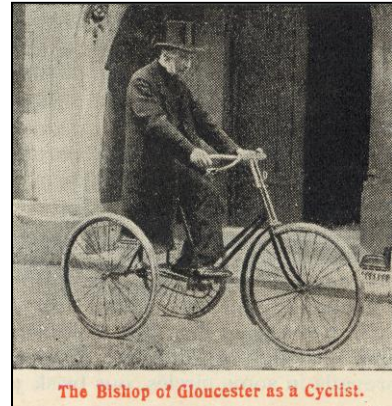


George Cousins and his Three-Wheelers

George Cousins was a man of many parts. When he first arrived in Birchington in the mid 1870s, he came as a builder and set about buying up land near the newly opened railway station. He built the first five houses in Minnis Road that have observatories on the top of their roofs. In about 1880-85 he built a cycle factory near the station and began making the first ladies cycles with a dropped cross-bar and raised handles. He neglected to get them properly patented, so lost the opportunity to make a fortune.

He then added an estate agent's office onto the end of his factory and set about marketing land and letting or selling property in the village. This proved a very profitable business and provided him with the extra finance to continue in the cycle works. He branched out into making a tricycle for a local resident who was the recently retired Bishop of Gloucester, Charles Ellicott.



He also made a three-wheeled motor cycle for his wife and himself, with an extra seat at the rear to accommodate his young mechanic, George Walker. It had the unusual arrangement



whereby his wife sat in front of him. One hopes that this did not impair his view too much! He had a special inspection pit made in cycle factory floor in order to service the vehicle. This was only uncovered about five years ago when the old factory was converted into a wine bar and restaurant.

He was an excellent photographer and was happy to give examples of his work to some of his many friends and colleagues.

In the late 1890s he became chairman of the newly-formed Birchington Parish Council and on his gravestone in All Saints Churchyard, his monument states "This memorial was erected by his many friends in Birchington, in recognition of his parochial services. H. A. Serres, Vicar

G. E. Matthews, Hon. Sec."

When he died in 1908 at the age of 64 he was still the chairman.