

KENT REMEMBERED



PEDAL POWER: Stephen and Shirley Channing's book offers a variety of routes for hikers and cyclists

Journey around Kent – with a Victorian cyclist

By Nick Ames

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A NEW work of travel literature called *A Victorian Cyclist* offers a rare and insightful look into the Kentish countryside in 1886, from the perspective of two wheels.

The third book from Thanet-based historian Stephen Channing and his wife Shirley, *A Victorian Cyclist* includes several different rambles, each beginning in the seaside town of Margate.

The continuing fascination for the Victorian era and its view of Britain has become even more apparent in recent years with TV series such as Michael Portillo's travelling on the railways using his 19th century Bradshaw's Guide to the landscape, town and villages.

There are also a great number of smaller roads across Kent which wind through countryside largely unchanged from the landscape of the time.

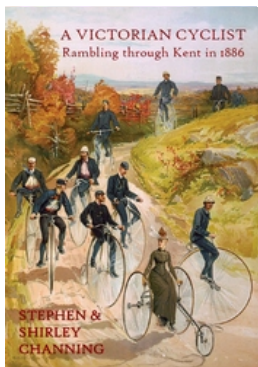
The book takes the reader through nearly 500 miles of Kent countryside, and explores a variety of routes that are ideal for the hiker and cyclist alike.

"From the saddle there is so much to see," said Shirley.

"Kent is a fantastic place and although I've lived here all my life, while researching the book and travelling the routes I went to places I'd never been before.

"As well as the beautiful landscapes there is the history and the people we encountered."

Providing detailed historical insight, the narrative offers a comprehensive account of the



experiences and discoveries of a Victorian cyclist. This allows the reader to learn more about the landscape and ecology of the Victorian age, and discover how routes and paths have changed and developed over the years.

Past heroes, characters, and famous residents from the secluded villages and hamlets of the time are brought to life throughout the multiple journeys.

Additional extracts are drawn from contemporary media, putting the Victorian cyclist's exploits in context and drawing on changing attitudes to give a flavour of the age.

Conventional attitudes to women's position in society, the state of the roads and bike design are all covered, including a section on 'The Art of Velocipede Management'.

More than 200 photos and illustrations (most of which are around a 100-years-old) complete the reader's experience.

Stephen said: "When I discovered the first article written by the Victorian cyclist I was struck by the diverse content and attention to detail.

"After further research, I was astounded to find page after page of rambles covering the Kentish countryside, each as comprehensive as the first.

"I know readers will enjoy reading about the experiences, people, scenery, villages, buildings, flora and fauna which were so enjoyed by our cyclist in 1886. I wanted to offer historians, genealogists, ecologists et al, the opportunity to discover Kent as it was in Victorian days, from the pen of an articulate and knowledgeable member of society."

A Victorian Cyclist comes complete with sections from a contemporary copy of an Ordnance Survey Map for Canterbury and east Kent, showing the road system as it was in our cyclist's time.

Modern directions are provided, alongside illustrations and details about some of the history en route to allow the reader to rediscover these tracks through the eyes of both the modern and the Victorian explorer.

The publisher says the book is one which will interest historians, naturalists and geographers as well as those with a passion for cycling.

An associated website www.victoriancyclist.com is also now up and running.

The book is available from Ozaru Books online and from retailers, including WH Smith and Waterstones.