**====19th Century Kent====**

**Overview**

<http://glorious-and-unknown.co.uk/>

During the 19th century Kent was connected to the metropolis through hoy and steam boats and later by the expanding railway network; it also provided convenient access to the coast of France through the regular passenger ships running from [[Folkestone]] and [[Dover]]. It attracted the attention of numerous writers across the century. Coleridge, Keats and Jane Austen were among the most famous of Kent’s Georgian visitors, while [[Dickens]], Thackeray and Wilkie Collins all stayed and wrote here in the early to mid-Victorian period. At the fin de siècle George and Weedon [[Grossmith]] (authors of *The Diary of a Nobody*) and New Humourists such as [[Jerome K. Jerome]] had a rich comic tradition to draw on for their tales of hapless tourists who get into scrapes at the [[seaside]].

But notwithstanding its celebrated status as a holiday destination, Kent was also a focal point for political controversy. In the 1860s Chatham was a pilot town for the infamous Contagious Diseases Acts, designed to stop the spread of venereal disease among the navy by the compulsory ‘treatment’ of infected prostitutes. <http://glorious-and-unknown.co.uk/chatham-lock-hospital/> This legislation was forcibly opposed by feminists such as Sarah Grand (later a resident and suffrage leader in Tunbridge Wells).

The gloomy [[Canterbury]] prison <https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=8&v=wzwQM0cGo_4&feature=emb_title>

does not feature in David Copperfield’s account of a sunny street ‘dozing as it were in the hot light’, although Traddles does later remind Uriah Heep that 'Maidstone jail is a safer place of detention’ than his own room, should he refuse to co-operate. While Uriah’s criminal activities will finally catch up with him, his ultimate fate is to become an obsequious ‘pet prisoner’, adored by evangelical philanthropists. Less fortunate inmates were taken to Maidstone from prisons such as Canterbury for the purpose of execution. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=461nK7mazNo>