

“THERE’S VALUE IN A CHEAP ‘HACK’ BIKE THAT COSTS NEXT TO NOTHING TO MAINTAIN”

during which period I could bring it back for free tweaks and repairs (aside from things like punctures).

I cycled back to the station and caught a train home.

READY TO RIDE

Whenever I’ve bought secondhand bikes in the past I’ve had to do a fair amount of upgrading and assembly. This roadster had been through more than 20 mechanical and quality control checks before I bought it. All I really had to do was raise the saddle and handlebar so it fitted me better. I also toed-in the (functional but noisy) brakes.

There were only two problems with the bike: the leather saddle and the traditional bell. I’m uncomfortable with leather saddles, literally because this one didn’t suit my bum and figuratively because I’m a vegan. The bell, meanwhile, looked great but jingled and jangled constantly, driving me nuts. I swapped it for an old ping-bell that I found in my workshop.

I also had a spare non-leather saddle of suitable width and padding for an upright roadster. The upper was torn but not so badly that some electrical tape couldn’t fix it well enough. This saddle wouldn’t fit on the bike’s plain seatpost or in its twin-rail clamp, so I looked for suitable clamp on eBay. Success: I found one for £4.99 delivered. To offset the cost I put the leather saddle on eBay. That yielded a mere £3.20 (plus postage), bringing the bike’s cost to £100.79

As I wanted to use the bike for all my local journeys, I needed to add lights. R-evolution would have sold me a set at a good price – and did offer – but I had some spares at home: an AXA Basta Classic front battery light and a rack-mounted battery rear light made by Ikzi (no, me neither). Although these didn’t cost me anything upfront, their combined value would be about £25.

Ever since I bought the bike in August I’ve been riding it daily. It’s heavy, of course, and for a hilly town it’s overgeared; I’ve mostly been using just the three easiest of its five gears. Yet it’s very comfortable to ride, especially



Platt Fields Bike Hub in Manchester, also BBR affiliated

Left & opposite (top): Joolze Dymond. Opposite (below): Peter Devlin

in normal clothes. There’s a reason the Dutch use roadsters. Most of my journeys on it have been short urban trips of two or three miles. I also did a 15-mile ride on it wearing a suit (to attend a funeral). This wasn’t a problem on a bike with a chaincase and mudguards.

The bike rides best at stately pace, with a slower cadence. It’s not significantly slower than sportier bikes for very short trips, however, because some time is recouped at the start and end of journeys. There’s no need to look for special shoes or cycle clips, or to fit or remove lights: just jump on and go.

BIG BIKE REVIVAL

So far we’ve looked at one side of the money-saving coin: what it’s like finding and buying a budget secondhand bike as a customer. Now let’s look at the other side: selling, repairing, and promoting the use of older bikes.

As it happens, R-evolution in Hull is part of Cycling UK’s Big Bike Revival (BBR) scheme (cyclinguk.org/bigbikerevival). Some other BBR partners across England are also bike recycling centres. Not all are; the scheme’s primary focus is, as the name says, more about reviving people’s bikes and their interest in using them. “The main purpose of BBR is to encourage people who have bikes but don’t use them to start cycling again,” said Susan Keywood, project manager for Big Bike Revival England.

“We think the best way to encourage people to cycle in their local areas is to have locally-based cycling development

Bike recycling centres

To find a bike recycling centre in your area, whether you want to buy a bike or donate one, visit cyclinguk.org/secondhandcycles.

As well as locating Big Bike Revival partners across England, the map shows bike recycling centres in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. It’s worth contacting any recycling centre before you visit, either to check what they’ve got in stock if you’re buying or to make sure they want your bike if you’re donating one. Contact details are on the website.

Buying a bike from a bike recycling centre is more straightforward (and usually comes with more backup) than buying a secondhand bike elsewhere. If you are buying from another source, however, you can find some guidance on the Cycling UK website: cyclinguk.org/article/cycling-guide/buy-secondhand-bike.