



Technical Forum



Mudguard safety

Knowing that you have penned one or two articles recently on the problems of front mudguard failure I thought the following might be of interest:

On 13 May, a Tuesday, I decided to go out for a ride about 11.30am, with the express intention of exploring an old railway line which has been converted into a dual-use cycle- and footpath. I was proceeding along the path at about 15mph, enjoying the mild spring day when ... The next thing I remember was an office with several people – then ambulance men – then inside the ambulance – and finally the Accident and Emergency unit at Hemel Hempstead General Hospital. I was so dazed and shook up during all this time that I cannot, even 24 hours later, recall exactly what happened. However, it was clear that I had fallen off my bicycle in some way, causing concussion and mild amnesia.

The cyclist who found me said that I was standing over my bike looking for my lost spectacles, completely in a daze and unaware of my surroundings. He had a look for them but, being unable to find them quickly and worrying about my condition, picked up my bicycle and the broken pieces of my front mudguard, and took me to his work about 1 mile away. The ambulance was called and in the meantime I was quizzed as to home address, telephone number, next of kin etc.

Presumably I answered the questions satisfactorily (I still cannot remember) as a member of staff telephoned my wife. At the hospital I was given the usual tetanus injection and several X-rays. I was still not all there and, to be honest, I thought that I was dreaming the whole episode! After seeing that I was all right, my wife went to the offices of the cyclist who found me to collect my bike and to ask what had happened.

It transpires that my front mudguard suffered a catastrophic failure, either by breaking, or by a stone becoming trapped between mudguard and tyre. This led to the bicycle making a sudden stop and I was thrown off. The mudguard snapped into two pieces, and all three fixing points were wrenched away, leaving three large tears. Whether this resulted from a stone, twig or branch, or mudguard failure, I do not, and probably never will, know. However, it is by far the worst accident I have ever suffered in many years cycling. Fortunately, my injuries were slight and I have even managed a short ride today (15 May) but what might have been?

Now the technical details:

The mudguards were Poker and only used one stay each side (I

didn't notice at the time of purchase). Having read articles by you in the past about the dangers of only having one fixing stay each side, I added a second retrieved from an old ESGE. I thought that this would be enough to prevent problems, now proven wrong. It has been a salutary lesson and the replacement mudguards will be ESGE complete with Secu-Clips. One fear remains, however. Suppose the stays work loose from the clips and become entangled in the spokes – same problem as before? And one further point, surely these mudguards with only one stay per side should be made illegal, in view of their inherent dangers.

Chris Larkin

• The stays are quite hard to push into the plastic Secu-Clips; and although some have complained about rattling, no one has reported a spontaneous stay release. On the other hand I've heard from quite a few people who've seen these clips do their stuff, releasing under the force of a stick or stone picked up by the wheel etc, thereby averting the kind of mudguard jam described above – or worse. In none of these cases did the released stays become entangled, but merely rattled against the spokes while the rider brought the bicycle to a controlled halt.

Now that they are more widely available, it will be easier for me to argue that front mudguard safety release features should be required at the point of sale – on new bicycles at least. You can help by writing to your local trading standards office.

This accident also raises questions about the safety and suitability for all of many recently designated cycle paths. Road bikes have not sold well lately, yet they outnumber mountain-bikes in some locations. A lot of rather close-fitting, low quality mudguards will remain in use for some considerable time to come. These may be just safe enough on a smooth clear road, but become unacceptably hazardous on a rough, rarely swept, or gravel surface.

– CJ

Electronic end to end

Here's a curious question that appeared recently in our e-mailbox:

I'm cycling 1100 miles in 8 days (John O'Groats to Lands End) and would like to download information from a Polar X-Trainer to a palmtop. Possibilities include maybe the Psion 3c or the HP320LX. Obviously a laptop is going to be heavier ...

My problems include trying to transfer the data from the X-Trainer to a palmtop instead of a desktop PC. I think unless I can install Training Advisor (supplied with the X-Trainer and about 1.4Mb) onto the palmtop I may have to write a program in order to download into a Word file, which could later be converted for use on the desktop. Does anyone have any experience in downloading to a palmtop?

I'm afraid I wasn't much help. At the end of the day (11, at 137.5 miles each) the only thing I'd like to download is my head onto a pillow-top! Send your suggestions (witty or useful) to ndk@willowbeauty.demon.co.uk. – CJ

