

# Six-a-day



## Six families a day are bereaved by road crashes in Great Britain

Road deaths continued to fall in 2009. While this is to be welcomed, we should not forget the emotional devastation that these deaths bring or the value of these lives lost.

Here are six accounts, written by the families, of deaths that were avoidable but still seen by too many people as acceptable 'accidents'.

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On February 5th 2009, **Eilidh Cairns** (30) was cycling her regular route to work, a 20 mile round trip from North to West

London. A fit and experienced cyclist, she was run over by a tipper lorry driver, who did not see her, at Notting Hill Gate. Eilidh died later that morning.

Her friends and family have campaigned for greater cycle safety and cycle awareness, taking their case to Mayor Boris Johnson. They have been granted the first permanent ghost bike memorial at the site of the crash. Over 300 cyclists attended a memorial cycle ride and raised money for trauma research in her name.

Eilidh grew up by the sea in Northumberland. She loved the outdoors: the ocean, the mountains and the desert which influenced her spirit of adventure throughout her life. She was about to start her 'dream job' making television documentaries. Happily settled with her loving boyfriend, at the centre of a tight-knit but extensive group of friends, she was known for her unique style and vivacious personality. ■



On the night of **February 14th 2009**, **Luke Bland** (20) was on a public footpath with his friend Ben. A sports car driven by an off-duty police officer skidded on a patch of ice and lost control. He hit the kerb, and, airborne, hit the two boys. Luke's body was thrown over a 6ft fence into the middle of a large pond. He died at the scene and Ben received life changing injuries.

The driver was prosecuted for Causing Death by Careless Driving but was found not guilty after a Crown Court trial. He is also being prosecuted for driving with defective tyres at the time of the crash, which was not mentioned at the trial.

Luke was a typical big brother, the eldest of three. He was a talented drummer, who progressed from playing for the scout band to performing at a national level. Luke was in the process of applying to join the police and would have been perfect for the job, a kind, considerate, compassionate young man with his whole life ahead of him. ■

On April 4th 2009, **Sophie Harrison** (18) was on her way to a friend's birthday party. She



and four friends accepted a lift from a school mate after missing the last train. The five seater Landrover was over crowded and Sophie was without a seatbelt. The driver lost control at a small roundabout and overturned the vehicle. Sophie was airlifted to a London hospital but died from severe head injuries two days later.

The driver was charged with Causing Death by Dangerous Driving and pleaded guilty a week before the trial, and over a year after the crash. His initial two year sentence was reduced to 15 months on appeal.

Sophie was her parents' only daughter and much loved younger sister of Luke. She was kind, caring and beautiful. She absolutely loved life and always put others before herself. Her smile, laughter, happiness and positive outlook on life was inspirational and contagious. ■



On **April 13th 2009**, **Stuart Golding** (28) was on his way home from a friend's house in the early hours of the morning. He was halfway across a junction when he was

involved in a collision with another vehicle. Stuart was pronounced dead at the scene.

The driver of the other car was charged with Causing Death by Dangerous Driving and is due to appear in court in October 2010, one year and five months after the crash.

Stuart was his parents' only child. They had waited five years to receive the news that they were to be parents. They take comfort in the fact that Stuart had travelled the world and lived his short life to the full: "we are no longer a happy family home, just a house. We are in a prison, sentenced to a life with no future except the wonderful memories and photos of our son." ■

On **July 28th 2009**, **Kate Furneaux** (27) was cycling in a cycle lane alongside a queue of traffic. Without warning a lorry driver turned left into a cul-de-sac, thinking it was a short cut. Kate was dragged by the lorry and died in hospital two hours later.

The driver served a six month prison sentence for Causing Death by Careless Driving and was banned from driving for three years. Upon appeal the ban was reduced to one year and he no longer has to re-sit his driving test.

Kate had been awarded her PhD in Atmospheric Chemistry two weeks earlier and the previous day had returned from Germany where she had secured a fantastic job, which involved studying the atmospheric gases above the Amazon forest and pollutants high above China and India. She was a passionate environmental campaigner, a wonderful cook, an accomplished scientist and a great team player. Her joyful, loving, positive approach to the world remains an inspiration to the many people around the world who loved her. ■

On **June 17th 2009**, **Paul Richardson** (50) was on his way to work on his motorcycle. An experienced rider, he had returned to regular motorcycling a few years earlier and founded an internet forum for riders where his skill and concern about road safety was much respected.



That morning, whilst overtaking, he was hit by a skip lorry. The tachograph on the lorry showed that the driver was exceeding the speed limit for his vehicle by 40% and the family understand the driver admitted to this under police questioning, but despite this evidence, no charges were brought by the CPS. Nor did the Coroner make any recommendations about the need for road improvements. On the same road, six months earlier a retired police officer died on his motorcycle and one week after Paul's death a young motorcyclist was also killed, just a few hundred yards away.

Paul was a gifted, intelligent, humorous and gentle man. He had achieved excellence in many careers ranging from guitar making and furniture making to magazine editor, author and book publisher. His widow continues to seek safety improvements to the road. His absence from a long and loving marriage and from the future lives of his children is a continuing source of grief. ■



**RoadPeace** continues to campaign to reduce road danger, to work for an improved post-crash response and to highlight the injustices that families encounter.