

GEAR UP

Components, kit, and books reviewed by specialist journalists and Cycling UK staff.

This issue: A chainset, a jacket, and books



- PROS**
- + Smaller-sized chainring options
- + Square taper
- CONS**
- Superfluous chainguard

Spa Cycles TD-2 SUPER COMPACT CHAINSET £60

spacycles.co.uk

THIS SUPER-COMPACT double chainset is a converted triple: a Spa XD-2 with the outer ring removed. I've done this myself with a road triple, losing the dinner-plate 50-tooth ring and fitting a slightly larger middle ring to end up with a 42-30. The main advantage of Spa's chainset over this DIY approach is the chainring choice available. You can have an inner ring as small as 24 and an 'outer' (in the middle position) as large as 46.

I fitted a 42-26 chainset to my Pinnacle Dolomite, replacing a Sora 50-34 double. With an 11-32 cassette, the gear range is 22-101in. While I rarely need that tiny bottom gear, it's nice to have in reserve on a long day; there are some very steep hills in North Yorkshire. At the top end, 101in is plenty – enough for 35mph at 116rpm, after which it's as fast to freewheel downhill.

In use, there's less jumping between chainrings in search of the right gear. You can leave it in the big ring, dropping to the inner only for long and/or steep climbs. Once I'd moved the Sora double front derailleur down the seat tube, it shifted gear well enough with its STI shifter. Dropping onto the inner ring is fine every time. Shifting up from the 26 can be hesitant, but it's not a problem – by then, the gradient has eased.

It's a square taper chainset, so I replaced my bike's Hollowtech II bottom bracket with a 115mm Stronglight JP400 (£16 for the aluminium cups version from Spa). Chainline is good with this, while the pedal tread or Q-factor is 160mm. That's more than the Sora double (about 10mm more, according to my measurements) but less than the wide tread of many touring bikes that use mountain bike triples. It seemed fine to me.

Crank length is 170mm; 175mm and 165mm are also available, in either silver or black. All chainsets have the outer ring replaced by an aluminium Stronglight chainguard. I think this is superfluous and would use single chainring bolts instead, with spacer washers if required. The TD-2 Super Compact and Stronglight bottom bracket weigh 1072g together, compared to 946g for the Sora double (also 170mm) and its Hollowtech II bottom bracket. Without the chainguard, weight would be much the same.

I used this chainset on a 9-speed road bike. Given the small ring sizes available, you could fit this budget 'Alpine double' to a triple-equipped tourer or hybrid. And those Zicral rings apparently work okay in 10- or 11-speed set-ups.

Dan Joyce

REVIEW REQUESTS

Is there a product that you would like Cycle to review? Let us know and we'll consider it.

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Other options



1) LINDARETS X WOLF TOOTH ROADLINK £18

With this derailleur-hanger extender (reviewed Dec 15/Jan 16), you could use a 9-speed 12-36 cassette (e.g. Alivio, £25) or 10-speed 11-36 cassette (e.g. Deore, £30) to get a bottom gear of about 25in with a 50-34 double and a road mech. shop.18bikes.co.uk & lindarets.com



2) SUNRACE R90 SLR-R9 BAREND SHIFTER £29.99

Swap the front shifter for this friction bar-end one and you can have whatever chainset you want – although costs will add up, as you'll need a new brake lever, probably a new front derailleur, and maybe even a new rear one... ison-distribution.com



- PROS**
- + Lives up to its claims
 - + Comfortable & well-made
- CONS**
- Confusing taillight instructions



Altura

NIGHT VISION EVO 360 (WOMEN'S) £109.99

altura.co.uk

THIS JACKET is aimed primarily at commuters, which is why it's liberally covered with reflective details and incorporates an LED rear light. Otherwise, the features are what you'd expect from any cycling jacket: it claims to be breathable, windproof and waterproof. Unlike some jackets, it lives up to its blurb.

It coped well in sustained drizzle, and I'm sure could withstand much worse. It kept me warm in deep frost, worn over other layers, yet (minus layers) didn't make me overheat in mild sunshine. The 'soft touch' fabric is pleasant to wear, making the jacket feel like clothing instead of cold tarpaulin.

It's well-designed and well-cut for cycling. I can't stand billowy, draughty jackets. This is neither, despite being 'loose fit' and technically a size too big (it's a 10 and I'm an 8). Once I'd tightened the shockcords round the neck and hem and fastened the Velcro cuff straps, I was very happy with the fit. The back of the jacket never hooked behind the saddle when I needed to stand on the pedals or dismount – something I've

often experienced with other jackets, perhaps because I'm five feet tall.

There are three conveniently-placed front pockets with zips. All are generous enough for commuter trappings such as lights, keys, tickets, etc. It saves time and hassle compared to scrabbling for these in a backpack or pannier. Under the similarly serviceable rear pocket, there's a red silicone button that turns into an impressively bright steady or flashing taillight when pressed.

The rear light is low down and wasn't obscured by my backpack. I was baffled by the instructions for activating it first time, however. In hindsight, I see there's no need to spend an evening feeding material back into a fiddly eyelet with a tiny screwdriver. Leave the eyelet well alone, press *only* the button out into the lining, extract through the vent at the side of the jacket, activate the battery, and reassemble.

Sizes available: 8-18, in yellow, blue or pink. Men's version available in S-XXXL.

Cherry Allan

Other options



ENDURA WMS LUMINITE II £89.99

A waterproof, windproof commuter jacket with lots of reflectivity, a rear LED in the rear pocket, and three useful front pockets. Sizes XS-XL. endura.co.uk



MADISON STELLAR WOMEN'S £99.99

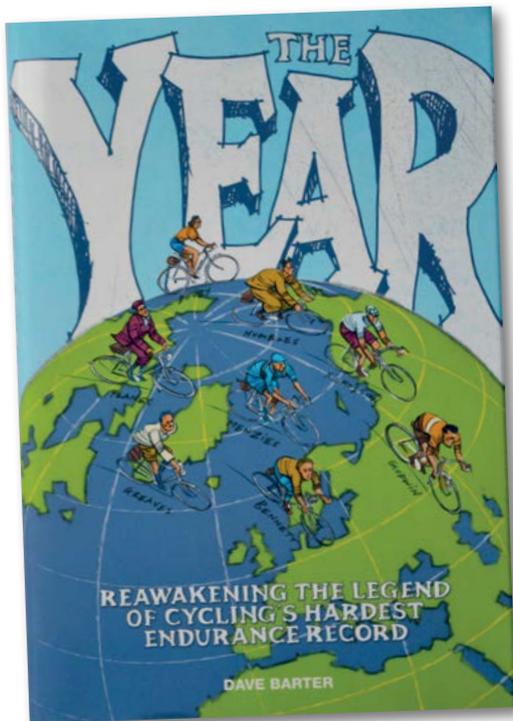
No rear light but this waterproof jacket's rear pocket has a tab for fixing one onto. The dropped tail stays tucked up with magnets if you prefer. Sizes 8-16. madison.co.uk



REVIEWS

BOOKS

A round-up of the latest cycling-related reads



Dave Barter
THE YEAR £20
v-publishing.co.uk

THIS IS A RIVETING retelling of the various attempts to cycle the most miles in a year. It's timely: Kurt Searvogel beat Tommy Godwin's 1939 record this January by riding 76,076 miles; Cycling UK member Steve Abraham sadly gave up after a year on the road; and there's now an attempt on Billie Fleming's women's record by Kajsa Tylan.

Almost from the start of cycling as we know it, riders were attempting and achieving huge mileages on poorly-surfaced roads on heavy bikes. In 1902, 'Cycling' magazine threw down the gauntlet to the British public with a century-riding competition open to anybody. Thousands took part, many managing to ride 100 miles several times a week, even though they were working full-time.

Author Dave Barter's research has unearthed extraordinary stories about what would become one of the hardest records in the world to break – in cycling or outside it. One of the most incredible was that of Walter Greaves, a one-armed Yorkshireman. Greaves set the record of 45,383.6 miles in 1936 – on a bike he'd acquired only after riding from Bradford to Coventry and back in a blizzard to secure sponsorship! During the record-breaking ride itself, he faced illness, incident, injury and ice – the latter causing him to crash several times over. His answer? To just ride faster.

The danger of a book like this is that it will make you feel like a slouch. Your own annual mileage will look insignificant compared to those who attempted to ride further than anyone else in a year.

Julie Rand

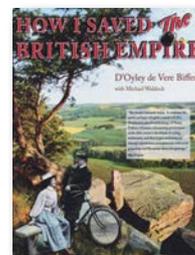
Michael Waldock

HOW I SAVED THE BRITISH EMPIRE

£3.51 (Kindle)

ailemobook.com, amazon.co.uk

At last, the story can be told: how young Dolly Biffen, third son of a landed Hampshire family, unwittingly rescued the British Empire while pedalling his Rudge-Whitworth Indomitable along the country's highways and byways in 1901. During the course of his journey, he discovers the joys of cycling and the beauty of the countryside – not to mention treachery, romance, fairground fisticuffs, family disloyalty, espionage, torture, friendship, gin, and the Empire's greatest secret! Naturally, he joins the Cyclists' Touring Club too. A rippingly good yarn. *Tony Upfold*



Elizabeth & Joseph Pennell
A CANTERBURY PILGRIMAGE/AN ITALIAN PILGRIMAGE

£20.65

uap.ualberta.ca

Written in the 1880s, this book charts the first two cycle tours of the Pennells, a married couple from Philadelphia who rode an early tandem. The two accounts are short vignettes of a different time, when one could pedal from London to Canterbury or Florence to Rome – albeit on rough roads – and encounter not a soul, nor (even better!) motor traffic. As two of the first depictions of leisure cycle tourism, this book is a charming addition to any library. *Sam Jones*

Rod Ismay

BELLS & BIKES

£12.99

v-publishing.co.uk

Many of us joined the crowds that cheered the Grand Départ of the 2014 Tour de France, but we may have missed the church bells that heralded the tour in the run-up to the start and rang out as the tour caravan snaked past. The pealing bells were the idea of Rod Ismay, a touring cyclist and bell-ringer. This is his account of a wonderful year. He dressed up in a King of the Mountains jersey, cycled around the county, chatted up bell-ringers, got lost, locked himself in cars, and made a splash in the local media. His book is a great tribute to Yorkshire, cycling and community creativity. *David Cox*

