



Oxford Bike
Works tourer

Left: Oxford Bike Works

riders are more likely to feel 'road buzz'."

Components wear at different rates, he said. "Chains and brake pads are the key items that wear out soonest. Shimano hubs last well. Cheap pedals often need replacing after a few thousand miles. Tyres can last a very long time – I had a customer cycle 14,000 miles from Singapore back to the UK on one set of Schwalbe Marathon Plus Tour tyres without any punctures. To date I have built 600 wheels and had only one spoke snap (that I know of)."

I asked him what he'd specify for a 'forever bike', capable of being ridden for thousands and thousands of miles with little or no maintenance. "My Expedition bike," he said, "with a Rohloff hub, Magura rim brakes and a chain tensioner (so that I never had to re-tension the chain). A few pairs of brake blocks and some chain oil would be all that I needed."

WORLD BICYCLE RELIEF

The next bike could hardly be more different. The Buffalo Bicycle (you can read more about it at worldbicyclerelief.org) is designed to serve the needs of

“ I HAD A CUSTOMER CYCLE 14,000 MILES FROM SINGAPORE TO THE UK ON ONE SET OF SCHWALBE MARATHON PLUS ”

people who travel long distances over rugged terrain with heavy cargo. It's a very strong bicycle – the rack alone can take 100kg – built to withstand harsh rural conditions at a low cost. It's designed for local maintenance and to use locally available spare parts. It's made of steel, has a back-pedal coaster brake, a singlespeed gear and a stand that would not look out of place on a motorbike.

"Steel frames still provide the most value in terms of strength, cost and longevity," World Bicycle Relief's Lena Kleine-Kalmer told me. "A good steel frame will more or less last indefinitely in that it has a very good fatigue resistance and can be easily welded should it ever need a repair or modification. Steel welding capability is relatively common in the parts of the world where we operate, whereas aluminum welding is not. Threaded interfaces, such as the bottom bracket shell, are much easier to damage on an aluminum frame than a steel frame. As such, steel is a better choice for bikes with a very long life that will be serviced many times."

Hub gears are usually thought of as long lasting and reliable but the Buffalo is a singlespeed. "No commercially available gear hub lasts very long in our markets," said Kleine-Kalmer. "We have experimented with hub gears but while they provide good function, at least initially, they are very difficult to service and most of them rely on cables for shifting and require adjustments to maintain functionality. Internal

Cycling UK members recommend it

Some of your suggestions from the Cycling UK Forum. You can read the full thread here: cyclinguk.org/bikes-to-last

● **BARROWMAN:** Oil-bath chaincase/shaft drive/Gates belt drive. Fixed wheel. Solid tyres.

● **RAREPOSTER:** For me an absolute minimal maintenance bike would be a flat-bar hybrid bike with rigid forks, a belt-drive hub gear and hydraulic disc brakes with 700C wheels (for ease of spares).

● **CARLTON GREEN:** Chains wear and so do sprockets. Part of that is due to muck kicked up from the road so fitting mudflaps seems worthwhile.

● **RE_CYCLER:** Singlespeed, hub brakes, belt drive, mudguards, yearly service.

● **SLOWSTER:** ... e-bikes increasingly look like being a game changer in this regard. The hard service conditions that e-bike parts are often subject to are forcing manufacturers to design stronger – and consequently longer lasting – parts for them.

● **RAREPOSTER:** Shimano Linkglide uses much heavier-duty cassettes, originally developed for the extra torque of e-bikes but actually super durable and slick on normal bikes too, reckoned to be easily double the life of current cassettes.

● **PWA:** I rate STI controls as some of the least durable or reliable parts of a bike. I haven't used them on my bikes for the last 15 years or more, much preferring the better longevity and smoother cable run of Shimano bar-end levers.

● **STRADAGEEK:** I've just dismantled a shed-find, a 1954 SA 3-speed used as a daily commuter for 20+ years. I have never seen an SA rear cog so worn, and the internals were dry of oil and grease. Despite this the hub functions perfectly – with pitted cones and a broken pawl spring. That's what I call 'built to last'!