

Expert advice

Q&A

YOUR TECHNICAL, LEGAL, AND HEALTH QUESTIONS ANSWERED. **THIS ISSUE:** DRAIN DANGERS, HAMSTRING PAIN, FLATS TO DROPS, AND MORE

MEET THE EXPERTS



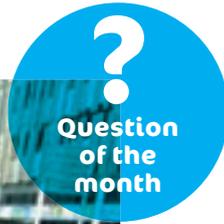
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NB. Slots aren't in line with road

Left: Graham Lansdell

Legal

GUTTER POLITICS

Q Earlier this year, I crashed while riding a Brompton bike on a busy main road in Nottingham, as a result of the bike's front wheel getting caught in a drain. I was fortunate to receive only bruising and a smashed wristwatch, having fallen over the handlebar.

I attach a photo, taken a week later, illustrating the depth to which such a bike's wheel can sink in this drain. The drain is just across the road from one of Nottingham's Brompton dealers, so I am unlikely to be the only Brompton rider to use this stretch of highway.

The council denies responsibility for the crash. As a result, the drain will remain as it is. Another Brompton rider might not

be so lucky. Is there any way to exert legal pressure on the council to change the drain cover?

Graham Lansdell

A Whilst it is unfortunate that your bicycle wheel was caught in between the gaps in the drain pictured, it seems from the letter you sent as if the council has provided a reasonable justification for denying liability in this particular case.

The council states that the drain is designed in a way to allow cyclists and other oncoming traffic to travel safely over the feature whilst following the normal direction of the road. This allows for effective drainage along the sloped road. If the council were to change this, its reply says, the road may become more liable to flooding and, as a result, this would increase the risk to road users, including cyclists.

The council is responsible for the maintenance and repair of public roads

and it relies on the public to report any faults so they can be investigated. The council also has a duty to carry out regular checks/inspections, which are usually more frequent if the road is busy, such as those around town or city centres.

On this occasion, the council will no doubt allege that the drain cover was not defective and has been properly maintained. For an actionable claim, one would have to show that this design of drain is particularly dangerous and the cause of numerous accidents/injuries. Section 67 of the Highway Code also states that cyclists should look well ahead for obstructions such as drains and parked vehicles.

That being said: if you come across a drain that is damaged, a pothole, or other significant road defect, then you may indeed have a legitimate complaint. Cycling UK has a website dedicated to reporting road defects, so if you see something that you would like to bring to

your local council's attention, go to fillthathole.org.uk. Alternatively, most local councils offer their own forms to report these defects. Furthermore, if you sustain a significant injury as a result, then you should contact the Cycling UK Incident Line: 0844 736 8452.

Richard Gaffney

Technical FRONT DERAILER

Q I ride a Ribble Sportive Racing, which has done about 3,000 miles. The gears are Campag Centaur with 34-50 chainrings and 13-29 sprockets. When changing down from large to small chainring, the chain rides along the top of the teeth of the inner ring unless I first move four cogs in from the 13-tooth cog. This is difficult to reproduce using a bike stand, and though I've had it looked at a couple of times the problem persists. Any suggestions?
Keith Horsfall

A Running the chain from the inner ring to the outer three or four rear sprockets forces it to run on to the chain ring at a severe angle, which creates a natural tendency for the chain to ride off the chainring to the outside. Unless the front mech shifts the chain far enough inboard to drop on to the inner chainring teeth, it will tend to ride on the tips of the teeth as described. This can be dangerous as, with no drive, any attempt to pedal may result in loss of balance and a fall.

It should be possible to adjust the front mech to nudge the chain further inboard on the downshift without falling off the inside. First check the mech cage outer plate is parallel with the outer chainring and, if so, that the inner plate does not

Carradice Pro-route cape, £38



rub on the chain when it is on the largest sprocket. If this is the case, try angling the tail of the cage slightly inwards and repeat the previous check. If these don't work, a professional mechanic will be able to find a solution.

In any case, 50/23 is much the same gear as 34/16 so it's easy to avoid having to run the chain on the stated gearing combinations. To find a higher gear than 34/16, simply use the big chainring.

Richard Hallett

Technical NO JACKET REQUIRED

Q Are you aware of any providers remaining these days for what I call cycling capes? I expect you will recall them – the universal (usually yellow) waterproof, loose upper body garment, which I used as a boy riding with CTC in 1943 and for 70 years afterwards. Recently, I bought one of these modern, rather heavyweight jackets, which I dislike.
Derek Watts

A Traditional cycling capes, or ponchos, are still available for sale and remain the best choice for those cyclists wanting truly effective wet weather gear.

There are plenty to be found by searching online; if you prefer not to do this, take a look at examples by Vaude, Carradice and Brooks.

Richard Hallett

Health HAMSTRUNG BY TENDONITIS

Q I have been diagnosed with hamstring tendonitis. It started a year ago, two weeks after a tour that was longer, more hilly, and more heavily laden than my usual. The symptoms are right buttock pain, particularly when sitting on a sofa or driving, cycling up a hill, or walking up a hill.

I am 61 and have been cycling for 27 years, always with care to use low gears on hills and to avoid strain, and I have thoroughly enjoyed it. However, I wonder if my cycling days are over? Despite a steroid injection (which made it worse), and extensive physiotherapy, every time I try to resume cycling the pain returns, often after a delay, and I then cannot sit, drive or sleep.

For the past two months, I have avoided cycling altogether. Should I just be philosophical, accept that I'll never get back on the saddle again, and give away all my bikes?

Raymond Walker

A The hamstrings are a group of muscles that pass down the back of the upper leg, from the ischial tuberosity (sitting bones) of the pelvis, to just below the knee. They help to bend the knee and the straighten the hip. Tendons are the fibrous bands of connective tissue which join muscle to bone. Tendonitis refers to inflammation of these and usually arises from excessive repetitive movement. Hamstring tendonitis is also commonly seen in runners.

You describe symptoms of high (proximal) hamstring tendonitis, which usually causes pain in the buttock, sometimes radiating down the back of the thigh. In common with other types of tendonitis, treatment typically involves rest, ice and physiotherapy. Anti-inflammatory drugs, such as Ibuprofen, may help in the short-term (as long as there are no contra-indications to taking them). In more resistant cases, a steroid injection around the area (not directly into the tendon) may be employed, and this is usually done under ultrasound guidance to ensure correct placement.

However, it sounds as if you've already tried most, if not all, of these. I wonder



Tendonitis: a pain in the backside

Continental's Sport Contact II



whether you have looked at your bike set-up? Saddle adjustment may help, usually lowering the saddle slightly.

It would be a real shame if this condition alone resulted in the end of your cycling days, but I can see how frustrating it must have become. There is still a chance that it will improve given sufficient time. Consider extending your prolonged rest from cycling, perhaps for up to six months, before trying once more. Make sure you do your hamstring stretches (which I'm sure your physio has taught you) before riding.

Matt Brooks

Technical TYRES FOR LOADED TOURING

Q I will be needing new tyres soon and would like some recommendations. They are for loaded touring, and I currently have Conti Sport Contact 700x37mm. These actually blow up to 42mm width, so size regarding brakes/frame/mudguards is not much of an issue.

dlv13, via the Cycling UK Forum

A You have chosen a good tyre size but don't state that you are dissatisfied with your current tyre choice. If not, then the new Conti Sport Contact II would make a suitable, like-for-like replacement. There's a dozen or so models in Schwalbe's Marathon series of touring tyres, from the performance-orientated Racer to the legendarily tough Marathon

Plus. If you fancy trying something a little different, take a look at the Compass Barlow Pass; at 390g for a 700x38 tyre, it is light, very fast-rolling, and will transform the feel of a laden tourer.

Richard Hallett

Technical SWAPPING FLATS FOR DROPS

Q I have a Thorn Voyager tandem with 8-speed Deore, V-brakes and 26x1.75in tyres, and I would like to change the flat bar to a drop bar. What are my options for braking and changing gear?

My first thought was to use STI shifters. For that, I would need to change the gear cables – easy – and then change the brakes to mini Vs or possibly cantilevers? My next thought was bar-end



shifters and a set of linear-pull brake levers, so I'd probably need just to change the gear cables.

Anything else I should take into consideration?

martinn, via the Cycling UK Forum

A You may struggle to find adequate clearance for your tyres and suitable mudguards using mini V-brakes, which in any case can feel a little spongy used with road brake levers (see TRP CX8.4 review Cycle Oct/Nov, 2016).

If you wish to stick with the V-brakes and would prefer to use STI dual-control shifters, you may have to fit Travel Agent cable pull adaptors as the levers and brakes are not compatible.

Instead, I'd recommend using Shimano bar-end shifters and V-brake-compatible drop-bar brake levers from Cane Creek, DiaCompe, TRP or Tektro (pictured). If you prioritise dual-control shifting, consider using cantilever brakes such as Tektro's CR720 (reviewed Cycle, Oct/Nov 16).

Richard Hallett

Technical CARBON RIM QUERY

Q What's the advantage over aluminium? Do they last longer? Do they not crack at the spoke holes like aluminium ones do? Are the dimensions as good as aluminium rims? MikeDee, via the Cycling UK Forum

A Where bicycle wheel rims are concerned, the advantage of carbon fibre over aluminium lies in the former's much greater stiffness for its weight. This makes it possible to build deep-section aerodynamic rims without the significant weight penalty of an aluminium rim with the same aerodynamic profile. The answers to your other questions depend on the manufacturer but, in general, carbon fibre rims are durable and manufactured to the same dimensional standards as their aluminium equivalents.

However, carbon fibre rims provide a less effective braking surface than aluminium and generally require blocks with a carbon-specific compound, if used with rim brakes. Heat can build up in the material on long, twisty descents and lead to tyre blow-off. Problems with braking on carbon-fibre rims are arguably the primary driver for the promotion of disc brakes on performance road bikes.

Richard Hallett

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**.