humankind. They speak for the antediluvian utopias of pre-modern times. They are divisive, mutually antipathetic, and irrational. They represent a dead end. They will not prevail.

I can only hope that as the new century wears on, the gist of the argument of H.G. Wells's masterpiece, *The Open Conspiracy*, will reappear in some form or other, and help to inspire the kind of world revolution he dreamed of. His vision of what I once called the City of Man[19] and would now call the Human Commonwealth – social-democratic, liberal, and secular, led by our best and bravest Open Conspirators – remains humankind's most hopeful chance of surviving into the 22nd century.

David J. Lake

Port Burdock in *The Invisible Man*: Where Does Griffin Die?

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[19] Wagar, *The City of Man: Prophecies of a World Civilization in Twentieth-Century Thought* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1963); and *Building the City of Man: Outlines of a World Civilization*: (New York: Grossman, 1971). I am also much indebted to Wells for my idea of a "World Party": see my *A Short History of the Future* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989; 3rd edition, 1999).

Wells in his novel *The Invisible Man* tells us that Griffin, the Invisible Man, finally makes for a town called Port Burdock, and there at last he is cornered and killed. In the novel, Port Burdock is close to another place called Port Stowe, and both are on the south coast of England, within walking distance of Sussex. When I edited *The Invisible Man* in 1996, for Oxford University Press, I wanted to identify Port Stowe and Port Burdock in my notes, but my General Editor restrained me. My General Editor was Patrick Parrinder. I am grateful now to Professor Parrinder, because he saved me from a blunder. However, last year Leon Stover published an edition of *The Invisible Man*, and in it he made a different blunder. He claimed that Port Stowe plus Port Burdock is Southampton.[1]

In this paper, I intend to show that Stover is wrong. We don't know where Port Stowe is, but Port Burdock can't be Southampton. I would say instead that it is almost certainly based on Portsmouth. I don't claim that Port Burdock *is* Portsmouth: that would be simplistic. Towns in fiction are never *exactly* the same as towns in reality. All fictions create fictional worlds, which resemble the real world only more or less. So what I claim is that Port Burdock is much more like Portsmouth than it is like Southampton. Wells in fact knew Portsmouth well; I am not sure that he ever visited Southampton. And if we agree that Port Burdock is based on Portsmouth. Then we can even locate a spot in the real Portsmouth suburbs, which agrees fairly well with the spot in Wells's novel where Griffin is hunted down and killed. The agreement is not so good as to warrant a plaque, or a monument like the Martian monument in Woking, but it is not at all bad.

Now we must consider the question of dates, because this is crucial. Wells began writing *The Invisible Man* in 1896, and published it the following year: the serial began in June 1897. He set his story in a vague present, later than the 1887 Jubilee, but still in the reign of Queen Victoria, for both the Jubilee and the Queen are mentioned in the text.[2] So we have to consider all places as they were in late Victorian times, the late 1880s to 1890s.

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[1] Leon Stover, ed., *The Invisible Man: A Grotesque Romance. A Critical Text of the 1897 New York First Edition, with an Introduction and Appendices*, by H.G. Wells (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1998), p.106, n.141.

[2] H.G. Wells, *The Invisible Man*, ed. by David Lake (New York: Oxford University Press [World's Classics], 1996), pp.34, 138.

There are three main locations where the events of the novel take place. In chronological order, these are London, a village in Sussex called Iping, and then Port Stowe and Port Burdock.

Griffin gives the history of his early adventures in a long flashback, Chapters 19 to 23. By this time he is already in Port Burdock, or its outermost suburbs: he is holed up in the house of Doctor Kemp, his former college acquaintance and his future enemy. This flashback presents no problems of location: Griffin gives exact locations in London – Great Portland Street, Drury Lane, and so on. Griffin finds that London in winter is not a good place for a naked invisible man, so he escapes to a village in Sussex – and that is where we meet him in Chapter 1 of the novel.

He stays at the "Coach and Horses" Pub in this village, heavily muffled and disguised, for several months and a dozen chapters. Finally at Whitsun, early June, he runs out of money. He commits a burglary, and has to escape, once more naked and invisible; but this time he has a visible accomplice, a tramp called Thomas Marvel, whom Griffin forces into his service. Griffin and Marvel walk overnight from the Sussex village to the coast.

As to the village, we know it is in Sussex, because Sussex is mentioned three times in the text, twice in Chapter 4 and once in Chapter 18.[3] And we are even given the name of the village: Iping, which is a real village in West Sussex, close to Midhurst. But the real Iping is not much like the fictional Iping. There is no pub at all in Iping, and there never has been: it is a very small village. What Wells probably did was to use the real nearby village of Stedham, but call it "Iping". Stedham around 1890 did have a National School and a village green and a pub. But of course the pub was not called "The Coach and Horses": it was called 'The Hamilton Arms.' This is typical of Wells's fictionalizing: he alters reality a bit, usually for reason of discretion.

The other village and town names in this part of the story are all pseudonyms. There are several references to "Bramblehurst" and "Bramblehurst railway station",[4] which may well be a disguise for Midhurst – Midhurst did have a station in Wells's time. Of course, all this is real Wells country: in the 1880s he was a chemist's assistant and then a pupil-teacher at Midhurst; his mother was the housekeeper at Up

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[3] Wells, *The Invisible Man*, pp.21, 87.

[4] Wells, *The Invisible Man*, pp.1, 5, 62.

Park a few hours' walk to the west. And then for two years, 1881-83, Wells was a draper's assistant in Southsea, the southern suburb of Portsmouth. Portsmouth is also within a long walking distance of inland West Sussex, because Wells once did the seventeen miles from Southsea to Up Park on a Sunday morning, as he relates in his autobiography.[5]

I believe it is safe to assume that Griffin and marvel escape from the Iping and Midhurst area when they head for the coast. But now the real problem begins.

It is Whit-Monday, and, according to Chapter 26, early June.[6] Griffin and Marvel leave the Iping area in the twilight of the evening[7] – which means, I presume, about 9 pm – and next morning at 10 am they are at a place called Port Stowe. From its name, it must be on the coast – also, there are sailors here; and already Griffin has been committing burglaries, and putting the money into the pockets of Mr. Marvel. By the next chapter it is the evening of the same day, and they are in the suburbs of a nearby place called Burdock or Port Burdock. Here Marvel runs away from Griffin; Griffin chases him downhill to a place called "The Jolly Cricketers", and there gets wounded by a gunshot. After that, Griffin takes refuge with Kemp, and tells him his story. Kemp is horrified, and notifies the police. Then Griffin escapes inland, but later returns and tries to kill Kemp. After that, there is a chase downhill, and Griffin is finally cornered and killed. He is killed, in fact, near a police station, a tramway terminus, and that same pub, "The Jolly Cricketers". And all that climax takes place in the suburbs of "Port Burdock."

At this point we have to tackle the relationship between Port Stowe and Port Burdock. The novel certainly gives the impression that they are not far apart. Perhaps the clearest indication comes from Chapter 15, where Doctor Kemp is in Port Burdock, presumably, and he relates that that morning a man ran into him shouting "'Visible Man a-coming, sir!".[8] This is the same morning that Griffin was committing his burglaries in Port Stowe. The evidence is not really very strong. But Griffin and Marvel have already made a long overnight march, and they surely would not be in a condition to make another long march between about 10 am and the evening of that

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[5] H.G. Wells, *Experiment in Autobiography*, 2 vols (London: Gollancz, 1934), I, p.158.

[6] Wells, *The Invisible Man*, p.133.

[7] Wells, *The Invisible Man*, p.64.

[8] Wells, *The Invisible Man*, p.71.

Tuesday. If, as I think, Port Burdock stands for Portsmouth, then "Port Stowe" could stand for a coastal place like Emsworth. But the real main question is, where is Port Burdock?

Leon Stover thinks that Burdock is a suburb of Port Stowe, and Port Stowe is Southampton.[9] This is a confused way of putting things. But Stover's formulation at least implies that Port Burdock is also Southampton, and that is the theory I am now going to examine.

There is really only one point in favour of Southampton. This is, that it is and was a major port with shipping connections to France. And that is important to Griffin. Kemp asks him in Chapter 24:

'What were you planning to do when you were heading for Port Burdock? *Had* you any plan?'

[And Griffin answers:]

'I was going to clear out of the country....You have a line of steamers from here to France.'[10]

This is why I say the problem is not Port Stowe, but Port Burdock. Burdock is the major port, with connections to France. And it is certain that in the 1880s and 1890s, Southampton did have shipping connections with France, especially with Cherbourg and Le Havre.

But Portsmouth may also then have had a connection with France. There certainly was a line of steamers plying between Clarence Pier, Southsea, and Cherbourg in 1910: this is mentioned in the 1910 *Southsea and Portsmouth Official Guide* in two places.[11] (I owe this evidence to John Hammond.) For the Victorian period, I am not sure. Local newspapers of the 1880s and 1890s, such as the *Hampshire Telegraph*, carry no relevant advertisements. But there are one-line declarations of steam connection with Le Havre in several Portsmouth directories of

[9] Stover, ed., *The Invisible Man*, p.106, n.141.

[10] Wells, *The Invisible Man*, p.126.

[11] *Southsea and Portsmouth Official Guide*, 1910, pp.33, 83.

the 1870s through 1890s: the *Post Office Directory* of 1875[12] and *Kelly's Directory of Portsmouth* from its first edition in 1886 through to 1894, in its introduction.[13] All these directories have the same formula: "There is steam connection with Plymouth and Havre." I do not know what weight to give to this. Possibly there was not a passenger line, but merely cargo vessels. However, even a cargo vessel would have been enough for Griffin: he could have stowed away on anything.

So – this is one point in favour of Southampton, a certain rather than an uncertain "line of steamers" to France. But there are two pieces of decisive evidence *against* Southampton. One is the cordon established by the police against Griffin; and the other is the garrison.

First, the *cordon*. In Chapter 26, when Griffin has escaped from Port Burdock, we read about the police precautions:

Every passenger train along the lines of a great parallelogram between Southampton, Winchester, Brighton, and Horsham, travelled with locked doors.[14]

The two limits of the cordon on the coast are Brighton on the east, and Southampton on the west. Southampton, then, is the extreme western limit of the danger area. If Southampton itself were Port Burdock, then the western limit would have to be much farther west – say, at Bournemouth or in Dorset.

This point alone really rules out Southampton as a possibility for Port Burdock. In fact, there is only one major port between Brighton and Southampton, and that is – Portsmouth.

Moreover, we read in the novel that Port Burdock has a *garrison*. In Chapter 25, Kemp talks about the hunt for Griffin, and says, "The garrison must help".[15] Now, in the 1880s and 1890s Southampton had no garrison, whereas Portsmouth *did*. This

[12] *Post Office Directory (Hants)*, 1875, p.10.

[13] *Kelly's Directory of Portsmouth*, 1886, 1888-89, 1892, 1894, p.1.

[14] Wells, *The Invisible Man*, p.134.

[15] Wells, *The Invisible Man*, p.131.

is most clearly verified by the events of the dock strike in Southampton in 1890. A. Temple Patterson in his history of Southampton says that troops had to be called in to control the strikers. They had to be sent for – 280 men – from Portsmouth.[16] In fact, the Portsmouth garrison was famous.

I think the layout of the cordon and the fact of the garrison rule out Southampton as the basis for Port Burdock. A third point one could make against Southampton is that for Griffin to march there from Iping in one day would be on or over the limit of human possibility. Stover says Portsmouth is 27 miles from Iping.[17] That may be true as the crow flies, but Griffin is not a crow. He is a naked man on foot, with a reluctant companion. He and Marvel surely have to take paths, if not roads. I think their distance to Southampton would be not 27 miles, but close to 40; and Griffin must take time off for rest and food, and for his burglaries in Port Stowe. He could reach Portsmouth, about 25 miles from Iping; but he probably could not reach Southampton, in one day.

If we accept that Port Burdock is probably based on Portsmouth in *The Invisible Man*, then the probability becomes even stronger when we look at other novels of Wells. (I owe this point to John Hammond, who nudged me into some rereading.)

Apparently Wells first coined the name "Portburdock" in his fantasy novel, *The Wonderful Visit*, published 1895, but in that novel all we learn is that "Portburdock"[18] is not too far from Iping Hanger, a village name also used in *The Invisible Man*.[19] The name evidence in *The Wonderful Visit* is suggestive, but we don't even know what counties are involved, so I'll say no more about it.

The History of Mr Polly, published 1910, is quite another matter. Here, in Chapter 1, we get a detailed picture of "Port Burdock", in the days before cycling became cheap and popular; and it is very obviously Wells's Portsmouth, as he knew it in the 1880s.

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[16] A. Temple Patterson, *A History of Southampton, 1700-1914*, 3 vols. (Southampton: University of Southampton Press, 1966), III, p.91.

[17] Stover, ed., *The Invisible Man*, p.106, n.141.

[18] H.G. Wells, *The Wonderful Visit* (New York: Arno Press, 1978), p.6.

[19] Wells, *The Invisible Man*, p.17.

Mr Polly serves as a draper's apprentice at Port Burdock for six years – as Wells served at Southsea for two years. In *Mr Polly* Port Burdock is described as "One of the three townships that are grouped round the Port Burdock naval dockyards".[20] This is a bit confusing; but then, Portsmouth and its townships *are* confusing. There is Portsmouth proper, with its dockyards, and round it are Portsea, Landport, and Southsea. I think here Wells is using the name "Port Burdock" for both Portsmouth proper and for Southsea, or for the whole area generally. And certainly the rest of Chapter 1 of *Mr Polly* is full of descriptions which suggest Portsmouth. We are told that Polly and his friends

> once…got a boat for the whole summer day, and rowed up past the moored ironclads and the black old hulks and the various shipping of the harbour, past a white troopship, and past the trim front and the slips and interesting vistas of the dockyard to the shallow channels and rocky, weedy wildernesses of the upper harbour.[21]

This is a good description of Portsmouth harbour; it is certainly not Southampton; the reference to "ironclads", that is, warships, is enough to rule out that. Then again, in the next paragraph we read:

> The country over the hills behind Port Burdock is all that an old-fashioned, scarcely disturbed English countryside should be.[22]

This was certainly true, in the 1880s and 1890s, of the country inland from Portsmouth behind the long hill called Ports Down.

One more point: Mr Polly and his friends go rambling on foot, once more, we are told, "they went along the coast, following it as closely as possible, and so came at last to Fishbourne…".[23]

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[20] H.G. Wells, *The History of Mr Polly* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960), p.15.

[21] Wells, *The History of Mr Polly*, pp.20-21.

Well, Fishbourne is a real village, on the coast about 12 miles east of Portsmouth. In fact, it is very near Chichester. It is well out of reach of any reasonable ramble on foot from Southampton. I think this pretty well clinches the evidence for *Mr Polly*. In that novel, in 1910, "Port Burdock" is strongly based on the real Portsmouth.

Of course, if Wells in 1910 used "Port Burdock" to mean Portsmouth, it does not follow that he meant the same thing in 1897 in *The Invisible Man*. But at least it is strongly suggestive, that he probably did.

And now we need to examine the precise place of Griffins death. In *The Invisible Man*, the topography is clear: Kemp's house is on a hill overlooking Port Burdock and its ships and its pier.[24] The pub, "The Jolly Cricketers", is "just at the bottom of the hill, where the tram-lines begin".[25] In the final chase, as Kemp is running down hill, he sees a tram arriving "at the hill foot. Beyond that was the police station".[26] The tram is a horse-tram, and its terminus is just beyond the pub, and all this is in the main street called "Hill Street".[27] All the indications are that Hill Street and the tramway lead on to the centre of Port Burdock. Griffin is finally cornered and killed on this street, some three hundred yards from the tramway terminus.[28]

Well, Portsmouth Central Library has very kindly given me copies of a large-scale map of the northern outskirts of Portsmouth as they were in 1897. The area of the village of Cosham is especially interesting. Cosham is north of Portsmouth harbour, under that hill, Ports Down; and it is on the old main road north from Portsmouth. The map shows this main road – not called "Hill Street", but High Street, and on the High Street there is indeed a tramway coming up from Portsmouth, and terminating about 90 yards short of a pub. There is also a police station in a side street opposite the tram terminus.

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[22] Wells, *The History of Mr Polly*, p.21.

[23] Wells, *The History of Mr Polly*, p.23.

[24] Wells, *The Invisible Man*, pp.71, 77.

[25] Wells, *The Invisible Man*, p.77.

[26] Wells, *The Invisible Man*, p.149.

[27] Wells, *The Invisible Man*, p.150.
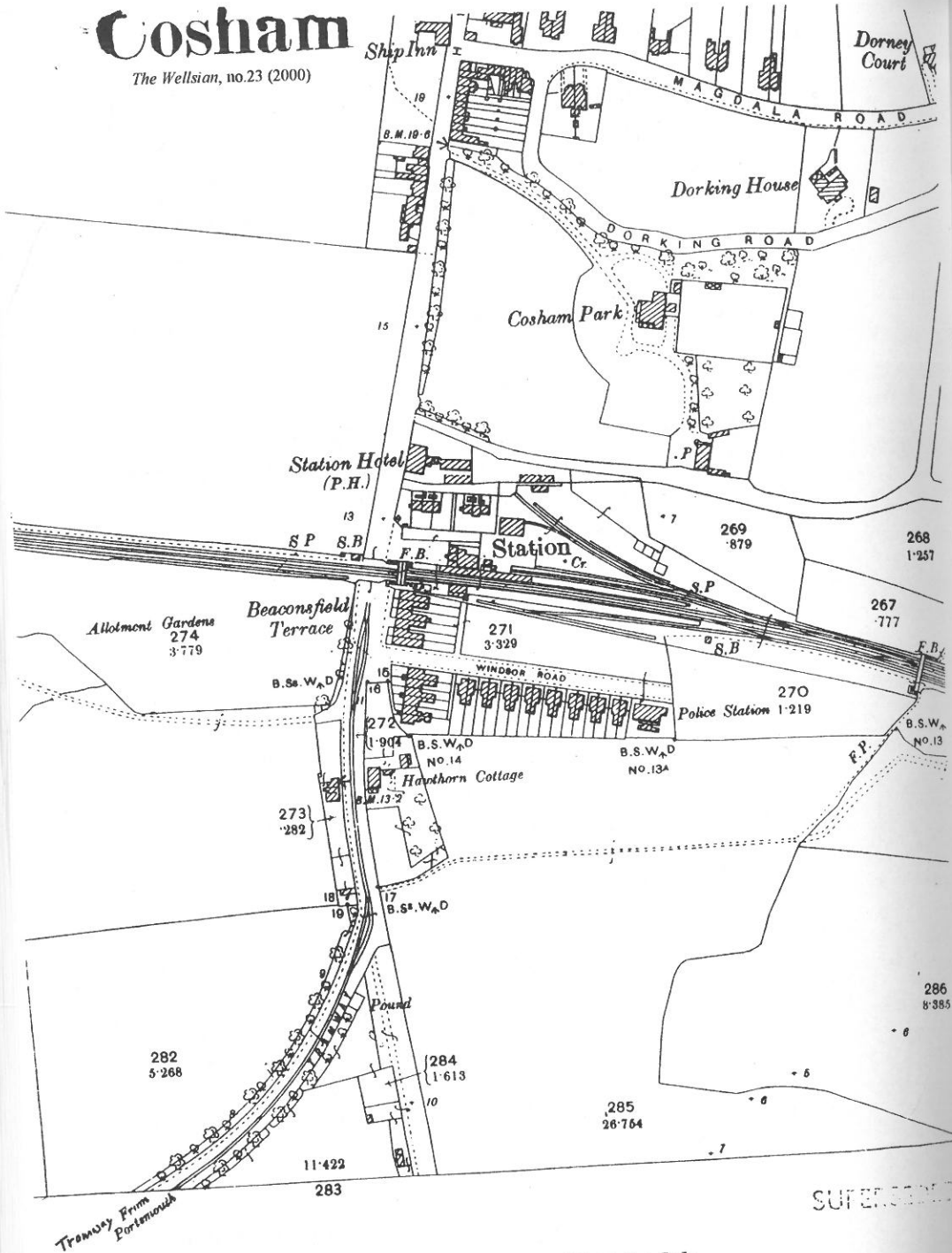
[28] Wells, *The Invisible Man*, p.150.

The match with *The Invisible Man* is really quite good. Pub, tramway terminus, and police station – they are all there, close together. This is a three-way coincidence, and it is enough to suggest that this is the spot which Wells had in mind.

But the match is not perfect. The pub was not called "The Jolly Cricketers" – it was called 'The Station Hotel'. For it is very close to Cosham railway station, and the railway crosses the High Street. The railway was certainly there in the 1890s, but there is no railway in Wells, not a single mention. You might say he left it out because it was irrelevant, it didn't fit into his story.
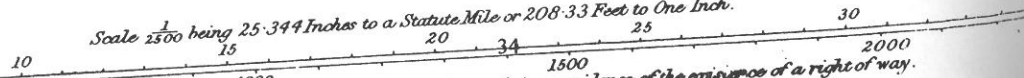
And that is typical of Wells's handling of topography in general. He did similar things to Iping, where he used a real name, but mixed villages. In conclusion, I repeat, we can't claim that Port Burdock *is* Portsmouth, or that Cosham *is* the place where the Invisible Man is killed. I merely think that these are the places which Wells has mainly used as the scenery for the end of the novel.

Cosham

The Wellsian, no.23 (2000)

Ship Inn

Dorney Court

MAGDALA ROAD

Dorking House

DORKING ROAD

Cosham Park

Station Hotel
(P.H.)

268
1·257

269
·879

267
·777

Station

Beaconsfield Terrace

Allotment Gardens
274
3·779

271
3·329

WINDSOR ROAD

270
1·219

Police Station

272
1·904

B.S.W_AD
NO.14

B.S.W_AD
NO.13A

NO.13

273
·282

Hawthorn Cottage

282
5·268

284
1·613

286
8·385

285
26·754

Pound

11·422

283

Tramway from Portsmouth

SUPERSTORE

Scale $\frac{1}{2500}$ being 25·344 Inches to a Statute Mile or 208·33 Feet to One Inch.

...s map of a Road, Track, or Footpath, is no evidence of the existence of a right of way.