

FETTLED FOLDERS

Some people are just never happy. For two folding bike enthusiasts, that meant taking it a little bit further and doing something about it...



Paul ‘Chop’ Rossiter’s Birdy

Paul ‘Chop’ Rossiter, a rock band bus driver, explains how his much-modified Birdy red comes in handy when on tour...

After about three and a half years as a house husband, (and now free and single) my weight had ballooned, I was unfit and broke! So I accepted a job as manager of a seventies theme bar called The Purple Dragon. Now with an income, I decided that I needed a folding bike. I live about 10 miles from Cardiff on narrow, pot-holed roads used as a late night rat-run. I needed to get

This trick looking bike was brilliant. I lost weight quickly, became fitter than I had been for years, and it fitted easily into my Isetta. I added a Yak-Bob trailer from D-Tek but found it a bit wobbly until my mate Martin Jones shortened the yoke. I now had a rig which could carry a useful amount of weight – even my 6 year old daughter.

fit, keep my licence and I needed a folder that would fit in the back of my 1959 BMW 600 Isetta bubblecar. I toyed with the idea of a second hand Brompton, but thought they looked like my Aunt’s old RSW! Then someone wheeled a Birdy Blue into my local Cybercafé, and the hunt was on!

A trip over to Avon Valley Cycles in Bath, a quick test ride and I was hooked. I now owned a Birdy Red with all the trimmings, waterproofs etc.

I took my rig to Portmeirion (in the back of my Isetta) for the Folding Society’s excellent weekend. A trip to the Centre for Alternative Energy would test whether my rig was suitable for train travel. As I waited with a Birdy Blue rider on the platform, my heart sank as a rather full single railcar pulled into view. We folded the Birdys, removed the wheel from BOB and it fitted easily into the luggage area. Wicked!

This would be the first of hundreds of rail trips all over Europe. While I was on a trip to Nordkapp, Norway, my pub closed and I was unemployed again. I decided to try for a job driving bands around in a sleeper bus. I started with Star-line in Clevedon and carried everything that I needed on my rig the 10 miles to the station and then the 8 miles from the station the other side – that was my commute to work!

Now, travelling around for my work, the Birdy really came into its own, allowing me to explore every town, canal path etc. that I came to. By this time though, it was becoming a bit sad, the brakes had almost worn through the rims, and the low-slung derailleur needed frequent replacement, so I decided rather than replace my beloved Birdy, that I would improve it.

Working with my mate Martin Jones again, who did all the engineering work, I decided on a Sachs hub brake laced to a Moulton rim. Then, while searching for a hub gear brake combo we came up with the idea of using the Rohloff Speedhub 14 speed hub gear with Hope hydraulic disc barks – also laced to the Moulton rim.

Add an Egg-ring and polished keepers from Highpath Engineering, a Brompton chain tensioner, nearly two Rohloff chains and a pair of Moulton Bridgestone high pressure tyres and I was mobile again.

Wow! It went like hell, stopped even better and even folded fairly successfully. Then we added touches such as Biogrips, a Brompton rack, mudguards and folding pedals, adjustable stem, a GPS system and some very expensive locks!

I am very happy with my rig, and use it daily all over Europe. But we are not finished! Next comes a steering damper, adjustable shocks and a titanium frame with built in anti-theft satellite tracking unit.

I now work as a Nightliner driver, driving well known bands around on tour in a double decker mobile hotel. This means that I am away for most of the year. My Birdy ‘rig’ goes with me everywhere. Plenty of famous stars have ridden my rig and have been converted to folders after seeing how useful my Birdy is in a touring situation. Next week I take the rock band Asia on a tour of Germany, Austria, Switzerland (including a visit to the superb Vitelli Cycle Spares in Basel), Holland, Belgium and the UK – so some serious miles should be possible.

Safe riding, Chop!

Check out Chop’s website: www.long-john.com

Steve Parry’s ‘SP’ Brompton

Steve Parry, who produces modified Bromptons semi-commercially, sent us these details and pictures of his latest ‘SP’ Brompton:



“The frame is a modified Brompton one, in steel and titanium. The main frame hinge has been done away with, which means that while the folded package isn’t so compact, it’s a convenient long thin shape – and the whole bike can be made lighter.

Seatpin, stem and handlebars are all replaced with titanium versions. Bar ends are carbon fibre. Hope disk brakes are fitted front and rear, and modified Pace front forks. It still fits a Brompton front luggage block for the quick-release bag. You can wheel the folded bike along on its front wheel, even fully loaded.

The ‘SP’ comes with 1, 2, 3, 8 or 16 gears. The first three gears are achieved using multiple chainrings. Then, for eight speeds you need a rear derailleur, and that’s combined with two front rings for the 16-speed. The 16 speed has rather more chain and this gets in the way rather, so it does not fold quite as nicely.

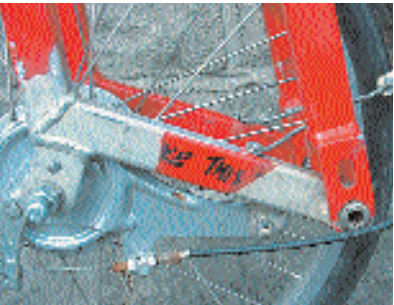
Weight is 22–25lb (9.8–11.1kg) depending on the gearing, and prices are between £1400 and £1600 (around 2300 Euros, \$2100).

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A huge Eggring helps raise the gearing, compensating for the very small drive wheel



A certain amount of mutilation of the Birdy fork was needed to squeeze in hub brakes



It’s a tight fit at the back, too, with the Rohloff hub and hydraulic disk brakes



A Brompton chain tensioner is used to stop the chain coming loose as you fold the bike

