

Kit reviews

GEAR

COMPONENTS, KIT, AND BOOKS REVIEWED BY SPECIALIST JOURNALISTS AND CTC STAFF.
THIS ISSUE: SADDLE, TRAILER & CHAINSET

Review requests
 Is there a product that you would like us to review? Let Cycle know and we'll consider it.
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- PROS**
- + No breaking-in period
 - + Looks great
- CONS**
- Some signs of wear

Brooks CAMBIUM C15 SADDLE

£129.99

brooksendland.com

MOST MODERN saddles are made from a single piece of plastic into which steel or cro-mo rails are plugged. Foam or gel is glued on top and wrapped in faux leather or waterproof plastic. Fit is determined by how well the owner matches the manufacturer's view of the stock cyclist. Brooks leather saddles are different. The leather softens and moulds over time to the shape of the rider, and on many models the tension can also be adjusted to suit. This custom fit is why the Brooks saddle has been the touring cyclist's favourite for decades; once broken in, it becomes as individual as a fingerprint.

Leather is no longer the only option from Brooks, however: the C15 replaces the leather with a vulcanised natural rubber covered in an organic cotton for grip. Rubber is waterproof so doesn't require the care of leather (oiling etc), and there's no breaking-in period required. The C15 was comfortable straight out of the box, and for that I was thankful. While I'm aware that

leather saddles become progressively more pleasant to ride on, the last time I tried a Brooks Swallow it felt like it was me getting broken in.

SADDLEBAG-READY

The C15 saddle is fairly narrow at 140mm wide, which is great for my style of 'sporty position' riding. (The sister C17 model is wider at 162mm for a more upright, touring ride.) As well as being the right size and shape, it looks wonderful: it comes in natural grey, rust or black, with the iconic Brooks rivets. The back-plate is a single billet of aluminium with the Brooks motif and integral saddlebag loops. It should suit traditional Brooks users and hipsters alike.

The downsides are that the cotton top to the saddle does show some wear after a few months, perhaps hastened by the bike being rested on bars and saddle when puncture fixing. Compared to sporty alternatives, it is a bit heavy at 405g.

Matt Mallinder

OTHER OPTIONS



1 FIZIK ALIANTE VS K:IUM
 £99.99

A modern saddle with a high level of padding on a nylon, carbon-reinforced shell with a 'sweet spot' at the centre. Various models – this one is 140mm wide and 259g.
fizik.com



2 SPA CYCLES AIRE £45

A direct competitor to the traditional Brooks Swallow, it's made from Australian cowhide on a chrome-plated cro-mo frame. It's 148mm wide and 594g.
spacycles.co.uk



Carry Freedom Y-FRAME LARGE £269.99

carryfreedom.com



- PROS**
- + Versatile load bed
 - + Hitch fits any bike

- CONS**
- No box/bag supplied

A CARGO TRAILER is the budget option for loads too big for panniers. I've used more than a dozen over the years and still have a couple: a lightweight Burley Nomad that's good for groceries and soft luggage; and a cheap box trailer of forgotten provenance. This Carry Freedom Y-Frame is the most useful trailer I've tried.

Part of that is down to the 700x500mm load bed. The 13mm-thick plywood base has four big holes cut into it to provide mounting points for straps. So you can firmly attach a box, a bag, or anything else that will fit (mostly) on. Grip tape on top helps stop the load moving about, and two Velcro straps are provided. I had more success with 'proper' luggage straps with metal cam buckles.

EASY ATTACHMENT

You could drill directly into the base if you wanted to fix something to the trailer semi-permanently. I was tempted to do that to fit a Thule Freeride 532 bike rack to the trailer in order to carry a bike. Since I don't own this Y-Frame, I made a framework of 2x2in wooden batons, cable-tied that to the trailer, and drilled into that. It worked fine.

The trailer's attachment bracket should fit to just about any bike. It bolts to the outside of the dropout – left or right, as the towing arm can fit either side. So it won't interfere with a disc brake or the reaction arm of a drum brake or hub gear. It's a simple chunky bicycle with a lollipop-shaped hitch only just clears a QR rear wheel securely. The trailer's Lollypop (sic) hitch only just clears a QR lever too; I nearly levered off a thumbnail a couple of times when attaching the trailer. A solid axle also doesn't require a little washer to centre the bracket on the axle.

QR AXLE IS A SLIGHT HITCH

The bracket works better on a solid axle. It's rated for higher loads that way: 90kg versus 50kg. And the peg prevents a quick release lever opening fully, so it's awkward to tighten a QR rear wheel securely. The trailer's Lollypop (sic) hitch only just clears a QR lever too; I nearly levered off a thumbnail a couple of times when attaching the trailer. A solid axle also doesn't require a little washer to centre the bracket on the axle.

The trailer hitch is a lollipop-shaped elastomer bolted into the aluminium towing arm. This dulls any jerkiness between bike and trailer and it's flexible enough that you can lay the bike down with the trailer upright. Whether that will fatigue the elastomer remains to be seen; a spare costs £35.99.

The Y-Frame Large has quick-release 20in

wheels, so it's easy to store. It comes with reflectors, a legal requirement, but (drilling aside) has no obvious mounting point for a rear light. I managed to fit an Exposure Flare.

There's a good range of accessories but some, such as the mudguards, longer towing arm, and surfboard support, aren't readily available in the UK. Nonetheless, this is an adaptable and well-constructed trailer suitable for a wide range of bigger-than-normal cycling loads. It weighs 7.5kg.

Dan Joyce



Above: The Whyte Coniston (p68) made an excellent trailer tower for loads this large

OTHER OPTIONS



1 SURLY BILL TRAILER

£649.99

Huge chrome-moly cargo trailer with 16in wheels and a 161x61cm load bed. Note that the hitch is extra – £239.99! ison-distribution.com



2 AVENIR MULE

£129.99

A budget trailer with a hard base, its fabric sides and top make it less suitable for outside loads. Chainstay clamp. raleigh.co.uk

Velo Orange GRAND CRU 50.4BCD CHAINSET £140

velo-orange.com



PROS
+ Small chainring sizes
+ Crank length options

CONS
- Less ankle clearance

OLDER READERS may recognize the neat lines of the Grand Cru 50.4BCD chainset from Velo Orange, for it is as near a direct replica of the classic Stronglight 49D model as a contemporary manufacturer might care to produce. That is to say, while it looks much the same as the former cyclo-tourist's favourite, it is made, using modern manufacturing techniques, to work with modern components. It might be used for a retro build but is also worth considering for a new build on its own merits.

The crank arms are of the proven square-taper type but fit a JIS axle instead of the ISO axle of the original. JIS square taper bottom bracket cartridge assemblies are readily available and the Grand Cru chainset ideally sits on one with a 118mm axle. Offered in three lengths – 165, 170 and 175mm – the arms are made from cold-forged 7075 aluminium alloy and accept standard 9/16" pedal axles.



Above: The Grand Cru looks like a Stronglight 49D but is compatible with modern (and some retro) components

Used by both Stronglight and TA, the 50.4 BCD format isn't quite as impressive as it sounds in terms of low gearing, as the inner chainring is bolted to the outer using a larger BCD, but it is possible to fit a 28t inner. Velo Orange have fitted a 30t inner and 46t outer but promise more sizes to come – and old TA Cyclotourist-type chainrings will fit. The VO chainrings are machined from 7075 aluminium. They are thicker than the originals for added stiffness, have cutaways to save some weight, and feature ramps and pegs for improved shifting.

ON THE BIKE

Detailing includes aluminium dust caps for the extractor threads and hex-headed fasteners. The whole assembly is finished to a high lustre and really looks the part on a retro build.

Its performance is directly comparable to that of any recent square taper crankset. Riders used to external bottom bracket bearings and beefy, hollow crank arms may note a little flex, but they'll need to tread hard to feel it. Tread width, or 'Q factor', is only 2mm wider than a standard Shimano Hollowtech II road chainset at an impressive 147mm on a 118mm axle. Indeed, the only minus point likely to raise concern is ankle clearance since the straight sides of the cranks place the dust caps much wider apart than with the low-profile cranks of recent decades. If you ride heels-in, this may be a problem; it won't be for everyone.

Richard Hallett

OTHER OPTIONS



1 TA CARMINA CHAINSET £300

94mm BCD spider gives 29T inner chainring option; square taper axle, extensive crank length selection. chickencyclekit.co.uk



2 PRAXIS WORKS WIDE RANGE 10-SPEED CASSETTE £99.99

40T largest sprocket offers super-low gearing but needs suitable mech – or an adapter such as the Lindarets x Wolf Tooth Roadlink. upgradebikes.co.uk



Book reviews

BOOKS

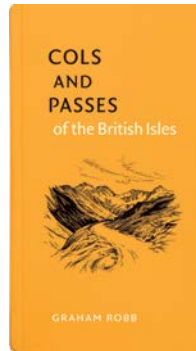
A ROUND-UP OF THE LATEST CYCLING-RELATED READS



Laurence McJannet
BIKEPACKING £16.99
 wildthingspublishing.com

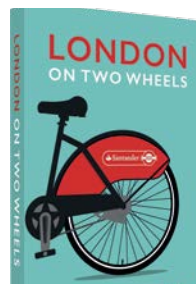
LIKE ALL Wild Things Publishing books I've seen, 'Bikepacking: Mountain Bike Camping Adventures on the Wild Trails of Britain' is a thing of beauty. It's not designed to be taken on the trails with you but to inspire adventures. Initially, I was disappointed that the majority of the routes described seemed too short, with mileages that didn't seem to justify staying out overnight in a bivvy. But as I read more of the book and understood Laurence's love for Bikepacking, I realised it wasn't meant to be about multi-day adventures. It is, in fact, a well-reasoned riposte to all those who think big miles equal big adventures.

It reminds me a lot of the writer Robert Macfarlane's Wild Places and his hunt for wilderness in the UK, finding it eventually in the simplest of places like his garden hedge. Adventures, like wilderness, can be found in your own backyard if you're open enough and know how to look for them – and this book will help you find them. **Sam Jones**



Graham Robb
COLS AND PASSES OF THE BRITISH ISLES £20
 penguin.co.uk

THIS IS A catalogue of every pass and col in the British Isles – a pass being a route over a range of mountains or hills, and a col being a narrow passage between two hills that doesn't necessarily mean a climb. This book lists them all (105 passes and 2,002 cols) alongside drawings of many and some historical background. If you're fascinated by the geology of our islands and enjoy riding in high terrain, on or off-road, this book would make a great addition to your library. It's not specifically aimed at cyclists. **Julie Rand**



Richard Peace
LONDON ON TWO WHEELS £9.99
 eburypublishing.co.uk

SUBTITLED '25 HAND-PICKED rides to make the most of the city', this book is a healthy reminder that London really is best seen from two wheels. With clear maps, the routes are ideal for both Londoners and tourists alike. The book has something for everyone, whether you're looking for some peace and quiet in the lively capital or want a crash course in London's history and architecture. Just remember to venture beyond the Santander network too. Tom Guha



Simon Warren
CYCLING CLIMBS OF YORKSHIRE £8.99
 quartoknows.com

THIS IS THE second of eight regional guides, identifying 75 of the best cycling climbs in Yorkshire, describing them, and rating them out of 10. You might have seen the pros toiling up some of them (Sleights Moor, Robin Hood's Bay) in the recent Tour de Yorkshire, while others (Rosedale Chimney) have a fearsome national reputation. The regional scope makes sense for this kind of book: I don't know when I'll ride the Bealch Na Ba; I could ride Stoupe Brow tomorrow. **Dan Joyce**



READ MORE ONLINE

To read an exclusive excerpt of Laurence McJannet's book, **Bikepacking**, visit cyclinguk.org/bikepackingWTP