

Sally and Max

This is getting very close to home. Let's just say that one person in this relationship has earned a living from bicycles for a long time while the other had preferred not to ride at all. Not even when, on an early date, Sally had the opportunity to ride a rare and magnificent Moulton AM7 or later, when a sturdy tandem was on offer, did she relish the experience. No bicycle could provide the level of comfort and security that would tempt her to two wheels.

Determined to force this couple to spend more time together, CA was prompted into lateral thinking by a photo in an obscure cycling magazine. It led us to ask CycleCentric for the loan of a Circe Morpheus Omnis Plus tandem, where the stoker is at the front, recumbent in a bucket seat, while the captain sits up behind, with all the gears, brakes and steering.

It's a decidedly long beast, heavier than the average tandem, and has a SRAM Duel Drive hub; essentially a three-speed hub with a nine speed cassette mounted on it, giving 27 gears. Would it seduce the sworn non-cyclist to ride with her partner?

Now it's fair to say that Sally was, at the least, a little ginger. She'd heard

her partner enthuse after his trial rides on the Circe with friends, but reasoned he was always like that with a new bike. She'd listened tolerantly when he'd described how cars gave the Circe the right of way just because it looked so unusual. She'd nodded patiently as he banged on about its safety, comfort and, above all, the tandem's sociability.

Finally, Sally relented and stepped aboard, lowering herself onto the recumbent seat, cautiously taking her feet off the ground and placing them on the unfamiliar pedals. Behind her, her partner beseeched the gods, stroked his lucky rabbit foot, thought positive thoughts and started to pedal.

It went well. First they learned to coordinate stopping, by the captain gently saying to the stoker in front that she might like to stop pedalling as they were going to slow to a halt, after which she might care to put her feet on the ground. Such patronising talk cut little ice with Sally, yet they came to a rest successfully before she decided they should move off and she pedalled strongly, with years of ballet muscles providing power, while the captain struggled to keep up.

They were soon cruising down roads, cycle paths and across shared spaces. The Circe is so well balanced that Sally could take her hands from the bars and sip from a teacup and saucer. Cars did indeed give way and passers-by beamed generously and waved as the pair cycled serenely towards the beach for a picnic.

The captain insists it was the most enjoyable time he'd had on a bike since he'd first had fun on a mountain bike off-road almost 30 years ago.

Stoker Sally says it was the first time she'd had fun on a bike ever. A comfy front seat instead of a saddle brought smiles all round. Result. **End**



