seven lives lost represent one day's average toll.



On May 8th 2008, **Ruby Milnes**, 17, was cycling on a designated traffic-free cycle path as her parents wanted her to use the safest route to college. The access road gates of a racecourse were opened for the first time that year and she was hit by a large lorry, hidden from view by a hedge, which has since been removed.



Seventeen months after her death, Ruby's family still do not know whether there will be any charges brought for causing her death, or what will be done to ensure that cycle routes are made safe in practice, not just in name.

Ruby was a gifted student. She was kind, caring, original, beautiful, stylish and great fun to be with. She was deeply loved and is sorely missed by her family and all who knew her. The world has been deprived of the exceptional young woman she was destined to become. ■

On May 19th 2008, **Zachary Taylor**, 17, was on his way to college on his 125cc motorbike. The traffic was moving at a steady 25–30mph. When a car pulled out of a concealed side street, the car ahead of Zachary swerved. This made Zachary lose control of his bike and he was thrown into the path of an oncoming car. He went under the wheels and died instantly. It took ten agonizing months for his family to find this out at the inquest.



Zac was four weeks away from his 18th birthday. An accomplished guitar player, he was due to start university in September and hoped to become a music teacher. He was his parents' only child and the "light of their lives". Described as a "huge personality" nearly a thousand people came to Zac's funeral and paid tribute to the kind, loving, funny and talented person that he was. His family's grief was further compounded when roadside tributes were removed and incinerated without their knowledge. ■



On June 4th 2008, **Marie Vesco**, 19, was cycling to an anti-arms trade demonstration when she was knocked from her bike by a car exiting an A road. The car behind could not stop in time and ran her over. The Crown Prosecution Service did not charge either driver.

The Highway Code states that drivers should give cyclists plenty of room when passing them and leave a safe following distance.

Marie was a committed anti-war activist and regularly campaigned for Food Not Bombs. Passionate about injustice, she helped feed the homeless with food given away by markets and retailers. Her family and friends are devastated by her death and further shocked by the removal of the ghost bike erected in Marie's memory. ■



On July 3rd 2008, **Anthony Maynard**, 25, a highly accomplished cyclist, was enjoying a cycle ride with his local cycling club. He and his friend were hit from behind by a van. His friend was injured, but Anthony died at the scene. His father, who had

just retired that day, was also on the ride, but on a different route. He had four harrowing hours before the police confirmed his worst fears.

The driver's explanation was that he had not seen the cyclists as he was blinded by the sun at the time of impact. The inquest found that the car drove into the back of them at nearly twice the speed of other road users in the vicinity. The Crown Prosecution Service chose not to prosecute and Anthony's devastated parents and sister are struggling to come to terms with this decision.

Anthony was an athletic, principled and gentle son and brother. A qualified driver, he never aspired to owning a car, unless out of necessity. ■

On Christmas Eve 2008, **Malcolm Boswell** was doing what he loved most – cycling – when he was struck by a 4 x 4 which didn't stop. Thanks to an eyewitness, the driver was identified later that night, but claimed not to have seen him. The driver is being charged with Causing Death by Dangerous Driving. Malcolm died on Christmas Day. While others were eating their Christmas dinner, his family was wrestling with the decision over organ donations. Three people are now living healthier lives thanks to Malcolm.



Malcolm was due to move the following week to be closer to one of his sons and his grandchildren. The world has lost a father, grandfather, brother and friend as well as a keen and experienced cyclist. ■

Longer versions of these testimonies are available on our website. As shown here, too often the families' grief is exacerbated by the response from the justice sector. **RoadPeace** continues to campaign to reduce road danger, to work for an improved post-crash response and to highlight the injustices that families encounter.



On August 19th 2008, **Thomas Pople**, 22, was returning home with friends from a night out. He did not make it home as he was hit by a car whilst crossing the road. His mother rushed to the scene and he died in her arms.

No charges have been brought due to lack of evidence. His family believes there should be a statutory requirement that both drugs and alcohol consumption tests are done after a road death. The victims, after all, are tested for both.

Thomas was a bright young man with a world of opportunity at his feet. He was adored by his family and the hole he has left in their hearts will never be filled. Their lives will never been the same without him. At his funeral family and friends dressed in bright colours to highlight the positive impact he had made in his short life and pay tribute to the colourful character that he was. ■

On September 9th 2008, **Rebecca Taylor**, 18, was returning home after driving her sister to school. There was a large amount of surface water on the road, following a torrential downpour. Beccy skidded and lost control of the car. She avoided two cars coming in the opposite direction, but then hit the 6 inch curb on her side of the road. This caused the car to slide sideways into the path of a third car. The full impact was on her side and the car exploded. It took 12 weeks for Beccy's family to be informed she died instantly and was not alive when the car exploded and burst into flames.



Beccy was beautiful both on the inside and outside. Effervescent and bubbling with life, quirky and unique, she was a free spirit who was unconventional and original. Beccy embraced life and was always smiling. 1200 African children have access to water as the result of a gig held in Beccy's memory. She continues to make new connections, as her family and friends share her with others. She is greatly missed by all who loved her. ■