

Mike Burrows's new city bike

Gordon is a carbon fibre commuter with many of the maverick engineer's hallmarks. Dan Joyce phoned Mike and pressed 'record'



“No one knows anything in the bike industry. They're pinning tails on donkeys in the dark”

after Giant displayed his prototype at Interbike. 'Monoblades work,' Mike said. 'Get used to it. You've got two monoblades on your bicycle – the cranks – and you stand on the end of them!'

One thing Gordon lacks is a dynohub. 'I'm not a dynohub fan,' he said, 'because I want a drum brake. It gives you reliable, consistent braking in all weathers. And unlike a disc, it's not over-powerful. People tend to ride to their brakes, I find.'

Gordon will be displayed in Bikefix in London but isn't commercially available. 'Put this in there,' Mike said, "Mike is more than happy to work with anyone who wants to put this bike into production. But he's not holding his breath." ●

By the time you read this, the bare carbon fibre will be painted. It ought to be blue, for the bike is named after Gordon of Thomas the Tank Engine fame. It's not the first bike Mike's named after a train, nor the first utility bike he's built with cantilever wheels.

'It's something I've been trying to do for 25 years,' Mike told me. 'I did my first city bike for New Cyclist magazine, the Amsterdam with offset wheels. And then when I got the job with Giant, I thought we could do this properly. The problem was that we couldn't get component manufacturers to cooperate.'

Mike doesn't have a bad word to say about Giant, but he's scathing about the wider industry's lack of vision. 'I don't think anybody knows anything out there,' he said. 'They're pinning tails on donkeys in the dark.'

'After I left Giant, I built the 2D. It had a structural chaincase and so forth but could only be singlespeed. Then I came across the Pinion gearbox. That was the inspiration.'

One ride on a Pinion-equipped Tout Terrain persuaded Mike that this new gearbox was ideal. 'I'm an engineer,' he said.

'I know that every pair of gears is 2% of my power being wasted. But there was no negative element to using it. Hub gears have an element of "hub gear" about them, and this just didn't have that sensation. For a town bike, it was just perfection.'

Lack of suitable gears, and the industry's reluctance to make any, were two of the problems that derailed the Giant city bike project in the 1990s. 'The other problem was the process. We spent a lot of time trying to find a push-button way to make a moulded bicycle. There was nothing that would give you the volume of injection moulding but the strength of a composite. Of course, that now exists: it's called China. China and cheap carbon are synonymous.'

Gordon was made 'in a shed in Norfolk,' however. Mike has pioneered carbon fibre cycle construction. He is best known for the Lotus track bike on which Chris Boardman won 1992 Olympic gold. That bike, like Gordon, had cantilever wheels, a rare feature that has become a Burrows hallmark.

Despite single-sided wheel support being 'lighter, stronger, and better', there's only one popular monoblade fork: Cannondale's Lefty. It was introduced, Mike noted, six months

Tech spec: Gordon

PRICE: n/a **WEIGHT:** 12.75kg as pictured **FRAME & FORK:** custom carbon fibre frame and monoblade fork **WHEELS:** Schwalbe Marathon Racer tyres, Sturmey Archer drum brake hubs on stub axles **TRANSMISSION:** Pinion bottom bracket gear, twistgrip shifter **BRAKING:** Sturmey Archer drum brakes (90mm front, 70mm rear), Sram TT levers 'built up with epoxy because they were like carving knives' **STEERING & SEATING:** custom carbon fibre handlebar, Passport Navigator saddle, carbon fibre seatpost. **EQUIPMENT:** mudguards, Topeak rack, CatEye lights



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