

The War of the Worlds by H.G Wells

From Book One Chapter Three: ON HORSELL COMMON

By mid afternoon there was quite a considerable crowd— including one or two gaily dressed ladies.

It was glaringly hot, not a cloud in the sky, nor a breath of wind. The only shadow was that of the few scattered pine-trees. The burning heather had been extinguished, but the level ground towards Ottershaw was blackened as far as one could see, and still giving off vertical streamers of smoke.

Going to the edge of the pit, I found it occupied by a group of about half a dozen men— Henderson, Ogilvy, and a tall, fair-haired man that I afterwards learned was Stent, the Astronomer Royal. There were also several workmen wielding spades and pickaxes.

Stent was giving directions in a clear, high-pitched voice. He was standing on the cylinder, which was now evidently much cooler; his face was crimson and streaming with perspiration, and something seemed to have irritated him.

A large portion of the cylinder had been uncovered, though its lower end was still embedded. As soon as Ogilvy saw me among the staring crowd on the edge of the pit he called to me to come down. He asked me if I would mind going over to see Lord Hilton, the lord of the manor.

“Could you please tell him that the crowd is getting in our way - especially the boys. We want to put a light railing up to help to keep the people back.”

“Of course. What have you found so far?”

“Not much. We can hear some sounds from inside, but the workmen can’t get the top off. The case is enormously thick, and there’s nothing to grip.”

People

Narrator - unnamed but lives in Woking

Henderson - London journalist

Ogilvy - important local astronomer/scientist.

Stent - the Astronomer Royal (appointed by the King of England)

Lord Hilton - local VIP

Quick Check: True (T) False (F) or Not Stated (NS)?

1. There are more ladies than men in the crowd.
2. It is very warm.
3. The fires are still burning out of control.
4. Lord Hilton organises the crowd.

Reading comprehension:

1. Find three words that indicate there has been fire.
2. Describe Stent in less than 25 words. (3 marks)
3. Give two reasons why Stent’s face might be ‘crimson’.
4. What does Ogilvy ask the narrator to do?