



First look

A made-in-Britain steel hybrid that can be bought as, or easily converted to, an e-bike



“
You can't split and rejoin a belt like you can a chain, so you need a special frame
”

Tech spec

ARCC ABINGTON NON-ELECTRIC 8-SPEED

Price: £1,795 as tested (from £1,600).
Sizes: S, M (tested), L.

Weight: 15.76kg [34.67lb], as shown.

Frame & fork: Custom-drawn Reynolds 631 steel frame with twin top tubes, 68mm threaded bottom bracket, adjustable and splittable dropouts, plus fittings for rear rack, mudguard and one bottle. ARCC steel fork with fittings for mudguard and front rack.

Wheels: 40-584 Schwalbe Marathon Plus tyres, 684x19 Mach 1 double-wall aluminium rims, 36 spokes (x2 front, x3 rear), Shimano Deore QR front hub, Shimano Alfine 8-speed rear hub.

Transmission: VP607 alloy/rubber tread pedals, Gates

chainset with 170mm cranks and 55t ring, Thun square taper bottom bracket, Gates Carbon Drive CDN 118t belt, 22t Gates sprocket. Shimano Alfine 8-speed shifter and hub. Eight ratios, 35-107in.

Braking: Magura MT4 hydraulic disc brakes, 160mm front and 140mm rear CenterLock rotors.

Steering & seating: Ergo grips, 640x25.4mm aluminium low-rise handlebar, 100mm x 6° Promax aluminium stem, 1 1/8in threadless headset. Brooks C19 saddle, 27.2x400mm single bolt seatpost, Allen-bolt seat clamp.

Equipment: ARCC rear rack, black (£155), SKS full 27.5 mudguards (£40). arccbikes.com

Frame & fork

The ARCC Abington is made, not merely assembled, in Cambridge. Its Reynolds 631 frame has twin top tubes that continue as seatstays. I imagine that's primarily for aesthetics, although the narrow-gauge tubes look like the same ones used for the step-through Rosemont – albeit with a different bend and orientation – so there may be manufacturing savings. The tubes are close enough together that you're unlikely to clip your knees.

The frame splits on the drive side at the pleasingly industrial-looking dropouts. These are adjustable so the wheel can be moved back to tension the belt, which is more important than it is with a chain as a belt can't be run slack. But you won't need to adjust that tension whenever you remove and refit the rear wheel, like you would with a fixie with track ends, as the Abington's dropouts are downward facing. The rear wheel drops out (or in) with no fore-aft movement required.

The fork is ARCC's own, a steel one with an old-school crown and new-school straight blades with minimal tapering. While a more tapered fork with curved ends would look and perhaps ride a little nicer, a beefier version makes sense given



Top: Magura MT4 hydraulic discs: very effective stoppers
Bottom: Schwalbe Marathon Plus tyres are ideal for this kind of bike as they're so tough

the disc brake – as well as the front hub motor of the electric Abington, which uses the same fork.

The Abington's tall head tube provides room to mount the battery for the IDS system there. It also gives a comfortably upright riding position. The seat tube is unusually wide; a 27.2mm post is shimmed out to 33mm to fit. Presumably the larger diameter seat tube is to increase the frame's torsional stiffness. A belt drive needs a stiff frame so that the belt tracks properly; it can't handle sideways deviations like a chain.

The Trek District 4 has a lighter weight aluminium frame and fork, made from chunky, hydroformed tubes that hide the cables and hoses inside. Tinkerers prefer external cables but anyone buying a belt-drive bike to eschew chain care won't be fiddling with cables and hoses. And it does look neat and tidy. The frame splits at the drive-side seatstay to admit the belt. It's not as substantial as the ARCC design but seems sturdy.

Like the Abington, the District 4 has adjustable, downward-facing dropouts, and the same comments apply. It has an even taller front end, giving a very upright riding position. The bottom bracket is quite

