**Note to Michelle: the images shown in the article are Spade House and Spade House 2.**

**Herbert George Wells (H.G Wells) (1866-1946)**

**Publications of Interest: \_***The Sea Lady*\_ (1902), **\_***Kipps***\_**(1905) and **\_***The History of Mr. Polly***\_**(1910)

**Places:** Sandgate, Folkestone, Aldington, Ramsgate, Canterbury

“This bus it was, this ruddy, venerable and immortal bus, that came down the Folkestone hill with unflinching deliberation, and trundled through Sandgate and Hythe, and out into the windy spaces of the Marsh, with Kipps and all his fortunes on its brow.”

**\_***Kipps***\_**

A vintage photo of a house

Description automatically generatedWhen Wells’ doctor Henry Hick suggested he move to the South-East coast of England a new chapter in his literary life began. Wells and his wife Jane stayed at The Swan in Hythe and The Homestead in Sandgate for a short period before renting Beach Cottage on the coast of Sandgate. In March 1899 Wells and Jane moved to Arnold House (also on the Sandgate coast), whilst their new home was being built. Both Beach Cottage (now known as Granville Cottage) and Arnold House (now known as 20 Castle Road) have plaques to commemorate Wells. Wells and Jane moved into the completed Spade House (now Wells House Nursing Home) in December 1900. Wells had many connections to authors who spent time in and wrote about Kent. Around 1898 Joseph Conrad moved near Hythe and the two authors became acquainted. In 1901 T.S Eliot wrote a review for Wells’ novel \_*The First Men in the Moon*\_. Wells also dined, in March 1902, with Winston Churchill. But perhaps his most influential connection was to the illegitimate daughter of the late J.F Nisbet. Wells offered to fund her schooling and during a trip to the family home in Sandgate she became the inspiration behind \_*The Sea Lady*\_.[[1]](#footnote-1)

In 1901 \_*The Sea Lady*\_was published in \_*Pearson’s Magazine*\_ and then published as a book in 1902.[[2]](#footnote-2) The novel tells the story of a mermaid washed ashore in Sandgate who is taken in by a wealthy family. After becoming well known to the town and creating the myth of wanting to integrate into society, her real motives become clear – to seduce Harry Chatteris.

During 1901 Wells embarked on a cycling tour of Kent, visiting Hill farm in Aldington to focus on his writing and then on to Ramsgate.[[3]](#footnote-3) A few years later in 1904 Wells completed his novel\_*Kipps*\_which was published in 1905. \_*Kipps*\_ *,* based mainly in Folkestone,is the rags-to-riches story of Kipps, a draper’s assistant (the inspiration arguably from Wells’ own experience as an apprentice at the family drapery[[4]](#footnote-4)), who received a large, surprise inheritance. With his new-found wealth he is accepted into the higher classes of Folkestone but finds himself struggling to integrate. One scene shows Kipps desperately trying to educate himself in the [local library](link to 19C Folkestone Free Library). This comic novel’s critics have claimed it has autobiographical moments and a sense of Wells’ own life.[[5]](#footnote-5)

A vintage photo of an old building

Description automatically generatedIn 1907 Wells’ became a Justice of the Peace for Folkestone,[[6]](#footnote-6) received a visit from the author [Elizabeth von Armin](link to von Arnim)[[7]](#footnote-7) and a few years later, in 1910, published his novel *The History of Mr. Polly*. *The History of Mr. Polly* is the story of Alfred Polly, a shop keeper in the fictional town of Fishbourne in Kent, based on Sandgate.[[8]](#footnote-8) It retells Mr. Polly’s history and, similar to *Kipps*, he begins as a draper’s assistant, hanging around with the Three Ps until he eventually receives an inheritance from his late father. After this he travels to Canterbury, has a short love affair which ends in heartbreak and settles on marrying Miriam (his first cousin) bringing the novel back into the present, revealing the reality of shop-owning life. Similar to \_*Kipps*\_the novel feels somewhat autobiographical, a theme throughout Wells’ writing. Each of the novels Wells wrote while living in Sandgate gives its reader a small glimpse into the history of H.G Wells.

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1. Sherborne, 133-154 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Roberts, 135 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Sherborne, 143 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Sherborne, 38 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Sherborne 167 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Sherborne 181 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Scott, 30 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Roberts, 203 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)