

15<sup>th</sup> April 2020

## Heroes

**“The daring feats worked by those heroes are well known to us.”**

*Anonymous (Old English), Beowulf*

My bike hasn't been out of my garage for ages, and yet I have been a lover of cycling all my life. Cyclists Chris Froome, Mark Cavendish, Miguel Indurain, Julian Alaphilippe, and many more, are all heroes of mine.

The *Tour de France* at the beginning of July is a must for me (though Covid-19 has damaged that for this year.) This annual, multi-stage race is the most prestigious, and arguably the most difficult, bike race in the world. When the winner stands on the *Champs-Élysées* podium on the final day, bedecked in the famous yellow jersey – the *Maillot Jaune* – I've been known to shed a tear.

There can be only one winner, of course. Yet the race isn't just individual riders racing each other. It's about teams competing with teams, so that each lead rider has a chance of winning. The team is made up of *domestiques*, good cyclists in their own right, but whose job is to ride for the team principal. They'll work at the head of the *peleton* to protect their leader; distribute food bags from the team car; wait behind to pace someone back to the pack if there's been a crash; sacrifice themselves to bring their man home. *Domestiques*, riding for someone else, taking little or no glory for themselves.

When I stand on my doorstep to clap and cheer for our NHS and Care staff, I pray I'll never forget those whose sacrifices ensure all of us get good care. Our country is massively indebted to all the unsung heroes, the *domestiques*, who look for no glory and get little reward, save that of knowing that they do it all – every day – for other people.

### **A prayer for today**

*For leaders and supporters, for team-principals and domestiques,  
and for the many back-up staff... thank God for them all. Amen*

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