



The HG Wells fan club

Where: South-East England
Who: Phil Beed
When: November 2025

Cheaper Sunday room rates at Premier Inn were the incentive to extend our regular Portsmouth CTC club ride. We could go further afield and add some cultural exploration.

From Portsmouth we headed through Iping village, where the Invisible Man sought refuge. Then to Hindhead and past the Devil's Punch Bowl. We descended on the old A3, which is now a cycle track going over the road tunnel. With the Hog's Back behind us, we picked up the Basingstoke Canal towpath to Woking.

In the town centre we passed under a seven-metre Martian tripod sculpture; Woking is where *The War of the Worlds* begins. There was also a statue of HG Wells and a monument of the alien cylinder. The pub we visited for lunch had a Time Machine

clock on the ceiling, as well as a dummy of the Invisible Man in clothes and bandages.

The Wey Navigation took us into London, where we had a 20km ride on quiet back streets, riverside paths and through two royal parks to reach our hotel in Wandsworth. We passed through Putney, where *The War of the Worlds* narrator meets the Artilleryman; it's also a location in Wells's cycling novel, *Wheels of Chance* (see cyclinguk.org/wheels-of-chance).

The following morning we retraced our steps. Getting out of London was easier than expected on a Monday morning. In daylight this time, we saw deer in Richmond Park and riverside sights we had missed in the dark of the previous evening. The canal towpaths were quieter on a weekday and we made good progress back to Woking

There we took a short detour to Horsell Common and the site of the Martian landing in the Sandpits. The area is largely unchanged since 1895, and you could see why Wells picked this spot. Our gathering of cyclists was not unlike the curious spectators in the story.

We arrived home after dark, having had two days of riding and culture.



Exploring mine craft

Where: Mid Wales
Who: Peter Haskett
When: Summer 2025

We pushed open a heavy metal gate, revealing a long, black tunnel. As we entered, all we could hear was the splashing of our feet and the constant dripping of water. Head torches on, we walked in for 50 metres or so. And there it was in all its decaying glory: one of only two surviving underground waterwheels in the UK.

Our three-day family bikepacking trip began on a warm day in Machynlleth with a climb into the hills. We puffed and pushed up small lanes and forest tracks, before descending into Artists Valley and reaching the mine mid-afternoon. After exploring that, a friendly local told us of a lovely spot for a dip in the river.

Feeling refreshed, we cruised down towards Borth, reaching our campsite in time for tea. We were treated to a beautiful sunset. The next day would bring a long climb back up into the mountains. But for the time being we were

content to enjoy the last of the sunshine and settle down in the tent, listening to the cries of oystercatchers and curlew across the water.

