

# Q & A

Your technical, legal and health questions answered.

**This issue:** cycling on pavements, lower gears, brake fixing, breaking spokes, bad knees, and tyres



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## MEET THE EXPERTS



**RICHARD HALLETT**  
Cycle's Technical Editor



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### LEGAL

## CYCLING ON PAVEMENTS

**Q** If CTC members cycle on pavements, are we still covered by CTC insurance in a collision with a pedestrian or animal? In recent newspapers, magazines and on TV, it has been suggested that pavement cycling is okay if done safely.

**LAURENCE MOORE**

**A** Cycling on the pavement is against the law, pursuant to s.72 Highways Act 1835, as amended by s.85(1) Local Government Act 1888. It is illegal for cyclists to 'lead or drive' a 'carriage of any description' on 'any footpath or causeway by the side of any road made or set apart for the use or accommodation of foot passengers'. It is worth noting that there is no blanket ban on cyclists using footpaths that are not by the roadside.

Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs), which were increased from £30 to £50 in 2013, may be administered by police officers for various cycling offences, including cycling on the pavement. Failure to pay a FPN may lead to a higher fine or prosecution

for the underlying offence. The maximum penalty is £500.

Guidance as to how and when FPNs should be used has been varied. In 1999, Mr Paul Boateng MP, speaking on the introduction of FPNs, said: 'The introduction of the Fixed Penalty Notice is not aimed at responsible cyclists who sometimes feel obliged to use the pavement out of fear of traffic and who show consideration to other pavement users when doing so. Chief police officers, who are responsible for enforcement, acknowledge that many cyclists, particularly children and young people, are afraid to cycle on the road. Sensitivity and careful use of police discretion is required.'

Children are the obvious example where discretion should be exercised. Children under ten are below the age of criminal responsibility and children under 16 cannot be served with a FPN. In Lincolnshire, one policeman threatened to confiscate a four-year-old's bicycle after he saw her cycling on the pavement. Not only can the officer not legally do this, it is clearly a ridiculous exercise of police power as the rule was implemented to keep pedestrians safe and it would be unreasonable to expect a young child to cycle on the road.

CTC has said the police must differentiate between those whose behaviour is dangerous and antisocial and those who are acting out of concern for their own safety without presenting a threat to others.

Despite the guidance given, when FPNs were introduced in 1999 the Metropolitan Police handed out around 1,200 notices in an eight-week period. Last year, Transport Minister Robert Goodwill spoke about the use of FPNs and urged police to use their discretion when exercising the right to fine cyclists who choose to use the pavement. Those in agreement with Goodwill have argued that it is often necessary to mount the pavement at difficult and dangerous junctions.

Whilst cyclists are responsible for a far smaller proportion of serious injuries and deaths on the road than motor vehicles, stories of irresponsible cycling are unfortunately not uncommon – for example, the recent media coverage concerning the hit-and-run cyclist who collided with a toddler on the pavement in Blackpool. Bad cycling of this nature obviously needs to be punished and FPNs are a good way of controlling such irresponsible behaviour.

Whilst the police have discretion when it »



● A 42-32-22 triple chainset is an easy way to lower gears on a hybrid with a 48-36-26

» comes to FPNs, cycling on the pavement is still against the law and should be avoided wherever possible. CTC's third-party liability insurance provides £10million of indemnity insurance. This provides protection to CTC members if their negligence results in a collision. Unlawful activity, such as cycling on the pavement or jumping a red light, does not invalidate the insurance. The third-party insurance is a valuable member benefit and provides peace of mind in the event that something goes wrong.

PAUL KITSON

### TECHNICAL GEARING DOWN

**Q** I have ridden fixed-wheel all my life, but at the age of 82 am now using gears. I purchased a Specialized Sirrus Sport bicycle. The triple chainset of 48-36-26 teeth is to my mind unsuitable, giving a top gear of 115in. I wish to convert the chainset to 36-30-28 or thereabouts, still giving me a top gear of around 86in, and with a smoother transition between the smaller rings. Can you help?

GW ARNOT

**A** You may well find that the front derailleur is unsuitable for use with such close-ratio triple chainrings. In any case, if you wish to fit a lower range of gears, the most cost-effective solution may well be to buy a triple chainset such as Shimano's FC-M361 Acera with 42-32-22 rings. It needs a square-taper axle and will, with luck, fit the one fitted as standard to the bike. The gaps between ratios will be much the same but the overall range will be some 12% lower and give you a top gear of around 100in. Swap the 11-32 cassette for a 9-speed Acera 12-36 and you'll have a top gear of 96in with lowest ratio of 17in.

RICHARD HALLETT

### TECHNICAL SIDEPULL BRAKE PROBLEMS

**Q** My road bike has Tektro 312 dual-pivot sidepull brakes, which keep going off centre, resulting

in the left brake block catching on the rim. I've repeatedly adjusted the set-screw to re-centre the brake to such an extent that the screw is fully out but still the brake is going off centre. I've also retightened the centre bolt. After these adjustments, the bike seems fine but the problem occurs after riding a couple of miles. Why?

PETE SAUNDERS

**A** You don't specify which brake is causing the problem or if it is with both. There's no obvious reason why this should happen with correctly-installed components but one possibility, assuming you have a recessed 'top-hat'-style sleeve nut, is that the brake bolt nut is bottoming out on its thread – it won't tighten any further – before it can apply sufficient clamping force to the fork crown or seatstay bridge. There may be enough grip to persuade you that all is well at the workstand but not to keep the brake centred as it is actuated. In this case, either fit a shorter nut (remember that you need at least three threads to engage with the bolt for security) or file a couple of millimetres off the smaller diameter end so that the nut can apply full clamping force as it is tightened.

RICHARD HALLETT



● If the sleeve nut is too long for the brake's centre bolt, the brake won't stay centred

### TECHNICAL SPOKE BREAKAGES

**Q** I keep breaking spokes in my front wheel during heavy braking on descents. They are handbuilt with plain-gauge spokes. Is there a way to stop this? I use cable discs with a 180mm rotor

SALSAFARGO, VIA THE CTC FORUM

**A** Disc brakes put severe loads on spoked wheels, and spoke breakages are usually due to fatigue caused by repeated flexing. The spokes should be laced three-cross to provide sufficient torsional rigidity and J-bend spokes should be correctly 'bedded' at the head – tapped tight against the flange using a drift – to remove residual curvature, which allows cyclic flex as the spoke is loaded »



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● With discs, the spokes transmit braking forces to the rim/tyre



» and unloaded. Beyond this, plain gauge spokes build a less robust wheel than do butted spokes. They don't stretch as much under tension and are, therefore, more prone to slacken as the wheel passes over bumpy ground and, furthermore, transmit shock loads more forcefully to the spoke bend. A correctly-built, properly-tensioned wheel with double-butted spokes should resolve your problem.

**RICHARD HALLETT**

**HEALTH  
LUMP BEHIND KNEE**

**Q** Are there any health problems associated with cycling with a Baker's cyst, a walnut-sized lump at the back of the knee?

**JIM RODGERS**

**A** A Baker's cyst is a swelling filled with synovial fluid, which forms in the popliteal area at the back of the knee. It can arise in an otherwise normal knee, or can sometimes be associated with an underlying knee condition such as osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis or a tear in the meniscal cartilage within the knee. Although larger cysts can cause symptoms such as pain, tightness, difficulty bending the knee or a palpable swelling, many do not cause any symptoms at all, especially if small. A Baker's cyst may often be an incidental finding on a scan such as an ultrasound or MRI of the knee.

Treatment is not usually needed (and some will resolve spontaneously over time) but, if required, can range from simple painkillers through to surgery in more severe cases. If there is an underlying condition such as arthritis, this can be

treated accordingly.

Occasionally, a Baker's cyst may rupture. This can cause a painful swelling of the calf which may mimic a DVT (deep vein thrombosis, or blood clot) but will gradually resolve with rest and elevation.

There shouldn't be any additional health problems associated with cycling with a Baker's cyst, especially a smaller one. If you do encounter any problems then go and discuss with your GP whether any further action is required.

**DR MATT BROOKS**

**TECHNICAL  
TUBULAR TYRES**

**Q** Why don't we use these any more? Apart from cost they were far more efficient following a puncture. You could be back on the road in five minutes or less, and you could ride them flat for a while without risk of damage until convenient to change. I believe many pro teams use them again these days, although they don't have to worry about the expense.

**JEZER, VIA CTC FORUM**

**A** The reason most performance road cyclists no longer use tubulars is surely that the best modern clinchers offer comparable performance without the cost implications of a puncture early in the tyre's life. Clinchers are also perceived to be more convenient, although as you point out, that ain't necessarily so. The good news is that plenty of 'amateur' cyclists still ride tubs and that there's a new type of tub tape on the market, called Effeto Mariposa Carogna, which makes fitting tubs a breeze. If anything, it is easier than fitting a recalcitrant clincher.

A seamless tubular such as Clément's

● A Baker's cyst can be associated with arthritis or cartilage damage

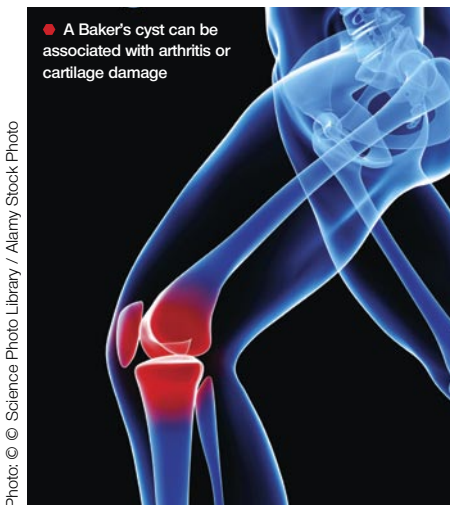


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● Effeto Mariposa Carogna tub tape is easy to use



Strada LGG can be filled with sealant to minimize the possibility of puncturing. In any case, fitting a new tub in the event of a flat is the work of moments. Of course, if you get more punctures than you carry spare tubs, you will be riding on a flat tyre unless you carry and can use a tubular tyre repair kit, which is not something to be undertaken lightly by the roadside on a wet winter's afternoon.

**RICHARD HALLETT**

**TECHNICAL  
SCHWALBE MARATHON  
EQUIVALENT?**

**Q** I have run Marathons for years but I'm unsure about the Greenguard version, which seems a bit harsh to me. My slightly odd rim sizes (17mm on back and 19mm on front) mean that 700x32 is the right size. What is the best like-for-like replacement for Kevlar Marathons? Vittoria Randonneur? Continental Touring Plus?

**FATBOY, VIA CTC FORUM**

**A** Any tyre with something close to the Marathon's level of puncture resistance is going to be similarly harsh and heavy (around 640g). If puncture avoidance is your primary concern, this may be the price you have to pay. Conti's Touring Plus is durable, a bit lighter and very resistant to punctures, while the firm's Tour Ride is inexpensive and sturdy.

Vittoria's 700x32 Randonneur Pro (right) weighs just 420g and should be a bit faster if you want to spice up your ride...

**RICHARD HALLETT**



**Contact the experts** Email your technical, health and legal questions to [editor@ctc.org.uk](mailto:editor@ctc.org.uk) or write to CTC Q&A, PO Box 313, Scarborough, YO12 6WZ.

We regret that Cycle magazine cannot answer unpublished queries. But don't forget that CTC operates a free-to-members advice line for personal injury claims, tel: 0844 736 8452.