



A Publication of the Pleasant Places of Florida

Communication

#200

New Series

Special Paste-Up Issue 2000

Volume 4 Issue 2

Hello!

We've been getting so many articles sent in by alert members that we decided to do a special paste-up issue. Those of you who have been with the PPOF a long time might find these pages familiar looking. Hope you enjoy!

The Papers on the Sundial

Dangerous criminals entered the Forest Movie Theater to capture and hold Slylock Fox for ransom. The goons guarded all the exits to prevent Slylock from escaping. But when the movie ended, the "Sly Sleuth" managed to safely walk outside and call the police. How did he do it?



BASIL RATHBONE

SLYLOCK FOX

In this Issue...

News clips, pictures, comics and calendar pages sent our way by Dr. Benton Wood, BSI, Doris Ohanesian, Milt Halpert, Tom Takach and Carl Heifetz.

PROPOSED SCHEDULE 2000

June 9, 10, 11

Sunshine State Sherlockian Scion Symposium II

Dolphin Beach Resort
St. Pete Beach

25th Annual Spring Gathering (inclusive)
November 4

25th Annual Fall Gathering
Palm Harbor

Hosts: Carl & Sandie Heifetz
Case: Missing Three-Quarter

Unraveling the Mysteries of Sherlock Holmes

By MICHAEL POLLAK

WHAT would Sherlock have thought of the Internet?

Its spreadsheets would have been invaluable time-savers (for correlating soil colors and granulations by London neighborhoods, for instance; or trouser threads by manufacturer and tailor). He would have found it quite useful as a library and a correspondence tool, if only for cataloging and exposing the mistakes of others. As a code-breaker, it would have been entirely unnecessary; his own intellect was enough.

As biography, he would have declared it absolute rubbish. But that is only what Sherlock Holmes himself would have thought. For more than a century, Holmes devotees have been enthusiastically filling the gaps left by the incomplete journals of Dr. John H. Watson, Holmes's friend and chronicler, and they have lost no time putting their speculations online. Sherlockian trivia is legendary, and since "obsessive" would be Holmes's middle name if he had one, there is no shortage of Web sites.

One of the most comprehensive sites is at Yoxley Old Place (www.geocities.com/~sherlockian/index.html), compiled by "Fred Porlock," who is also the host of a Baker Street Web ring. From Yoxley, one can find information on everything from The Baker Street Journal, the quarterly publication of the Baker Street Irregulars, perhaps the most famous Holmes society, to collectable and trivia sites.

One can also link to "A Matter of Attention" by Greg Stoddard, an es-

say contending that Holmes suffered from attention deficit disorder, and to "Was Sherlock Holmes Autistic?" by A. Michael Maher. "The Detective in Montana," by Bruce A. Trinquet, concludes that both Holmes and Watson served incognito in the Seventh Cavalry and survived the Battle of the Little Bighorn. In "The Truth About the Speckled Band," L. M.

Klauber, a herpetologist, writes that there is no such Indian reptile as a "swamp adder," that Watson misunderstood Holmes as usual and that, in fact, the villain in the case had made a hybrid, crossing a cobra and a Gila monster.

"Fred Porlock" is the nom de Doyle for Rick Freeman, 40, a Canadian civil servant who lives in Chatham, Ontario. "When I first began Yoxley, there were only a handful of sites with a lot of Holmes/Doyle content, but that has grown so quickly that it is hard to keep up," Mr. Freeman wrote in an e-mail message. "I

Sites for trivia and speculation worthy of an obsessive mind.

say I have over 1,200 links on my site, but I don't know really how many anymore." Non-English sites are growing especially fast, he added, noting Holmesiana in French, German and Polish. (Yoxley Old Place, incidentally, is the name of a house in the Holmes short story "The Adventure of the Golden Pince-Nez," which

takes place not far from Chatham, England.)

Whether touring Holmes Web sites or actual British sites, one should be aware of the Game. The Game is not what's afoot; it is a premise of Holmesian research. Mr. Freeman explained: "Those who follow the Game 'believe' Holmes was real, Watson wrote the stories and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was merely the literary agent who brought them forward for publication. Doyleans dislike the Game intensely and say it takes away the credit Doyle should get for Holmes as well as his many

other works. I don't speak for all Sherlockians, but personally, I think we all know what a genius Doyle was."

Other issues can turn the chat lines red-hot, Mr. Freeman wrote. One is original stories, most of which can be downloaded off the Web, versus pastiches. (For a list of public-domain stories, see watserv1.uwaterloo.ca/~credmond/canon.html as well as Yoxley.) "People either like and accept well-written pastiches or hate every one," Mr. Freeman wrote. Another is choosing the best Holmes actor and best film. On the other hand, should Holmes be enjoyed only in book form? Just how many times was Watson married? (Doyle is not consistent.) Were

Holmes and Watson gay? (The majority say no, but there are strong opinions for each side.)

As for the source of Holmes's enduring popularity, "Personally, I think it has to do with Doyle's writing style," Mr. Freeman wrote. "Doyle

If you are planning on sending in your reservation for the Sunshine State Sherlockian Scion Symposium II between April 22 and May 6, please send it to Wanda Dow, 1737 Santa Anna Drive, Dunedin, FL 34698 to insure an immediate reservation. Carl will be out of town at that time.

NEAL TRAVIS' NEW YORK

Andrea's Holmes, sweet Holmes

AFTER a six-year battle with her former husband, Andrea Reynolds has recovered management of the worldwide copyright to the Sherlock Holmes stories of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

The fight started after Andrea, now the innkeeper at The Guest House in upstate Livingston Manor, left her husband, TV producer Sheldon Reynolds, for Claus von Bulow, accused and acquitted of attempting to murder his heiress wife, Sunny.

Now Judge Eliot Wilk, in Manhattan Supreme Court, has found that management of the copyrights belongs to Andrea (they were bought in 1976 by her mother, Lady Duncan) and that Sheldon owes her royalties from a series of films based on the pipe-smoking Holmes character.

"Darling, I am thrilled," Andrea told me yesterday. "I intend to develop a Sherlock Holmes franchise. There will be new films, maybe a contest to write new Sherlock Holmes books. He will be like James Bond, going on forever."

Andrea is serious about reviving the Holmes legacy.

But in many other ways, she just wants to get on with the bucolic life she enjoys with her British nobleman husband, the Honorable Shaun Plunket, and their lovable puppy dogs at their Catskills bed-and-breakfast. ("Rustic luxury and the feeling is pure escape," according to Zagat.)

"I won the case against Sheldon Reynolds, but it is a hollow victory," Andrea said. "Finding out and having to prove that someone you loved very much has betrayed you and deprived you and your family of income that was crucial is a devastating experience."

Andrea tries to go easy on her ex-husband: "It is my learned opinion that Sheldon Reynolds did this as a revenge for me having left him for Claus. He was not hurt sentimentally, because he didn't love me one bit, but he was p---ed off by the media coverage."

His Manhattan lawyer-adviser, Harvey Stuart, hadn't returned calls at press time. Reynolds is believed to have married a wealthy British woman, and is thought to be splitting time between an upstate estate and a country house in England.

Archaeology 2-1-2000

Sherlock's Last Bow?

YOUR "TIME OUT" CARTOON of the Y-cave baseball players (September/October, 1999) brings to mind an article in *Science* about a hoax that may have been perpetrated by Arthur

Conan Doyle. An intriguing case is made that Doyle was the chief suspect in the Piltdown forgery. As a doctor, anatomist, sportsman, and practical joker with a grudge against the scientific establishment, he was well acquainted with all of the principals, and had access to the site. His wish to undo a joke that had gone too far may account for one of the last artifacts found at the site: a piece of elephant femur carved like part of a cricket bat!

And the key piece missing from the ape jaw was the condyle hinge. Wouldn't a wordsmith like Conan Doyle have been delighted to have such a talisman of his own name? Perhaps the condyle might still be found among his effects.

LAWRENCE S. GURNEY
Los Angeles, CA

Continued from Page 2

began to hate Holmes, even killing him off in the early 1890's so he could get on with his 'important' work. Since he didn't take Holmes seriously, he was a bit careless with details and continuity (which makes for a lot of what 'the Game' entails). However, he wrote about the times in a way that brings them back to life for many.

"You don't just read the stories; you're transported back in time and become part of the story."



Master of Deduction

THE DOCTOR AND THE DETECTIVE A Biography of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

By Martin Booth
St. Martin's. 371 pp. \$27.95

Reviewed by DENNIS DRABELLE

"I fear that if the matter is beyond humanity it is certainly beyond me," confesses Sherlock Holmes in "The Adventure of the Devil's Foot." "Yet we must exhaust all natural explanations before we fall back upon such a theory as this." The theory in question is that a diabolical force has invaded a closed room, killing a grown woman and making off with the sanity of her two card-playing companions. The story ends, of course, with Holmes's caution vindicated: The power that swept through the room turns out to have been quite earthbound.

What makes Martin Booth's hearty beef stew of a biography so engrossing is his portrait of Holmes's creator, Arthur Conan Doyle, wantonly flouting that Holmesian precept in his private life. The cerebral detective may have liked nothing better than being given a "three-pipe problem" to solve, but the physician-writer was a gullible booby when it came to the occult, putting stock in seances, "mysterious" table-rappings, automatic writing and even fairies. Born in Scotland in 1859, Conan Doyle was raised in the Roman Catholicism of his Irish ancestors. But after being sent to Stonyhurst, a Jesuit boarding school, he rebelled against what he later called "the uncompromising bigotry of Jesuit theology" and espoused something akin to Unitarianism.

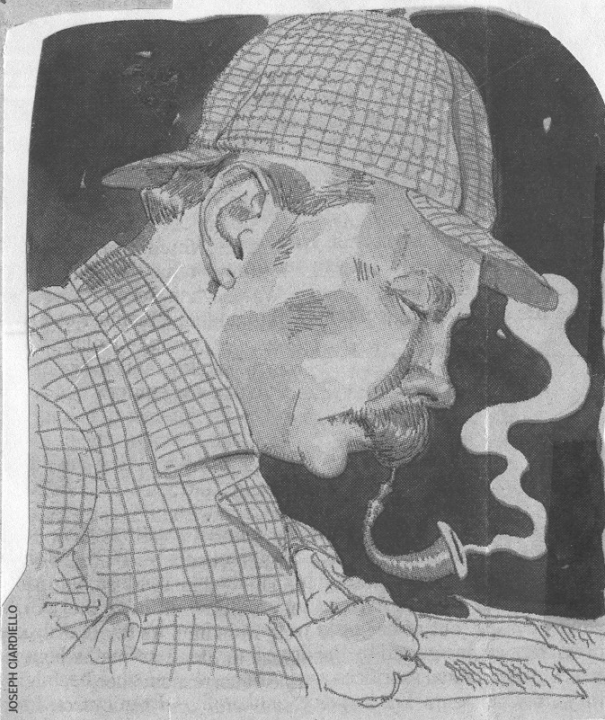
Though his family claimed royal connections, Arthur grew up in "genteel poverty"—the result of his alcoholic father's irresponsibility. The boy escaped by reading, so industriously that the local library laid down a rule aimed specifically at him; no one could "exchange books more than once a day." After Stonyhurst, he attended another Jesuit school, Feldkirch in Germany, which he found more to his liking and where he discovered the works of Edgar Allan Poe, who was to influence his storytelling. Back home, he enrolled as a medical student in the University of Edinburgh.

It was there that he encountered the inspiration for Sherlock Holmes, a surgeon on the faculty named Joseph Bell, whose "strong point," Conan Doyle recalled, "was diagnosis,

not only of disease, but of occupation and character." Bell was not above exploiting his remarkable powers of observation and deduction as a kind of parlor trick, as when he told one flummoxed patient that he was a recently discharged non-commissioned army man from a Highland regiment who had been stationed in Barbados—all of which was spot-on. "You see, gentlemen," Conan Doyle quoted Bell as explaining, "the man was a respectful man but did not remove his hat. They do not do that in the army, but he would have learned civilian ways had he been long discharged. He has an air of authority and is obviously Scottish. As to Barbados, his complaint is Elephantiasis, which is West Indian, and not British." The seedling nature of this demonstration will be obvious to anyone familiar with the Holmes canon.

Conan Doyle was a long time getting started as a doctor, but Booth challenges the widely held notion that he wrote fiction to kill time between patients. In fact, Booth points out, "the more his practice grew, the more he wrote." He also wrote quickly, sometimes not bothering to stop while he carried on a conversation, but mostly he managed to avoid the snare lying in wait for the exceedingly facile—prolixity. In the best Holmes stories, not a word is wasted as the narrative bolts toward its cunning conclusion. Booth goes too far when he nominates Conan Doyle as "the father of the modern short story," but he may well have been the progenitor of the modern magazine short story.

When he started turning out Holmes stories in the late 1880s, the British were ravenous for something like them. "The Education Act of 1870 had made elementary schooling compulsory across the nation," Booth writes, "considerably lowering the illiteracy rate. On top



Sherlock Holmes in the 22nd Century —
Animated adventures of the world's most famous investigator, brought back to fight unprecedented crime in the world of the future. Co-produced by DIC Entertainment and Scottish Television.

of that, increased mechanization in factories allowed workers more leisure time in which many turned to the pleasures of reading. . . . With the advent of mass railway travel and the rise of the urban commuter, there was also a need to provide reading material for travelers. News-stands sprang up on every corner and news stalls appeared on railway platforms. . . . Britain was awash with the printed word as never before." Among the new magazines aimed at the burgeoning reading public was the Strand, of which Conan Doyle became a mainstay.

What a treat his Holmes stories must have been for the commuter or traveler. What better way to while away a humdrum journey than by getting settled in a railway compartment, unpacking your sandwich, opening up the new number of the Strand and immersing yourself in that eternal London of hansom cabs, pea-soupers, women with bustles and jewels and secrets, men with mustachios and watch fobs and gambling debts—and, of course, the stupendous Holmes, the Uber-sleuth who upstages the police, who is immune to amorous impulses (except, perhaps, toward the one he always called *the woman*, Irene Adler of "A Scandal in Bohemia"), who plays the violin and shoots up cocaine. Conan Doyle discounted the excellence of these tales, preferring to be remembered for his historical novels—*The White Company*, *Sir Nigel* and others—his grumpiness (and weariness with the formula) even driving him to kill Holmes by sending him over a Swiss waterfall locked in combat with his nemesis, Professor Moriarity. (A few years later, however, succumbing to popular pressure and his own need for cash, he revived the detective for further adventures.) He couldn't see that the trim perfection of a bonbon like "The Red-Headed League" was worth all ye olde pomp of a fruitcake like *Sir Nigel*.

Conan Doyle had long been intrigued by the occult, but his obsession took hold after his knighthood (which he received not for his writing but for his medical services in the Boer War), when he was a British grandee, living in London, a member of the right clubs, world-famous owing to Holmes. The deaths of his son, Kingsley, and his younger brother, Innes, in the flu epidemic of 1918 whetted

Conan Doyle's interest in breaking through to the other side. Not even the unmasking of several mediums as frauds by his friend Houdini could bring him back to his senses. Nobody could reason with him on the subject—he may have abjured Catholicism, but not without having absorbed a trace of its dogma of infallibility. He died in 1930, and immediately afterward mediums all over the world reported hearing from him. As Booth drily observes, "in death, as in life, it seems he kept up his busy routine of correspondence."

The Doctor and the Detective is brisk and businesslike but also speculative and shrewd. Martin Booth shares his subject's virtue of concision—in a mere 350 or so pages of text, he takes the measure of the writer, reveals the lineage of his great creation and sketches the era when they collaborated to help launch nothing less than modern popular culture. ■

Dennis Drabelle is a contributing editor of *Book World*.

MYSTERY LOVER'S CALENDAR

The New York Public Library

Monday

7

FEBRUARY



Where was Irene Adler born?

Don't forget we still have a few PPOF pins left! The club logo on a tie-tack style enamel pin. \$12.00 postpaid to Wanda Dow.

New Jersey

What's Up This Week®

BY HERBERT KUPFERBERG

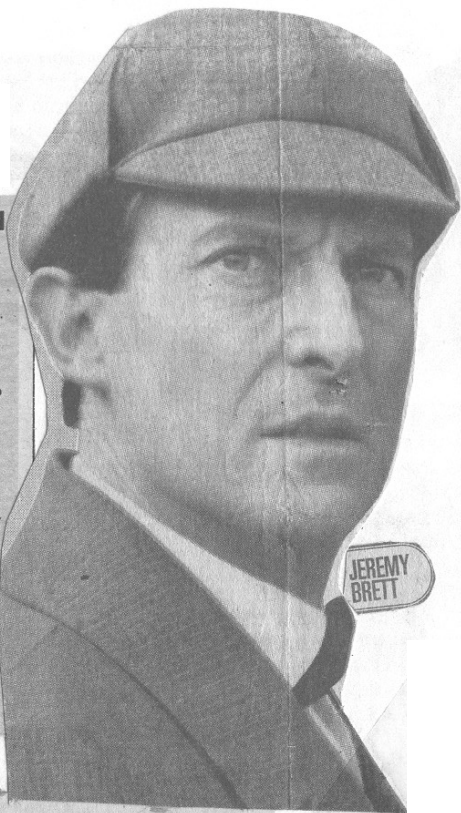


Meet Shirley Holmes

By rights there shouldn't be a schoolgirl sleuth named Shirley Holmes, a great-grandniece of Sherlock. After all, neither the great detective nor his brother Mycroft Holmes ever married, so where did Shirley come from? But, on second thought, who cares? In any case, this bright, pert young woman is the heroine of a line

of Dell paperbacks called **The Adventures of Shirley Holmes** (\$3.99 each). The author, Judie Angell, tells pleasantly and even plausibly how Shirley's deductive talents solve minor mysteries involving her schoolmates. One of the tales, *The Case of the Blazing Star*, dealing with nefariousness at a racetrack, will be inevitably reminiscent of Sherlock's own racehorse classic, *Silver Blaze*, which contains the famous incident of the dog who did nothing in the nighttime. Shirley Holmes' dog doesn't do much, either. His name is Watson.

CHILDREN



THE NEW YORK TIMES, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 9, 1999

Conan Doyle Site Is Saved From Burgers

LONDON, Dec. 8 (AP) — An 18th-century Scottish mansion where Sir Arthur Conan Doyle once lived was saved today when the city of Edinburgh imposed a preservation order on it.

Fans of Sir Arthur, the creator of Sherlock Holmes, alarmed to discover that McDonald's planned to build a restaurant on the site, appealed to city hall and won.

The fans asked the Edinburgh City Council to refuse the McDon-

ald's application for planning permission.

But the council went one better and issued a preservation order, which prevents development of the site.

McDonald's said that it had only recently learned that Sir Arthur lived at the Liberton Bank House during the 1860's, from age 5 to 7.

But, it said, it had gone ahead with plans to develop the site owned by Pearl Assurance.



ROGER MOORE

Sherlock Holmes has been portrayed in more movies than any other character. He also has popped up in innumerable stage and television productions, including "Star Trek: The Next Generation," right, in which Data (Brent Spiner, left), Geordi LaForge (LeVar Burton) and Dr. Kate Pulaski (Diana Muldaur) re-create a Sherlock Holmes mystery.



JOHN BARRYMORE

The Pleasant Places of Florida

*Founded: 1972
by Leslie Marshall (dec.)*

Recorder Emeritus: Dr. Benton Wood

For the record:

THE LAST COURT OF APPEALS

David McCallister, Master of the House,

Jeff & Wanda Dow, The Papers on the Sundial,

Carl L. Heifetz, Representative both with the Servants and with the Tradespeople, .

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