



Bike test



DAN JOYCE

Apart from walking to the shops round the corner, Dan does all of his urban journeys by bike, while wearing normal clothes

Belting town bikes

Less mess, less maintenance: belt drives make urban bikes easier to live with. **Dan Joyce** tests an ARCC Abington and a Trek District 4 Equipped

The chain drive has reigned supreme for most of the bicycle's history and doesn't look like relinquishing its crown any time soon. A chain is very efficient, reliable and works with any gearing setup. Yet to function at its best it needs more care than many owners give it, as countless rusting drivetrains bear witness. Bikes are more convenient as everyday transport for ordinary people if the chain is hidden away in a chain case. Or, perhaps, replaced with a belt.

Belt drives have issues of their own. They don't work with derailleurs. You can't split and rejoin a belt like you can a chain, so you need a special frame: one that splits so you can fit the belt; or one with a raised drive-side chainstay so that the belt runs underneath it instead of looping around it. They're also slightly less efficient. They're nevertheless seen on e-bikes, high-end tourers, niche mountain bikes and – the reason for this

review – utility bikes.

British company ARCC is best known for its Intelligent Drive System e-bike conversion kit, which uses a front hub motor. ARCC will adapt your own bike for you or sell you a new bike with the IDS system fitted. It stocks a range of electrified Bromptons and Moultons, plus its own e-bikes: the Abington, the Rosemont and an upcoming e-cargo bike. The Abington and Rosemont are also available without electric assistance.

Trek is a big US brand but its European-style District models are assembled in Germany. The cheapest – Districts 1 and 2 – have chains and chain cases; the two dearest, 3 and 4, have belts. As the name says, the District 4 comes Equipped: with mudguards, rear rack, dynamo lighting, kickstand and lock. A version with a mid-step frame is available. While there are also electric assist District+ models, they're fundamentally different bikes.