



The Pleasant Places of Florida



(* - Suggested in The Five Orange Pips)

A Corresponding Scion Society of The Baker Street Irregulars

12th Night Reflections



The Commissionaire and Chaplain

...First off, let me correct an error of omission in #73. Carol Jackson's S'ian toast came from "The Sherlockian Meddler" that fine publication of the Non-Canonical Calabashes of L.A.,CA. - mea culpa! Now for a briefing on BSI bash in NYC (Jan.11-12). Our first stop was for breakfast at the Algonquin. There we joined forces with our ASHy PPOffer, Marsha Pollak. She was presenting all the faithful with a beautiful Goose cookie, admonishing us - "You dast not eat the "Blue Carbuncle"..... Our next stop was the Gillette Memorial Luncheon at the Homestead Rest., hosted by Lisa McGaw. There we met and conversed at great length with Michael Harrison. In the course of things this Recorder toasted Commissionaire, Julian Wolff, on being an octogenarian that day(the 11th). The good Doctor replied that he had rather be a sexagenarian - now what do you think he had in mind? Mrs. Wolff, sitting nearby, just sat there and beamed, wishfully.... That evening the B.S.I. Dinner was held with all its resplendent glory. Our own Mike Carroll represented the PPOFF as my guest. Your Chaplain (Recorder, sic) sonorously recited the Sherlock Holmes Prayer(a copy of which, by the by, was printed in the PPOff hand-out at the Dinner. I'll send you one upon request, while supply lasts) Then John Bennett Shaw shared with us some humorous recollections of the old days of the B.S.I., with anecdotes of most of original Irregulars - Morley, Baring-Gould, Edgar Smith, et al....



John Bennett Shaw

Isaac Asimov was Isaac Asimov - witty and entertaining, as usual, and in remarkably good singing voice! The final "official" affair was



Isaac Asimov regales us, once again, with his incomparable wit and song.

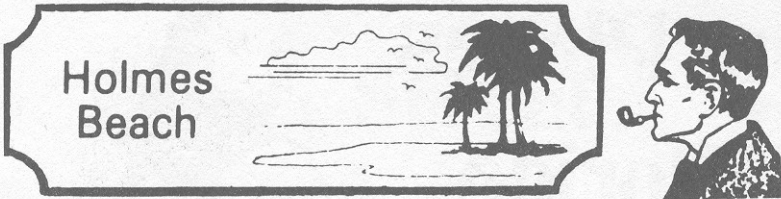
held at the Grolier Club, where we all bade farewell to all our Holmesian confreres 'til '86. ... Parenthetically, Mrs. 'Udson & I enjoyed the pleasures of NYC both theatrically("42nd St." & "La Cage")and gastronomically (ooo-weee, those calories!). Bill Ward, regretfully couldn't make it, but he reassured us in true MacArthurian tradition - "I shall return!". All in all, it was a super 131st Birthday celebration of the Master's nascency..... Spring Gathering is next, folks!



Stingers Upset Holmes in Britain

(EVEN RETIREMENT CAN BE HAZARDOUS)

Your Recorder was all smiles at the Gillette Memorial Luncheon.



Communication #74

January 24, 1985*

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A Corresponding Scion Society of

THE BAKER STREET IRREGULARS

Please direct correspondence to:

The Rev'd Dr. Benton Wood, BSI - Recorder

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(*- On this very day in 1897, Holmes uttered those immortal words: "Come, Watson, come! The Game is afoot." (ABBE)

Philatelic Philandering

... or "Stamping around with SHERLOCK HOLMES"

...There have been a number of U.S. postal issues that have commemorated The Pleasant Places of Florida.

Four of them are illustrated here: the Florida Centennial, The Everglades issue (HOLMES beach is just behind the Great White Heron's upper neck), the Florida flag, & more recently, the Florida bird (Mockingbird) & flower (Orange Blossom). Florida's other Scions - The Tropical Deerstalkers (Miami) and The Worthington Bank Gang (Naples) may also lay claim to these S'ian philatelic tributes.



Depicted (at right) is the commemoration of "The Musgrave Ritual" query: "Where was the sun?" (Over the oak.)



From Mrs. Udson's Kitchen



("Pease Pudding hot, Pease Pudding cold; Pease Pudding in the pot, nine days old." Very familiar with this old English rhyme, Holmes enjoyed this tasty dish, whose origins come from Newcastle-on-Tyne. (HOUN)).

PEASE PUDDING

- 1 lb. split peas 2 oz. butter
- 2 eggs Salt Freshly ground pepper

Soak and cook split peas according to the directions given on the package.

Once cooked, drain peas & puree them in a blender or food processor. Mix in the butter and eggs and salt and pepper to taste.

Spoon the mixture into a well-greased 3-cup pudding bowl. Cover tightly with aluminum foil & secure the ends with a piece of twine tied around the rim of the bowl. Place bowl on a steamer rack or on an inverted saucer in a large saucepan containing about 2" of water. Cover saucepan & steam for 1 hr.

Remove the pudding from the pan & take off the string & foil. Serve the Pease Pudding directly from the bowl in which it has been cooked.

Usually served with pork or sausages. Serves 4-6.

(Leftovers can be cut into slices & fried in butter - it's surprisingly good!)

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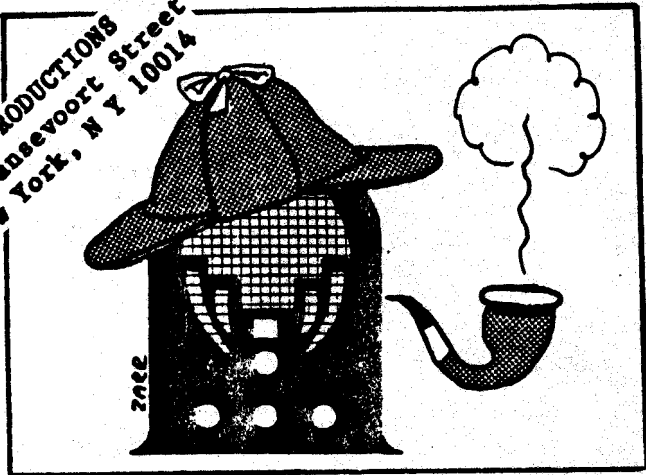


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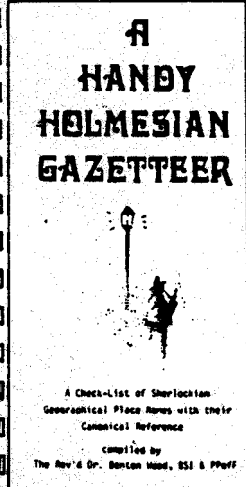
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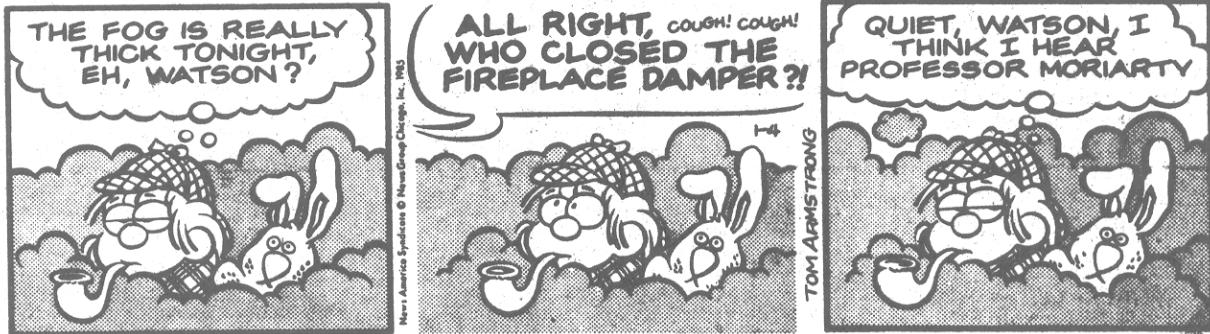
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MARVIN



The Islander / January 24, 1985



Islander photo by Carolyne Norwood

The game's afoot. Dr. Benton Wood is exhibiting part of his collection of Sherlock Holmes incunabula at the Island Branch Library this month. The rector of the local Episcopal Church of the Annunciation, he recently performed his duties as chaplain of the internationally famous Baker Street Irregulars in New York City, celebrating the master detective's birthday on Twelfth Night, Jan. 6.

Holmes

131 Years Old on Jan. 6

'He's in Sussex - keeping bees.'

Rev. Wood Is Considered Expert on Sherlock Holmes

"Is there any other point to which you would wish to draw my attention?"
 "To the curious incident of the dog in the night-time."
 "The dog did nothing in the night-time."
 "That was the curious incident."
 - from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's "Silver Blaze"

One afternoon - it was on the 15th of January, 1985 - my duties as a news-monger led me to the island borough of Holmes Beach. I had been supplied an address, 4408 Gulf Drive - a rectory at which I was to find the Rev. Dr. Benton Wood.

Apparently, he was expecting me. The angular gentleman in a stiff clerical collar greeted me at the door - then directed me down a corridor to his chambers.

Seated in an armchair, a comfortable distance away from his deerstalker hat and cherished bottle of Baker Street Scotch, he examined me in an introspective way.

Dale White



Undoubtedly, my choice in fashions revealed that my salary was definitely in the working-class range. My unkempt hair showed a certain disregard for grooming. And the unsightly bump on the middle finger of my right hand served as physical evidence that, though I scribble much, I've never really learned how to hold a pencil properly.

I wondered: Was the Rev. Wood all that he seemed? Had not the garb of "an amiable, but simple-minded cleric" been a favored disguise of that famous detective, Sherlock Holmes?

"Of course, we (the Baker Street Irregulars) believe that Holmes is still alive," Wood confessed. "He's in Sussex - keeping bees." The fictional genius would have celebrated his 131st birthday on Jan. 6.

(Cont. over)

SARASOTA HERALD-TRIBUNE
SUNDAY, JANUARY 20, 1985

(Continuation from
reverse side.)

As in the case of the silent dog, there's additional evidence - or lack of evidence - to support Wood's claim. A man of Holmes' repute surely would have warranted an obituary in the London Times. Well - "Holmes' obituary has never appeared in the London Times." So, there you have it.

I offhandedly remarked that Agatha Christie's egocentric creation, Hercule Poirot, had been the subject of a death notice in the New York Times when his last adventure was published.

"Well, that's his problem," Wood acknowledged with little remorse. We weren't there to discuss some dead Belgian snoop.

Oh, some readers believe Holmes never survived his tumble with the fiendish Moriarty over the perilous Reichenbach Falls some 80 years ago. Well, obviously, the sleuth retired for awhile on Anna Maria Island. After all, the setting of this article is Holmes Beach.

As for Sir Arthur Conan Doyle - the man who took credit for the literary efforts of Holmes' companion, Dr. John H. Watson - "we feel he was the literary agent," Wood revealed.

Actually, unlike his mentor, Wood devises his theories merely in jest. Like countless thousands of other boys, the Holmes mysteries helped stir in him a lifelong interest in literature. Yet he couldn't forget that pipe-smoking, violin-playing character whose rational approach always enabled justice to prevail.

Even in middle age, he still feels refreshed when he turns the pages of one of the four novels or 56 short stories. That's when he steps into a foggy, Victorian atmosphere - where the cobblestone lanes are still illuminated by gaslight, where you can still hear the squeak of carriage wheels outside 221-B Baker Street.

Although he's an amateur sleuth, Wood can be considered an authority on Holmes. He heads the largest of the three Florida chapters of the Baker Street Irregulars - a 50-year-old American organization. Currently, the sect has 275 members - roughly 60 of which belong to Wood's chapter.

"It's for men only," Wood said of the national organization. "Actually, we do have one woman - but I think she snuck through when no one was looking." Very Holmesian of her, I suspect.

The Irregulars aren't chauvinists - just purists, Wood stressed. "Sherlock Holmes would at times employ the urchins of the street to do errands - and they were paid with a Queen's shilling." In the stories, the Irregulars were all blokes. Of course, these days you need more

BAKER STREET -

Continued from Page 4

Jones, Holmlock Shears, Solar Pons, Sherlock Kombs, and even Sherlock's daughter, Shirley Holmes. Some of these were written by well-known writers such as Mark Twain, Agatha Christie, Vincent Starrett, Ellery Queen, Bret Harte, Stephen Leacock, and Sir James Barrie.

The heirs of Conan Doyle fought valiantly against the flood. When a collection of pastiches appeared in 1944, edited by Ellery Queen and published by Little, Brown & Co., the Doyle estate went to court and succeeded in getting the book withdrawn, with the result that today copies are scarce enough to fetch a premium price from Holmes devotees. Christopher Morley reacted to this flood in the early 1950s by remarking that "never has so much been written by so many for so few."

However, what seemed like a flood 30 years ago was really only a trickle. The flood has come now; in the 1980s, with the expiration of copyright 50 years after Doyle's death. Where it will end is anyone's guess. Pastiches involving Holmes and Watson and other characters continue to appear, as do "scholarly" analyses, novels, anthologies of short stories, encyclopedias, gazetteers and other aids to reading, understanding and analyzing the Sacred Writings.

The Baker Street Irregulars, which began as a small group of Holmes enthusiasts and is limited to 60 members (one for each of the original stories), now lists 393 men who have been members, of whom 297 are living. But Peter Blau of Washington, D.C., who maintains the official membership list, cautions that these figures change almost from one day to the next. Meanwhile, the BSI has spawned "scion societies," regional groups whose members are not part of the select membership of the Baker Street Irregulars, but who can claim association in a kind of apostolic succession.

The scion societies have multiplied to more than 200 today, and many of them are as successful in their way as the original BSI. All take their names, usually in an ingenious manner, from one of the stories. There are three in Florida, the Tropical Deerstalkers of Miami, the Worthingdon Bank Gang of Naples and The Pleasant Places of Florida (from *The Five Orange Pips*), founded in St. Petersburg and now including the central West Coast area.

The local chapter was founded in 1972 by a group of eight headed by Rev. Leslie Marshall, who had come to St. Petersburg in



Staff photo by JIM MOORE

The Rev. Dr. Benton Wood (left), chaplain of the Baker Street Irregulars, took C. Michael Carroll along as his guest at the annual dinner meeting in New York City.

1954 from Paterson, N.J. to head the Swedenborgian Church of the New Jerusalem at 419 Fifth St. S. Marshall retired from the church in 1967 and operated a stamp mission from a rear office of the church. An early member and for more than three decades chaplain of the BSI, he established an enthusiasm for Holmesian activities in the area. The local society soon caught on; by October 1975 the membership was 51, and today it is more than 400. Many of these are "corresponding" members from far away who pay dues and receive publications but do not attend local meetings.

Marshall was the first "recorder" of the Pleasant Places of Florida, that being the only office recognized. In 1976, shortly before Marshall's death, Rev. Benton Wood, rector of the Episcopal Church of the Annunciation, became recorder. The fact that his church is located at Holmes Beach on Anna Maria Island gives the local society a kind of distinction no other group can hope to claim, not even the chapter located at Moriarty, N.M. Wood also lends a special aura to the local group in his capacity as chaplain to the BSI, a post in which he succeeded Leslie Marshall. Wood's investiture in the BSI is Marshall's old one, *A Scandal in Bohemia*, from a disguise that Holmes assumed in that story as "an amiable but simple-minded clergyman."

Does all this serve any useful purpose? John Bennett Shaw has called the Sherlockian societies an exercise in "serious whimsy." But they also draw attention to an idea that runs all through the course of human history, from the myth of Prometheus to Mary Shelley's tale of Frankenstein: Whether for good or evil, the creator often risks being subsumed by his creation. Besides, in the Sherlockian societies, one has an opportunity to meet some of the most interesting and stimulating minds in existence, and for good reason: They are people who read books!

EVENING INDEPENDENT

St. Petersburg, Florida

Thursday, January 31, 1985

credentials than mere gender to join. The shilling Wood received during his indoctrination is currently part of the club's display at the Island Branch Library. Proof positive, I'd say.

After awhile, all had been revealed. I bade farewell to the humble rector, thanking him for his services. Then I returned to my ordinary life - in which fingerprints and bloodstains are only smudges on a bathroom mirror.

I don't know where Wood was headed. Yet, for some reason, I imagined him doing something far more sensible than I, such as deciphering coded messages, dodging a cloaked pursuer - or tracking the footprints of a gigantic hound.

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Baker Street Irregulars

They contend master detective Sherlock Holmes actually lived and had a sidekick, John H. Watson, who wrote up many of Holmes' cases and submitted them to Arthur Conan Doyle, who acted as literary agent.

By CHARLES MICHAEL CARROLL
Independent Correspondent

One cold evening this month, nearly 180 men assembled in a room at the Regency Hotel in New York City for a ritual dinner held for the past 51 years. Many were wearing curious fore-and-aft caps called deerstalkers, and some had a British shilling coin pinned to their lapels. They were the Baker Street Irregulars (BSI), and their annual dinner meeting, as well as their other activities throughout the year have one purpose: to honor and perpetuate the memory of the world's first and greatest consulting detective, Sherlock Holmes.

The occasion Jan. 11 was unusually auspicious for Julian Wolff, commissioner of the BSI (the highest office in the Society), who was celebrating his 80th birthday that day. But there were other distinguished guests: Michael Harrison of London, author of several books about Holmes; Per Egil Hegge, a Sherlockian scholar from Oslo, Norway; Isaac Asimov, author of more than 200 books on science and science fiction, and John Bennett Shaw, international authority on Holmes and owner of the largest library of Sherlockiana.

The Suncoast was represented by Rev. Dr. Benton Wood, chaplain of the BSI and also recorder of the local Holmes society, The Pleasant Places of Florida; and by Richard B. Shull, former actor and director at the Showboat Dinner Theater, now resident in New York. (I attended as a guest, not as a BSI member.) Indeed, the Suncoast opened and closed the meeting. Dr. Wood opened the proceedings by reciting "Holmes's Prayer," an invocation written by Christopher Morley, and Shull closed the meeting by giving the traditional toast to the Master Detective.

The original Baker Street Irregulars were a group of urchins employed by Holmes (wages: a shilling per day) in three of his cases: *A Study in Scarlet*, *The Sign of Four* and *The Crooked Man*. Far from being street arabs, these modern Irregulars are business and professional men from many walks of life, but with a common interest, the mystique of Sherlock Holmes.

The BSI was founded in 1934, the brainchild of a group consisting of Christopher Morley, Edgar W. Smith, Elmer Davis (who wrote the bylaws), Vincent Starrett, Rex Stout, Ellery Queen and others. Many of them were writers, or — like broadcaster Davis — people in the business of communication. But many were people who were simply fascinated with what has become known as the Canon, or the Sacred Writings, the 60 stories that relate the life and activities of the Master Detective.

Edgar W. Smith, who was the first commissioner of the BSI, was an executive with Sinclair Oil, but he was so well known for his activities and



Arthur Conan Doyle, in a photo from about 1915, is shown in the magnifying glass. At left is a postcard showing the reconstructed living room at 221 Baker Street in London.

Staff art by
EARL TOWERY

publications in the BSI and Sherlockian scholarship in general that his obituary notice carried the line that his profession had been the petroleum industry and his hobby Sherlock Holmes, "or perhaps vice versa."

Dressing in an elaborate or exotic costume and assembling for an esoteric purpose is as old as the caveman. What is so special about the Baker Street Irregulars? Just this: The basic stance of the BSI is that Sherlock Holmes actually lived and practiced his profession in London during the last two decades of the 19th century. He had a companion and amanuensis, an M.D. named John H. Watson, who at first lived with Holmes in bachelor quarters at 221-B Baker St., and after his marriage (or marriages) later returned for a few days when his wife was away.

Watson took notes on Holmes' cases and eventually wrote up many of these in narrative form. Arthur Conan Doyle's part in all this was merely that of a literary agent to whom Watson sent his manuscripts for publication. The basic axiom of Holmesian (pronounced Hol-MEES-ian) dogma is that Doyle was a mere pipeline through which the Watsonian accounts reached the public.

However, even the most doctrinaire Sherlockian scholar will admit that Doyle was a careless editor, responsible for numerous errors and inconsistencies in the stories. Presumably Doyle was more interested in his own writings, such as *The White Company*, *Rodney Stone* and *Cause and Conduct of the World War* (which went through several printings and was translated into 12 languages), than Watson's sometimes rambling narratives.

The contradictions in the stories will probably

absorb Holmesian scholars forever. Was Watson's wound, acquired in the historical battle of Mairwand in 1880, in his shoulder, as he first relates in *A Study in Scarlet*, or was it in his leg, as he later seemed to think? Was his name John or was it James, as his wife calls him in *The Man with the Twisted Lip*? Did Professor James Moriarty have a brother also named James, as Watson states in *The Final Problem*? There are even more abstruse problems raised in the stories. Was Watson married twice, and if so what was the name of his second wife? Was Holmes really an authority, as he told Watson, on the polyphonic motets of Lassus, a body of Renaissance music almost unknown even to musicologists in the latter 19th century? What happened to Holmes's dope habit? In the early stories he is depicted as a virtual addict, injecting a 7 percent solution of cocaine into his arm on dull days. Was he cured, and if so by whom?

Many of these and similar questions were raised early in the 20th century, while the stories were still appearing. But with Doyle's death in 1930 and the fact that the Canon was finally and irrevocably complete, the stories became a field for detailed exegetical research by many authorities, both acknowledged and self-ordained. *The Baker Street Journal*, published by the BSI, and *The Sherlock Holmes Journal*, published by the Sherlock Holmes Society of London, carried (and continue to carry) articles examining every minute detail of the stories.

In addition, pastiches of the stories had appeared from the earliest days, featuring detectives named Picklock Holes, Thinlock Bones, Hemlock

Please see BAKER STREET/3-B