



2011

# Communication No. 302

The Pleasant Places of Florida

## The Adventure of the Oakshot Trunk

Reviewed by: Philip K. Jones, December, 2010

By Coy Alfred Lewis, Sr.

Softcover, Dartmoor Publishing, LLC, 2000

This book was originally released as a 50-Copy private printing for The Knights of Shag in Greenville, South Carolina. It has recently been published in chapbook format in a new edition and is available for purchase through Amazon or the author (SirAlfred@BellSouth.net).

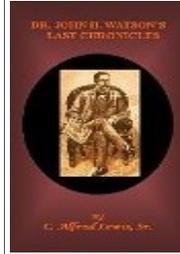
The new publication is approximately a novella-length tale in Trade Paperback format. The author spent many years as a private investigator and as manager of a sizeable investigative agency, so his viewpoint is that of one accustomed to the seamier side of human relations. In addition, he has gone to some effort to imitate Watson's style of writing with more than a little success. Unfortunately, he did not engage the services of an experienced editor and the book is riddled with misspellings and grammatical errors. I found the constant presentation of 'lion' as 'loin' and 'Lestrade' as 'Lastrade' to be most distracting.

The tale is well told and logically organized. As is usual, Holmes keeps his deductions to himself and, thus, mystifies Watson and Lestrade as well as the reader. I cannot, reasonably, fault the logic presented or the processes deduced by Holmes. I do expect that one or two are NOT quite so logically solid as the author proclaims, but I cannot blast any significant holes in them and must accept the events as presented.

I do, however, find the author's historical background somewhat deficient. When the Boxer Rebellion was mentioned, I began calculating dates based on that and rapidly found Holmes investigating a case while he was supposed to be in Pennsylvania joining the Scourers. The author corrected my calculations and placed the Boxers in 1890 instead of 1899 – 1905, so I stood corrected. Once those dates were clarified, the rest of the plot fell into order and things made more sense.

In summary, this is an interesting, well written pastiche with some editing problems. The plot and characters are well done and worth reading if you ignore the lacunae.

Editor's note: Mr. Lewis has since sent a letter of thanks to Mr. Jones for his comments and corrections.



## Dr. John H. Watson's Last Chronicles

Reviewed by: Philip K. Jones, December, 2010

By Coy Alfred Lewis, Sr.

Softcover, Dartmoor Publishing, LLC, 2000

This book was apparently released in a private printing for The Knights of Shag in Greenville, South Carolina some years ago. It has recently been published with some additions in chapbook format in a new edition and is available for purchase through Amazon or the author (SirAlfred@BellSouth.net).

This is a long novella-length tale about Dr. Watson's final adventure with Sherlock Holmes. It begins with the death of Watson's 2<sup>nd</sup> (?) wife, in 1927, and ends with an Addendum describing the Author's trip to England in 2002.

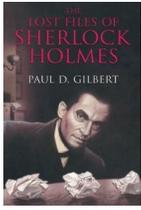
The events of 1927 cover Holmes' conversations with Watson after the death of his wife and a description of Holmes' research into bee culture. He explains his investigations into their species, subspecies and the characteristics of these groups and their cross-breeds. Holmes' research has included both botanical and chemical investigations along with extensive experimentation in breeding and genetics. His apiary contains more than sixty hives comprising nineteen separate varieties of bees.

The bulk of the tale is devoted to his plans for the future, the problems he foresees and his requests for action by Watson. The final entries in the *Chronicles* are Watson's notes on his actions in following those requests and his comments on the entire process. This is followed by a modern-day Addendum in which the author explains his involvement with the source of the tale and his inquiries into the matter.

As with his earlier book, *The Adventure of the Oakshot Trunk*, this book suffers from a lack of proper editing. In this case, the problem is not so acute as in the earlier book, but it is still distracting. Other than that, the book can stand as an enjoyable tale with familiar characters. Both Watson and Holmes are comfortable presentations and the off-stage presences of Mycroft and others feel much as we are accustomed to. Holmes' research results and his conclusions and plans may be disagreed with by some, but they are reasonable and conventional within the Sherlockian community.

In summary, this is an interesting pastiche with some editing problems. The plot and characters are well done, conventional and worth reading if you ignore the editing problems. Even the Americanisms mostly come from American, not from British characters.

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**The Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes**

Reviewed by: Philip K. Jones, December, 2010.

By Paul D. Gilbert

Trade paperback, F. A. Thorpe (Publishing) Anstey, Leicestershire, 2007 \$20.99

This is a reprint the author's first collection of Sherlockian tales which has been 'out of print' for a number of years. It contains seven novella-length tales.

The first tale is *The Adventure of the Connoisseur*. This case starts off as a typical Holmes investigation, but turns into a moderately pedestrian mystery. Holmes' intellectual acrobatics are all interior, with little explanation or insight into the processes or conclusions. The story lacks the *flavor* of Holmes and Watson. The second tale is *The Mystery of Avalon*. This tale, too, starts in a typical Sherlockian fashion, with all the usual elements, but it progresses into a dark and tragic story that opens a door on Holmes' past and reveals unexpected depths in the Master.

*The Missing Don Giovanni* falls quickly into the classic Canonical pattern and follows through with an interesting mystery and a believable situation. Watson complains about Holmes' lack of communication and Holmes is focused, impatient and impolite to everyone. The mystery is interesting and well developed. *The Hooded Man* is very much a typical Holmes adventure. It is another case introduced to Holmes by Inspector Hopkins, but occurs after the seven cited in ABBE. Holmes' conclusions and deductions seem obvious in retrospect, but, like Watson, readers will feel themselves in a daze during the investigation. *The Old Grey Horse* is another well crafted and ingenious tale. This one has Watson trying to help a client while Holmes is deep in another case with Lestrade. Holmes saves the day, serves up the usual, impromptu but brilliant deductions and hands the villains over to justice.

*The Adventure of the Conscientious Constable* is something of a departure. Holmes and Watson are called in to find a detective constable who has failed to show up for his turn on a diplomatic *stake out*. The Government and Police are sure his disap-

pearance is part of an international incident, but Holmes uncovers an even more bizarre cause rooted in his past successes. *The Adventure of the Dying Gaul* is the final tale in the collection. In it Holmes is forced to take another look at his actions in FINA and the subsequent, belated appearance of two, previously unknown Moriarty brothers. Theft of a classical treasure in Rome leads to a re-evaluation of the identity of Professor Moriarty and his role in the intervening years

This anthology introduces a talented writer's efforts to recreate the Canon. The tales are ingenious and the writing improves through the collection. As the tales unfold and the artist becomes more comfortable with his medium, it is easy to allow oneself to feel as if a new issue of *The Strand* has just arrived and once more it is 1895.

**A Hudson View**

Reviewed by: Philip K. Jones, December, 2010

By B. J. Vassar

Softcover, Uncredited pub. 2007

This book may have been copyright in 2007, but it has only recently been made available. As with other recent books, it lacks the attentions of a professional editor and presents a number of spelling and usage errors. On the other hand, this is a truly remarkable book. It concentrates on the life of Mrs. Hudson and her circle of friends or *cronies* as Holmes calls them. Holmes, Watson, Mycroft and Inspector Lestrade as well as various characters from the Canon pass through her parlor and up the stairs, but life goes on and the 19<sup>th</sup> Century moves steadily toward the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

When I say remarkable, that is just what I mean. Mrs. Hudson and her friends live along side Holmes and Watson but do not share in their lives except in the simplest fashion. Cases and persons are mentioned in passing, but the life of 221 Baker street progresses. Deaths, marriages, tragedies and triumphs occur with the career (cont. on page 3)

**CALENDAR SHERLOCKIANA 2011**Jan. 6-8 *BSI Weekend*, NY, NY.Jan. 7 *Gaslight Gala*, The Manhattan Club, NY, NY.Apr. 8-10 *Gathering of Southern Sherlockians*, Chattanooga, TN.Apr. 15-17 *STUD Silver Blaze race, dinner & Fortescue Brunch*, Chicago, IL.Apr 29-May 1 *Malice Domestic 23*, Bethesda, MD. Go to malicedomestic.com.Oct. 13-14 *The Friends of Arthur Conan Doyle Collection Symposium*, Toronto.Nov. 11-13 *From Gillette to Brett* conference, Indianapolis, IN.

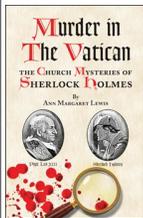


(cont. from page 2) of Holmes as a backdrop to the important matters of life.

Mrs. Hudson is a strong, sensible woman who is interested in her world and who lives the life of a middle-class Englishwoman with care, concern and panache. Her friends are important to her and occupy much of her attention. She is careful and thorough in her housekeeping duties and comes to value her tenants, both for their unique activities as well as for their personal attributes.

The very ordinariness of her life in the midst of the storm that Holmes must have been offers a splendid contrast and commentary on 19<sup>th</sup> Century London. She and her friends discuss the news of the day and live through the ups and downs of life in cheerful and hopeful fashion. There are events recorded that disagree with details of the Canon, but the reasons for these disagreements are easily apparent and really need no discussion other than Watson's imagination.

The tale is marvelous as a description of how life must have been for the landlady of 221 Baker Street. It gives a thoughtful view of Holmes and Watson through the eyes of a wise and caring woman and provides the reader with strong insights into late Victorian England



### Murder in The Vatican

Reviewed by: Philip K. Jones, December, 2010

By Ann Margaret Lewis

Softcover, Gasogene Books, 2010

This book presented me with a unique opportunity as a reviewer. I had been asked to read and comment upon the rough drafts of these tales and on the components of the author's *The Watson Chronicles*, long before any of these items were accepted for publication. This has given me the chance to complain about all the misspellings, grammatical errors and temporal and logical anomalies that I could find in the drafts. That is not to say that there are no errors, merely that I can't find any more.

The three novella-sized tales in this book are all Untold Sherlockian tales: cases that were mentioned in the Canon but were never published by Dr. Watson. 'The little affair of the Vatican cameos' was cited in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, while 'the sudden death of Cardinal Tosca' was mentioned in *The Adventure of Black Peter* and 'the two Coptic Patriarchs' was cited in *The Adventure of the Retired Colourman*.

These tales feature two of the more remarkable characters that appeared in a remarkable Century. Sherlock Holmes, as a fictional character, forced Po-

lice Departments and detectives around the world to pay attention to physical evidence, to examine crime scenes and suspects minutely and to build evidence chains. Leo XIII (2 March 1810 - 20 July 1903, born Vincenzo Gioacchino Raffaele Luigi Pecci, Pope from 1878 to 1903) led his church out of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century mentality of 'The Pope as ruler of half of Italy' into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century of Social Reform and attention to the welfare of the poor.

The Nineteenth Century began in a Europe steeped in Feudal rights and Medieval constructs: Guilds, Leagues, family intermarriages and complex power blocs of related despots. It ended on the verge of *The War to End All Wars* with a general breakdown among the former Pillars of Society and the rise to power of the Middle Class with their mercantile morality.

The author has captured the strengths and stresses of the two great characters along with the societal changes they champion in her tales. Even more surprising is that she has done this with love. Her Sherlockian stories, even the not yet published tales of *The Watson Chronicles*, glow with love and concern for humans as individuals. I suspect the same is true of her other writings which I have not had opportunity to read. Holmes softens visibly during his contact with Leo and Leo, in turn, comes to appreciate the Hunters of Men who protect society from those with no concern for others. Their interactions form a pattern of continuing growth in both of them as they share and analyze one another's viewpoints.

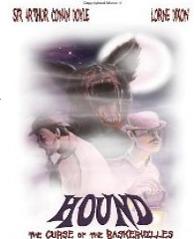
The mysteries are tricky, complex and seldom obvious, so mystery fans should be satisfied. All the usual suspects are present, Mrs. Hudson, Billy, Lestrade and Mycroft as well as Father Brown and his Flambeau. Holmes performs his usual wonders and Dr. Watson remains the touchstone of all that is Victorian Britain.

### Werewolves of Devon?

By David R. McCallister

A subgenre of the Higher Criticism in the Great Game is the second-guessing of Sherlock Holmes's many deductions, and the provision of alternate explanations.

Accordingly, his explication of the mystery of HOUN does not satisfy everyone. Thus, following apologies for the demon dog itself, the alternate suspects to Stapleton as the (cont. on page 4)





(cont. from page 3) guilty party have recently included Dr. Mortimer and Beryl Stapleton. Now, even the supernatural has been invoked. In *Hound, The Curse of the Baskervilles*, it is revealed that the true curse is that of lycanthropy. Yes, the Baskervilles, including Sir Hugo, Sir Charles, and Sir Henry, are all werewolves.

This slim volume follows the recent spate of such cross-over literature as the zombie versions of *Wizard of Oz*, *War of the Worlds*, *Huck Finn*, and another werewolf, *Emma*. In each of these pastiches-plus, the original author, Baum, Wells, Twain, or Austen, is acknowledged along with the contemporary co-author. The co-author of this new Hound in this case is Lorne Dixon, apparently a resident of New Jersey and previous author of horror themed thrillers: *Snarl* and *Lifeless*, all published by Coscom Entertainment, of Winnipeg. Whether Coscom pays his half of the royalties direct to Sir Arthur's ectoplasmic account, or his descendants pick it up for him, is another question. Dr. J.H. Watson (not to mention Robertson), has been cut out altogether .

Ninety percent of the book is ACD. There are a few deviations which the true Sherlockian might pick up, but most of the narrative follows the crooked path of the original. Foreshadowing comes when Sir Henry reveals a pentagram-shaped birthmark in his palm, and Sir Charles's body goes missing from the undertakers. The real change-ups come at the end, when the party of Holmes, Watson, Lestrade, and Mortimer, in due course, save Sir Henry from the beast, and it becomes apparent that Stapleton *IS* the horrible hound.

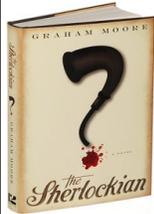
Subsequently, the underground lair of the lupine Baskervilles is discovered. Beryl is additionally revealed as a biological sibling as well as wife of Stapleton's, and thus a cousin of Sir Henry's, gratuitously adding to the disquieting *National Inquirer* atmosphere of the piece. How, or if, she escapes the family Curse is perhaps for another Doyle-Dixon novel. Dixon rounds off the novel by having Holmes refuse to acknowledge the supernatural, Merripit house and the nastiness underground is torched, and Watson is admonished to publish only a bowdlerized version of the case.

I am as much a fan of pastiches as anyone, but this one really stretches disbelief. I suppose that those who have grown up with, or grown accustomed to, the contemporary vampire and general weirdness craze of adolescent literature will find *Hound, The Curse of the Baskervilles* enjoyable. Personally, I doubt if it will send anyone running to the original, as much as running from the whole idea. It was worth a try, but I'll pass.

BASKERVILLE FAMILY TREE

HUGO d.c. 1647		
HUGO fl 1742-		
Rodger	John	-Elizabeth
R Adm -fl 1782		James Desmond
Sir William -fl 1800		(Westmorland)
Sir Charles d. 1889	??-	Rodger, Sr. d. 1876
Sir Henry		Rodger, Jr.
		aka Vandeleur
		aka Stapleton d. 1889

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**Anyone interested in hosting, please contact Wanda Dow immediately. A list of cases not as yet used will be sent you to choose from. You make the location arrangements and we'll do the rest!**



**Books of The Times** NY TIMES  
 December 15, 2010  
 A Sherlock Holmes Tale That's Hardly Elementary  
**The Sherlockian** by Graham Moore  
 Review by Janet Maslin  
 "Perhaps the greatest of the Sherlock Holmes mysteries is this: that when we talk of him we invariably fall into the fancy of his existence," T .S. Eliot wrote in a 1929 review of "The Complete Sherlock Holmes Short Stories."  
 For an extreme example of what Eliot meant, consider "The Sherlockian," a new novel predicated entirely on Holmes worship, Holmes mimicry, Holmes artifacts and assorted other forms of Holmesiana. Its smart young author, Graham Moore, has done much more than fall into the fancy of Holmes's existence. He has fallen down a Holmes well.  
 He's going to take a lot of readers with him too. Thanks to the sly self-awareness that keeps *The Sherlockian* smart and agile, it's possible (cont. on page 5)



(cont. from page 4) to enjoy this book's laughable affectations and still be seduced by them. This is a novel by, for and about Holmes-quoting mystery nuts, and it understands what makes them happy. Red herrings, exclamations of "Elementary!" and the assurance that life's problems have logical solutions are at the core of Mr. Moore's world view.

After a prologue involving Arthur Conan Doyle, Holmes's creator, who will take up half the space in *The Sherlockian* assisting on a Scotland Yard investigation, Mr. Moore tosses his story right into the midst of the Baker Street Irregulars. They are fondly described here as a group of Holmes fans equipped with pipes and deerstalker hats, assembled at the Algonquin Hotel in New York and quacking like a bunch of ducks in heat at the prospect of a real-life murder in their midst. "Just to be clear," somebody later asks this crew, "is there one of you people who *doesn't* have obsessive-compulsive disorder?"

Harold White is a bedazzled new inductee into the group. And before he can say "The Hound of the Baskervilles," Harold is swept up into a mystery that will force him to do a latter-day Holmes imitation. It must be pointed out that Harold works at a film studio vetting scripts, because he is so well read that he can fend off any plagiarism claim by finding similar story lines in the public domain. By some mysterious means that Mr. Moore never gets around to investigating, Harold's story in *The Sherlockian* is set up like a movie scenario and owes at least as much to *The Da Vinci Code* as it does to *The Sign of Four*.

So it needs a girl, a murder and a holy grail, not necessarily in that order. The grail this time is a lost diary of Conan Doyle's, the turn-of-the-century volume that explains why he resuscitated Holmes eight years after throwing him over the Reichenbach Falls with Professor Moriarty and leaving both of them for dead. In a prologue of sorts, Conan Doyle makes a brief 1893 appearance and explains why he wants the hated Holmes ("My Mam speaks as if she's *Holmes's* mother, not mine") out of his life.

The 2010 murder in *The Sherlockian* is, like a lot of things in this interestingly researched book, based on something authentic. Mr. Moore extrapolates from the 2004 death of Richard Lancelyn Green, a real-life Sherlockian who claimed to have found the lost diary and was garroted with a shoelace, to stage a similar, fictitious crime. In the novel a Holmes scholar named Alex Cale claims to have found the diary and then suffers death by shoelace while the Irregulars' convention is underway. And presto! Harold must start thinking, acting and talking like Holmes to find the missing diary

and solve the crime.

Mr. Moore interjects a young woman named Sarah into the story, mostly because he has to. Sarah says that she's a reporter covering the convention, that Harold will make a nice hook for her article, and that she must thus join him in globe-trotting in order to witness his adventures. This makes her the least credible character in a book that crosscuts between Harold in the present and Arthur — as Conan Doyle is called here — in 1900 and gives Arthur a sidekick too. Arthur is accompanied by his friend Bram, an aspiring writer who is as obscure as Arthur is famous, since nobody cares about Stoker's Transylvanian "Count What's-His-Name." Feel free to enjoy the fact that there will be a Count Chocula more than 100 years later.

The passage of time between Arthur's era and Harold's actually lends some gravitas to the fun and games *The Sherlockian* provides. Harold thinks wistfully back to the relative simplicity of Conan Doyle's time (even though Mr. Moore's historical research makes it clear that Conan Doyle faced plenty of real problems). "It's funny," Harold says, once the plot takes him to England. "I'm so much more familiar with Britain a hundred years ago than Britain today."

And every time the book's 21st-century chapters refer to new technology, they contrast sharply with late Victorian glamor. "The old centuries had, and have, powers of their own," writes one Sherlockian, "which mere modernity cannot kill." Mr. Moore sustains this theme so faithfully that his book's last chapter, about the arrival of so-called progress on Baker Street, is its most affecting one.

So *The Sherlockian* manages to make a journey from the ridiculous (Harold White, instant detective?) to the sublime. And it is anchored by Mr. Moore's self-evident love of the rules that shape good mystery fiction and the promises on which it must deliver. As the book's characters say outright, all the relevant details must be woven into the story. There can't be too many needless ones. Progress must be logical. The author must understand, as Arthur demonstrates during the course of this novel, that "the requisite pedantry of detective work" does have its obsessive-compulsive rewards.

And the author must make a promise to his readers. It is a vow that is made explicitly by Arthur during *The Sherlockian* but is honored in this book by Mr. Moore too. "I am going to take care of you," Arthur avers. "I know it seems impossible now, but it will all work out. You cannot see where I'm going, but I can, and it will delight you in the end."



**The Pleasant Places of Florida**

(founded in 1972)

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Bill Ward, B.S.I. 1988 - 1999  
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**Carl Heifetz**, *Representative (both with the Servants and with the Tradespeople)*,  
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