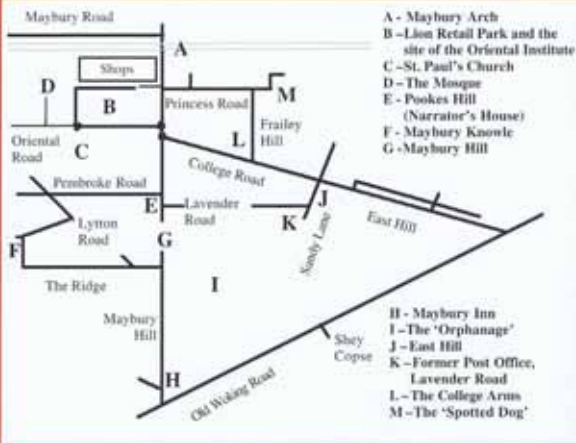


H.G. WELLS, WOKING & THE 'REAL' WAR OF THE WORLDS
MAYBURY HILL



This cycle tour should take up to an hour and a half (depending on your cycling ability) and as the route follows made-up roads and cycle-paths, it should be accessible all year round. Unfortunately, as the title suggests, this route does include a number of hills, but just remember that what goes up must come down, so it is not too strenuous. Please follow the Countryside Code, respect the privacy of the owners and occupiers of the properties listed and enjoy your ride.

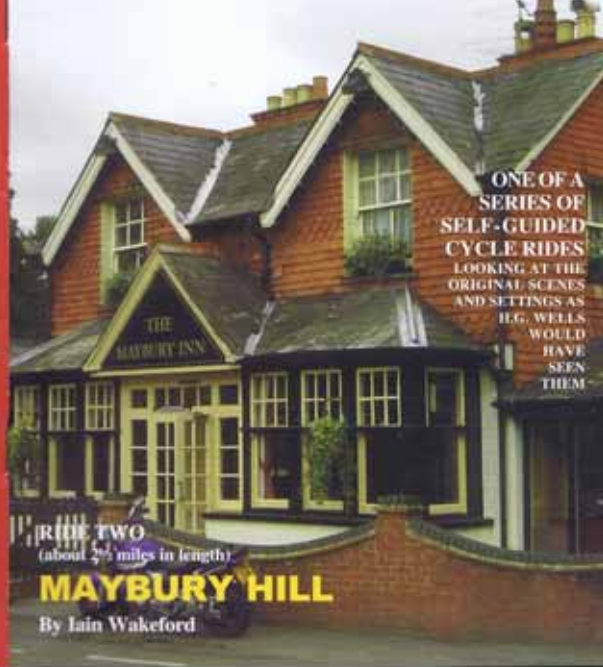
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Published by Iain Wakeford, 166 High Street
Old Woking, GU22 9JH.

CYCLE
GUIDE No. 2

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H.G. WELLS, WOKING & THE REAL WAR OF THE WORLDS

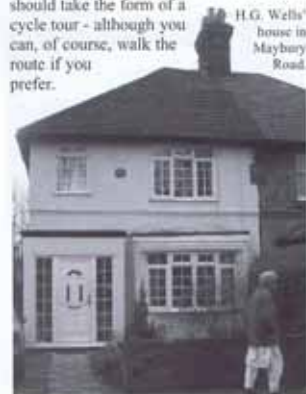


H.G. WELLS, WOKING & THE 'REAL' WAR OF THE WORLDS MAYBURY HILL

Wells and Woking

H.G. Wells came to Woking in 1895 - at the start of his writing career. *The Time Machine* (his first great science-fiction novel) was published in that year. Whilst in Woking, Wells wrote not only *The War of the Worlds* but also *The Invisible Man* (as well as several articles and the book *Wheels of Chance*). Wells had recently married for the second time and had borrowed £100 from his new mother-in-law to help furnish a small, semi-detached villa in Maybury Road. He lived there quite happily until the end of 1896, when he and his wife decided to move to a larger house at Worcester Park with room to look after his ailing mother-in-law. By this stage, Wells was starting to make money from his writing. *The War of the Worlds* had already

been published as a series of articles in *Pearson's Magazine* and in 1898 it was released as a book. In his autobiography, Wells recalls how he had learnt to ride a bicycle in Woking and how he had travelled around the area noting down suitable people and places to be destroyed by his Martians. It seems appropriate, therefore, that this guide should take the form of a cycle tour - although you can, of course, walk the route if you prefer.



The Ride

This ride follows on from the first guide in this series which mainly covered the first seven chapters of H.G. Wells' book (for about four miles around Woking Town Centre and Horsell Common). It follows the action on to Maybury Hill and starts at Maybury Arch (just down the road from where Wells used to live), although you could, of course, start from any point along the route.

Maybury Hill from Maybury Arch.



From the Arch head, up Maybury Hill and enter the Lion Retail Park at the gates near the pedestrian crossing between the park and Princess Road.

Maybury Arch

Wells mentions the Arch on several occasions. In 'How I Reached Home', the Narrator sees 'over the Maybury Arch a train, a billowing tumult of white firelit smoke, and a long caterpillar of lighted windows' head south towards Woking Station. The following morning he mentions the Arch again. 'After breakfast, instead of working, I decided to walk down towards the common. Under the railway-bridge I found a group of soldiers - sappers. I think - They told me no one was allowed over the canal. - Later still on the Saturday, Wells mentions that, just before the Narrator set off for the Spotted Dog to borrow the landlord's dog-cart, he saw 'a bevy of hussars ride under the railway bridge; three galloped through the open gates of the Oriental College; two others dismounted and began running from house to house.'



Lion Retail Park

The Lion Retail Park lies on the site of the Oriental College, and the gates by the pedestrian crossing are more or less on the site of the gates through which the hussars rode.

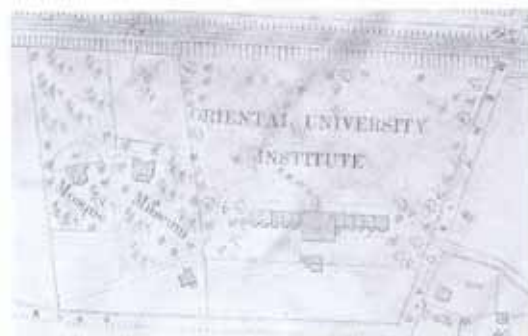


Looking down Maybury Hill towards the arch in the early 20th century, with the entrance to the Oriental Institute on the left.

Oriental Institute

The Oriental College (or Institute) was originally built in 1859 as the 'Royal Dramatic College' (of which Charles Dickens and William Makepeace Thackeray were trustees). It was supposed to have been a drama school, using retired actors and actresses to teach the pupils, but it never succeeded and ended up as a retirement home for what *The Times* rather unkindly called 'decaying actors and actresses'.

The Lion Retail Park.



In the late 1870s the Royal Dramatic College closed due to lack of funds and in 1880 a gentleman by the name of Dr. Gottlieb Leitner established the Oriental Institute on the site. The Institute was a centre where Europeans wishing to visit the Far East could learn about the history and culture before

The Oriental Institute in 1895.

The Oriental Institute in Victorian times.



travelling, and as a place for Orientals to stay whilst visiting this country. By the time Wells came to Woking, the Institute was well established with a museum of oriental art and literature and was already awarding degrees under the University of the Punjab (with which Leitner had connections). Unfortunately when Leitner died in 1899 the Institute closed (although the buildings did manage to survive until well into the 20th century - even if they didn't manage to survive in H.G. Wells' book!

When, in 'The Fighting Begins', the Martians start their destruction of Woking, the Narrator's house on Maybury Hill is one of the early casualties. 'Starting out upon the lawn I saw the tops of the trees about the Oriental College burst into smoky red flame, and the tower of the little church beside it slide down into ruin. The pinnacle of the Mosque had vanished, and the roof-line of the college looked as if a hundred-ton gun had been at work upon it. I and my wife stood amazed, then I realised that the crest of Maybury Hill must be

within range of the Martians Heat-Ray now that the college was cleared out of the way.'

St. Paul's Church today.



St. Paul's Church

The 'little church' beside the College was St. Paul's Church (which incidentally has a turret - not a tower). It was being built in 1895 as a Chapel of Ease to Christ Church, Woking.

St. Paul's soon after it was built in 1895.





The Mosque from the entrance to the Lion Retail Park.

Mosque

As well as St. Paul's, Wells also destroys the Shah Jehan Mosque, at that time the only one in this country. It was because of Leitner and the Institute that the Mosque was built here in 1889. When Leitner died, the Mosque (like the Institute) closed, although the Mosque did finally re-open in 1913.

James Walker's

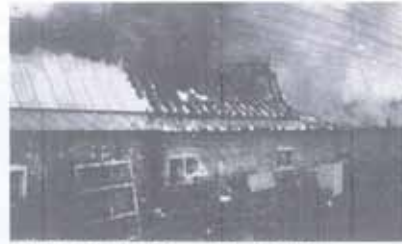
In the early part of the 20th century the Institute building was used for various industries. These included Martinsyde's Aircraft factory, which by the end of the First World War was the third largest aircraft manufacturer in the world. Unfortunately, after the war aeroplane production ceased and in the mid-1920s the factory suffered a disastrous fire (caused by Martians perhaps?) and the factory closed.

The site was then taken over by James Walker & Co. Ltd., who re-named the

The Mosque from an old postcard.



The fire at Martinsyde's factory in the mid 1920s. Is this what the destruction of the Oriental College would have looked like?



site 'The Lion Works' — hence the name 'Lion Retail Park' for the new units that replaced the old Institute buildings in the late 1990s.

Narrator's House

From the description of the destruction of the Oriental College it is possible to work out the location of the Narrator's home.

From the sandpits on Horsell Common the Martians' had destroyed main Institute building, St. Paul's Church and then the Mosque. The Narrator's house was 'within range of the Martians' Heat-Ray now that the college was cleared out of the way.' If you draw a line from the old sandpits on the common, through the centre of the institute building, you hit Maybury Hill near its corner with Pembroke Road.

From the Retail Park, turn left on to Oriental Road and then right at the roundabouts.



Leave the Retail Park by the road exit at the far corner of the park. At the mini-roundabout turn left, heading towards Maybury Hill road and the double mini-roundabout at the junction with College Road. Turn right, up Maybury Hill, to the junction with Pembroke Road.

A few properties are of the right age and location, but a property now called 'Pookes Hill' on the corner with Pembroke Road (now divided into flats) seems the most likely (as the map below clearly shows).

As the Narrator prepares to escape with his wife to Leatherhead, he gives another clue to the location of the Narrator's House... 'The beech trees below the house were burning - and the palings up the road glowed red'.

The Maybury Hill area in 1895. The arrow shows the probable course of the 'heat-ray' from the sandpits on Horsell Common, through the tower of the Oriental Institute to Pookes Hill on the corner of Pembroke Road and Maybury Hill.



Pookes Hill from Maybury Hill.

At this point, the Narrator is preparing to leave and is loading the dog-cart with belongings. A soldier came running up the hill. 'He was going from house to house, warning people to leave. He was going on as I came out of my front door'.

The soldier told him that the Martians were emerging from the sandpits. He then 'ran on to the gate of the house at the crest.'

Maybury Rough is the house on the crest, but before we follow the Narrator over Maybury Hill, we are going to take a short detour to look at another house which in the past was thought to have been the Narrator's home.

Turn down Pembroke Road to Lytton Road, turning left, up the hill, and then right into The Ridge.



Pookes Hill from Pembroke Road.



Maybury Knowle is believed to have been built by the architect, Mr. W.F. Unsworth, in about 1897-8 - after the story had been published in *Pearson's Magazine* and Wells had left the area. The fact that Wells' friend, George Bernard Shaw, lived at Maybury Knowle during 1901-03 may have helped some people to become confused!

Maybury Knowle
Many used to believe that this was the house on which Wells modelled the Narrator's home. It has a clear view across to Horsell Common and Ottershaw, but it could not be the house Wells was thinking of. Apart from the fact that it is in the wrong place — a heat ray from the sandpits would completely miss the Institute buildings if it hit Maybury Knowle — it was not even built when Wells was in Woking!

Maybury Knowle.



Maybury Rough — the house on the 'crest' of Maybury

From Maybury Knowle, continue along The Ridge to the 'crest' of Maybury Hill. Turn right and head down the hill towards the Maybury Arms and the junction with the Old Woking Road.



The corner of The Ridge and Maybury Hill.

Maybury Hill

At this point we re-join the route the Narrator took when he was fleeing with his wife to Leatherhead (where his cousin lived). He has driven the horse and dog-cart up and over Maybury Hill and 'in another moment we were clear of the smoke and noise, and spanking down the opposite slope of Maybury Hill towards Old Woking'.

Maybury Hill looking towards the Maybury Arms (above) and away from the Maybury Arms in the early 20th century (below).

'In front was a quiet sunny landscape, a wheat-field ahead on either side of the road, and the Maybury Inn with its swinging sign. I saw the doctor's cart ahead of me. At the bottom of the hill I turned to look at the hillside I was leaving. The smoke already extended far away to the east and west - to Byfleet pine-woods eastwards, and to Woking on the west.'



The Maybury Inn
Although Wells calls it 'The Maybury Inn', it is clear from the description that the pub is really the Maybury Arms. At this point the Narrator continues his journey to Leatherhead through Old Woking before returning to the Maybury area later that night (having left his wife with his cousin).

Maybury Arms.

Old Woking Road.

Old Woking Road in the early 20th century.

If you wish to follow the Narrator on part of that journey to Leatherhead and back (via Old Woking, Send, Ripley and Pyrford), you can do so with the third four in this series (which starts from this point). To continue on this route, however, you need to turn left at the Maybury Arms and head down the Old Woking Road towards the foot of East Hill.



Old Woking Road
On the right, in the fields beyond Shey Copse, are where the third cylinder landed 'In the Storm', a little after midnight on the Sunday morning. If you look to your left, across the playing fields of the Prins Wilhelm Alexander School, you will see what Wells called 'The Orphanage'.



The Orphanage

'At first I regarded little but the road before me - and then, in a flash like daylight, the red masses of the Orphanage near the crest of the hill, the green tops of the pine trees and this problematical object came out clear and sharp and bright.'
This paragraph has fooled many locals who tried in the past to trace the places mentioned in the book. There used to be an Orphanage - in Oriental Road (on the opposite side of the Mosque to the Lion Retail Park) - so it was obviously nowhere

St. Peter's Convent - the Orphanage in *The War of the Worlds*.

near the crest of Maybury Hill. As such, it was certainly not visible from the Old Woking Road (where the Narrator was obviously travelling). In fact, it would not have been visible to Wells at all, as it was not built until 1909! The building Wells describes was not an Orphanage, but was the old St. Peter's Convent (now turned into luxury apartments and named Oldhouse Woods). Wells has once again changed the name of a building whilst preserving vital clues with which to identify it.





The Narrator had had his first glimpse of the Martians' Tripod, but 'At the sight of the second tripod my nerve went altogether. Not stopping to look again, I wrenched the horse's head hard round to the right, and in another moment the dog-cart had heeled over upon the horse.'

'Not far from me was a little one-roomed squatter's hut of wood, surrounded by a patch of potato-garden. I struggled to my feet at last and, crouching and making every use of cover, I made a run for this.'

Looking across from the Old Woking Road.

"I staggered through the trees, fell into a ditch and bruised my knees against a plank, and finally splashed out into the lane that ran down from the College Arms. I say splashed, for the storm water was sweeping the sand down the hill in a muddy torrent."

The entrance to East Hill.



If you follow the route in the third book from the Maybury Arms through Old Woking and Send and then back via Ripley and Pyrford, you will rejoin this tour at the bottom of East Hill.

East Hill.



On this tour, turn left into East Hill - the 'lane that runs down from the College Arms - and continue up the hill to the corner with Sandy Lane and the junction with College Road.

The top of East Hill.



East Hill

East Hill was still a sandy lane at the turn of the 20th century. Old photographs show it clearly as a narrow lane lined with trees. It is not hard to imagine it turning to mud whenever it rains and from the description there is little doubt that this was the lane that the Narrator splashed into.

It was near the top of East Hill that the Narrator made a gruesome discovery.

"I went close up to the fence on the left and worked my way along its palings.

Near the top I stumbled upon something soft and, by a flash of lightning, saw between my feet a heap of black broadcloth and a pair of boots.

I stood over him waiting for the next flash. When it came I saw that he was a sturdy man, cheaply but not shabbily dressed; his head was bent under his body and he lay crumpled up close to the fence, as though he had been flung violently against it.



East Hill in the early 20th century.

I stopped and turned him over to feel for his heart. He was quite dead. The lightning flashed for a third time and his face leapt upon me. I sprang to my feet. It was the landlord of the Spotted Dog, whose conveyance I had taken.

I stepped over him gingerly and pushed on up the hill. I made my way by the police station and the College Arms towards my own house.' At the top of the hill, glance left down Sandy Lane towards the corner with Lavender Road.

Lavender Road

'At the corner turning up towards the post office a little cart, filled with boxes and furniture, and horseless, heeled over on a broken wheel. A cash-box had been hastily smashed open, and thrown under the debris. Except for the lodge at the Orphanage, which was still on fire, none of the houses had suffered very greatly here. The heat-ray had shaved the chimney tops and passed.'

The College Arms.

Nowadays the Post Office is down East Hill, but in Wells' time it was in the property (recently turned into a house) on the corner of Sandy Lane and Lavender Road. The post box still stands outside the former shop - which in the mid-1890s was run by Mr Harry Mitchell. Continue over the hill into College Road to the junction with Frailley Hill (just before you reach the College Arms public house).



The Post Office on the corner of Sandy Lane and Lavender Road.





The College Arms
After stepping over the body of the landlord of 'The Spotted Dog' he makes his way home, noting... 'By the College Arms a dark heap lay in the road'.



Frailey Hill from the junction of College Road.

Turn into Frailey Hill, going down the road to its junction with Princess Road. At the junction, look right to The Princess public house.

The College Arms in Victorian times.

The Spotted Dog

There are three public houses in the Maybury area: The Maybury Arms, The College Arms and The Princess. In view of what happens to the poor landlord of the 'Spotted Dog', it is not surprising that Wells had to change the name of the pub to avoid upsetting the real landlord. He did, however, make it possible to identify The Spotted Dog, as within a few lines he mentions the Maybury Inn and in the following chapter records the College Arms - so that the Spotted Dog must be The Princess.



The 'Spotted Dog' in 1895.

The landlord of The Princess (who presumably must have upset Wells in some way) was William Brown! But why the 'Spotted Dog'? One theory is that William Brown had a Dalmatian dog - hence the connection - although this has still not been proved.

At the bottom of Frailey Hill turn left into Princess Road. The houses on the left (Windsor Terrace) were built in 1895 when Wells first moved to Woking. At the end of the road turn right, down the hill, to the start of the tour again at Maybury Arch.

The Princess today.



Safe Cycling

Where possible, this route has taken advantage of safe cycle routes and cycle paths, but unfortunately some of the route must be along main roads, whilst in other areas you will have to dismount as the route goes through pedestrian areas or along footpaths. Please be careful and considerate of others. Unfortunately (as the title of this cycle ride indicates), this route is far from flat, but as they say, 'What goes up must come down', so as well as having to climb Maybury Hill and East Hill, you have the advantage of being able to 'free-wheel' down the slopes as well! Places to lock up your bicycle are limited, although there are several places to find refreshment such as The Maybury Inn, The College Arms and The Princess - all mentioned in the story (as well as snacks and drinks being available from the two petrol stations on the route). Enjoy!

About the Author

Iain Wakeford has written numerous books, booklets and articles on the history of Woking and on its connection with H.G. Wells and 'The War of the Worlds'. He also gives illustrated talks on the story using his extensive collection of period photographs, contemporary maps and illustrations from Pearson's Magazine (in which 'The War of the Worlds' first appeared in serial form before being published as a book). Iain conducts a series of three guided walks based on his research and has helped on numerous television programmes and documentaries about the story. All Iain's Heritage Walks are free, although donations are welcome—a hat is passed around at the end of the walk. For more details, please contact Iain at 166 High Street, Old Woking, GU22 9JH; or e-mail heritage.walks@ntlworld.com