

In a series of guided Heritage Walks around Woking, and in these articles, we investigate the stories behind H G Wells' famous science-fiction novel

## 'The War of the Worlds'

Iain Wakeford 2016

# CHAPTER NINE

## THE FIGHTING BEGINS

*'Saturday lives in my memory as a day of suspense.'*

*'I rose early. I went into my garden before breakfast and stood listening, but towards the common there was nothing stirring but a lark.'*

*'The milkman came as usual. I heard the rattle of his chariot and I went round to the side-gate to ask the latest news. He told me that during the night the Martians had been surrounded by troops, and that guns were expected. Then - a familiar, reassuring, note - I heard a train running towards Woking.'*

There were a number of dairies in the Woking area by the 1890's, as this later advertisement shows. All supplied milk from local farms, some



Established 1880. Tel. 48 Woking.

**A. J. RENSHAW,**  
Kingsway Farm Dairy

Absolutely Pure Milk  
:: supplied from ::  
Cows kept at Horsell

INSPECTION INVITED.

Special cows kept for the nursery.  
Fresh and Preserved Cream Fresh  
and Salt Butter and New Laid Eggs.

---

Established 1879. Telephone 155.

For MILK DIRECT FROM THE FARM try  
**J. LUTLEY & SONS,**  
Devonshire Creamery,  
CHERTSEY ROAD, WOKING.  
Over Forty Cows kept at our Own Farms at Horsell.

---

Established 1870. Telephone 469.

**J. C. RENSHAW,**  
St. John's Dairy.

Warranted Pure Milk  
supplied direct from  
own Cows kept on  
the Premises.

Fresh Butter.  
New Laid Eggs.  
Unpreserved Cream  
Fresh Daily.

of which would have delivered direct to their customers from churns on the back of carts like the one shown here getting ready for a carnival display in Knaphill.

*'I saw my neighbour gardening, chatted with him for a time, and then strolled in to breakfast.'*

*'He told me of the burning of the pine-woods about the Byfleet Golf Links.'*

Some people have assumed that these must be the 'West Byfleet Golf Club', but that was not

established by H.F. Locke-King until 1906 (as the Bleakdown Course). In 1894-5, however, he was laying out his first course in the area - the New Zealand Golf Club to the north of Woodham Lane, so it must be here that the second cylinder landed, and which Wells changes the name to the less confusing 'Byfleet Golf Links'.

Locke-King, of course, was to go on to establish Brooklands Motor Racing Track in the fields between Byfleet and Weybridge, but that was not even a twinkle in his eye in the 1890's!

The New Zealand Golf Course was built by H F Locke-King (who later developed the famous Brooklands Motor Racing Circuit).







The view down Maybury Hill towards the railway arch. The entrance to the Oriental Institute is on the left (with the crossed hatched fence). Princess Road (towards the Princess of Wales public house) would be to the right of the photographer. The trees of Horsell Common can be seen in the background.

*'After breakfast, instead of working, I decided to walk down towards the common. Under the railway bridge I found a group of soldiers.'*

*'They told me no one was allowed over the canal.'*

This is perhaps the first indication that the Narrator didn't live in Maybury Road, like Wells, but lived somewhere upon Maybury Hill (so that he could look down towards the Maybury Arch and not be allowed over the canal).



**Chobham High Street**

*'After a while I left them, and went on to the railway station to get as many morning papers as I could.'*

*'But I will not weary the reader with a description of that long morning and of the longer afternoon. I did not succeed in getting a glimpse of the common, for even Horsell and Chobham church towers were in the hands of the military authorities.'*

The church towers at Horsell and Chobham would have been ideal look-out posts for the army to observe the common - both being built upon slight hills that give a good elevation to see across the tree-tops to Horsell Common.

Remarkably, apart from the trees, the modern equivalent of these views has not changed all that much and would still be recognisable to Wells.







www.wokinghistory.org

Tibbenham Brothers and Pocock's shops (established in 1896) are now the site of McDonalds in Chertsey Road.

*'I found people in the town quite secure in the presence of the military, and I heard for the first time from Marshall, the tobacconist, that his son was among the dead on the common.'*

There were several tobacconists in Woking at that time - none by the name of Marshall - but one that had only just opened in town (where perhaps Wells was sold some matches that didn't light properly - prompting a note to be made in his 'little black book') was Albert Pocock's in Chertsey Road. Coincidentally Marshall's was the name of a butchers in Chertsey Road at that time, so whether it is a

change of name, or a change of profession, that Wells had in mind, I will leave you to decide. No doubt those from Woking reading the story in the 1890's would have had their own idea about who Wells was getting at in the story!

*'The soldiers had made the people on the outskirts of Horsell lock up and leave their houses.'*

*'I got back to lunch about two, very tired.'*

*'About half past four I went up to the railway station to get an evening paper, for the morning*

*papers had contained only a very inaccurate description of the killing of Stent, Henderson, Ogilvy and the others.'*

*'About three o'clock there began the thud of a gun at measured intervals from Chertsey or Addlestone. I learned that the smouldering pine-woods into which the second cylinder had fallen was being shelled in the hope of destroying that object before it opened.'*

*'It was only about five, however, that a field gun reached Chobham for use against the first body of Martians.'*



www.wokinghistory.org





The 1895 Ordnance Survey 25" Map of the Woking area, showing the direct line of fire for the Heat-Ray from the sandpits to Pooks Hill on Maybury Hill.

*'About six in the evening as I sat at tea with my wife in the summer-house talking vigorously about the battle that was lowering upon us, I heard a muffled detonation from the common, and immediately after a gust of firing, Close on the heels of that came a violent, rattling crash quite close to us, that shook the ground; and 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. One of our chimneys cracked as if a shot had hit it, flew, and a piece of it came clattering down the tiles and made a heap of broken red fragments upon the flower-bed by my study window.'*

This passage is crucial in locating the position of the Narrators House. From the sandpits on Horsell Common the Heat-Ray hits the Oriental Institute before hitting the chimney of his house on Maybury Hill road. If you draw a straight line from the sandpits to Maybury Hill through the central tower of the Institute (and incidentally through Wells' own house), you hit the house on the corner of Pembroke Road and Maybury Hill - a house that is now divided into apartments known as Pooks Hill.







Within a four years of Wells writing the story the Oriental Institute was closed following the death of its founder, Dr G.W. Leitner.

Dr Leitner's son, Henry, used the buildings as workshops for his company the Woking Accumulator Supply Co., and later the aircraft manufacturers of Martinsydes Ltd took over the site during the First World War.

After the war Martinsydes went into liquidation and the site was taken over by James Walkers Ltd, whose headquarters are still on part of the site facing Oriental Road (in front of the mosque). The old institute buildings that then became part of Walker's Lion Works were demolished when the Lion Retail Park was built on the site in the 1990's.

It is interesting that both the mosque and St Paul's Church should both be hit. The mosque was the first purpose built structure of its kind in this country (being built in 1889), whilst St Paul's was constructed as a chapel of ease in 1895.

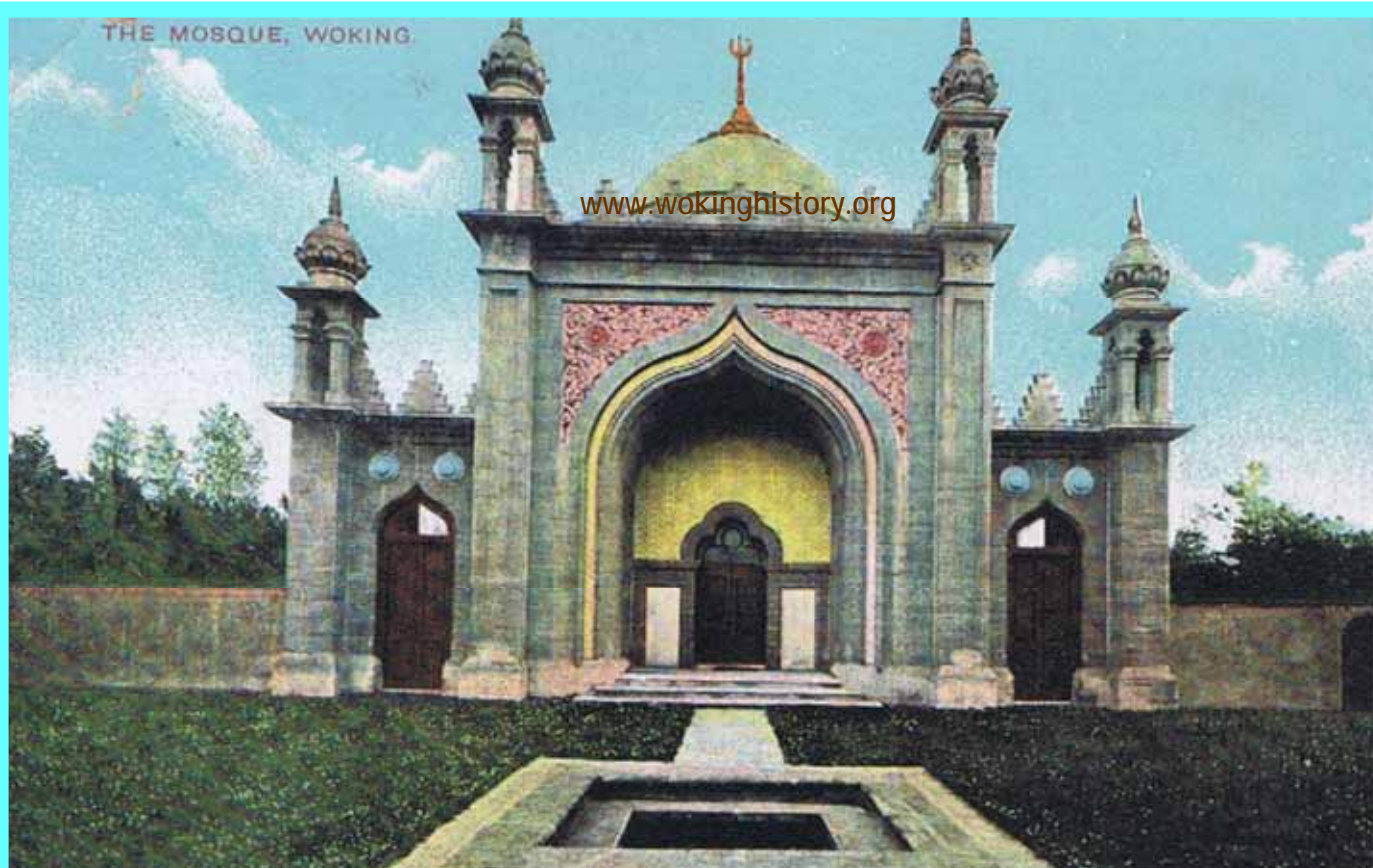
*'I and my wife stood amazed. Then I realised that the crest of Maybury Hill must be within range of the Martian's Heat-Ray now that the college was cleared out of the way.'*

*'At that I gripped my wife's arm and without ceremony ran her out into the road.'*

*'She looked away from me downhill. The people were coming out of their houses astonished.'*

*'Down the hill I 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.'*

The illustration of Maybury Arch three pages back shows the 'open gates of the Oriental College' where the pedestrian entrance to the Lion Retail Park from Maybury Hill (by the pedestrian crossing) is today. The houses opposite were constructed in the 1890's, whilst Wells was researching and writing the book.



**St. Paul's Church**





*'Stop here, said I, you are safe here, and I started off at once for the Spotted Dog for I knew the landlord had a horse and dog-cart. I ran for I perceived that in a moment everyone upon this side of the hill would be moving.'*

*'I found him in his bar quite unaware of what was going on behind his house.'*

At this point Wells relates an amusing story of the landlord selling his half of a pig and the confusion arising out of the Narrator wishing to borrow the dogcart.

I wonder whether Wells actually witnessed the landlord of the Princess of Wales, William Brown, actually selling 'his half of a pig', which prompted him to put the story into *The War of the Worlds*. I wonder too why Wells changes the name of the pub to 'The Spotted Dog'. Some have suggested that perhaps William Brown had a dalmatian, but so far I have been unable to confirm this.

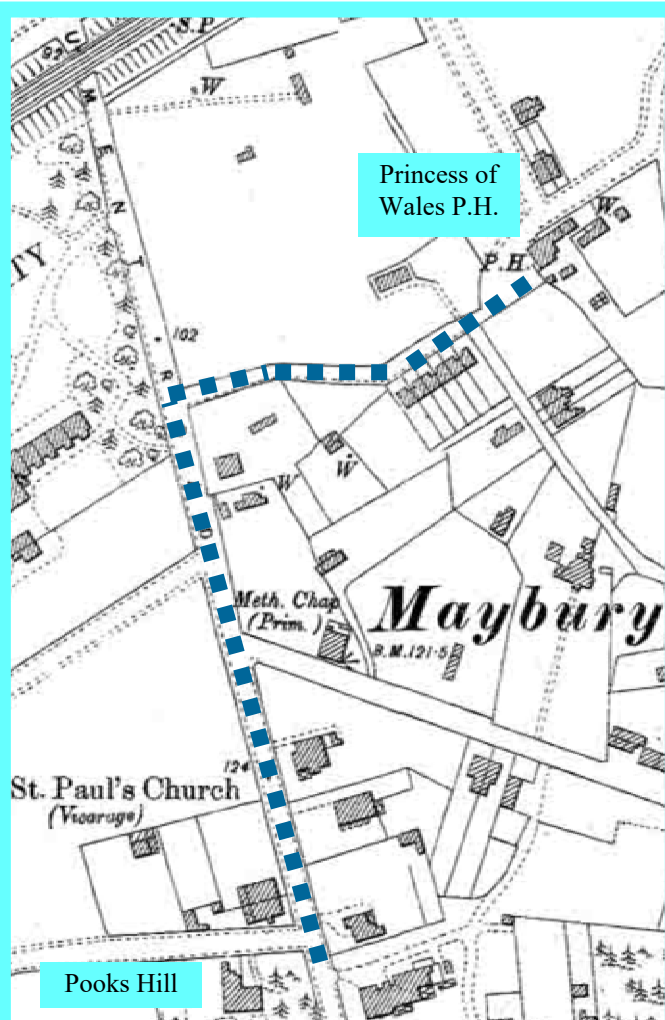
Having secured the cart, the Narrator returns to his house to load it with valuables so that he and his wife can drive to her cousins house at Leatherhead.

*'The beech trees below the house were burning red whilst I did this, and the palings up the road glowed red.'* - *'one of the hussars came running up. He was going from house to house warning people to leave. He was going on as I came out of my front-door, hugging my treasures done up in a table-cloth. I shouted after him;*

*"What news?"*

*He turned, stared, bawled something about "crawling out in a thing like a dish cover", and ran on to the gate of the house at the crest.'*

The house on the crest is Maybury Rough.





*'In another moment we were clear of the smoke and noise and spanking down the opposite slope of Maybury Hill towards Old Woking.'*

*'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.'*

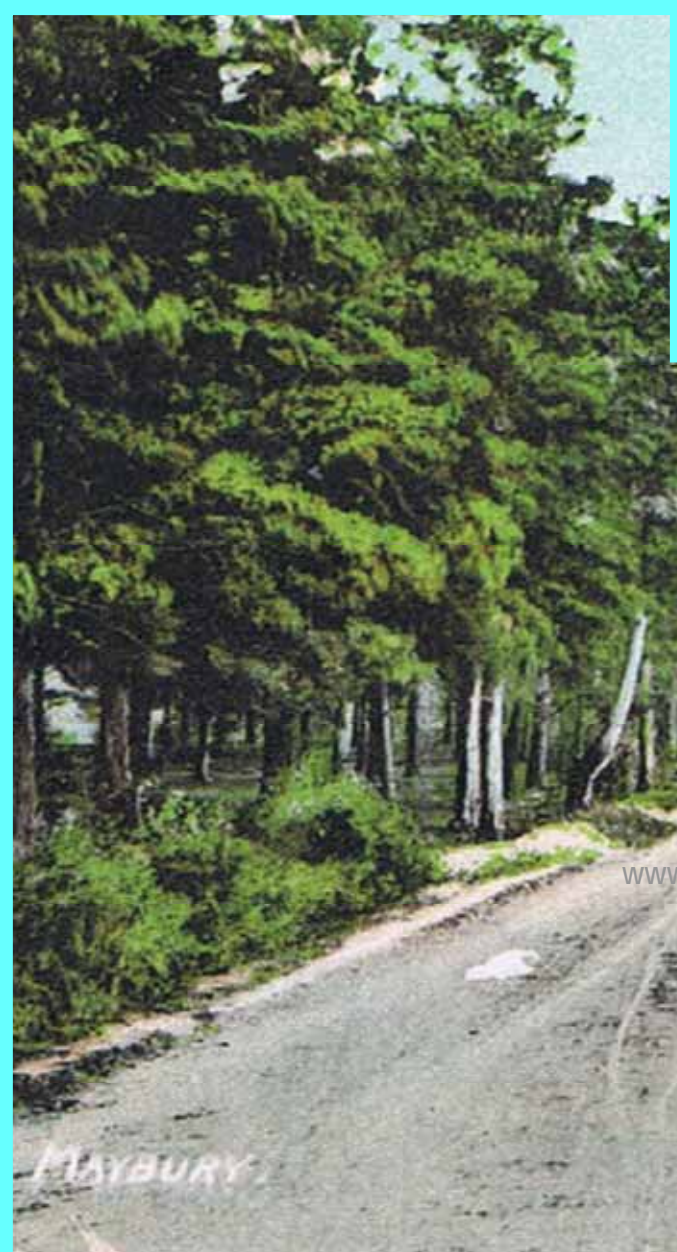
The photograph below shows *'the Maybury Inn with its swinging sign'* and below that *'the opposite slope of Maybury Hill'* in the early 20th century (the houses on the right were built about 1907 on field '507' marked on the 1896 published Ordnance Survey map, to the left).

It seems likely, therefore, judging by the size of the pine trees on the left of the photograph, that the *'wheat-field'* was not in this location, but probably after the Maybury Inn - where the Hockering and Roundhill Estates and the Hoe Bridge Golf Course are today.

*'I saw the doctor's cart ahead of me. At the bottom of the hill I turned my head to look at the hill-side I was leaving.'*

*'The smoke already extended far away to the east and west—to the Byfleet pine-woods eastwards and to Woking on the west'.*

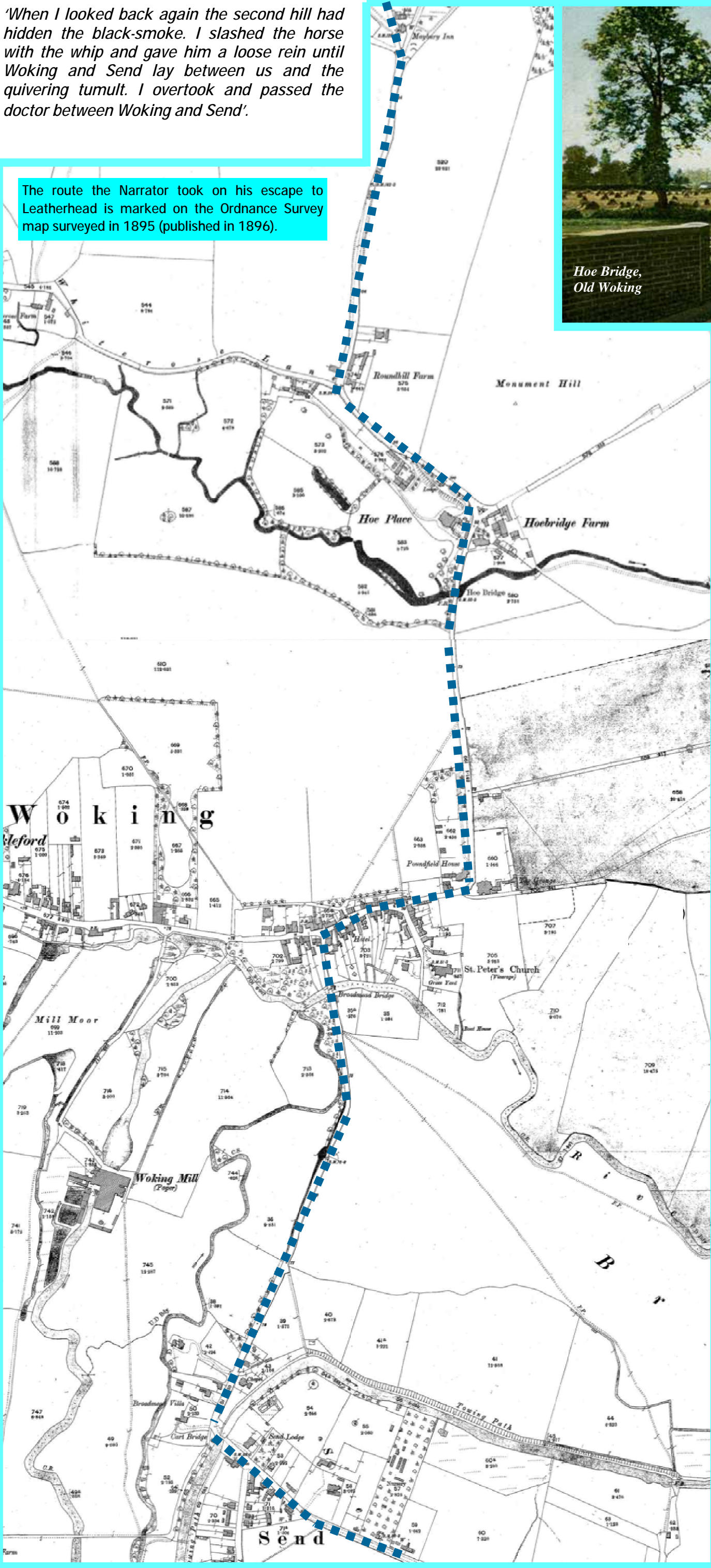
The *'bottom of the hill'* was therefore at the junction of the Old Woking Road with White Rose Lane (by Roundhill Farm).





'When I looked back again the second hill had hidden the black-smoke. I slashed the horse with the whip and gave him a loose rein until Woking and Send lay between us and the quivering tumult. I overtook and passed the doctor between Woking and Send'.

The route the Narrator took on his escape to Leatherhead is marked on the Ordnance Survey map surveyed in 1895 (published in 1896).



The 'second hill' would be 'Monument Hill' (where the entrance to the Hoe Bridge Golf Course is today), so that the Narrator was probably passed Hoe Bridge and heading towards Old Woking Village, where he would have made the sharp right turn into the High Street and then left onto Broadmead Road towards Send.

The confusion in Victorian times as to what to call Old Woking is evident in three photographs below that show the Old Market House in 'Woking' (opposite the entrance to Church Street); 'Woking Village' (at the turning towards Send); and 'Old Woking' (by the bridge over the River Wey). This was the original town of Woking (before the new one grew up around the station), and in Wells' time the decision to name the old town 'Old Woking' had not been made. Some disliked the prefix 'Old' and preferred the suffix 'Village', but Wells appears to have hedged his bets by calling it 'Old Woking' at one point and then simply 'Woking' as the Narrator is heading along the Broadmead Road towards Send (where he passed the doctors cart on his escape to his wife's cousins at Leatherhead). Later in the book he calls it 'Woking Village'!

