

want a number of bikes it's a bit of a pain looking out all the cards and filling in the same customer details on each one, not to mention working out what it all costs. We once had a customer who hired 20 bikes for his daughter's birthday party, which took me ages. That was a bit of a one-off though; we do get requests for parties and events, but it's generally the special stuff that they want.

SD: Special stuff?

Annie: Sorry, I should have told you about that. We have some novelty items that Mike (he's the boss) has picked up at auctions, like a couple of genuine working penny farthing cycles. Those are very popular for period style photos and charity events. People tend to notice them, so they're a really good advertisement for us as well. Last year we had a local couple who hired one of our old tandems for their wedding and we got loads of publicity from that.

SD: Presumably hiring those out is rather more complicated.

Annie: Oh yes, we have to write on the card extra details about our special bikes, such as their age, value and restrictions on what they can be hired for.

SD: OK, so just to get back to the actual hire procedures. You fill in the details on the card, the customer pays and you give them a receipt.

Annie: Yes that's it really.

SD: Thanks, that's very helpful. So what happens when the customer comes back with the bike?

Annie: Well they come in, usually all hot and sweaty, but never mind that. I get the bike number and I check that the bike they're returning is the one on the card. And I have to check the return date as well, because if they're late they have to pay extra.

SD: And you return the customer's deposit if they bring back the bike on time?

Annie: Usually, but not if the bike's been damaged of course. One of the mechanics gives every bike a quick check to make sure it's