

Meeting Notes

June 6, 2020



Reported by Carla Kaessinger Coupe

Like Emilia Lucca, we are all still practicing social distancing, so for the first time in its history the Red Circle met online. More than **113** people from near and far used their computers or phones to attend Saturday's meeting.

Alan Rettig ably directed the technical aspects of the meeting and began with a quick intro on how to mute your mic, ask questions, comment via Chat, and take the polls. Alan is a superb instructor and all the attendees are brilliant, because the technical side of things went very smoothly. Thank you, Alan.

Peter Blau took over, looking very rakish with his quarantine beard, and gave his usual warm welcome. He then introduced The Red Circle to the Red Circle: our speaker, Laurie R. King ("The Red Circle" in the Baker Street Irregulars), author of the Mary Russell series.

Appropriately clad in a bee-themed shirt, Laurie explained the genesis of the Mary Russell stories. She wanted to set them post-Canon, which gave her scope to explore how a Victorian gentleman like Sherlock Holmes would—or wouldn't—change and adapt to the rapidly changing world after World War I. She was also intrigued by the idea of Holmes encountering a young woman who was his intellectual equal, who became his partner in crime-solving as well as in life.

Her newest book, *Riviera Gold*, will be released later in June, and explores Mrs. Hudson's checkered past. "Feisty old ladies in Monte Carlo," arms dealers, and actual historical figures allowed Laurie to dive into the research she so enjoys. She calls herself a "recovering academic"—a label shared by many other Sherlockians. As is so often the case with historical fiction, the plot of *Riviera Gold* mirrors many aspects of the modern world. But of course, you have to read the book to discover exactly how it does so.

Despite having to type questions for Laurie into Chat or "raise your hand" electronically, attendees were able to ask Laurie questions about a variety of topics, including her Kate Martinelli series (for which she won an Edgar Award from the Mystery Writers of America).

Although the sound of applause was missing, the positive comments on Chat and afterward testified to everyone's appreciation for Laurie's talk. To see her entire talk, you can [view the recorded meeting here](#).

Curious to compare online versus in person attendance, Alan posted a quick poll. Twenty people had attended a Red Circle meeting within the year, and for 22, it had been longer than a year. The big surprise was that 31 people were first-timers! (Yes, I know the numbers don't add up to over 100 attendees. Seventy-three people participated in the poll.)

Carla Coupe gave a brief run-down of the January Birthday festivities in New York, followed by Greg Ruby reminding people that there was still time to [register for Scintillation of Scions here](#).

For those desperate for a coveted Red Circle pin, Tom Fahres at tufkat@starpower.net can provide more information.

Our crossword maven Verna Suit shared one of her delightful crosswords, "The Horse of Course," which [can be found here](#).

Peter also announced that the BSI conference “Sherlock Holmes and the British Empire” will not be held this year but has instead been postponed until June 25-27, 2021. More information is available at the [Baker Street Irregulars’ website](#).

After Alan provided grins and guffaws with a few Pandemic Aphorisms from the Red Circle website, Dana Richards gave his usual fiendish quiz. We were all grateful that there were only ten questions. Winning with 7 points each were Chere Harper and Evy Herzog/John Baesch. Dave Harnois, Ann Marlowe, James O’Leary, and Monica Schmidt came in a close second place with 6 points each. Bravi to the winners!

Peter thanked Laurie for her talk and everyone for attending the Red Circle’s largest meeting ever. The fall meeting format will depend on the COVID-19 situation, and the date/time/format will be announced later in the summer or in the early fall.

Watch this space!