

Wayne Jeff "Horsell Common And The Heat Ray"

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JOURNALIST: Next morning, a crowd gathered on the
Common,

hypnotized by the unscrewing of the cylinder. Two feet
of shining screw projected

when, suddenly, the lid fell off!

Two luminous disc-like eyes appeared above the rim. A
huge, rounded bulk, larger than

a bear, rose up slowly, glistening like wet leather. Its
lipless mouth quivered and slavered

- and snake-like tentacles writhed as the clumsy body
heaved and pulsated.

A few young men crept closer to the pit. A tall funnel
rose, then an invisible ray of heat

leapt from man to man and there was a bright glare, as
each was instantly turned to fire.

Every tree and bush became a mass of flames at the
touch of this savage, unearthly

Heat Ray.

People clawed their way off the Common, and I ran too.
I felt I was being toyed with,

that when I was on the very verge of safety, this
mysterious death would leap after me

and strike me down. At last I reached Maybury Hill and
in the dim coolness of my home

I wrote an account for my newspaper before I sank into
a restless, haunted sleep.

I awoke to alien sounds of hammering from the pit, and
hurried to the railway station to

buy the paper.

Around me, the daily routine of life - working, eating,
sleeping - was continuing serenely

as it had for countless years.

On Horsell Common, the Martians continued
hammering and stirring,

sleepless, indefatigable, at work upon the machines
they were making. Now and

again a light, like the beam of a warship's searchlight,
swept the Common - and the Heat

Ray was ready to follow. In the afternoon, a company of
soldiers came through and

deployed along the edge of the Common, to form a
cordon.

That evening, there was a violent crash and I realized
with horror that my home was

now within range of the Martian's Heat Ray. At dawn, a
falling star with a trail of green

mist landed with a flash like summer lightning.

This was the second cylinder.

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