

Expert advice

Q&A

YOUR TECHNICAL, LEGAL, HEALTH, AND POLICY QUESTIONS ANSWERED. **THIS ISSUE:** EASY-MOUNT BIKES, INNER EAR PROBLEMS, CHAINS, AND MORE



The Dawes Galaxy Cromo Ladies isn't just for women

Technical

MOUNTING & DISMOUNTING

Q At the age of 84, I can cycle well enough but I'm having trouble getting on and off my bike easily. I've considered a step-through Dutch roadster but they generally have a limited range of gears. I've lowered my carrier and my saddle to get more clearance. Maybe there's a simple solution that I've overlooked?

Maurice George

A The obvious solution is a well-equipped step-through. You could build a new bike around a step-through frame – either off-the-peg such as the Thorn Sherpa or custom-built – using components that give you the required gearing range. Or you could buy a “ladies” touring bike such as the Dawes Galaxy Cromo Ladies.

The editor suggests trying a dropper seatpost, as used in mountain biking. A dropper seatpost descends rather like a variable-height office chair, then returns to its original height at the push of a button. It's used for riding downhill on a mountain

bike but for you could move the saddle out of the way until you are aboard and riding.

Richard Hallett

Technical
DIFFERENT WIDTH TYRES

Q My alloy/carbon road bike has 23mm tyres. I'd like to fit something wider, having switched from 23mm to 28mm on another bike, with noticeable improvements to comfort and rolling. But although I have room for 25mm on the front, there is very little clearance under the seat stay bridge. Would there be any advantage in having a 25mm on the front? I suspect it would be better the other way round but that won't work. Would there be any disadvantage in having odd tyre sizes?

Edward Holt

A The obvious place to put a fatter tyre, if using two different sizes, would indeed be at the back, since bicycle weight distribution is heavily biased to the

rear. That said, the advantages to running a fatter front tyre, in terms of grip and comfort, are not negated by having a narrower rear and it can be argued that, if more of either is needed, it is more useful at the front end. After all, hardtail mountain bikes with a suspension fork are a commonplace, unlike the alternative arrangement.

Richard Hallett



MEET THE EXPERTS



DR MATT BROOKS
Cycling GP {Health}



RICHARD HALLETT
Cycle's Technical Editor
{Technical}



PAUL KITSON
Partner from Slater + Gordon Lawyers
{Legal}



Labyrinthitis causes vertigo and often tinnitus

Health

ESCAPING LABYRINTHITIS

Q I had labyrinthitis recently, causing nausea and balance problems. Is it cycling related? How can I avoid it?

Stewart Nicholl

A The inner ear (labyrinth) consists of a system of fluid-filled tubes. These include the cochlea, which is concerned with hearing, and the vestibule and semi-circular canals, which act like a spirit level, sensing head movements and assisting balance.

Labyrinthitis is inflammation of the inner ear, often due to an infection. Many cases are thought to be viral and some will be preceded by a common cold. It causes vertigo (dizziness with a spinning sensation) and this may be severe, often with vomiting. Temporary hearing loss and tinnitus (ringing or buzzing in the ear) may also be present. Labyrinthitis usually resolves spontaneously within a few weeks.

Although not caused by cycling, labyrinthitis may prevent you from being able to ride until you recover. There is no way to avoid it but, if severe, sometimes a course of anti-sickness tablets (such as prochlorperazine), or an antihistamine (such as cinnarizine) may be prescribed to ease the symptoms. No investigation or treatment is required in most cases. A full recovery is usual in a few weeks.

Other conditions can cause similar symptoms. These include BPPV (benign positional paroxysmal vertigo), which causes vertigo on specific head movements or positional changes. See your doctor if you have prolonged or recurrent symptoms, or if the diagnosis is uncertain.

Matt Brooks

Technical

RESTORATION PROBLEM

Q I have a 1982 Mercian, which had a Regina 5-speed freewheel and double chainwheel until 2010, when

the block fell to bits. The rear dropouts were 122mm or thereabouts.

I had the stays opened out by a frame builder to 130mm to take a modern wheel, which it did perfectly. However, the chainwheels will no longer line up satisfactorily with an 8-speed cassette. On the outer rear sprockets, the chain line is so far out that it eventually pulled a side plate off the chain.

Yet when I put the same bottom bracket axle in my modern bike, which has the same bottom bracket shell width and the same chainstay length, all works perfectly. Can you suggest a remedy?

Michael Griffiths

A This sounds very much like frame misalignment. If the chainwheels and axle work on the new frame, they should do the same on the old.

One explanation is that, to get the required spacing, the frame builder pulled the stays on one side (probably the gear side) further out than the other – or even pulled them all the way over on one side. In other words, the rear wheel may be offset from the cycle's centre line.

A quick check is to remove the rear wheel and run a length of string from the inside of one rear dropout, around the head tube and back to the inside of the other rear dropout in a symmetrical arrangement. If the dropouts are evenly spaced from the frame centre line, the string will be equidistant from the sides of the seat tube. Should this prove to be the case, the rear end should be tweaked accordingly.

Richard Hallett



Left: Ryan Cousineau, Flickr CC

Legal

DRIVER IS CLAIMING AGAINST ME

Q I've been in a traffic incident and would like to understand the potential consequences. It happened on an unregulated intersection. I was riding straight on and an oncoming driver was turning right. My bike is damaged, as is the car – his front bumper and left door. Luckily, a police car was passing by and stopped. I have a CAD number, the driver's details, and a photo of his car showing the number plate. I don't know what the police registered in their files.



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Can the driver file a claim against me? If so, what I can do to protect myself?

Kat (via the Cycling UK forum)

A Under Sec 170 (1) of the Road Traffic Act 1988, a motorist is under a statutory duty to stop and give information or documents when 'an accident occurs by which—

- (a) personal injury is caused to a person... or
- (b) damage is caused—
 - (i) to a vehicle... or
 - (ii) to an animal (defined as cattle, ass, mule, sheep, pig, goat or dog)... or
 - (iii) to any other property...
- (2) The driver must stop and, if required to do so by any person having reasonable grounds for so requiring, give his name and address and also the name and address of the owner and the identification marks of the vehicle.
- (3) If for any reason the driver does not give his name and address under subsection (2) above, he must report the accident.
- (4) A person who fails to comply with subsection (2) or (3) above is guilty of an offence.'

Sec 170 does not apply to cyclists (or pedestrians) who may cause a collision. There is, of course, no legal obligation for a cyclist or a pedestrian to have third-party insurance. (There is a body of opinion that advocates that all cyclists should be obliged to have third-party insurance and registration numbers for their bikes. This would, in my view, be unworkable, disproportionate to the risk that cyclists cause to other road users, impossible to police, and would result in a significant reduction of cycle journeys.)

Notwithstanding the lack of legal obligation, I recommend that all regular cyclists have a policy of third-party legal insurance. Cycling UK members have £10 million of third-party

insurance cover included with their membership. This is a valuable benefit, which offers peace of mind should a claim be made against a member.

Here are my top 10 tips for cyclists who have been involved in a collision:

1. Exchange names, addresses, email addresses, and phone numbers with the other party.
2. Obtain the registration number of the vehicle. (This is the most important piece of information. We can use it to pursue a claim as we can identify the vehicle insurer through the Motor Insurer's Database by entering the registration number.)
3. Obtain details of make, model and colour of the vehicle.
4. Obtain names, addresses, and phone numbers of any witnesses.
5. If possible, obtain photographic evidence of the position of the vehicle(s).
6. Report the incident to the police without delay. If the police attend the scene of the incident, obtain details of name, serial number and station of the officer(s), as well as the CAD reference.
7. If you were using a helmet camera, do not wipe the film! We can use this in evidence in both criminal and civil proceedings.
8. If you were injured, seek medical attention.
9. Remain calm and don't get drawn into discussion with the other party about who was at fault for the collision.
10. If injured, contact Cycling UK's legal

helpline telephone: 0844 736 8452. If the collision was your fault, and injury or loss was caused to another person, report this as a potential claim through the helpline.

On the basis of the description of the collision reported by Kat, it would appear that the motorist was at fault. Even though the motorist is likely to have been completely at fault for this collision, this needs to be reported to Cycling UK's insurers through the legal helpline.

Paul Kitson

Technical RIVETING PROBLEM

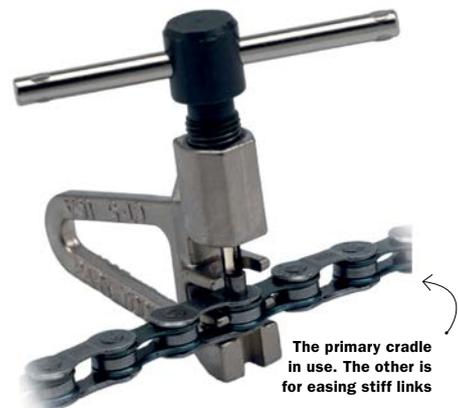
Q When taking a chain apart lately, I've had great difficulty preventing and rectifying a tight rivet when putting it back together. My clubmate, who runs the local cycle shop, confirmed my suspicion that it was due to the narrower chains of today. I needed a new chain tool, so he sold me a Park Tool one. The diagrams for its use aren't clear: which is the primary cradle and which is the tight-link cradle?

John Thompson

A The old-school way to break and close a chain by leaving the pin in one side plate on removal and using the tool to press it back into place when refitting should not be used with a modern – i.e. eight-speed upwards – derailleur chain except in an emergency, after which said chain should be ridden with care and replaced asap. The outer links of these chains have very thin side plates, which do not take kindly to being deformed by the removal of a pin.

They are designed to be closed either using a one-time device, such as Shimano's dedicated pin or the widely-used breakable links offered by manufacturers such as SRAM and KMC. A chain tool should be used to drive out the unwanted pin when shortening a chain. The 'tight-link cradle', where provided, is the projection nearer the driving handle.

Richard Hallett



The primary cradle in use. The other is for easing stiff links

Contact the experts

Email your technical, health, legal or policy questions to editor@cyclinguk.org or write to **Cycle Q&A, PO Box 313, Scarborough, YO12 6WZ**. We regret that Cycle magazine cannot answer unpublished queries. But don't forget that Cycling UK operates a free-to-members advice line for personal injury claims, tel: **0844 736 8452**.