BIKES AND BLOOMERS

VICTORIAN WOMEN’S CONVERTIBLE CYCLE WEAR
SEWING PATTERNS

#5 SIDE-BUTTON CYCLING SKIRT

A cycling costume inspired by Mary Ward’s 1897 UK Patent #9603
I wonder if Mrs Buckman knows of the thing called ‘The Hyde Park Safety Skirt’. For it is an invention whereby the Rational Dress can be made into an ordinary looking skirt at once. It was made by Mrs Ward and I have seen it and though I don’t want it myself, it might be convenient for anyone paying calls who wants to leave their cycle and walk about. It would not prevent a person riding a diamond frame.”

Lady Harbeton to S.S. Buckman, of the Rational Dress League (1898)
Victorians enthusiastically took to the bicycle. Yet women had to deal with many social, political and material challenges to their freedom of movement. Cycling in ‘ordinary’ dress could be dangerous as it wrapped around pedals and caught in wheels. Wearing more ‘rational’ cycle wear, such as shorter skirts and bloomers, was more comfortable, but not necessarily safer as some parts of society were threatened by the sight of this progressive ‘New Woman’ carving new modes of gendered independence in public space. Onlookers sometimes hurled abuse and stones! However, nothing was going to stop women from cycling. In response, some creatively protested against restrictive ideas of how a woman should act and move in public through their clothing, by designing convertible costumes that enabled wearers to switch from street wear to cycle wear when needed. Luckily for us, these inventive women not only imagined, made and wore radical new forms of cycle wear - they also patented their designs!

Six sewing patterns in this collection (comprising a total of nine different garments) are inspired by convertible cycle wear patents lodged in the 1890s by inventive British women. They form part of an ESRC funded Bikes & Bloomers sociology project led by Dr Kat Jungnickel at Goldsmiths, University of London, with Rachel Pimm, Nadia Constantinou, Alice Angus and Britt Hatzius. More about the lives of these fascinating inventors is in Bikes & Bloomers: Victorian Women Inventors and Their Extraordinary Cycle Wear (Goldsmiths Press). Along with the book, these patterns bring to life some of the inspiring cycling, sewing and suffrage stories that have helped shape how we cycle today. They also (still) provide useful ideas for functional clothing that works on and off the bike. We look forward to seeing what modern sewing cyclists make with them.
Pattern #5 is for an A-line skirt made of two ‘aprons’ joined at the waist and along the sides via a series of buttons/holes. Two straps are sewn into the waistband. To convert the garment, the wearer tethers the skirt with the straps at intervals via buttons, which gathers it up out of the way of the wheels. **Requirements:** 2.5m fabric, 50cm contrast for straps, 3m decorative trim and 14 buttons.

**This pattern is approx UK size 12** and will need to be customised to fit as required. Minimal instructions are provided. See our mistakes, workarounds and suggestions at: bikesandbloomers.com

**BIKES & BLOOMERS CONVERTIBLE CYCLE WEAR SEWING PATTERNS:**

- #1 – Pulley cycling skirt
- #2 – Cycling semi-skirt
- #3 – 3-piece cycling suit
- #4 – Cycling skirt/cape
- #5 – Side-button skirt
- #6 – Cycling bloomers I, II

All sewing patterns are free to download. Profits from the sale of printed patterns go to the London Bike Kitchen, a DIY workshop. Please share your cycle wear creations with us on #bikesandbloomers & www.bikesandbloomers.com

**RESEARCH PROJECT**
Kat Jungnickel

**SILK LINING ARTWORK**
Alice Angus

**COVER PHOTO**
Charlotte Barnes
SIDE FASTENING PLACKET
CUT OR FOLD TO PRINT SAFE BOX
LINE UP SHAPES
STICK TOGETHER
CUTTING LINE ______________________
SEAM ALLOWANCE ______________________

STAY STITCH THE WAIST ON THE SELF TO AVOID DISTORTING
CONSTRUCT FACING
MAKE BACK AND FRONT SKIRTS SEPARATELY LIKE APRONS
FULLY LINE BY HANDSTITCHING
TACK TO WAISTBAND
INSERT PLACKET OVER JOINS AND ATTACH WAISTBAND
MAKE BUTTON HOLES
SEW ON BUTTONS
BACK

CUT 1 PAIR SELF
CUT 1 PAIR LINING
BUTTON STAND

CUT 1 PAIR SELF
BUTTONS ON LEFT SIDE
20 CM SIDE OPEN FOR GRAIN LINE
MAKE UP COMPLETE FACING FIRST THEN BAG OUT HEM
FRONT HEM FACING

CUT 1 SELF ON FOLD