



Joan touring Scotland and Northern England

My Bike

JOAN GREEN'S E-BIKE

At 66, Joan gave up group riding. Now aged 81, she's back cycling with her clubmates – thanks to the purchase of a Powabyke e-bike

WELL, I'VE BEEN and gone and done it: I've bought an electric bicycle. After 15 years of selective and solitary pedalling, I am now able, aged 81, to go out with the club again.

Would I recommend it to you? You bet. Electric bicycles have some way to go technically, and mine is not above losing power five miles from home. But I can now do 40 miles on a ride, keeping up with everyone else, and enjoying glorious days out again.

Not everyone is young and fit and riding to Timbuktu or the Amazon. It's nice to hear about those who do, but for most of us the joy of our lives is setting out from home with a group of friends and exploring our local areas. As long as we can do that, we are happy. The worry, as we approach 50 or perhaps 60, is how much longer we can keep it up. It matters so much to us, we don't know what we would do without it. It is the icing on the cake, the sparkle in our eyes. What will we do without it? Can we do without it?

The good news now is that you will never have to. Honestly. I've got two metal hips, screws in my spine, stents in my arteries, and narrowing of my spinal vertebrae – and I

was still out there last Sunday. I'm planning to do something similar next Sunday too.

An electric bicycle is power-assisted and silent. It only works when you pedal, so you still get a good workout, but it offends no one else with noise or fumes. You can keep up with everyone else on the hills, and you use whatever level of power you need on the flat.

There are usually three levels of power, with a booster for very steep hills and a walking mode in case you ever have to get off and push. The current models are very heavy, so don't think you can lift one over a stile, but tracks and rough-stuff are perfectly do-able.

EXPANDING HORIZONS

The only real limitation is range. Although some manufacturers claim you can get 100 kilometres out of one battery charge, I don't believe it. One retailer told me that he advises his purchasers to halve the manufacturers' claims. If you think on the lines of 30-40 miles to one battery charge, you will be safe and get yourself home. You can, of course, take a charger with you for a little boost, or a spare battery, but both chargers and extra batteries are heavy and



Budget e-bikes are hefty and basic but can transform your riding

cumbersome. Hopefully, some day, there will be bicycle charging points along the way, just as there are for cars in big cities now.

Because of the weight, most electric bicycles are very sturdily built and won't give you a sleek, young image. That's a pity, because I would love to become the glamorous young thing that I never was first time round. The riding position on my bike is Dutch grandma style.

The handlebars are straight and, because of all the gear and cables attached to and around them, there is little room for modifying them. The wheels are thick and heavy, but they are stable and roll beautifully once you get them going. The gears are not what you might wish to choose, but you have the motor to use to get around that.

You will likely pay between £1,000 and £3,000. Don't buy mail order unless you are a superb mechanic and a good electrician. They do go wrong and need adjusting.

I am sure electric bikes will soon be more like club machines. The batteries will be improved, and recharging as you go along is bound to be developed. Yet already your future is assured: you can keep cycling! I am smiling all the way to the club meet (again).

Joan Green's Powabyke Xbyke XLS Mk2

PRICE: £1,149 for Mk3 version
FRAME AND FORK: Very heavy alloy frame, Zoom suspension fork
WHEELS: hybrid/off-road tyres, 26-inch Jinhatong alloy wheels, 250W front hub
TRANSMISSION: Prowheel 48-tooth chainset, 12-22 tooth 6-speed freewheel, Shimano SIS indexed shifter and derailleur
BRAKES: Promax V-brakes
STEERING & SEATING: Kyagel saddle supplied (swapped for my 40-year-old Brooks), Zoom suspension seatpost. Riser handlebar with adjustable-angle stem
EQUIPMENT: 36V 9-Amp lithium battery, front lamp, mudguards, stand, and rear carrier
powabyke.com