

Lesson 13: The Martian colony

Main activity 1

THE BRITISH IMPERIAL COLONIAL SOCIETY

A **PROPOSAL** TO BUILD A **COLONY** OF LOYAL SUBJECTS UPON THE VERY SOIL OF
MARS.

The members of the society have been greatly interested in the recent work of Percival Lowell on the imaging of the planet Mars. Mr Lowell has been able to describe the surface of the planet in great detail using his powerful instrument. He has confirmed the presence of "Canals" on the surface. These features (called "Canalli" at the time) were observed by Giovanni Schiaparelli last century.

We can now present a State-of-the-Art view of the conditions on Mars as understood by us in the year of our Lord 1912.

Mars

In the past, the ancient people viewed Mars as a hot, blood red body that circled Earth and represented violence and war. We now know that the planet is far from unpleasant and may indeed be a most pleasant place to live.

Temperature

We can observe the presence of ice-caps upon the poles of the planet, but the ice does not cover the whole of the globe. It can be safely assumed that freezing temperatures may be encountered at the poles, but nearer to the equator the temperature is warmer. Since we have seen the canals of Mars, We must assume that the temperature elsewhere cannot be too hot or the water in the canals would boil or evaporate.

Atmosphere

The existence of liquid water and the observations of possible storms on the planet suggest an atmosphere of gas. The atmosphere seems clear, so may well be made of common colourless gases such as oxygen, nitrogen and carbon dioxide. We do not know how much of each. Our colonists might need to make their own air.

Life and sources of food

The canals cannot be natural features. They are therefore the products of intelligent life. That life must eat to live, so we may assume that Mars' food would be suitable for humans, or that our food would grow there.

Intelligent life would obviously recognise the advantages of being part of the British Empire, so we anticipate no problems in creating a colony on Mars (or New Basingstoke as we suggest renaming it).

Your task

As senior scientific officer for the society we would like you to propose a number of ways of supplying the colony with energy in the forms of heat and electricity. You must base your ideas upon the current information given in this document. Be prepared to discuss your ideas with the other members of the team. Be hasty – His Majesty King George V is waiting for your report before choosing a crown for his new planet!