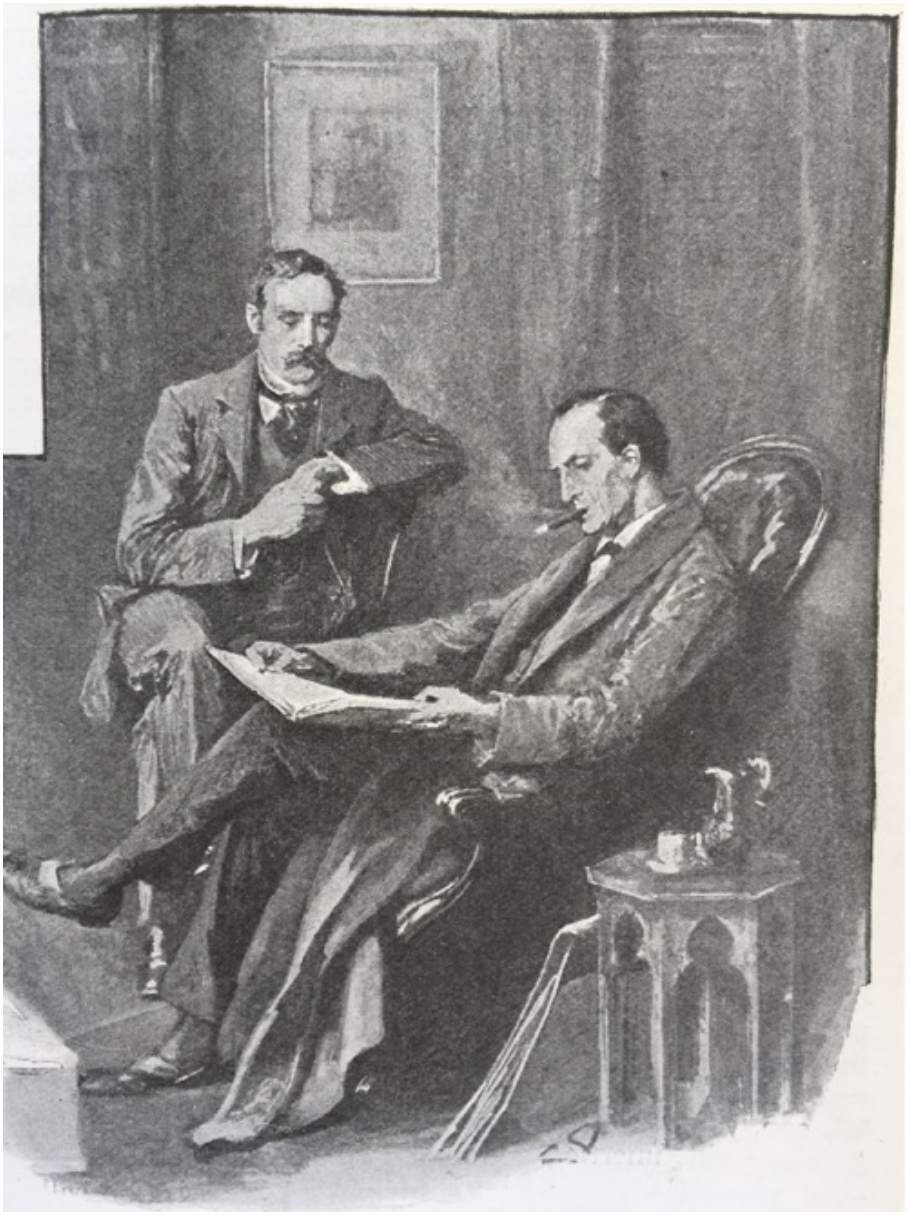
THE TORR

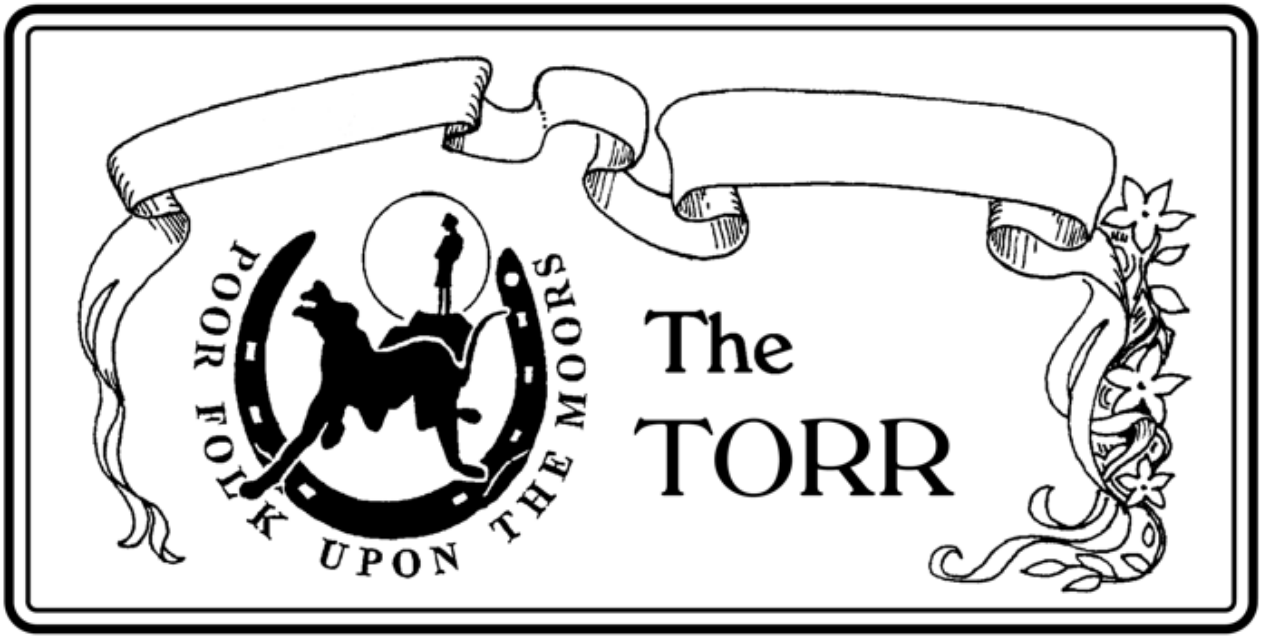
The journal of

THE POOR FOLK UPON THE MOORS



The Sherlock Holmes Society of the West Country

Issue No. 54 – Spring 2019



The bi-annual journal of

THE POOR FOLK UPON THE MOORS

The Sherlock Holmes Society of the West Country

"My brother is very anxious to have the Hall inhabited, for he thinks it is for the good of the poor folk upon the moor."
(Beryl Stapleton, in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*)

No. 54, Spring 2019

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From the Editor

"… we saw a Swiss lad … with a letter in his hand"

On 10th March 1883, the *Isle of Wight Observer* reported the following transcription from Mr Oscar Wilde: "When I arrived at Leadville […] in the evening I went to the Casino. There I found the miners and the female friends of the miners, and in one corner a pianist – the typical pianist – sitting at a piano over which was this notice: 'Please do not shoot at the pianist; he is doing his best.'" Readers will no doubt recall Westerns of their youth where there was such a sign above the honky-tonk player (although my memory is of a much clearer message "Don't shoot the pianist; he's doing his best").

Although there is no reason to doubt either the *Observer* (which was one of at least three imparting this information that week) or Wilde, a very similar report appeared several years earlier, namely in *The Northampton Mercury* (2nd August 1879), reproduced below (with thanks to Sarah Obermuller-Bennett).

The minister, during a service at Pooleville, Arkansas, some years ago, said: "I have again to apologise for the absence of the newly-engaged tenor for the choir. He is expected on the next train, however, and will be at his post next Sunday without fail. And while I think of it, I would suggest that the present practice of shooting at the organist during the service be discontinued. It is a ridiculous habit, and annoys the congregation by filling the church with smoke. The poor man has his faults, but he does the best he can. Besides, it chips the new organ."

A minister with a sense of humour!

But why do I mention this? First as a weak attempt to absolve this Swiss lad of any failings that may appear in articles written by or taken from others. Secondly, to absolve the Swiss lad of any intentional wrongdoing (for example, as suggested by John Sheppard; see p. 17). Watson records

only that, on their turning to return to Meiringen – the path to the Falls ended "abruptly" at the point they'd stopped to stand "near the edge peering down at the gleam of the breaking water far below us against the black rocks" – "we saw a Swiss lad come running along it with a letter in his hand." Watson is sufficiently gullible to believe Holmes "that he should retain the young Swiss messenger with him as guide and companion while I returned to Meiringen". Is there any reason to believe that Watson was the better wanderer in the Swiss alps, especially as, at least on the face of it, his need to return safely and as quickly as possible was far more pressing? No. Holmes himself writes in the note left for Watson to find, "I was quite convinced that the letter from Meiringen was a hoax, and I allowed you to depart on that errand." But for Watson to suggest that, although the "Swiss youth was never found again", "there can be no doubt that he was one of the numerous agents whom Moriarty **kept** *[my emphasis]* in his employ" is, in my opinion, a slur on this Swiss lad in particular and Swiss lads in general! Swiss youths, unite!!

Dear reader, I hope that you will not have taken the aforegoing too seriously – but there may be food for thought therein for discussion. In truth, I simply needed an 'intro' and far be it for me to either detract from the quality of John's article or, more to the point, discourage him from producing future ones: indeed, I know that he has others in the pipeline.

The quality and diversity of the articles in this issue speak for themselves. Foremost are those that featured at the Society's *Literary Day* last September, especially the "speculative drama" by Marilyn and Pete Cummings. Tony Derlien introduces Conan Doyle's shortest (Holmesian) story, which has led me to reproduce said story. He – Tony, that is – mentions Sir Edwin Lutyens, who also left his mark in Exeter, where yours truly spent his schooldays: he designed the Devon County War Memorial. A simple affair, and not to be confused with the much grander Exeter City War Memorial in Northernhay Gardens, it was unveiled on 16th May 1921 and is on Cathedral Green. Lutyens most famous war memorial is, of course, the Cenotaph on Whitehall. His only other commission in Devon (to the best of my knowledge), but a 'weighty' one, was Castle Drogo in Drewsteignton for Julius Drewe, the founder of the Home and Colonial Stores.

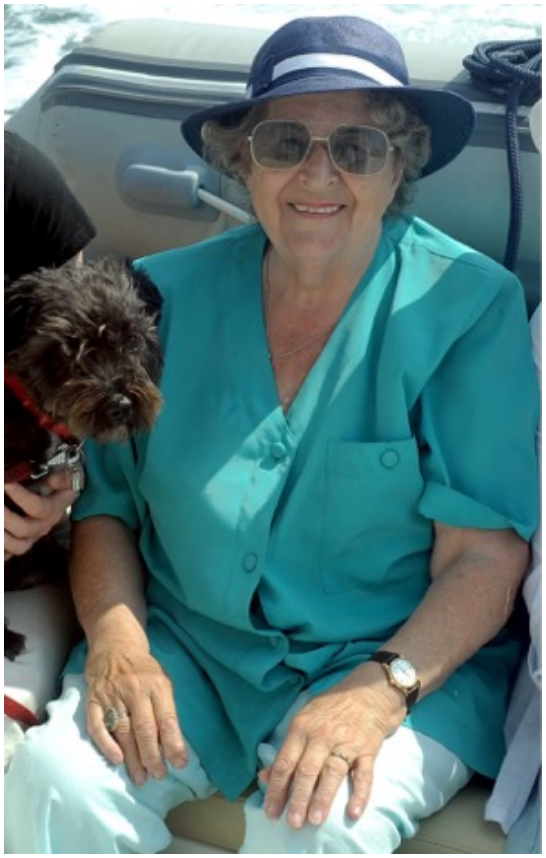
A few words on the Paget illustration on the cover of the last *Tor*r. It is also from *The Adventure of the Empty House* ("Sherlock Holmes was standing and smiling at me across my study table"). Why 'also'? Because in that same issue there was, on the same theme, the illustration by Frederic

Dorr Steele (p. 20) for *Collier's* and which was published a month earlier (in September 1903). Because, on pp. 37 and 38, there are two more, this time by Paget, from the same story, and finally, the *Strand*'s advertisement (p. 41) announces "The Return of Sherlock Holmes" in its October issue with…. *EMPT*. These were, for me, reasons enough. And this issue's cover illustration? Although hardly necessary for Holmesians, clues abound in this *Torr* on the source and perhaps even the reason I chose it. Happy hunting!

A final word: please check out our website with its new look, and a new gallery of past events. I think that you'll be agreeably surprised. That's it from me; read on and I hope you enjoy what's before you (but first, I'm afraid, a piece of sad news, and another on p. 12).

sar

Nicole Piper



Nicole, the only member, I believe, of the *Poor Folk* who truly lived on Dartmoor, at Throwleigh, and that only a stone's throw from the moor at its most desolate, has died at the age of 85.

Nicole's French roots were most noticeable in her warmth, her *joie de vivre* and her dress sense, all of which can be gleaned from the photograph, taken on Richard Dunsford's boat in 2013. Although quiet by nature, she had a fine sense of humour and the Society events that she attended were made all the more enjoyable by her presence. Even though she had lived in England for many years, she never fully lost her French accent – and probably had little wish to do so – which added to her already considerable charm.

Members will miss Nicole's *gaieté* and our thoughts are with her family.

Stephan Arthur
19 January 2019

The Chairman's Contemplations

Inspiration for this came from an unusual source. I was quietly listening to BBC Radio 3 on the afternoon of Saturday 29th December, when the film music programme came on. When I am at my desk, this is one of my favourites, so no surprise there. But then the theme for the programme was announced – Sherlock Holmes. Almost at the start, there was a short item on Eille Norwood – reputedly Doyle's favourite Holmes. Anthony Edward Brett was born in 1861 and died on 24th December 1948 – 70 years ago. His stage name 'Eille Norwood' was based on a girl he once liked called *Eille* who just happened to live in *Norwood*.

Apart from playing Holmes in 47 films during the early 1920s, Eille Norwood was a composer of comic songs and ballads including "Danse des Follettes" which was recorded by HMV and became part of the repertoire of the Coldstream Guards. He also compiled some 2,000 crosswords for the *Daily Express* and appeared in adverts for, amongst other things, drycleaners and nerve tonic.

Since this is a year (2018) for anniversaries, commemorations and significant birthdays, it seemed fitting to remind ourselves that apart from our President's 100th birthday, quite the most important of our own *Poor Folk* celebrations, it was also the 100th anniversary of the birth of Roger Lancelyn Green (father of Richard – Holmesian par excellence); Richard Greene (born in Plymouth on August 25th 1918), an actor best remembered for his portrayal of Robin Hood in the long-running 1950s TV series but who also played Sir Henry Baskerville in the 1939 film which marked the first pairing of Basil Rathbone and Nigel Stock – though it was Greene who took top billing. And finally – thanks to the wonders of radio – we can add Eille Norwood to this roster of related Holmesians who should all be remembered in this, the 100th anniversary of the ending of the Great War.

May I wish you all a very Happy New Year and thank you for your continued support of *The Poor Folk Upon the Moors*.

Following in the footsteps …

by

Geraldine Beare[1]

This is a tale of three people who never met but whose paths criss-crossed over a period of 150 years.

The first of these is a man called William John Wills who was baptised in Totnes, Devon in 1834 but whose family home was in nearby Ipplepen. He was educated at St Andrew's Grammar School, Ashburton and later attended St Bartholomew's hospital in London before joining his father's surgical practice in the West Country.

In 1852, William's father bought shares in the Melbourne Gold Mining Company. The recent gold rush in California had attracted hundreds of prospectors from all over the world including a young man, Edward Hammond Hargraves. Hargraves had been born in Hampshire but at the age of 16 found himself in Sydney. In 1849 he joined the hundreds of hopefuls in California but two years later he was back in Australia and, using the skills he had learned, started prospecting for gold in New South Wales. When he struck lucky, he declared to another prospector, "There it is! I shall be a baronet, you will be knighted and my old horse will be stuffed and put into a glass case and sent to the British Museum." A few months later gold was found in Victoria and shortly thereafter, William's father bought his shares.

Although Dr Wills was unable to go to the gold diggings, William and a brother, Thomas, sailed from Dartmouth in October 1852. William spent several years in and around Ballarat, digging and learning about surveying and meteorology. As a result of the influx of migrants, the nearby town of Melbourne grew rapidly, becoming Australia's largest city and, after London, the second largest city in the British Empire. The University was founded in 1855 and the State Library in 1856.

As a new and unexplored country and with a need for good communications across the continent with a link to the rest of the world via Java and then Europe, it was decided that an overland telegraph should be

1 Talk given by the author at the Society's *Literary Day* on 29th September 2018. [Ed.]

established. The Victorian government offered a reward to encourage an expedition to find a suitable route between south Australia and the north coast, a committee was formed and camels purchased from India to join the few already imported as they were considered ideal for desert exploration.

William Wills was chosen as expedition surveyor under the leader-ship of Robert O'Hara Burke, a police superintendent who had little or no skills in bushcraft. Suffice it to say that although the expedition, which left Melbourne in August 1860, made it to the north of the continent, they failed to complete the return journey, all but one perishing along the way with Burke and Wills dying at Cooper Creek in June 1861. John King was the man who survived with the help of the local Aborigines. As is the way of things, when the bodies were finally discovered and returned to Melbourne, a statue was raised in 1862 to the memory of Burke and Wills – but not to John King. Two years later, in 1864, Totnes also raised the funds to erect a monument to William John Wills.

Our second man is well-known to us since it is, of course, Arthur Conan Doyle. He had lived briefly in Plymouth and later visited the West Country in the company of Bertram Fletcher Robinson who had moved to Ipplepen with his family from Liverpool. Educated at Newton Abbot, he too was a writer collaborating not only with Doyle but also with P. G. Wodehouse. Robinson is buried at St Andrew's Church in Ipplepen and in 2009 a bench with a commemorative plaque was placed in Caunter's Close.

During the First World War, Doyle lost not only his son but also his brother Innes, two nephews and his brother-in-law E. W. Hornung. Some years earlier he had become interested in the paranormal and this intensified during these sad years. He began to travel extensively not only all round the UK but also Europe and the United States giving very successful talks and lectures on spiritualism. Finally, in 1920, he decided to visit Australia and New Zealand and on 1st October of that year he arrived in Melbourne. Initially he stayed at the Menzies Hotel but after a few days he moved to a flat in the Grand Hotel on Spring Street where, in 1898, the Constitution of Australia had been agreed.

Doyle was very taken with Melbourne spending several days exploring it. "There are few cities which have the same natural advantages, for it is

near the sea, with many charming watering places close at hand... Edinburgh is the nearest analogy which I can recall. Parks and gardens are beautiful, but, as in most British cities, the public statues are more solid than impressive. The best of them, that to Burke and Wills, the heroic explorers, has no name upon it to signify who the two figures are, so that they mean nothing at all to the casual observer, in spite of some excellent bas-reliefs, round the base... Before our departure I appealed in the press to have this omission rectified and it was, I believe, done."

And our third person is me.

In the early years of this century my daughter and her family moved just to the south of Melbourne. I visited on several occasions, the most recent in the spring of 2018 when I stayed for a few days in a flat at the Grand Hotel on Spencer Street. Not the Grand of Doyle's day (now known as The Windsor), but an equally magnificent building that had once been the headquarters of the Victorian Railway Line. Both buildings are similar in style and were built during the 1880s and both retain much of their original 'goldrush' splendour. A few years earlier, in 2010, I had found myself in California attending the wedding of my youngest son. Whilst there I went on a mini road trip with my brother from San Francisco via Yosemite, Death Valley and on to Las Vegas. The landscape and temperature were reminders of the hardships that must have been endured by the original '49ers' and it triggered a memory of a statue I had seen and photographed on one of my visits to Melbourne – that for Burke & Wills. As a sometime lecturer, I give day courses at my local adult education college and it occurred to me that a series of three linked courses on exploration might be of interest. The first would cover the Californian Gold Rush; the second the ill-fated Burke and Wills expedition and the third Livingstone and Stanley. I visited Ipplepen, Ashburton and Totnes taking photos and adding them to the ones I already had from Melbourne and California. I have never been to Livingstone's Africa and as far as I am aware neither did Doyle or Wills. The course was duly given and I thought no more about Wills, the gold rush or Australia.

Last year I was asked by Brian Pugh to index his latest Conan Doyle Chronology. There I discovered the links between Wills, Doyle, the West Country, Melbourne and myself. Over the century and a half during which they and I have lived our paths have criss-crossed on numerous occasions. William John Wills set it in motion; Conan Doyle consolidated the link – and I just followed in their footsteps.

Society news

Of, by and with the members of the Poor Folk

Footsteps across the Moor weekend (end-September 2018)

Literary Day (Saturday, 29th): Geraldine welcomed Marilyn Warbis and Pete Cummings to the NoBody Inn, where a small group of *Poor Folk* met to hear a reading of the couple's 'speculative drama'. There were talks by Geraldine, Shirley Purves and yours truly. All were well received (and can be found within this issue), and a successful morning was, unsurprisingly, rounded off with lunch.

Dartmoor Day (Sunday, 30th): Where part one of the weekend had required mental exertion of its participants, part two required physical (and a little bit of mental) exertion. Meeting at the Warren House Inn, the highest in Southern England and also said to be the loneliest (where we left our President handling a beer), we set out for the Bronze-age settlement, Grimspound, which it is known to have been visited by Conan Doyle and Bertram Fletcher Robinson in March 1901.

Walking through the bracken, David Guest uninterruptedly explained the archaeological history of the ruins, the channelled stream running to and from the compound, the likely location of a reservoir, and much else. We then climbed to and up the nearby Hookney Tor which, in spite of the cloud, offered a splendid vista. Somewhat chilled, but generally in good humour, we returned to the Warren House for a well-deserved lunch. Our thanks to David for an interesting walk and talk.

The 2018 AGM and Luncheon (1st December 2018)

As a result of the general disappointment on the quality of last year's luncheon at the Two Bridges Hotel, the Committee agreed with Mike Menhenitt's suggestion to hold this year's AGM at the newly renovated Stag Inn – but which purports to be the oldest pub in Devon – in his home village of Rackenford, around five miles south of the southern edge of Exmoor. This was deemed close enough for the *Poor Folk* to be *Upon the Moors*! We were not to regret the decision.

Our Chairman, in her opening address, first welcomed the other 12 (plus Freddie) attending, and then reported a year which had seen, *inter alia*, a record turnout at the croquet, and, the following day, our President's centenary; there was also the aforementioned *Footsteps across the Moor* weekend and the *Return Luncheon*. She thanked Mike's initiative for his promoting of the Society, culminating in a BBC interview given by 'Fitz'. [For more on these events, see *The Torr*, No. 53. Ed.]

Although the financial year was not quite over, the Treasurer was still able to report that the Society was financially sound (mirrored in the actual Balance Sheet following this report). As, in addition, the cost of *The Torr* was contained – and there had been no announcement (yet) by Royal Mail of any increase in postal rates – it was again proposed, and approved, to keep subscriptions unchanged.

The Editor was able to report that he had no problem in filling the 56 pages of *The Torr*, and indeed the opposite was the case for the next (i.e. this) issue, due largely to his hope that the talks of the previous September could be published. There was some discussion as to whether the website could be a possible forum, but it was felt that it could better serve as a 'pointer' to recent *Torrs*, to possibly make earlier issues digitally freely available and to upload photographs of recent events. He promised to investigate the matter further with the Webmaster.

The other Officers had little to report, and the next item on the Agenda, Elections, was equally dealt with speedily since, as all of the Committee were prepared to continue, their re-election was a formality. The AGM effectively at an end, lunch was taken and proved to be excellent. The Stag had decided that its kitchen would deal exclusively with us, and its attention to detail was evident in the three-course meal (followed by coffee and a mince pie).

Judith Marshall departed from her role as money-collector and spinner (wot, no raffle?!) and gave an interesting talk on the Victorian country house, paying special attention to the nearby Knightshayes Court, commissioned by Sir John Heathcoat-Amory, to which she has a special affinity. The house, which now belongs to the National Trust, is open to the public and well worth a visit. Who knows, perhaps you'll meet Judith there!

So ended another *PFUM* year, AGM and successful luncheon. Thanks to all who have made all of those possible, but especially to Geraldine for holding it all together.

Richard Dunsford

Richard, who only a year or two before had decided to join the *Poor Folk*, was persuaded to come onto its Committee at the 2011 AGM. He established himself immediately as someone full of ideas, but never pressed these upon others. Thanks to him, some Society members were able to join him as he took the helm on his boat on the Tamar in 2013, followed by lunch (*The Torr*, No. 43, pp. 20/1), and a few of us were lucky enough to have a guided tour of the Guildhall in Exeter, which, as a guild member and an occupation given – on his company's website – as woollen merchant, he was perfectly equipped to give.

An astute businessman, Richard was also responsible for the decision to provide new members to the *Poor Folk* a one-off reduction in fees in their first year.

After a six-year stint, Richard decided that it was time for someone younger to take his place on the Committee and he resigned at the 2017 AGM.

Richard rarely missed an AGM or the *Return Luncheon* in his village pub, the NoBody Inn, and always made sure that he was accompanied by a guest or guests, who were invariably 'persuaded' to join! It was at the former in Rackenford that I last saw him on 1st December. Four days later, having left the NoBody after his weekly noggin with the 'chaps', he collapsed and died on his way home. Richard had celebrated his 80th birthday in February.

Richard was a kind and considerate gentleman, and a valued member of the Society and, I'm certain, society. He was always happy to give advice when asked, and I owe a personal debt to him. He will be much missed both in the *Poor Folk* and in Doddiscombsleigh, and our thoughts are with Tina and the family.

Stephan Arthur
7 December 2018

sar

The *PFUM*'s Balance Sheet and Statement of Accounts: 2018 (Judith Marshall, Treasurer)

Income and Expenditure Account ending 31st December

Income (£)	2018	*2017*	Expenditure (£)	2018	*2017*
Subscriptions	688.49	*838.18*	***The Torr***		
Interest	–	–	Spring issue	262.50	*250.00*
			Autumn issue	262.50	*262.00*
***The Torr* sales**	–	–	p&p	151.00	*126.20*
Binder sales	–	–	**Other mailings**	–	–
			Committee expenses	59.30	*28.46*
Events			**Events**		
Return Luncheon	342.00	*474.45*	Return Luncheon	262.40	*434.00*
Croquet match	288.00	*360.00*	Croquet match	200.18	*286.56*
'Footsteps across the Moor' w/e	70.00	*225.00*	'Footsteps across the Moor' w/e	26.75	*225.00*
AGM & lunch	328.00	*340.70*	AGM & lunch	260.00	*390.70*
			Gifts	15.00	*19.95*
Raffle	–	*50.00*	**Raffle**	–	–
Total income	**1,716.49**	***2,258.33***	**Total expenditure**	**1,499.63**	***2,022.87***
		–	Cash in hand	–	*50.00*
Excess expenditure	–	–	Excess income	216.86	*185.46*
TOTAL	**1,716.49**	***2,258.33***	**TOTAL**	**1,716.49**	***2,258.33***

Note: Around £80 in subscriptions for 2018 were paid in 2017 by non-UK members.

Statement of accounts at year-end

Held in (£)	2018	*2017*
NatWest	1,433.40	*1,216.54*
Santander	276.22	*276.22*

Sherlock Holmes' children

by
John Sheppard


Sherlock Holmes certainly never had any children of his own, but there are many fascinating interactions with youngsters recorded by Watson in our beloved Canon. It seemed to me that the matter was ripe for consideration, since there are points in connection with it which are not entirely devoid of interest and even of instruction.

The obvious and most famous children who earn a mention in the Canon are the Baker Street division of the detective police force, who make their entrance, noisy and "disreputable" as it is, in *A Study in Scarlet*. Six of them, including their leader Wiggins, appear at 221B to report a lack of success in their assignment, to collect their day's pay, and to be sent out again to keep at the task. Having attended to them, Holmes explains their value to Watson, namely that, being easily overlooked by everyone else, they can "go everywhere and hear everything". Self-evidently, they were boys of huge common-sense but probably with little or no formal education. (Sadly, how often in our modern life are we led and governed by those of the complete opposite; much education but no common-sense!) At the end of *A Study in Scarlet*" it is Wiggins who brings the killer into 221B, for Holmes to be able to arrest him, although Wiggins was too small to be able to contribute to subduing Jefferson Hope; it took the four grown men present to do that.

In *The Sign of Four*, Holmes strategically ingratiates himself with six-year-old Jack Smith, which leads to an oblique conversation with Mrs Smith, and the gathering by Holmes of much valuable information. Holmes also sends a telegram to his "dirty little lieutenant" Wiggins, in order to summon the assistance he needs in tracing the steam-boat *Aurora*. One cannot help wondering what kind of street-child has an address sufficiently reliable for Holmes to send a telegram, but we must take this as being evidence of Wiggins' resourcefulness and common-sense. In this case, Holmes refers to them as the Baker Street irregulars, a dozen of them invading Mrs Hudson's premises. They make a concerted but unsuccessful search, and it has to be Holmes himself who discovers the *Aurora*'s whereabouts, after which he puts one of the boys on watch. Soon, Holmes, Watson and the police are

ready in the police-launch, and when the faithful boy-sentry gives the agreed signal, the chase is on, to the successful conclusion we all know. Holmes is a not ungenerous employer of his "unofficial force" at one shilling per day, and the offer of a guinea (as older readers may recall, 21 shillings) is a munificent potential reward. However, my feeling is that Holmes is able to command the faithful service of these usually wild and wilful boys partly by financial incentive but also by more intangible means. Was he perhaps the only adult who took them seriously and gave them some respect?

Further references to these boys in Holmes' service are, firstly, in *The Crooked Man*, where young Simpson (apart from Wiggins, the only one to be named) is set to mount guard over Henry Wood and to keep him under surveillance until Holmes and Watson arrive. Holmes dismisses Simpson with an affectionate pat on the head and the praise he has earned. The second reference is markedly more oblique, and occurs in *The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax* in which it is mentioned that "… neither the official police nor Holmes' own small but very efficient organisation sufficed to clear away the mystery."

More prosaic and less adventurous are the pageboys to whom there are so many references in the Canon. These youngsters, with their neat uniforms and impeccable manners, serve at 221B and elsewhere, to introduce and announce callers, occasionally being nearly overwhelmed by them: Miss Sutherland appeared "… like a full-sailed merchant-man behind a tiny pilot-boat". Only one of the pageboys at 221B is ever identified by name. This is Billy, first mentioned in the 1887 case *The Valley of Fear*. He must have been very young then, because in the 1903 case, *The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone*, he is identified again by name and described as young but wise and tactful. Notwithstanding Billy's long service and good conduct, a pageboy employed by the Blessington and

"Sherlock Holmes welcomed her" [1]

1 From *A Case of Identity*. Watson records, "… the boy in buttons entered to announce Miss Mary Sutherland …". The illustration is not one of Paget's finer works: Holmes appears to be suffering from elephantiasis! [Ed.]

Trevelyan medical practice turns out to be one of the murderous criminals, although no legal case could be made against him. Obviously, like any other group, there were good and bad among the pageboys of London.

There is only one reference to a child being a witness to the circumstances of a crime, and that is 14-year-old Patience Moran, who heard and saw the verbal conflict between the two McCarthys in *The Boscombe Valley Mystery*. However, she was so frightened by their incipient violence, that she preferred to run away home to her mother rather than stay and watch, which would have been arguably more useful. Presumably her family was not related to the notorious Colonel Sebastian Moran! Holmes visits the Moran home later, but there would have been no point in him questioning Patience, since by then he had solved the mystery. One thing is certain, there is little patience in Holmes' dealings with Lestrade!

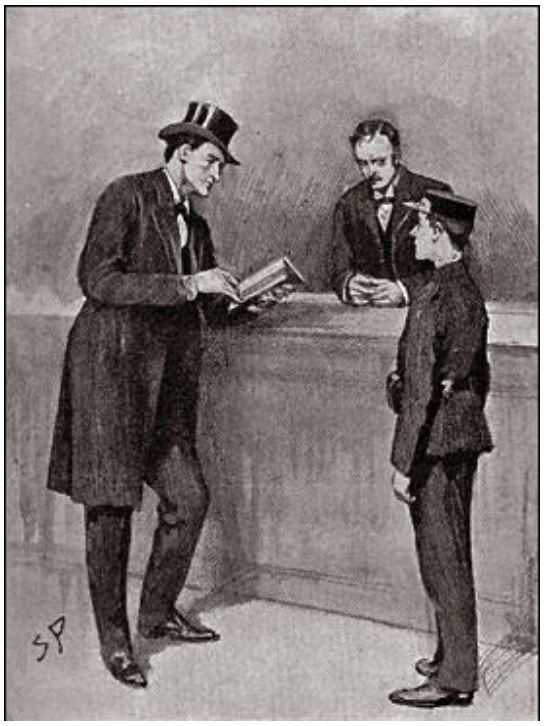
"They found the body" [2]

Holmes has numerous interactions with other people's servants. This is perfectly natural to Victorian society where any household of middle-class or greater income would have staff. The young housemaids seem to be totally ignored and remain in the background, with Holmes interviewing as witnesses only more mature female staff. The young males with whom Holmes and Watson have contact are mostly the stable boys, who were definitely at the bottom of the horsey hierarchy. There is a contrast between these stable boys and the "stable lads" of Colonel Ross's racing establishment, King's Pyland. Even in modern parlance, the term "stable lad" is usually taken to mean one of more mature years than the word "lad" would normally imply. Holmes demonstrates his ability to interact well with all levels of society in his friendly questioning of one of the Colonel's lads over the lameness of the sheep, thus confirming one of his deductions that led to the solution of *Silver Blaze*.

Living as we do in the age of electronic communication, it is delightful to be taken back to times when paper was the medium of correspondence,

2 "They" were (in order of the illustration, starting from the background) Patience's mother, Patience and the "young Mr McCarthy" and, of course, the prostate senior McCarthy.

and not only was there a rapid and efficient Post Office, but a District Messenger Service for more urgent items. District Messengers are mentioned twice in the Canon. The one of particular interest to us is 14-year-old Cartwright who was of such great help to Holmes in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Evidently Cartwright was a youth of intelligence and some education, and was no doubt the off-spring of a respectable working-class family. Aged 14 in 1889, the year of *Hound*, he would have been one of the first generation to benefit from the Elementary Education Act of 1870 which established the legal framework for School Boards in localities. By 1880 the provision of elementary schooling for both sexes was made compulsory, and the age raised to 13. Cartwright was obviously no scruffy street child; as a District Messenger he would have had to have carried himself with tact and dignity to accomplish his normal duties, let alone the enquiry task to which Holmes set him. Later in Watson's narrative, Cartwright turns up on Dartmoor as Holmes' faithful helper, but this time in disguise as a country boy. Frankly I think young Cartwright had the makings of as apprentice detective, but further speculation on that is beyond the scope of this piece. Incidentally, there are some references to "express messengers" but this was a Post Office service, unlike the District Messenger Service which was a private business.

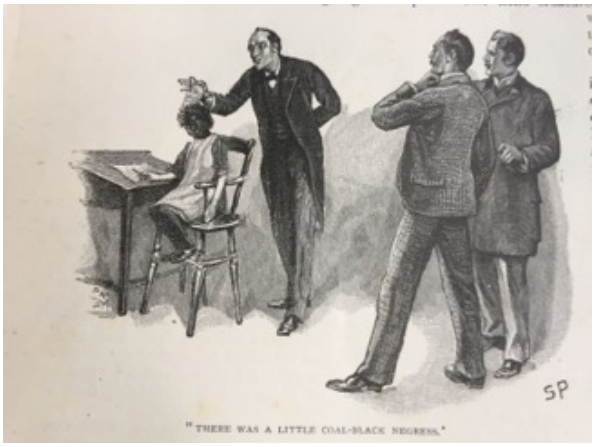


"Now, Cartwright, there are the names of twenty-three hotels here"

The Canon includes cases where a child is one of the criminal gang; I have already alluded to *The Resident Patient*, but there is also *The Final Problem* where a Swiss lad brings Holmes the false letter with which Moriarty traps him, more or less willingly. One of the most interesting of Watson's narratives is *The Adventure of the Copper Beeches* in which the appallingly wanton and cruel behaviour of a child (as relayed to him rather than directly observed by him) leads Holmes to an accurate view of the true character of the head of the household. This cruel and selfish man, Jephro Rucastle, who hides behind a façade of joviality and bonhomie, is exposed by Holmes and receives a measure of just punishment in being attacked and injured by his own out-of-control dog. One of the last group of published

cases is *The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire*, which is the only one where it is proved that a child, the spoiled and over-indulged Jacky, has actually committed the crime; the attempted murder of his baby step-brother. In the absence of an effective youth-justice system, and in view of the need for the Ferguson family to avoid a public scandal, Holmes recommends a year at sea for the evil Jacky. This is distinctly letting him off lightly, but it is probably the best route to a bit of character-building hardship and adventure.

Holmes is brought into two cases where he is instrumental in rescuing a child. In *The Yellow Face* he has his part in freeing the little black girl from bizarre but well-intentioned circumstances, thus reuniting her properly with her mother, and also just as importantly, with her step-father. Holmes withdraws swiftly and humbly from the scene, admitting to Watson once they are home that it was not his finest piece of detective work. In *The Adventure of the Priory School* the kidnapped boy is rescued by Holmes from the clutches of the vicious Reuben Hayes and the deviously evil James Wilder, and takes a very real pleasure in extracting the full sum of money promised by the child's father as reward. As an interesting aside, Holmes accepts the cheque for both his and Watson's rewards, but then he was always the senior partner in their work.



"There was a little coal-black negress"

Finally, let us consider briefly Holmes' abstract thinking around children. Firstly there is his wonderful description of the Board Schools of south-west London as "Lighthouses my boy! Beacons of the future! Capsules with hundreds of bright little seeds in each, etc etc". Secondly, in *The Adventure of the Illustrious Client*, Holmes pleads for some common-sense to be shown by Miss de Merville, as if she were a daughter of his. Was there a subconscious element of wishful, wistful thinking here? No, probably not, it was just a trope to convey the intensity of his feelings and pleadings to his faithful chronicler.

I trust that all this has been of interest. For a lengthy and scholarly article on Victorian street-children in general, readers may wish to consult Professor Stepenoff's contribution to the London Society's *Journal* in its Winter 2016 issue.

Almost unknown

by
Shirley Purves[1]


Dear Dr Watson….

We will never know how near we were to learning nothing of the adventures of Mr Sherlock Holmes. There is history and background that would never have been revealed if the dear Doctor, recovering from his Afghan War years, had not met his eventual great friend at the bar of the Criterion, homeless in London, after surviving the horrors of the North West frontier campaign thanks to a little-known fellow soldier.

On July 4th 1880 Britain was embroiled in one of its several skirmishes in the far and near east. Skirmishes may be what they were called, but the actual loss of life in those years was appalling. Due to the unfathomable mind set of the hierarchy and generals of the British army, 2,453 soldiers of the Berkshire Regiment – also known as the "Fighting Fifth" – who were already stationed in India as part of the Bengal army, crossed the river Helmand to do battle with the forces of one Ayub Khan. This powerful warlord had assembled, in the spring of that year, a strong force intent on driving the British out of Afghanistan once and for all. The Berkshires were infantry soldiers (who in previous times had each carried a flintlock). Attached to this force was one **Doctor James Watson,** destined to be the medic for these brave men, who were ordered to take a desperate stand against Ayub Kahn, whose force of Ghazis and Pathans were famed as warriors of almost unbeaten fighting character.

On joining this regiment Watson as a medic would have had an orderly allocated to him. The troops, like Watson, doomed to fight "the fatal battle of Maiwand", had had journeys of many weeks travel. First taking ship to Bombay, then a coastal steamer to Karachi after which a toil up one of the three passes across the mountains to Sukkar, then via the new raiload to Jacobad and Siki. There then followed attachment to one of the many horse or camel caravans supplying the troops beyond the passes, with temperatures

1 Talk given by the author at the Society's *Literary Day* on 29th September 2018. [Ed.]

officially recording up to 140°F, which completed the traverse to the actual field of combat.

At Quetta, Watson and his orderly joined the field with the Northumberland Fusiliers. His duties lay not only among the wounded but also with the many suffering from outbreaks of dysentery and enteric fever. Eventually 159 miles inside Afghan terrain, Assistant Surgeon Watson was ordered to duty with the Berkshires. With him for his help and protection came his orderly whose name Watson discovered was **Murray**. They faced the fanatical Ghazis and Pathans at Maiwand on a terrible day of intense heat accompanied by a lack of food and most of all water. As the forlorn, exhausted men retreated the Ghaziz continued to fire mercilessly upon them. Watson was later to tell Holmes that he became one of the wounded having been struck "in the left shoulder by a jezail bullet" that shattered the bone (which bone we ask … clavicle, humerus or radius?). Murray wasted no time but, in Watson's own words, "**with devotion and courage threw me across a pack-horse and succeeded in bringing me safely to the British lines**". With a ruptured artery, death would have been inevitable and what is more, a fate worse than death awaited at the hands of the Ghazi women who would have happily come out to join the slaughter.

by George Hutchinson (1891)

by Richard Gutschmidt (1902)[2]

Rudyard Kipling, in his poem "The Young British Soldier", ends:

"When you're wounded and left on Afghanistan's plains
And the women come out to cut up what remains

2 See also *The Torr*, No. 52, p. 21. [Ed.]

Jest roll to your rifle and blow out your brains
An' go to your Gawd like a soldier."

Definitely a case of *sauve qui peut*.

Very little has been written about Murray's courage under fire but one hoped he was allowed to stay with the good and injured doctor for the tortuous journey home … 1,000 miles with the train of wounded men (and one cannot imagine there was much Florence Nightingale influence) then to Karachi by boat where they embarked on to the steam ship *Orantes* waiting to bring home the wounded men to Portsmouth.

Back in Britain, Watson refused to go to Netley for rehabilitation (perhaps he knew of the dubious conditions there). Somehow he gravitated to London, in his words "that great cesspool into which all the loungers and idlers of the Empire are inevitably drawn". As weak and emaciated as he was (remember he had also had an attack of enteric fever), he still had the strength (and cash) to get himself to the bar of the Criterion where he met his old friend Stamford who then introduced him to Holmes.… and the rest as they say is history.

Murray is the great unsung hero of the era. Without him we would not have known of Holmes … or rather Holmes would not have had Watson to tell of his works and successes. We owe honour to Murray and a huge vote of thanks!

In some small way that debt was repaid more than 100 years later in 1991 when one of our number (who prefers to remain anonymous) played the role of Murray in Switzerland on a Sherlock Holmes tour.

A bibliophile Return

by
Ernst-Harald Mock

It was in April 1894 when an elderly man with a "curved back" and "white side-whiskers" ran into Watson. Watson was having a look at the house in Park Lane, where Ronald Adair was murdered, when he jostled "against an elderly, deformed man".

Watson goes on:

> **… I knocked down several books which he was carrying. I remember that as I picked them up I observed the title of one of them, "The Origin of Tree Worship", and it struck me that the fellow must be some poor bibliophile who, either as a trade or as a hobby, was a collector of obscure volumes.**

Why did this title stick in Watson's mind? And why did he call it an "obscure" volume? To answer these questions, we first have to identify this book.

Madeleine B. Stern suggests *Der Baum-kultus der Hellenen* (Eng. *The tree cult of the Greeks*). The author was Karl Boetticher and it was published in 1856 in Berlin. She admits that Watson has changed the German title fairly considerably. Tupper Bigelow and Bliss Austin suggest *The Attis of Caius Valerius Catullus*[1] by Grant Allen, published in 1892 by David Nutt (whose business was situated in the Strand!), which contains a chapter entitled "The Origin of Tree Worship". Watson might have read this

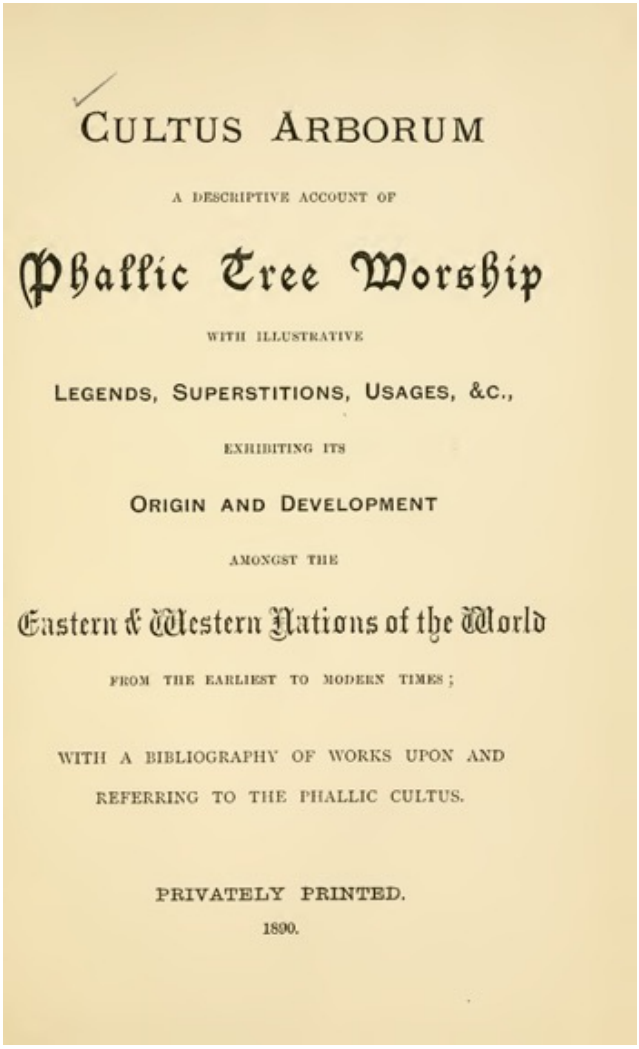
1 Attis, the consort of Cybele in Phrygian and Greek mythology, was also the Phrygian god of vegetation. In his self-mutilation, death and resurrection, he represents the fruits of the earth which die in winter only to rise again in the spring. [Ed.]

passage while picking up the volume.

But why did Watson mention this book at all? The only reason may be that the real title was very "obscure", and that he may have had cause to smile when writing this strange episode for *The Empty House* ten years later in 1903. So, what was the title of the book?

In 2010, a J. L. published an article on "Origins, Bäume, Erkenntnisse.." (Eng. *Origins, trees, knowledge*) in the internet. He or she had found a book with an unequivocally obscure title, "**Cultus Arborum – A Descriptive Account of Phallic Tree Worship** – with illustrative Legends, Superstitions, Usages, &c., exhibiting its Origins and Development amongst the Eastern & Western Nations of the World from the earliest to modern times – with a bibliography of the works upon and referring to the phallic cultus."

This little book was printed privately and, not surprisingly, anonymously in 1890. When Watson read the title, he surely thought: "Oh dear, what a really poor old lecher".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PRIVATELY PRINTED.

1890.

But what Watson could not have known, everybody who expects some kind of erotic details will be disappointed, because he or she will only find a list of nearly every mystical tree in the world with a short description, starting with the Paradise tree, via the Bo tree in India and the Christmas tree to the German *Maibaum*, and so forth.[2]

This thin book seems to be a very good candidate, which explains Watson's reaction. Of course, he refused to publish its embarrassing title.

What about the other books mentioned in this story?

2 For an example, and that which may have interested Holmes, see at the end of this article. [Ed.]

Later, and just before he reveals his true identity to Watson, Holmes, still in disguise, names three further books:

> **"… I am sure. … Maybe you collect yourself, sir; here's 'British Birds', and 'Catullus', and 'The Holy War' – a bargain every one of them. With five volumes you could just fill that gap on that second shelf. It looks untidy, does it not, sir?"**

Madeleine Stern believes that these books were: Thomas Fuller's first edition of *The Historie of the Holy Warre*, published 1639; Avantius' rare edition of *Catullus, Tibullus, Propertius* from 1502; and the two volumes of *History of British Birds* by Thomas Bewick dated 1797–1804, with fine wood engravings by the author.

Tupper Bigelow prefers, along with Avantius' book, John Bunyan's *The Holy War* and the three-volume William Yarrel's *A History of British Birds*, which are very heavy and thick books.[3]

Why on earth should Holmes carry such "millstones" to Park Lane? Watson speaks of about "a dozen" books. Of course they had to be small and light, and easy to carry under the arm. Another point is, if Holmes was a passionate book collector, he would never have used any items from his fine collection. It seems obvious that he wanted to run into Watson and he also intended that some of the books would escape his grasp. No real book-lover would use his copies or any other fine book for this purpose.

Ashley Mayo hits the nail on the head when he calls them 'props'. He also doubts whether we would find them on Holmes' bookshelf. Thus every small, light, damaged and cheap edition, dealing with *British Birds*, *Catullus* or *The Holy War* could be the right one.

What about these titles? It was not Holmes' intention to itemise the full titles of all the books. He just wanted to manipulate Watson to turn around. Thus he focussed Watson's attention onto the books and then, with a sudden gesture, pointed to the shelf behind Watson, hoping that he would turn around instinctively. If Watson had not moved, Holmes would probably have dropped a book behind the desk, forcing Watson to pick it up.

What happened to these old books? Well, could it be that we can find them, bound together with Watson's old mourning band, on his bookshelf, for sentimental reasons?

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3 But which would satisfy the number of books to which Holmes refers. [Ed.]

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On the mysteries of the ash tree, from *Cultus Arborum*

It has been said that if the oak be regarded as the king of trees and the Hercules of the forest, the ash may fairly claim supremacy as their queen, and Gilpin terms it the "Venus of the Woods." […]

So much mystery has always been associated with the ash tree, …

In many parts of the Highlands of Scotland, at the birth of a child, the nurse puts one end of a green stick of this tree into the fire, and while it is burning gathers in a spoon the sap or juice which oozes out at the other end, and administers it as the first spoonful of food to the newly-born babe.

In Somersetshire, and some other counties, the burning of an ashen fagot is a regular Christmas custom, and it is supposed that misfortune will certainly fall upon the house where it is not duly fulfilled. In the same county, there is held annually the "Ash Faggot Ball." The fagot is bound with three withes, which are severally chosen to represent them by the young people present — the first withe that breaks in the fire signifying that they who selected it will be the first to be married. It is said that these customs prevail extensively where the Arthurian legends are very strong, and that "it is probable that the association of the ash with Arthur grew out of its dedication to the gods of war, on account of toughness for weapons." [4]

4 This tradition survives in pubs on the Devon-Somerset border, and is celebrated on the evening of 6th January (old Christmas Eve). For example, in *The Squirrel Inn* in Laymore, the ritual centres on an ashen faggot around twelve feet in length bound by approximately a dozen withies, and the faggot's butt placed at the rear of the lit fireplace. Bets are placed on the length of time elapsed until the last binding bursts; the proceeds go to charity. [Ed.]

Sarah's postcard album: The remarkable Mr Wiles

by
Sarah Obermuller-Bennett

This will come as no surprise to fellow collectors, but the question I get asked most often in relation to my hobby invariably concerns the identity of the postcard which sparked my interest.

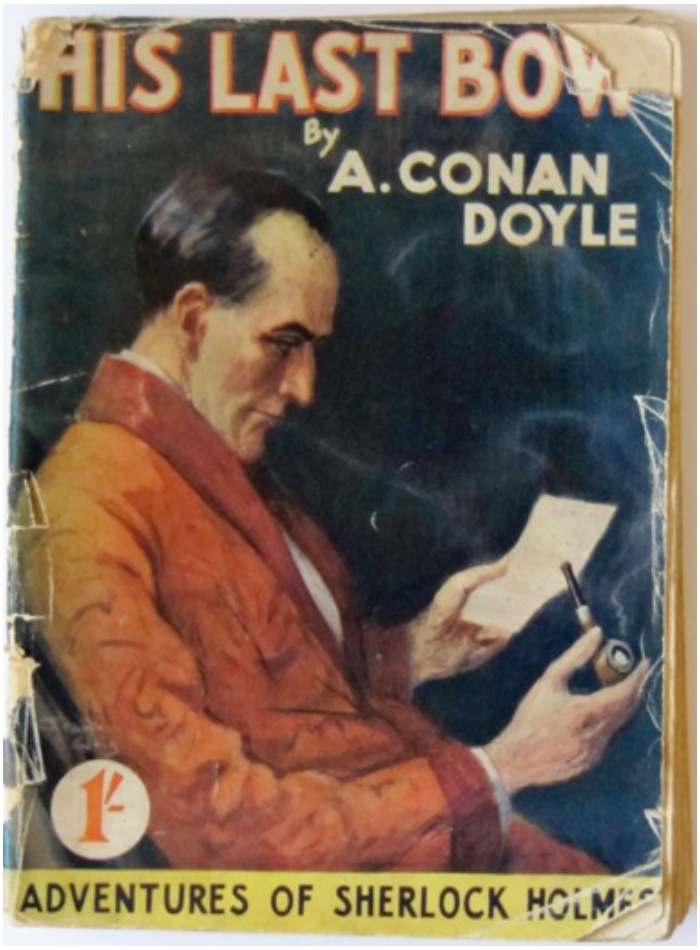
Readers of these articles may be surprised to hear that my first postcard is rather different from others featured thus far. No 'Marrow Man', Louis Wain cat or photograph of a local theatre, the postcard that launched the beginning of the collection is a modern example, a reproduction of a book cover from the 1920s. This year is the anniversary of its purchase, ten years ago, from the gift shop of Portsmouth's Museum, also incidentally my first visit to the city.

It features my favourite depiction of Sherlock Holmes, by the artist Frank Wiles (1881–1963). The image, reproduced in postcard form by the Sherlock Holmes Memorabilia Company, comes from a cover illustration for *His Last Bow*. We find Holmes clad in a red dressing gown, deep in contemplation of a document held in one hand, whilst in the other he holds his pipe. He has been caught in mid-exhalation, the smoke directed arrow-like towards the document, from whence it drifts upwards. The background is plain, clearly defining Holmes' sharp features and the pronounced widow's peak of his hair. If I do have a criticism, it is in the treatment of the hands, which are sketchy in style; the hand that holds the pipe, in particular, is quite loose and the fingers appear to have melted into one. The face is excellent, however, with Wiles capturing that pensive look in the eye, the shine of the hair, and the subtle colour graduations of the folded skin around the jaw. It is perhaps not the first image of Holmes' that springs to mind, but it is one that, for me,

has always presented a mystery until recently.

The portrayal of Holmes most readily associated with Wiles is his illustration for *The Valley of Fear* (featured on the back cover of this issue of *The Torr*), the one which Conan Doyle gave his seal of approval by remarking that "this comes nearest to my conception of what Holmes really looks like". The same red dressing gown features, as does a page with a coded message and that same severe profile. Given the similarity between the two images, it is strange that the cover work for *His Last Bow* is not better known.

This disparity of popularity is probably due to some extent to the availability of the source material. The postcard identifies the image as belonging to a 'work' published by Newnes in 1925, currently in the Richard Lancelyn Green Collection at Portsmouth City Museum. I say 'work' because for many years I could not establish whether 'His Last Bow' related to the individual story or to the collection first published in 1917.



Then in 2016, something remarkable happened. Not one, but two copies of an elusive book featuring this cover image appeared on a well-known internet auction site. I missed the first (to a last-minute bid!), only to find another, and in better condition, for sale just a few weeks later. This time I was successful and finally had my hands on the item in question. My quest was over. Then, a matter of months later, in a case of happy coincidence, Nicholas Utechin published *From Abbey to Wiles: Sherlock Holmes Classic British Cover Artists* (2016), featuring the only reproduction I had ever seen of the cover in any book (although should the reader know of any other, I am always ready to be corrected).

What we actually have is a "Newnes' New-Size Novel" (Handy Pocket

Size 7″ x 5″, with Coloured Picture Covers, according to the advertising description). This paperback issue comprises Watson's preface and the eight stories that make up the collection of *His Last Bow: Some Reminiscences of Sherlock Holmes*, including *The Adventure of the Cardboard Box*, which was dropped from later editions. A date of 1925 has been suggested both online and on the postcard reproduction as the publishing year. The copy is undated, but it does come complete with its back cover and accompanying advertisements. *The Crusoe Magazine* (For Older Boys and Girls, price 7d.) advertised on the back cover saw its first issue in June 1924, which would seem to confirm the 1925 dating. But we can do better! Inside the back cover is a full-page piece on Newnes' 2/6 Novels. After checking the dates of all the advertised books, the latest is Richmal Crompton's *William – The Conqueror*, first published in 1926, which must mean this copy of *His Last Bow* was published in or soon after that same year.

In terms of quality, age has been fairly kind to this book. The binding is relatively tight and there are only a few spots of foxing. The front cover has suffered chips to its edges, but the image is largely intact. I treat this venerable book with great care and rarely does it come out of its protective bag – the covers are attached by the slimmest of threads, which probably accounts for the rarity of the Wiles image. Even rarer would seem to be this book's companion, *The Valley of Fear*, again with another Wiles' cover image, featuring a red circle and triangle superimposed over a full-face portrait of Sherlock Holmes. Interestingly, Wiles is not credited in my copy and only the faint signature just above the price label identifies the artist. This is even harder to see in the *The Valley of Fear* copy, as the title has almost completely obliterated the signature.

I knew little about the artist, aside from his *Strand* illustrations, before I acquired the postcard. Francis 'Frank' Edmund Wiles was born in Cambridge, the fourth son of British sculptor, Henry Wiles. Acclaimed as the most distinguished pupil at the School of Art in Cambridge, Frank Wiles later studied under Walter Sickert in London. He first exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1901, continuing to do so until 1930. As a professional artist, he specialised in portraiture, especially after his move to South Africa in 1947, where his brother Walter Gilbert Wiles had already established a studio. During this period, Frank Wiles was to receive commissions to paint portraits of the governors and leading ministers, including the South African Prime Minister Jan Smuts. A member of the South African Society of Artists, he regularly exhibited in the Society's annual exhibitions until his death in 1963.

But it is as an illustrator that Wiles will probably be forever remembered, producing artwork for anything from advertising posters for Nestlé's Milk through to books such as Jane Austen's *Emma* in 1932 and girls' school stories. For the *Strand Magazine*, he produced 31 black-and-white illustrations for *The Valley of Fear*, which commenced in September 1914. Wiles was to provide many illustrations for the *Strand*, for other stories as well as Sherlock Holmes, which included *The Veiled Lodger* (February 1927). The drama of the scene where the lion springs on the unfortunate Eugenia Ronder cannot fail to leave an impression.

Yet for me, it is the uncluttered scenes and close studies that come nearest to the character of Holmes. The two-page illustration of Watson observing Holmes as he sits "upon the floor like some strange Buddha, with crossed legs, the books all around him, and one open upon his knees" is one of my personal favourites, featuring as it does a more youthful character, brimming with barely contained energy, as opposed to the older and some-what haggard-looking Holmes that appears in some of Wiles' illustrations for *The Valley of Fear*.

What I cannot discover is the fate of Wiles' original artwork, if any survives at all. Interestingly, I note that the title page of the *Strand* has the following inclusion: "Most of the Original Drawings of the Illustrations in this Magazine are for sale". Were they purchased, we wonder? If anyone has further information, I would be interested to know.

Footsteps across the Moor[1]

A speculative drama based on a historical event

by

Marilyn Warbis and Pete Cummings[2]


Characters:
Arthur Conan Doyle [ACD], aged 41, author
Bertram Fletcher Robinson [BFR], aged 31, author
Edward Bray [EB], receptionist at *Rowe's Duchy Hotel*, Princetown, UK

Act 1 Scene 1
Location: *Rowe's Duchy Hotel*
Time: Late afternoon
Set: The reception area of the Hotel

(Robinson enters the Hotel wearing Victorian gentleman's attire and carrying a stick and a holdall. Bray stands behind the reception counter.)

EB: Good afternoon, sir, and welcome to Rowe's Duchy Hotel – Mr. Robinson, I presume.

BFR: And good afternoon to you too, sir. I imagine that you recognised me from my friend's description. He is here, isn't he?

EB: Yes; and you are quite correct, sir. He gave me a detailed description of yourself and your expected time of arrival, as would be expected from Mr. Doyle. I trust your journey from Ipplepen was uneventful?

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1 The play, reproduced here with kind permission of RoughWood Play Associates, © 2017, was introduced by Pete Cummings, and read by Geraldine Beare, Shirley Purves and Pete at the Society's *Literary Day* on 29th September 2018. [Ed.]

2 Marilyn Warbis, a friend of our Committee member Kevin ("Ginger") O'Doherty, was voted by readers of *The Plymouth News* on 12th February 2018 as one of the 59 "coolest women in the city." The newspaper reported that "she was always a keen letter writer but only turned her hand to other forms about three years ago. She joined Athenaeum Writers in 2015 and has written two, as yet unpublished, novellas. But she won the Plymouth Propriety Library's poetry prize in 2014 and the PlymLit16 flash fiction contest in 2016." [Ed.]

BFR: It was indeed, thank you, Mr. – er –

EB: The name is Bray, sir, and your room number is 5A – just up the stairs and along the corridor. It's next to Mr. Doyle's who is in 5B. Here are the keys to your room.

BFR: *(taking the keys)* Thank you. The rest of my luggage is with my coachman outside.

EB: No problem at all, Mr. Robinson. It will be collected and taken to your room immediately – please enjoy your stay with us.

BFR: With reference to your comment, "Mr. Robinson, I presume," by coincidence last year I returned from South Africa some thirty years after Dr. Livingstone was discovered by Mr. Stanley. It was during the voyage back that my friendship with Mr. Doyle was cemented. We have now come to Dartmoor to further our researches on a mutual project.

EB: Oh, I see, sir, and I hope our famous moorland weather does not turn inclement for you. Now, dinner is at 7 o'clock, and breakfast runs from 7.30 a.m., and I hope your stay is a pleasant one.

BFR: Thank you, Mr. Bray. I'll go to my room now.

(Robinson exits towards the stairs.)

CURTAIN

Act 1 Scene 2
Location: *Rowe's Duchy Hotel*
Time: The evening, several days later
Set: The lounge, after dinner

(Doyle and Robinson are sitting in easy-chairs and chatting, drinks glasses in hand.)

ACD: Well, Bertie, once again we've been fortunate with the weather – one never knows what it will be like here from hour to hour: one moment, sunshine, the next, thick mist over the tors, when it becomes a most atmospheric place.

BFR: Indeed yes, Arthur. And the fine weather made our walk to Fox Tor Mire a most enjoyable experience. I found Nun's Cross and Childe's Tomb both places of much interest.

ACD: And don't forget the old tin mine at Whiteworks – I could have

explored that for longer, but we had further to go. Maybe we can revisit it another day during our stay on Dartmoor.

BFR: Yes, and there are other places we must also visit.

ACD: I would like to see the prison here at Princetown when the mist comes down, it would be a fine location to be inserted into our story. *(pause)* And whilst thinking of locations, you know, that yew alley we saw at Cromer was spectacular. It would make a great addition to the Hall that we've discussed.

BFR: Sorry, Arthur: yew trees don't grow in soil which holds water, and they need clay, not peat. They wouldn't grow here.

ACD: In that case, Bertie, I bow to your superior knowledge.

BFR: Thank you, Arthur. Other spots we could visit could be Fernworthy, the ancient settlement at Grimspound, even an excursion to the Buckfastleigh area –

ACD: I must say, our visit to the area around Merripit caught my imagination. It surely must be utilised in the story.

BFR: And I'm keen to visit the Vitifer and Golden Dagger Mines around Grimspound. I could get Bray to arrange our overnight accommodation at the nearby Warren House Inn, as they are a distance from here. However – regarding distances between places – I'm somewhat concerned that some of the places we've visited and intend to use are so far apart.

ACD: I see no problem, Bertie. The story is set on the moors but there is nothing to say that the various locations cannot be moved around, and even invented, or the names changed somewhat, as wished.

BFR: But will our readers accept that, Arthur?

ACD: Of course they will, Bertie. They know that it's not real: they do know fact from fiction. I must say, that trek we did the other day – I did feel it in the legs.

BFR: Yes, it involved a real trudge, fourteen miles over moorland turf which tired me too, even though I can give you ten years.

ACD: I can't wait for those new horseless carriages to become available, and hope to have my name at the top of the list to own one.

BFR: My dear Arthur, that's merely a German fad. Believe you me, it'll never catch on; I'd rather call it useless-power than horseless-power. Those carriages will never replace the horse! *(He laughs.)*

ACD: Bertie, look to the future. You know that at my home in Hindhead, electricity is provided by my own generator, and that I'm interested in new inventions of all kinds.

BFR: Well, I prefer the here and now: to keep my feet on the ground, and the sea of course, as in our journey from Capetown to Southampton on the *Briton* last year.

ACD: Oh yes. As I mentioned before, I was glad to volunteer my services in the Field Hospital in South Africa, but the sights I saw there I really don't want to see again. To think of us, the British Empire, fighting farmers –

BFR: A rum do indeed!

(pause)

ACD: Following that, of course, you visited me at Cromer when I had that fever. Many thanks for that visit; and it proved fruitful for both of us.

BFR: Those stimulating hours we spent that Sunday discussing the local Black Shuck, and that Welsh dog of the Vaughans.

ACD: And the legends which caught my imagination and which brought us here were of the truly frightening Whisht Hounds, and the Cabell Hound, both of Dartmoor. They really made my skin crawl.

BFR: That afternoon at Cromer was really the beginning of this collaboration for the series in *The Strand Magazine*.

ACD: Talking of our collaboration, Bertie, I have a thought about your Penang Lawyer.

BFR: A thought, Arthur? About my cane?

(Doyle stands, fetches the cane, and returns to sit.)

ACD: Hmm. I can see that this is a gentleman's cane. New ferrel on the bottom – a well-used implement by a young man-about-town at the top of his profession.

BFR: Come now, Arthur; stop being mysterious.

ACD: You, Bertie, with your cane, are the perfect template for a character in our story.

BFR: Oh, so I will be part of the story, will I? *(pause)* And what of yourself? The main character, maybe?

ACD: No, only yourself, Bertie.

BFR: Well, I have a few thoughts of my own, Arthur, which I will explain in due course.

ACD: I shall look forward to hearing them, Bertie, perhaps during our next excursion.

BFR: Ah yes, the legend of "The White Bird of Laughter". Let's check the map for Laughter Tor. *(He produces a map and they peruse it.)*

ACD: I was most interested in that legend from your brief description of it, and look forward to our trek there tomorrow. Excuse me a moment.

(Doyle rises and returns the cane to its stand.)

CURTAIN

Act 2

Location: Bellever, Dartmoor; at a fork in the path
Time: Mid-day, the following day
Set: One fork signposts Laughter Hole; the other – right-hand – signpost points to Laughter Tor. Two boulders at this point.

(Doyle and Robinson are sitting on the adjoining boulders.)

ACD: Well, the weather's been good to us again, Bertie, and we have a good vantage-point from here – we can see both Laughter Hole below us, and the tor towering above, a grand vista. We don't need to check on the Ordnance Survey map here, do we!

BFR: We certainly don't, Arthur. *(He points.)* Look! Across there to the left lies Riddon Ridge.

ACD: Ah yes, another place to explore, another day. What say you we remain here for a while and have our lunch?

BFR: A good idea. We do have time to explore, as Henry will pick us up in the carriage in four hours' time.

ACD: Remind me again of the legend of "The White Bird of Laughter", would you, Bertie?

BFR: It went like this. A young man recuperating on Dartmoor from an illness met a young woman who lived below Laughter Tor. Unfortunately, her father was jealous of their liaison and murdered her. When the young

man next trekked across the moor to visit her, she was gone, but he saw a white kerchief hanging from a tree. As he looked, the kerchief rose up and flew as a bird direct to Laughter Tor.

ACD: A good tale indeed, Bertie. Can we use it in the story do you think? Let's consider it over lunch.

(They sit on the two boulders to eat.)

(The stage lights fade, then come up again.)

BFR: I fancy climbing to the top of Laughter Tor – what say you, Arthur?

ACD: Rather you than me, Bertie. Having done that fourteen-mile trek the other day, I think I'll leave it to you, being the younger man. I will wait here for your return.

BFR: As you wish. I'll come straight back and describe the view to you. I'll be off now, goodbye.

(Robinson exits, taking the fork towards Laughter Tor.)

ACD: Goodbye, and enjoy the walk.

(Doyle continues sitting, resting his forearms across his parted knees, hands dangling between his knees. He is frowning.)

ACD: What a fix. How do I tell him, and when? Things have moved on apace since Cromer, when we both agreed to work together. *(pause)* What will Bertie think of me? How will this affect our friendship? I should have let him know by now: the longer it's left the harder it's going to be. *(He sighs.)* But how could I have avoided this decision when the pressure from all sides was so great? There's only so much pressure a man can withstand. *(pause)* Surely, he'll understand? Will he ever believe it wasn't done for the money?

(Doyle shifts position.)

ACD: He's been so keen, so enthusiastic about this joint project, and his knowledge of legends is phenomenal. Every bit of that knowledge he's shared with me, trustingly. How can I possibly betray that trust?

(Doyle moves in an agitated way.)

ACD: And he has his own ideas to add to the story. What will this change of plan do to him? But my main character must come back. *(pause)* I pray my friendship with Bertie can weather this.

CURTAIN

Act 3 Scene 1
Location: At the same fork in the path
Time: One hour and forty-five minutes later
Set: Two boulders next to each other, near the forked signpost

(Doyle is sitting on one of the boulders. Robinson rejoins him following his hike to the top of Laughter Tor, and return.)

ACD: Oh, hello Bertie. Was the climb worthwhile? How was the view from the top of the tor?

BFR: *(plunking onto the adjacent boulder)* It was a fine view, Arthur, in all directions across untouched moorland. North Hessary in one direction, and the East Dart flowing far below me down to its meeting with the West Dart River. I could have stayed much longer drinking in such a marvellous vista, but with the exertion of the climb I've developed a bit of a stomach ache.

ACD: Alimentary, my dear Bertie; rest awhile, and to help ease the problem, I have just the remedy back at the Hotel – laudanum. I will give you some upon our return.

BFR: Thank you, Arthur. I will certainly take it.

ACD: It's my pleasure to help.

(Doyle sneezes and stands to pull out his kerchief from a pocket. A piece of paper is also inadvertently pulled out and falls onto the ground. Robinson reaches down, picks up the paper and casually looks at it. He then stares at it in silence.)

BFR: What's this, Arthur?

ACD: Oh, may I have it back, please?

BFR: Not this moment, no. *(He studies the paper.)*

ACD: If you would be so kind as to give it to me, I will tell you what it is.

(Robinson hands back the paper.)

BFR: A suspicion of underhand dealings by you is dawning upon me. It has your name on it, and it's signed by….

ACD: I know it looks suspicious to you, Bertie, but will you hear me out?

BFR: It's clear that you have done some deal behind my back. *(pause)* You've sold our story, haven't you?

(Doyle hands the paper back to Robinson.)

ACD: Look at it, Bertie – some of that will be for you! I know it looks bad, but I can explain. It —

(Robinson rips the piece of paper into small pieces and flings them onto the ground.)

ACD: My god, Bertie, what have you done? That was mine – and now it's in pieces in the mud!

BFR: There lies the remnants of a gigantic cheque, Mr. Doyle, no doubt within the footprints of your devil hound.

ACD: Bertie, I can explain —

BFR: Did you plan this all along? When were you going to tell me?

ACD: No, I didn't plan this all along, but the pressures upon me changed everything —

BFR: *(sarcastically)* Oh yes. Basing Mortimer on me – all of two lines – sugar-coating me and softening me up for this betrayal —

ACD: No, no, Bertie, it was nothing like that. You were perfect for Mortimer in the story.

BFR: So tell me – what <u>was</u> it like then?

ACD: It was like this, Bertie: you gave me the original idea for our story at Cromer, which I loved. We agreed to write it together, but as time went on, I realised it needed a powerful central character. At the same time, Smith, and Newnes, at *The Strand*, with the reading public behind them, demanded that he was brought back. So Holmes….

BFR: What? *(pause)* Holmes? *(pause)* Brought into our story? He's dead! Remember Reichenbach? *(pause)* You never consulted me on this —

ACD: I know how it appears; I just couldn't find the right moment to tell you, and Smith and Newnes also insisted that I complete the story alone. I had no choice, Bertie. And Holmes can continue, you know, as there was no autopsy —

BFR: Oh yes, Sherlock Holmes is undoubtedly a great money-making machine for you, Doyle, <u>and</u> *The Strand*, but I'd rather see my own police

detective, Addington Peace, in that story, than him: it's clear the mire vapours have gone to your head.

ACD: If Holmes is such a great money-spinner for me, why did I kill him off at the height of his popularity? I'll tell you why: I wanted to move on and do historical and romantic books. For one thing, I couldn't withstand the deadlines imposed, but the pressure from all sides to continue with him was….

BFR: So what was the point of bringing me to explore the moor? If you all think I'm not a good enough writer? You won't be visiting Ipplepen again, that's for sure.

ACD: Bertie, when this project began, it was a genuine invite: I did intend for us both to co-author the story. Holmes had not entered my mind then, but circumstances gradually imposed this outcome. And I am truly sorry.

BFR: What a fool I've been! Moriarty himself couldn't have done me a nastier turn.

ACD: Oh Bertie, you can't compare me to Moriarty! He was a murderer!

BFR: I see you in a different light now. You plagiarised my book "An Adventure on Dartmoor", and I've seen the way you look at my fiancée, Gladys.

ACD: What are you talking about? I respect Gladys, I've never looked at her inappropriately. And as for your "Adventure on Dartmoor", I know you wrote it, but I've not read it. So I'm afraid you're wrong on both counts.

BFR: Woodhouse would never dream of using me like this. But with Victoria gone, who liked Sherlock, any possible knighthood would be in jeopardy, I suppose.

ACD: Getting a knighthood has nothing to do with it, and what would Sherlock Holmes have to do with a knighthood anyway? And why bring Pelham into this? He's a friend to both of us! *(pause)* Bertie, it's not how you see it.

(Doyle flops down onto the boulder.)

ACD: God, what a mess.

(Robinson starts to walk back along the path to Postbridge.)

BFR: Yes; a mess of your doing.

(Robinson walks a few more paces and speaks to Doyle over his shoulder.)

BFR: I've certainly learned a bit more about human nature today.

CURTAIN

Act 3 Scene 2

(The stage curtains are closed, with Robinson standing in front of these, speaking to the audience.)

BFR: Well, ladies and gentlemen, here we are today. You may not have heard of me before – my name is Bertram Fletcher Robinson, Bertie or Bobbles to my friends. In 1901, at the time of this play, I was Editor of the *Daily Express*, and some ten years younger than Arthur.

During the following years I wrote various articles, plays, stories and books, but never engaged in any further collaboration with Arthur. Although I say it myself, I was well-known in literary circles, which contained such luminaries as H. G. Wells, Oscar Wilde, and P. G. Wodehouse, to name but a few.

To clarify matters, Arthur did remunerate me 25% of that gigantic cheque as payment for my contribution towards the enduring book, "The Hound of the Baskervilles", and we renewed our friendship.

The worldwide phenomenon that is Sherlock Holmes continues, and Arthur received a knighthood that year – despite my jibe during the heat of our argument.

Arthur married for a second time in 1907, and had a total of five children, none of them called Sherlock! I married my fiancée Gladys in 1902, but died in 1907 from an exploding intestine. So much for laudanum, eh?! Arthur, of course, carried on writing, and died in 1930.

Oh yes: to bring you up to date, in September 2017, a plaque was unveiled at Arthur's former home at 6 Elliot Terrace, The Hoe, Plymouth, Devonshire in the UK.

For your information, we have renewed here our collaborative enterprise – so The Game is still afoot!

I'll take my leave now and say goodnight, and thank you for coming.

(Finis)

Conan Doyle's shortest story[1]

by
Tony Derlien

In 1924, a very short story appeared in a red and gilt leather-bound book, only 1½″ x 1¼″ in size and 24 pages long. Conan Doyle wrote it at the request of the self-appointed Windsor Castle librarian, Princess Marie Louise. She was seeking tiny handwritten volumes for the walnut-panelled library in Sir Edwin Lutyens' 1/12th scale Queen Mary's Dolls' House.

However, the books had to be about 1/6th scale in order to be legible. Other uniform volumes were soon completed by J. M. Barrie, Joseph Conrad, Thomas Hardy, Rudyard Kipling, Somerset Maugham, Siegfried Sassoon and Edith Wharton.

The Dolls' House was designed to represent an upper-class London town house of the period. It was on loan in 1924 to the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley and was seen by nearly two million people; Queen

1 See also *The Torr*, No. 48, p. 60. [Ed.]

Mary's charitable fund benefitted, and various charities still do so today.

The tall, four-storey House, which has been on display at Windsor Castle since 1925, contains 40 rooms. Clever miniatures include a working pair of lifts, running taps in all five bathrooms, light bulbs, a Broadwood piano, a Singer sewing machine, royal portraits and monogrammed linen.

The library contains a small writing desk complete with tiny Swan fountain pen, inkwell, stationery and reading lamp. It also contains over 200 miniature books nowadays.

Arthur Conan Doyle's contribution, entitled "How Watson Learned the Trick", can be found in normal size print in two of R. Lancelyn-Green's books.[2]

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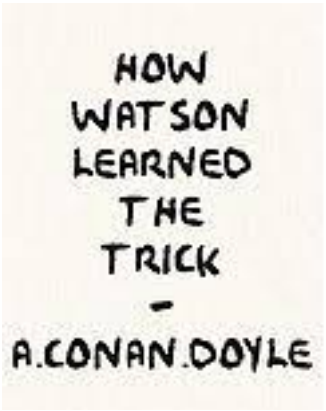
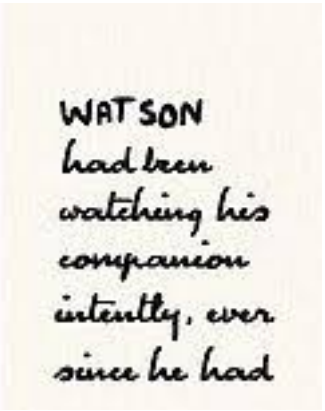
www.royalcollection.org.uk/how-watson-learned-the-trick.

2 And immediately following this article. [Ed.]

How Watson Learned the Trick

by
Sir Arthur Conan Doyle





Watson had been watching his companion intently, ever since he had sat down to the breakfast table. Holmes happened to look up and catch his eye.

"Well, Watson, what are you thinking about?" he asked.

"About you."

"Me?"

"Yes, Holmes, I was thinking how superficial are these tricks of yours, and how wonderful it is that the public should continue to show interest in them."

"I quite agree," said Holmes. "In fact, I have a recollection that I have myself made a similar remark."

"Your methods," said Watson severely, "are really easily acquired."

"No doubt," Holmes answered with a smile. "Perhaps you will yourself give an example of this method of reasoning."

"With pleasure," said Watson. "I am able to say that you were greatly preoccupied when you got up this morning."

"Excellent!" said Holmes. "How could you possibly know that?"

"Because you are usually a very tidy man and yet you have forgotten to shave."

"Dear me! How very clever!" said Holmes. "I had no idea, Watson, that you were so apt a pupil. Has your eagle eye detected anything more?"

“Yes, Holmes. You have a client named Barlow, and you have not been successful in his case.”

“Dear me, how could you know that?”

“I saw the name outside his envelope. When you opened it you gave a groan & thrust it into your pocket with a frown on your face.”

“Admirable! You are indeed observant. Any other point?”

“I fear, Holmes, that you have taken to financial speculation.”

“How could you tell that, Watson?”

“You opened the paper, turned to the financial page and gave a loud exclamation of interest.”

“Well, that is very clever of you, Watson. Any more?”

“Yes, Holmes, you have put on your black coat, instead of your dressing gown, which proves that you are expecting some important visitor at once.”

“Anything more?”

“I have no doubt that I could find other points, Holmes, but I only give you these few, in order to show you that there are other people in the world who can be as clever as you.”

“And some not so clever,” said Holmes. “I admit that they are few, but I am afraid, my dear Watson, that I must count you among them.”

“What do you mean, Holmes?”

“Well, my dear fellow, I fear your deductions have not been as happy as I should have wished.”

“You mean that I was mistaken.”

“Just a little that way, I fear. Let us take the points in their order: I did not shave because I have sent my razor to be sharpened. I put on my coat because I have, worse luck, an early meeting with my dentist. His name is Barlow, and the letter was to confirm the appointment. The cricket page is beside the financial one, and I turned to it to find if Surrey was holding its own against Kent. But go on, Watson, go on! It’s a very superficial trick and no doubt you will soon acquire it.”

The Baritsu Chapter, Richard Hughes and Ian Fleming

by
Stephan Arthur[1, 2]


This is the true, unembellished story about a Japanese scion society, *The Baritsu Chapter*, where, within its doors, so to speak, its founder created an intelligence network, operating first as a spy and then as a double agent! However, I should hasten to add that *The Japan Sherlock Holmes Club*, formed in 1977, which essentially evolved from the *Chapter*, has divorced itself from that society's murky past.

A scion society is founded

First notice of a Far Eastern scion society of the BSI appeared in Vincent Starrett's *Chicago Tribune* column of 14th September 1947. "Walter Simmons, the *Tribune*'s correspondent in the far east," it said, "writes that plans are underway to establish a far east chapter, of which more anon." *The Baritsu Chapter of the Baker Street Irregulars*, to give it its full name, was founded on 12th October 1948 in Tokyo. It all started innocently and typically Holmesian enough, with the election of a Chief Banto, a reading of a scholarly paper, discussion and proposed solutions to a recent crime, and naturally all embedded within a copious dinner.

The Chief Banto elected that night was Richard Hughes, a role he ostensibly held until his death in 1984. But, rather like Holmes' brother, Hughes didn't preside over the *Chapter*, he was the *Chapter*.

So, who was Hughes?

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1 Talk given by the author at the Society's *Literary Day* on 29th September 2018.

2 This article draws from the following two sources: "Richard Hughes and The Baritsu Chapter" by Jon L. Lellenberg, first published in 1996 for The Five Orange Pips Society (see *www.bsiarchivalhistory.org/BSI_Archival_History/Baritsu_Chapter.html),* including, in the same article, extracts from *The Man Who Read the East Wind: A Biography of Richard Hughes* by Norman Macswan, 1984, and "The extraordinary untold Japan story of 'You Only Live Twice' " by Damian Flanagan, published in *The Japan Times*, 17th June 2017.

Richard Hughes: a skeletal biography

Richard Joseph Hughes was born on 5th March 1906 at Prahran, Melbourne, Australia, and began his working life at the Victorian Railways as an apprentice shunter. Here he acquired his first journalistic experiences as a writer for the house magazine, developing the poetic style of writing for which he later became famous. His first marriage, at the age of 24, ended tragically less than three years later when his wife committed suicide. In 1936, after a short stint with a local newspaper, he moved to Sydney and went to work for the same-aged Frank Packer – his son Kerry was the founder of the famous or infamous, depending on your point of view at the time, World Series Cricket – and rose to become chief of staff of the *Sunday Telegraph*. In 1940, with war raging in Europe, Hughes travelled to Japan, sending reports warning that the Japanese would enter the war against the Allies. In 1943, Hughes was a war correspondent in the North African campaign, but returned home prematurely after developing rheumatic fever in Cairo. His interest in the Far East remained, and he was in Japan in time to cover the Allied occupation. With relations strained between him and the editor of the *Sunday Telegraph* – Hughes had reluctantly returned to Sydney – he resigned and returned to Japan, where, on the recommendation of the foreign manager of the London *Sunday Times*, he worked as the Far East correspondent for *The Times* and *The Economist*. After his second wife – he had remarried in 1945 – died in 1950, he moved permanently to Hong Kong, where, as from 1971, he also wrote for the *Far Eastern Economic Review*. Hughes died on 4th January 1984 at the age of 78 and was survived by his third wife whom he had married in 1973, and by his son Dick from the first marriage.

Those are the bare bones of his life, a life ostensibly led as a journalist, albeit a relatively successful one in a narrow field. Let me turn to his interest in Holmes.

Hughes and Holmes

Well before he became the Chief Banto, Hughes was using the pen name "Dr Watson Jr." Indeed, as Norman Macswan recounts, "[As a schoolboy] … on the long walk back home, Hughes would make up stories for the other boys and tell them of the latest adventures of Sherlock Holmes. His father had started him on Conan Doyle's hero and his love for the sardonic Holmes was to grow stronger over the years." In November 1920, when Hughes was 16, again according to Macswan, "Conan Doyle came to Australia to lecture on spiritualism and Hughes' father was involved in the arrangements for the visit. To his intense delight, Hughes was entrusted to pick up Conan Doyle from his hotel and take him in the family Oakland to the theatre where the great man was to lecture. Young Hughes told the author how he used to tell his school mates some of the Sherlock Holmes stories. Conan Doyle merely smiled. 'He wasn't very forthcoming,' Hughes would recall forlornly in later years. 'Doyle's primary interest at the time appeared to have moved away from Holmes' ", an opinion that we know to be the case.

Like many of us, Hughes was clearly a Holmesian from early youth, so that his founding of a scion society was and is no surprise. I mentioned earlier that the bare bones of Hughes' life are relatively uninspiring. The flesh on the skeleton, however, if the following is to be believed, is anything but and indeed inspired, as you will hear, two very well-known authors.

Richard Hughes: flesh on the skeleton

What follows is taken from Damian Flanagan's article. I cannot vouch for its complete authenticity, but without doubt much of it is true; that which is perhaps spurious still makes a good tale.

Let me therefore 'reboot' the story in 1940, when Hughes first visits Japan. He enters a world seething with espionage activity, where the distinctions between 'foreign reporters' and spies are paper thin. Among the press cohort in Tokyo, he becomes acquainted with Richard Sorge, a German reporter, whom he first assumes to be nothing more than the hateful Nazi he appears to be. What neither Hughes nor anyone else suspects at the time is that Sorge was one of the greatest spies in history, an agent of the Soviet Union controlling a ring of 16 communist spies in Japan. Through his friendship with the German ambassador and his wife, and his access to top-secret material in the German Embassy in Tokyo, Sorge is able to warn Moscow first of the imminent German invasion launched in June 1941 – a warning that Stalin foolishly ignores – and then, crucially, that Japan will not

follow Germany in attacking the Soviet Union, but is intent instead on sweeping south and invading Southeast Asia. It is this vital information, this time not ignored, that allows the Soviet Union to confidently transfer its Siberian units to the defence of Moscow and is at least in part instrumental in turning the course of the war.

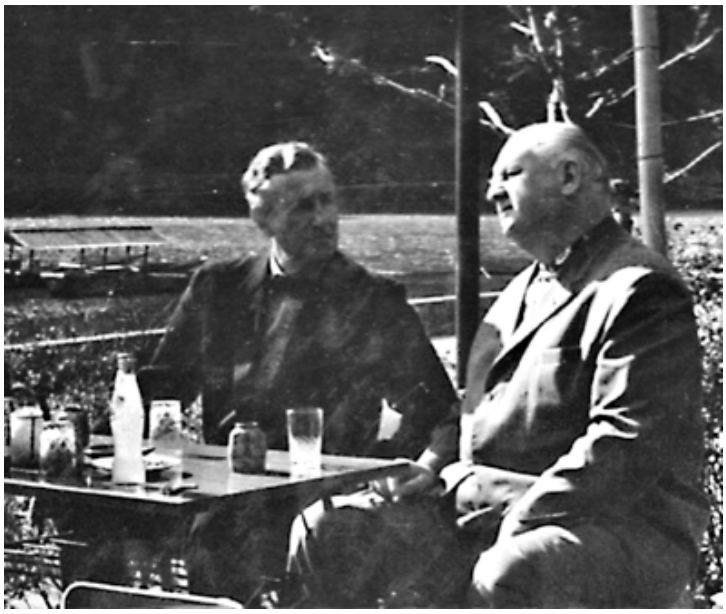
Sorge and his entire spy ring would be later exposed and arrested by the Japanese secret police, the Kempeitai, and Sorge would be executed after spending three years in prison. Nor would he be the only 'reporter' caught up in the espionage machinations of the age. Just before Hughes arrives in Japan, Jimmy Cox, the Reuters correspondent in Tokyo, falls to his death from a window while under Kempeitai arrest. The foreign community is convinced that it was defenestration and not suicide.

Fast forward to after the war: Hughes returns to Japan, now under American occupation, and becomes the manager of No. 1 Shimbun Alley, a rowdy foreign correspondents' club situated next to the residential wing of the Soviet Embassy. The club is the meeting ground of reporters, former soldiers and spies, many of whom conduct illicit liaisons in its bedrooms. The Cold War deepens in 1948 over the Berlin Airlift and Hughes is sacked.

Recall that I mentioned earlier the foreign manager of the London *Sunday Times*? This is none other than Ian Fleming – yes, that one –who had played a distinguished role in British naval intelligence during World War II and presided over many crucial covert operations. Hughes now creates his own intelligence network by founding *The Baritsu Chapter*, where membership is by invitation only, and the list of members is correspondingly high profile.

The Baritsu Chapter might have the appearance of an innocuous recreational hobby, but it is actually a cunning way for Hughes to keep in close contact with the highest strata of power and information – from US correspondents close to the Occupation authorities to the prime minister himself. Hughes has carefully absorbed the precepts of Hotsumi Ozaki, the right-hand man of spy master Richard Sorge, that the best means of acquiring information is to appear not to want to know it. In the relaxed – and alcoholic – atmosphere of the *Chapter*, Hughes brings together some of the greatest founts of information in occupied Japan. When the Korean

War erupts in 1950, the front line of the Cold War is transferred to this corner of East Asia: Tokyo once more simmers with espionage activity. At a party, the Russians discreetly ask Hughes if he would consider selling secrets to them. Hughes notifies Fleming in London, who in turn consults the foreign branch of British military intelligence, MI6.



Briefed by Fleming and MI6, Hughes pretends to accept the Russian approach and asks for double the money to convince the KGB of his seriousness. Hughes' career as a double agent has begun. He sets about providing the KGB information prepared by MI6 and picks as his codename "Altamont", Sherlock Holmes' alias in *His Last Bow*. Hughes has not just started a new life working as a double agent instructed by Fleming: he actually believes that Fleming had saved his life.

When in 1950 Hughes had wished to go and report on the Korean War, Fleming had strenuously advised him not to do so. Hughes dithered until the last moment and three other journalists kept him a seat free on their jeep. Hughes finally bowed to Fleming's wishes. The jeep went ahead without him, hit a land mine and all three journalists were killed. Rescued from certain death, the second life that Hughes starts as a double agent is to see him act out the kind of espionage fantasies that Fleming ascribes to James Bond.

In 1955, Fleming sends Hughes to Moscow, where he stays for three months, ostensibly to gain an interview with Nikita Khrushchev ahead of his first state visit to the United Kingdom. But the real intention is to gain a confirmed sighting of Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean, the notorious British spies for the Soviet Union, who had disappeared in 1951 and whose subsequent movements were unknown. Hughes can hardly believe his luck when on his last day in Moscow he is led to Room 101 of the Hotel National and introduced to Burgess and Maclean in person. Hughes returns to London the toast of Fleet Street.

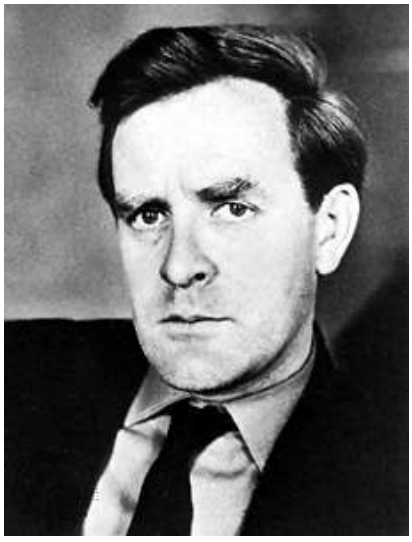
By the mid-1950s Hughes has moved his base from Tokyo to Hong

Kong, in order to more effectively monitor communist China and the increasing tensions in Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia. Hughes is soon to gain a reputation as the pre-eminent 'China watcher', able through his network of contacts to discern the true situation in the communist citadel through the mist of official pronouncements during the eras of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution.

Fleming visits Hughes in Hong Kong in 1959. He is writing a book called "Thrilling Cities" and Hughes guides him round the fleshpots of Macau and they travel on to Tokyo. By 1962, Fleming is now fragile, having suffered a heart attack the year before. However, he returns to Japan – as does Hughes – informing him that, for the next 007 adventure, *You Only Live Twice*, he would be sending Bond to Japan and is the reason for his, Fleming's, visit. Hughes gives considerable thought to the two-week tour which he prepares and which is well-documented, but has little place to describe here.

Travelling with Fleming and Hughes is the latter's friend, Torao Saito. Fleming declares, most likely as not during a meal of oysters and bottles of bourbon (Fleming equally declares that Scotch is bad for the heart, but Bourbon relaxes the cardiac muscles), that both Hughes and Saito would be appearing in the novel, the former as Dikko Henderson, head of the Australian Secret Service in Japan, the latter as Tiger Tanaka, head of the Japanese Secret Service.

After being portrayed in *You Only Live Twice*, the spy credentials of "Altamont" should have been blown forever. However, Hughes brushes it aside and breezily continues with his mixture of star reporting, espionage and Sherlock Holmes celebrations from his base in Hong Kong, where he establishes himself, in the words of a former employee of MI6, David Cornwell, as "a journalistic Eiffel Tower."



Cornwell, better known as spy writer John le Carré, is the second author who would openly depict Hughes, this time in the guise of "Old Craw", a Hong Kong-based MI6 operative, in *The Honourable Schoolboy* (1977), the sequel to *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*.

Still Hughes refuses to admit that he is or was actively involved in espionage, despite being 'outed' by two of the world's most famous spy authors. When asked why he keeps being depicted

as a spy – despite claiming to be nothing more than a journalist – Hughes winks and goes into his habitual mocking faux-archbishop mode, claiming he can only admit to certain things inside a confessional.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we have a skeletal biography, and we have, perhaps, a skeleton in the cupboard. There is proof of Hughes' genuine interest, love and knowledge of the Canon – for example, the communist Chinese attacks on the stories angered him, and he was in correspondence with Adrian Conan Doyle disputing whether Sir Arthur based Holmes on himself. There is the photographic proof of Ian Fleming chatting to Hughes; there is proof of the positions held by Fleming and Cornwell (aka le Carré); and there is strong evidence that the characters in both of their novels are based on Hughes.

Perhaps we will get nearer the truth, one way or another, fairly soon: Takeshi Shimizu, a member of *The Japan Sherlock Holmes Club*, is currently doing research and investigative work on the papers of *The Baritsu Chapter*.

Solution to the puzzle in *The Torr*, No. 53

S	T	O	L	I	V	E	R	S	P	R	I	V	A	T	E	S	C	H	O
L	E	**S**	P	A	U	D	L	I	N	**G**	I	A	N	T	R	A	**T**	O	O
G	H	O	**F**	L	A	U	B	E	R	**T**	R	E	E	W	O	R	S	K	**L**
N	R	S	**E**	N	C	Y	C	L	O	P	A	E	D	I	A	B	H	A	E
A	E	R	A	C	H	F	A	L	L	**S**	A	N	F	R	A	R	I	**Y**	S
M	H	O	B	F	E	R	J	A	C	K	E	**T**	A	N	N	I	**P**	E	T
D	C	H	N	E	N	G	G	O	W	N	**S**	E	R	K	C	T	O	L	R
N	S	K	E	E	I	**L**	E	I	C	E	S	T	P	E	I	A	R	L	A
A	I	R	H	**R**	S	E	**E**	N	G	I	N	E	E	R	S	N	L	O	D
S	L	A	C	U	S	N	E	A	R	I	E	**R**	N	V	C	N	O	**W**	**E**
S	G	**D**	I	O	E	N	**L**	M	E	N	E	E	T	I	**O**	I	C	E	A
O	N	I	E	N	R	A	A	B	U	**S**	R	A	I	L	R	C	**K**	S	R
R	**E**	O	**R**	O	**D**	H	R	I	M	D	A	R	N	L	D	**A**	N	T	**S**
O	L	R	A	H	R	C	H	S	I	L	G	N	**E**	E	E	B	I	M	W
T	B	E	D	F	A	O	B	K	C	U	**B**	U	L	C	R	E	G	O	A
C	A	T	N	O	N	O	I	G	E	L	E	H	T	F	O	R	H	R	M
E	T	S	E	L	A	C	E	T	A	G	W	E	**N**	E	E	D	T	L	P
P	S	A	N	A	F	O	S	C	I	M	A	N	Y	**D**	O	O	H	A	A
S	N	O	**C**	I	L	A	H	P	E	C	O	H	C	I	L	O	**D**	N	D
N	**I**	L	O	B	A	I	D	S	I	D	E	P	X	I	D	A	**R**	E	D

What's up, Sherlock?

Bits and bobs surrounding the residents of 221B

"Just give me a help with this buckle, cabman" (STUD)

The cabman in *A Study in Scarlet*, was, of course, Jefferson Hope. In 1979, the role was played by Nikolai Petrovich Karachentsov (Николай Петрович Караченцов) in the second of eleven episodes, entitled "Bloody Inscription", of the five-part Soviet TV film series *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson* (Приключения Шерлока Холмса и доктора Ватсона). Unlike some of their Western counterparts, the films are very close to the literary source and were hugely successful. On 27 April 2007, a sculpture of Holmes and Watson, as portrayed by Vasily Livanov and Vitaly Solomin respectively in this series, was unveiled outside the British Embassy in Moscow.

A character actor who always did his own stunts, Karachentsov appeared in over 100 films, but he also had a successful theatrical career as well as leading roles in rock operas. Karachentsov died at the age of 73 on 26th October 2018.

"… Holmes refused a knighthood for services …" (3GAR)

… as did Albert Finney in 2000 (as well as a CBE in 1980). His only Canonical role as far as I can discover was as an (uncredited) man in the audience in *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes' Smarter Brother* (1975). A fine character actor known as much for his early films as for his later portrayals, Finney died on 7th February 2019 aged 82.

Parish notices

Holmesian postings from not too far afield

Membership fees:

Single: £16; Family: £20; Overseas: £20.

Advertising at competitive rates (for example, £24 for ½ page). Contact the Editor if interested.

Dates for your diary:

Saturday, 6th April: *The Return Luncheon*. Never change a winning team: as usual, at *The NoBody Inn* in Doddiscombsleigh. Not too late to register (with the Treasurer), but you'll need to do it soon!

Sunday, 23rd June: Apropos winning team: the *Henry Drew Memorial* croquet match in Pinces Gardens, Exeter (and brunch at *The Twisted Oak* in Ide); full details and registration form soon. Reserve the date!

End-August: The date by which any articles for inclusion in the autumn issue of *The Torr* should reach the Editor.

Thursday, 5th September (prov): A day trip in and around the South Hams, with a visit to Coleton Fishacre, the summer – and later primary – residence of the D'Oyly Carte family. Details and registration form before the summer gets under way.

Saturday, 30th November: The Annual General Meeting and Luncheon. This time – and a novum – at *The NoBody Inn*. Mark in your diary.

Stop press!

The Poor Folk's website has a new look and new features! Check it out at ***www.poorfolk.co.uk***.

PRESIDENT Vosper Arthur

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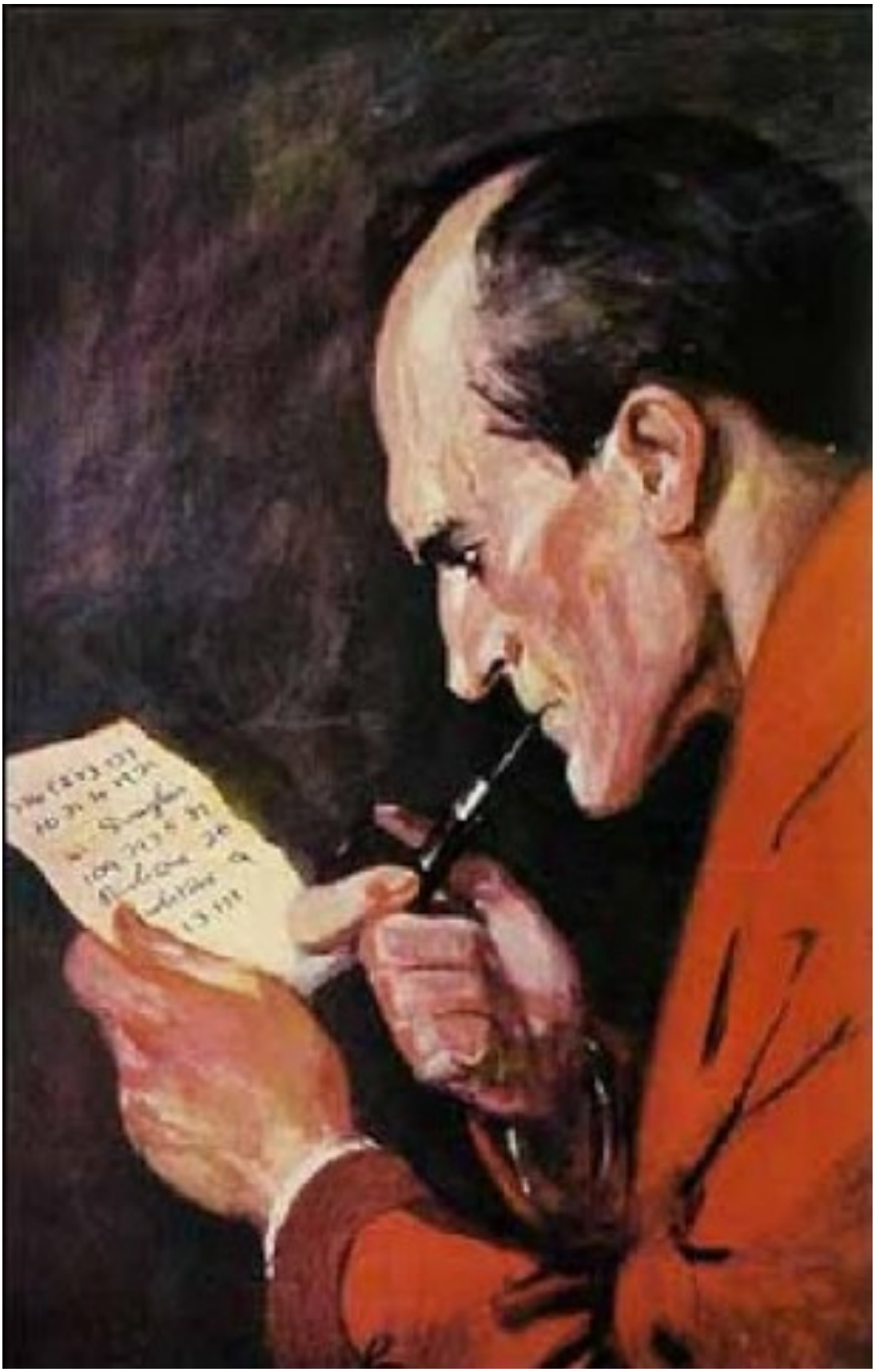

Frank Wiles' portrait of Holmes, "The cipher and the man who solved it", which introduces – in colour – the first two chapters of *The Valley of Fear* in *The Strand Magazine*, September 1914. It is considered by many to be the best illustration of Holmes, even over and above those of Paget and Steele.