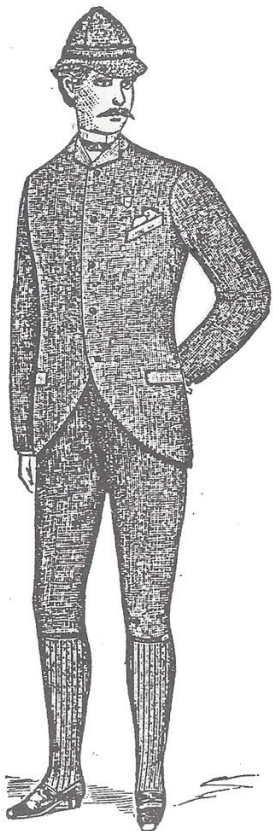
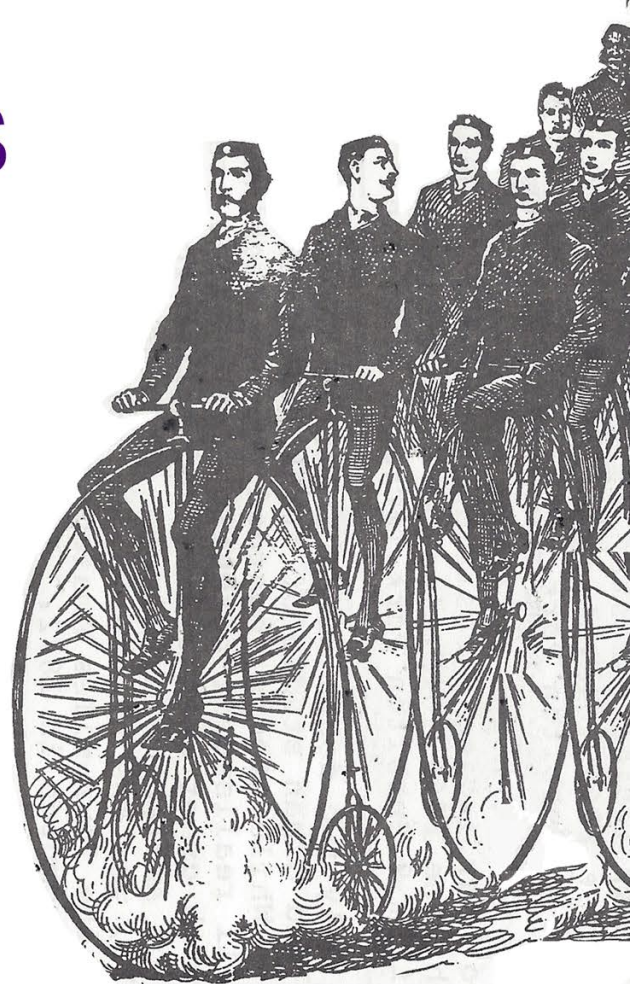


Victorian Clubs

The Victorian cycle club was a unique institution combining boisterous high spirits with strict social codes. Its membership was exclusively male and predominantly middle class. *Ordinary* bicycles were well out of the price range of the ordinary working man, meaning cycle clubs had a distinctly 'upper crust' feel. Indeed, Victorian cycle club members have been described as the 'Yuppies' of the late 19th Century.



Club members wore a strictly enforced uniform of heavily braded tunics. They rode in formation, captain at the front, then in order of seniority with the sub captain at the back. The ranks of captain and sub captain were highly coveted and had to be earned through skill in the saddle. The captain was in complete control of proceedings and had a bugler to convey his orders. Club members delighted in extravagant pub lunches for which the clubs paid a fixed rate in return for hospitality for their members, whenever required. The favoured spots in the area were the Fox and Hounds (Surbiton) and the Angel (Thames Ditton) both on Portsmouth Road.

Many cycle club members continued to ride their high wheeled *Ordinaries* well after the coming of the safety bike and turned their noses up at needless innovations such a brakes! The Pioneer club journal notes '*It would be difficult to find half a dozen brakes in the club. Brakes are of but little practical use to the practised cyclist.*'