



**CYCLING
PLANET**

Photos: Nick Fish

CYCLE JUMBLES

FORGET EBAY. FOR A PROPER RUMMAGE THROUGH HOARDED SECOND-HAND CYCLE FRAMES AND COMPONENTS, YOU NEED TO VISIT A CYCLE JUMBLE. JOURNALIST JACK THURSTON EXPLAINS

If the best thing about cycle jumbles is the possibility of finding a bargain, the next best is the certainty of a slice of homemade cake. It's not all about buying and selling. John Lottimore, the organiser of the Ripley Road VCC Jumble in Surrey, says: 'A lot of people come to our jumbles and just walk around and talk to friends who they've not seen since the last jumble. We started in a very humble way, six tables in a scout hut, very much a case of cyclists selling odd bits to their mates. But over the years it expanded.' The Ripley jumble now draws 60-70 sellers and several hundred buyers.

New jumbles are starting up too. Collector Mark Hudson recently started one in Sheffield. 'I'm into the pre-1960s stuff,' he says, 'but it was like a desert around here. I asked around and there was a decent response so I found a local church hall with good parking and put the word out, locally and via the web.'

The uncertainty of what will be on offer (and at what price) means you never know what you'll be coming away with. At the bigger jumbles, such as at Ripley, the Manchester Velodrome, and the CTC's Saddlebag Sale in York, the variety is huge: from collectable frames and components from the golden era of cycling (broadly the 1930s to the 1950s) to more modern parts, both used and 'new old stock',

sourced from dusty stockrooms of old bike shops or from racers moving on to newer gear and getting rid of last year's.

Some jumble visitors hope to buy the bicycle they could never afford when they were younger, such as a handbuilt lightweight frame with period Campagnolo components. Others just appreciate the craftsmanship, design and durability of bikes of the 'golden era'. Handbuilt frames sell from £50 and complete bikes upwards of £200. Owning a piece of British cycling history need not be expensive.

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There are plenty of bargains among more modern parts too. I've always thought that an 8-speed drivetrain represents the best compromise between choice of gears, durability and price. With 9-, 10- and now 11-speed gears coming on the market, a lightly used pair of once top-of-the-range 8-speed STI shifters sells for £20-£30, a fraction of the price of a new pair. Sturmey Archer 3-speed hubs are

reliable and commonly sold at jumbles for £5-£10 (triggers and cables extra).

The rise of modern threadless stems and oversize handlebar tubes has made new quill stems and 25.4mm handlebars ever harder to find. And the current trend for components to be painted black means jumbles are a lifeline for those of us who prefer the classic look of polished metal handlebars and cranksets.

'There's a real camaraderie among stallholders – some wildly eccentric and very good fun people,' says Stuart Collins, who maintains a bike jumbles listing website. 'They are an amazing fount of knowledge and most will give buyers any advice they need.'

Be wary of the unplanned purchase: the thrill of an impulse buy can quickly give way to buyer's remorse. It's worth writing a shopping list beforehand; to bargain for the right price; and, if you can't find what you want, to be ready to come home empty-handed.

Cycle jumbles can be an addictive pleasure. I asked Mark Hudson what was his best ever buy. 'I've bought plenty of lovely things but I like to think the best is still out there, waiting for me,' he says.

For more information on cycle jumbles, see bikejumbles.co.uk. Jack will be leading an open-to-all ride to the next Ripley jumble on 15 September – see thebikeshow.net/to-ripley-and-back/