

GEAR UP

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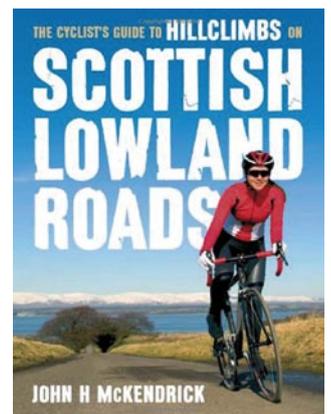


THE CYCLIST'S GUIDE TO HILLCLIMBS ON SCOTTISH LOWLAND ROADS

£6.99

Reviewed by Senior Marketing Officer David Dowling

With climbs from the English border to right up into Argyll, this book really covers the whole of southern Scotland. The misleading title is the worst thing to say about this fun little book, which is small enough to fit in a jersey pocket. It is neatly divided into regional sections. Every climb gets a double page with key information, a colour photo, a description of the climb and an easy-to-read map. With a bit of ingenious route planning, a whole chapter could be targeted in a day. The Highland Roads counterpart is due in 2013. Published by Pocket Mountains Ltd, ISBN 9781907025259



BIG AGNES FLYCREEK ULTRALIGHT 2 TENT

£374.99

Reviewed by Senior Marketing Officer David Dowling

It's certainly ultralight: just 1190g for a two-person tent. Lightweight isn't everything; it still needs to be fit for purpose. Given that Big Agnes test their products in their native Colorado, mountain weather shouldn't be problem. Surrey's milder climate wasn't.

The tent is very easy to put up. The aluminium poles come attached to a central hub. One long pole forms the main ridge of the tent while two shorter poles support the single entry flap to the inner tent. Poles slot into the corners of the integrated groundsheet and inner of the tent and the inner is suspended by secure and easy to use clips onto the frame formed by the poles. A lightweight fly goes over the top. The fly goes up taut without any fiddling and the whole structure is very stable thanks to the tripod design.

Once inside the tent, you do pay for that saved weight. While a reasonably wide 132cm at the door, the footprint tapers down to just 81cm at the end. So two full-length sleeping mats are going to overlap. That said, the walls

of the tent are near vertical, making most of the floor space usable, and headroom isn't bad. The quoted floor space is over two metres, but at 5ft 11in (180cm) I filled it neatly. The vestibule is also a little tight for two sets of panniers.

These niggles may be doing a fine tent a little injustice. Two 6-footers on an extended tour should look elsewhere. But for a solo tourer, this tent would be a delight. You can even ditch the outer and pole bags to shed yet more grams. bigagnes.com





ASGARD VERTICAL BIKE LOCKER

£599

Reviewed by Cycling Development Officer Steve Marsden

If you don't have a garage and indoor storage isn't an option, a bike locker is another way to keep your bike dry and secure. Asgard make a variety of heavyweight lockers for one, two, three or four bikes.

This vertical locker is handy for anyone without much floor space: the base is just 80×120cm. The locker itself is 199cm tall and 75cm wide, easily big enough for most solo bikes. Mountain bikes with bars wider than 66cm or so will need the bars turned, which will probably mean undoing the stem bolts if you want the bike to hang down straight from the front wheel loop.

Inside on the steel floor there is a ramp to roll your bike up so there is no need to lift it. A wheel holder fits over the top of your front wheel, and as long as you lift this loop up first, it's a very quick and easy locker to use. The locker is big enough to leave some of your kit inside too – a couple of hooks are provided.

It's made from very strong galvanised and weatherproof steel. At 132kg, you might need a crane to move it – fortunately the price includes delivery, and it's pre-built.

The locker comes with a fixing kit to fasten it to the floor and has its own 'pick resistant 3-point locking system', so there's no need to carry a lock around with you. It comes with a 10-year warranty. If you can stretch to the price, this locker will keep your bike secure for a long time. It's available in green or brown.

asgardsss.co.uk

ORTLIEB DOWNTOWN QL3 PANNIER

£117

Reviewed by CTC member Adam Ozanne

As a commuter bag, the Ortlieb Downtown QL3 ticks all the boxes for me: it's large enough to carry a laptop and papers and still have a bit of room for shopping on the way home; it comes with a comfortable shoulder strap that packs away easily when on the bike; it has useful pockets for organising stationery; and it looks smart enough for the office. Moreover, it fixes to the bike using Ortlieb's QL3 system, whose hooks are fixed to your pannier rack rather than being on the pannier. This leaves you with what Ortlieb refer to as a 'smooth back side' that does not snag your trousers, and works extremely well, going on and coming off the bike one-handedly with ease. It's not cheap, but as you'd expect from Ortlieb, the quality is excellent, and even in the Manchester rain I am never in doubt that my laptop and papers will be kept dry. ortlieb.de



POC RECEPTOR COMMUTER HELMET

£99.99

Reviewed by Cycling Development Officer Gavin Wood

POC is a Swedish company that makes a range of protective gear for both snow sports and cycling. The Receptor Commuter is a 'skate-style' helmet aimed, as the name suggests, at the growing commuter market. The outer shell seems very robust and the inner shell, which is partially lined with polycarbonate, is quite thick compared with a normal helmet. Despite this adding considerable weight, the helmet is pretty comfortable, and the limited number of vent holes means it keeps your head nice and warm in winter. Summer rides could be sweaty.

Size is adjustable using a Velcro strap at the back of the helmet; I would have preferred a dial or ratchet. With practice, the magnetic buckle can be undone and refastened one-handed. This helmet won't be to everyone's taste, but may suit the trendy, urban commuter who wants a helmet but not one styled for roadies or mountain bikers. It's available in black or white. 2Pure.co.uk

MYLANE HIGH VISIBILITY LASER LIGHT

£14.99

Reviewed by Cycling Development Officer Seamus Kelly

This waterproof, five-LED rear lamp has an unusual extra feature: two laser beams that project lines onto the road to mark out a 'lane' for the cyclist. The LED light itself is good, with constant and two flashing modes. The laser beam projectors have a separate switch and have constant and flashing modes. These laser beams look bright on unlit roads but under street or vehicle headlights they are too dim to attract attention. I think they are a gimmick

rather than a useful safety feature; I feel much safer using my very bright

Exposure Red-eye when riding at night. The light's casing is quite bulky but has fairly good visibility from the side.

highvisibility.uk.com



REVOLUTION SMARTPHONE HOLDER

£14.99

*Reviewed by Senior Cycling
Development Officer Dan Cook*

If you're using your smartphone for navigation or as a cycle computer, you'll probably want it visible while riding. This holder fits on top of an inch-and-an-eighth steerer in place of a 5mm spacer, which might mean lowering your stem. It works reasonably – the screen can be viewed and reached whilst riding, although I wasn't confident in the strength of the plastic bracket to tighten it up enough to stop it from rattling on the top of the stem. The velcro retaining flap keeps the phone in place well enough though I'm not sure the resulting holes on each corner fulfil the 'weatherproof' claim. This will suffice for drier road rides,

but for other uses I'd recommend checking the alternatives.

edinburghbicycle.com



LUSSO CARBON THERMAL JACKET

£59.95

*Reviewed by Cycling Development Officer
Mike Hawtin*

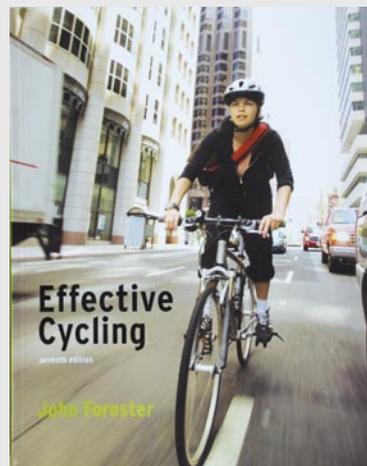
The Carbon Thermal has a nice snug fit and a fleece-like lining. It looks pretty good too. As it's meant to be thermal and breathable, I used it for the ride to work in temperatures from -2 to 5 degrees, and in light rain. Over a merino base layer, it felt warm enough, offering reasonable windchill protection. It actually feels nicer on than my Endura Stealth, which is more bulky and doesn't breathe as well but is designed for wet weather too. Fit was good for me at 5ft 8in; taller riders who take a medium might find it short at the back. A full-length zip cover would improve comfort against the neck on cold rides, if you don't wear a buff. All in all though, I think it's a great jacket. www.lusso-clothing.co.uk

EFFECTIVE CYCLING, 7th edition

£26.95

*Reviewed by Senior Cycle Training
Officer Greg Woodford*

John Forester is an American author (so you'll have to swap left and right), but writes that his major influence was CTC's George Herbert Stancer. Effective Cycling is a thick book aimed at the beginner cyclist. It covers a lot of what John Franklin writes about in Cyclecraft, but with additional detail on bike choice, campaigning, and more. I was very interested by his conclusion that even cyclists appear to have bought into the motoring lobby's efforts to restrict cyclists. Published by the MIT Press. ISBN 9780262516945.



TRAKKE MULE

£240

Reviewed CTC Finance Officer Keith Storey

This big messenger bag is made in Scotland from 14oz waxed cotton, with a waterproof liner. Capacity is 30 litres, so you can ride to work with a change of clothes and shoes and still have room for tools, spares, a couple of books, and a bit of shopping.

It's built to last, as you'd hope at this price (two to three times that of messenger bags from Timbuk2, Ortlieb, and Carradice). The tough cotton is well stitched and the stainless steel hardware has no moving parts. As well as the main compartment inside, there are three smaller ones, which I used for drinks, tools and lights, and a zipped one for valuables. There's also a secure front pocket and easy-access side pockets. Reflective details are conspicuous by their absence.

Like most messenger bags, the shoulder strap can be moved to sit on your right or left shoulder, and there's a stabilising strap. The shoulder strap is well padded, so doesn't dig in when the bag is full. If you're not large yourself – whether short or skinny – the Mule may not fit as well when it's mostly empty. If you won't be transporting much stuff, get a smaller bag. trakke.co.uk