

leopards, which got into the news when they escaped from their cages.⁵¹ Hunter's house was demolished in 1886, twenty years before 'The Door in the Wall' appeared, and Wells might not have heard of its peculiar history though it seems hardly a coincidence, if we consider the careful topographical indications which characterise the *denouement* of the plot. Also, Coburn himself had explored the subject: his *Sphinx* and *View of Trafalgar Square* show us the presence of feline figures in two crucial areas of the city – the Embankment and Trafalgar Square. Michael Weaver suggests that they might be associated to freemasonic images and symbols, but they also might be read as representations of the hidden, different London that both the photographer and the writer were trying to *render* with their art.

The verb *render* brings us back to the caption in Wells's caricature-drawing mentioned at the beginning of this essay: "Our business is to see what we can and render it." The juxtaposition of "see" and "render" betrays a shift from an objective, empirical mode of perception to a process of transformation of the seen. This, in my opinion, is emblematic of the strategy that we have observed in the stories in *The Door in the Wall* which are characterised by the problematisation of the diegetic structure of the narrative at all levels, involving the continuous attempt on the part of both the author and the narrators to prove their own stories. This strategy, I have argued, was illustrated and exemplified through and by Coburn's photographs.

We can therefore assert that despite their often very diverging aesthetics, Wells's and Coburn's collaboration in the volume *The Door in the Wall* works both from the point of view of structure and content: on the one hand, the photographic illustrations reproduce the constant tensions in the diegetic mode of narration between the real and the unreal, dream and reality; on the other hand, if we consider the representation of the city, both pictures and text show a deep commitment on the part of their authors to investigate the multifaceted aspects of the city and to portray its hidden parts, as if they belonged to a different world.

Ironically, in 'The Door in the Wall' Wallace's search for that other London ends tragically with his death on a building site for the extension of the railway: Wells, unlike Symons (and Coburn), was not able to shut the door and forget about the "real London," but had certainly been able to *see* its "other side" and, like Coburn, had tried to render it.

⁵¹ Lloyd Sanders, *Old Kew, Chiswick and Kensington*, p.271.

John S. Partington

Thornwood Lodge, Knowl Hill, Berkshire: Home of Isabel Mary Wells, c.1897-1899

With the recent publication of *The Correspondence of H.G. Wells* it came to my attention that Isabel Mary Wells, H.G.'s first wife and cousin, resided at a poultry farm called Thornwood Lodge, Knowl Hill, Berkshire during the late 1890s. As I have recently moved to Reading, it seemed a worthwhile pastime to research the whereabouts of this farm and discover as much about Isabel's time there as I could.

H.G. met Isabel during his undergraduate days at the Normal School of Science, South Kensington. He took a room in Isabel's and her mother's house in Euston Road in 1885 and quickly fell in love with his cousin. Although they lost touch for a short while, H.G. got in contact with Isabel again around 1890 and they were married in 1891. After three years of sexual incompatibility the pair separated in 1894 and divorced the following year. H.G. then married one of his students, Amy Catherine Robbins ('Jane'), who remained his wife until her death in 1927.

Despite his remarriage, H.G. continued to feel a love for Isabel for the rest of her life. Indeed, they kept in touch and H.G. supported Isabel financially during her several periods of hardship. The first of these seems to have been in 1897, when Isabel decided to purchase a poultry farm in Knowl Hill. H.G. contributed to the initial cost and he and Jane sent several cheques in the years that followed to help Isabel to keep the business afloat. Ultimately, however, the farm failed and Isabel sold up and moved on.

During the period in which Isabel ran the poultry farm, the house was known as Thornwood Lodge. It is a large house on a sizeable piece of land, located off Bath Road (the A4) on Sandhills. Despite Isabel's failure with the farm, the house must have been quite a possession. The previous owner, living at Thornwood Lodge at least between 1887 and 1895, was Hugh Harvey, listed in *Kelly's Directory of Berkshire* under the heading 'gentry'.¹ The directory listed village residents under the headings, 'gentry' or 'commercial' in the early 1890s, though 'gentry' became 'private resident' by the time Isabel moved to Thornwood Lodge. Curiously, Isabel is listed as a 'private resident' during her time at Thornwood Lodge, even though another poultry breeder, at Hillside,

¹ *Kelly's Directory of Berkshire* (London: Kelly's, 1895)

Knowl Hill, is listed under 'commercial'.² This discrepancy could be put down to one of several reasons: perhaps Isabel's status as a woman (she was listed in the directory as 'Mrs Wells') debarred her entry under 'commercial' by the directory's criteria. Or perhaps Isabel had a voice in her registration and decided not to advertise the fact that she was a poultry farmer. Perhaps Thornwood Lodge was considered too prestigious a residence to be listed as 'commercial'. Or perhaps Isabel was listed as a 'private resident' simply because her predecessor, Hugh Harvey, was listed as such and, incidentally, so was her successor, Mrs Corphey.³ For whatever reason, the only easily available evidence of Isabel's proprietorship of a poultry farm are her letters to H.G., contained in the collected correspondence, and a reference by H.G. to a trip he made to Knowl Hill in his *Experiment in Autobiography*.

David C. Smith, the editor of *The Correspondence*, includes several letters from Isabel Wells (Smith refers to her as Isabel Fowler-Smith, though she only married Fowler-Smith after the turn of the century) in lieu of any remaining ones from H.G. to her in the 1890s. Three of these letters were sent from "Thornwood, Knowle Hill, Twyford, Berks". In all three letters, Isabel thanks H.G. for a cheque before going on to discuss her life on the farm. In about February 1898, she writes,

I should have written before but I thought I would not bother you with a letter until I could tell you the result of my first hatching.

I have twenty-four healthy little chicks in the Foster Mother. Unfortunately we had to buy a lot of eggs as sixteen have proved infertile.

I have fifty of our own eggs in now & hope for better luck next hatching time. The Incubator is quite easy to work & keeps a wonderfully even temperature.⁴

Then, in a letter dated August 11, 1898, Isabel expresses her pleasure at entertaining her and H.G.'s cousin, Bertie Williams, at the farm before declaring, "I wanted your mother to come up to see me this summer, but she does not seem inclined, I wish she would. I

² *Kelly's Directory of Berkshire* (London: Kelly's, 1899)

³ *Kelly's Directory of Berkshire* (London: Kelly's, 1903)

⁴ Letter, Isabel Mary Wells to H.G. Wells, c. February 1898, in *The Correspondence of H.G. Wells: Volume 1, 1880-1903*, ed. by David C. Smith (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1998), p.301

should very much like to see her again."⁵ Finally, in an undated letter of 1898, Isabel asks, "can I send you anything in the way of country produce. I mean chickens or eggs. Of course I don't know how you are situated in your present abode. Perhaps you would rather wait until you are settled again."⁶ It would seem likely that this letter was written after September 1898 as H.G. was living in Worcester Park, Surrey until that date before moving to Sandgate in Kent. Isabel's reference to H.G. 'settling in' presumably refers to the move to the new address. These few references are all that we have publicly available on Isabel's life at the farm. It is of course possible that more of her letters to H.G. exist at the H.G. Wells archive in the University of Illinois or in collections elsewhere.

Although Isabel's letters give us a slight insight into life at Thornwood Lodge, perhaps the most interesting event at the farm has been told in H.G.'s autobiography. He relates an incident that reveals "how little I had really finished with my cousin when I separated myself from her." The event, although referred to by Wells as "somewhen about 1898 or 99", probably occurred in the summer of 1898 when he was living in Surrey. By 1899 he had moved to Kent and was thus too far away from Knowl Hill to have cycled to Thornwood Lodge. The passage runs as follows:

I visited her somewhen about 1898 or 99 at a poultry farm she was running, not very profitably, at Twyford between Maidenhead and Reading. I think the pretext of our meeting again was the discussion of some extension of that enterprise. I bicycled to the place and found her amidst green things and swarming creatures depending upon her, in the rustic setting to which by nature she belonged. We spent a day together at Virginia Water, a day without tension, with an easy friendliness we had never known before. We used our old intimate names for each other. Suddenly I found myself overcome by the sense of our separation. I wanted fantastically to recover her. I implored her for the last time in vain. Before dawn the house had become unendurable for me. I got up and dressed and went down to find my bicycle and depart. She heard me moving about, perhaps she too had not slept, and she came down, kindly and invincible as ever, and as amazed as ever at my strangeness.

⁵ Letter, Isabel Mary Wells to H.G. Wells, August 11, 1898, in *The Correspondence of H.G. Wells: Volume 1, 1880-1903*, ed. by David C. Smith (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1998), pp.317-18

Because you see it was all so unreasonable.

'But you cannot go out at this hour without something to eat,' she said, and set about lighting a fire and boiling a kettle.

Her aunt could be heard moving about upstairs, for they occupied adjacent rooms. 'It's all right Auntie,' she said, and prevented her from coming down to witness my distress.

All our mingling of intense attraction and baffling reservation was there unchanged. 'But how can things like that be, now?' she asked. I gave way to a wild storm of weeping. I wept in her arms like a disappointed child, and then suddenly pulled myself together and went out into the summer dawn and mounted my bicycle and wandered off southward into a sunlit intensity of perplexity and frustration, unable to understand the peculiar keenness of my unhappiness. I felt like an automaton, I felt as though all purpose had been drained out of me and nothing remained worth while. The world was dead and I was dead and I had only just discovered it.⁷

Although Isabel lived at Thornwood Lodge for just a few years, it captured much of what H.G. would later become famous and infamous for. On the one hand, H.G.'s donations of money to start and then to support the farm demonstrate his famous generosity. On the other hand, his emotional breakdown in Isabel's arms, pleading for her to return to him, shows H.G.'s infamous weakness for female companionship outside of the marital relationship. The experience of Thornwood Lodge also gave H.G. material for his fiction, as the poultry farm in his 1904 novel *The Food of the Gods and How it Came to Earth* demonstrates. In that book, the miraculous growth-food of the title is first tried out on chicks on an experimental farm at "Hickleybrow, near Urshot in Kent," though clearly based on Wells's knowledge of Thornwood.

I hope, in this paper, I have shown the significance of Thornwood Lodge to H.G.'s life and work. It is satisfying to know that the property still exists today. It is now

⁶ Letter, Isabel Mary Wells to H.G. Wells, c.late-1898, in *The Correspondence of H.G. Wells: Volume 1, 1880-1903*, ed. by David C. Smith (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1998), p.318

⁷ H.G. Wells, *Experiment in Autobiography: Discoveries and Conclusions of a Very Ordinary Brain (since 1866)* (New York: Macmillan, 1934), pp.358-59

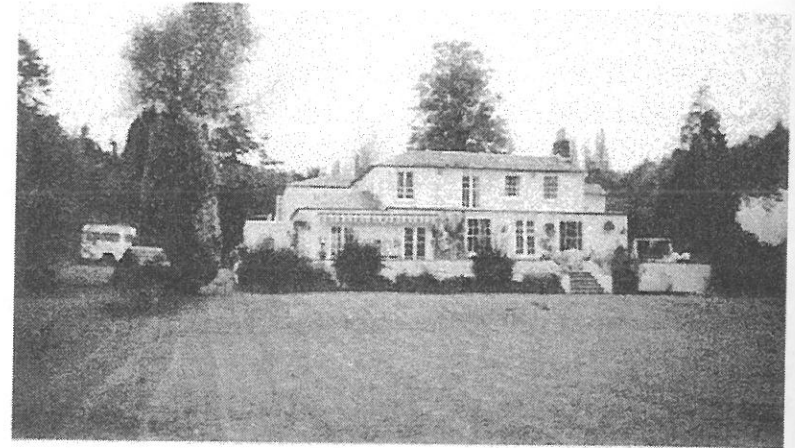
known as Thornwood House, an expensive residence with large lawns, a pond and a fountain behind electric wooden gates. Although, no doubt, much changed from its days as a poultry farm, the house itself has retained much of its nineteenth-century romance. I feel sure it would be easily recognisable to Isabel and H.G. Wells were they to see it today.

In preparing this article, I have attempted to determine the definite period at which Isabel Wells and her aunt lived at Thornwood Lodge. Her letters to H.G. are dated 1898 and H.G. claims to have visited Isabel in 1898 or 1899. *The Berkshire County Directory* lists Isabel as a resident at Thornwood Lodge in 1899. Unfortunately the directory was not an annual publication and the previous edition of 1895 and the next later edition of 1903 both show other occupiers of the house. As the census returns for 1901 are not yet available for public perusal, they cannot be used to verify the occupancy of Thornwood Lodge for that year. The electoral register, in those days before women's suffrage, offers very little evidence as to when Isabel lived in Knowl Hill. The Berkshire County Record Office has no title deed for Thornwood Lodge and no records of property transactions or rates payments for the address. The only other sources relevant to Knowl Hill at the turn of the century are the parish church magazines for 1895 and 1901, but again these make no reference to Isabel Wells. Hence, further clues in tracing Isabel's stay in Knowl Hill must be conducted through the use of records outside of Berkshire – perhaps documents from her previous or later borough residences, if these addresses can be ascertained. Although the possible span of years of Isabel's residency in Knowl Hill is between 1895 and 1903, it seems most likely to me that she lived at Thornwood Lodge from 1897 till 1899. This supposition arises from the fact that in her letter of February 1898 Isabel refers to her first hatchings, so she was unlikely to have lived at Thornwood Lodge from much earlier. The latter date is determined by the fact that the farm was a financial failure and Wells's references in his letters to funding Isabel at Thornwood Lodge stop in 1899. In researching this article, I have been assisted by the resources of Reading Central Library, Berkshire County Record Office, Reading University Library and the current occupants of Thornwood House, the Belchers, who provided me with a recent photograph (reproduced above)⁸ and a 1956 surveyor's report of the property.⁹ I

⁸ Photograph of Thornwood House, 16 October 1998, by A. Belcher

⁹ Surveyor's report of Thornwood, by Roland Hartley and partners, 10 May 1956. (This report, although of little use in dating Isabel's period at Thornwood, does prove that Isabel resided in the main house and not in some other cottage on the estate, as references are made to H.G.'s alterations to the interior of the house. The report also gives full details of the rooms and dimensions of the house and the land, albeit for 1956).

thank them all as well as David C. Smith, a useful correspondent and the editor of Wells's collected letters.



Jonathan Bignell

Another Time. Another Space: Modernity, Subjectivity, and *The Time Machine*

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H.G. Wells's science fiction novels have long been attractive to filmmakers. Film versions include *The Island of Dr Moreau* (Erle C. Kenton 1932 [titled *The Island of Lost Souls*], Don Taylor 1977, John Frankenheimer 1996), *The Invisible Man* (James Whale 1933, sequels Joe May 1940, Ford Beebe 1944), *Things to Come* (William Cameron Menzies 1936), and *The War of the Worlds* (Byron Haskin 1953). I want to focus here on Wells's short novel *The Time Machine*, first published in 1895, and the film adaptation