

Sep 17 #1

Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press

"The Strange Case of the Megatherium Thefts" is an amusing pastiche written by S. C. Roberts, first published in 1945 and then included in his collection *HOLMES AND WATSON: A MISCELLANY* in 1953, involving thefts from the library of the Megatherium in London. And it turns out that there really was a Megatherium Club, in Washington rather than in London. Its members were scientists who lived in the Smithsonian Castle in its early years and their club was named in honor of a recently-discovered giant sloth. There's more about the Megatherium, and its four young naturalists, in a recent blog at the Smithsonian Institution's web-site <www.si.edu/megatherium>.

"Ninety percent of intelligence comes from open sources. The other ten percent, the more clandestine work, is just more dramatic. The real intelligence hero is Sherlock Holmes, not James Bond." According to the late Lt. Gen. Sam Wilson, former Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, quoted by Van Hipp on Fox News <www.tinyurl.com/y9np5ygw>.

Further to the item about Goyard of Paris and the "writing trunk" they made on commission from Conan Doyle in 1925 (Nov 16 #5), the company has opened a flagship store on Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills; the company's impressive web-site is at <www.goyard.com>.

The winter issue of *The Magic Door* (the Friends of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection at the Toronto Public Library newsletter) has an interesting article by Al Dawson ("Six Steps to Douglas Ainslie" that connects Ainslie, Seymour Hicks, Ellaline Terriss, William Terriss, Bert Coules, and Arthur Conan Doyle); and more news from and about the Library and the Collection. Copies of the newsletter are available from Clifford S. Goldfarb, 22 Markdale Avenue, Toronto, ON M6C, 1T1, Canada <cgoldfarb@sympatico.ca>.

Pierre Berloquin's *SOLVING SHERLOCK HOLMES: PUZZLE YOUR WAY THROUGH THE CASES* (New York: Wellfleet, 2017; 192 pp., \$21.99) is an imaginative approach to the Canon; the author has written more than 50 books of puzzles, and in this attractively-illustrated volume uses six stories to present 144 puzzles of varying complexity.

Pan Macmillan is celebrating its 70th anniversary of the first Pan paperback with a "Pan 70th Collection" of 20 of their "best-loved, best-selling" stories, with redesigned covers, and one of them is *THE LOST WORLD*; you can see the new cover designs at <pages.panmacmillan.com/pan-70>.

Hazel Gaynor's *THE COTTINGLEY SECRET* (New York: William Morrow, 2017; 389 pp., \$15.99) is a well-written novel that tells the stories of two women: Olivia Kavanagh in modern-day Ireland, and Frances Griffiths, whose diary Olivia finds, and it's a delightful and warm celebration of the centenary of the Cottingley Fairies.

There's no shortage of knitted brows in the Canon, but the "dear old ruddy-faced woman in a country cap" is the only person who actually knitted (in "His Last Bow"). Sherlockian knitters surely will be interested in Joanna Johnson's *SHERLOCK KNITS: PATTERNS INSPIRED BY THE WORLD'S MOST FAMOUS CONSULTING DETECTIVE* (Loveland: Slate Falls Press, 2016; 48 pp., \$12.95).

Sep 17 #2 Further to the item about the statuette of Professor George Edward Challenger (Aug 17 #4), the image of the statuette disappeared from the web-site, but you can see it in the Inner Circle at the Red Circle's web-site <www.redcircledc.org>. Daniil Doubshin believes that Conan Doyle owned a copy of the statuette, and would like to know where the statuette is now, and the name of the artist. Daniil's at <txt@list.ru>.

Mattias Boström's FRÅN HOLMES TILL SHERLOCK (Apr 17 #4) is receiving excellent and widespread reviews, and interesting podcast interviews, including his conversation with Jacke Wilson in "The History of Literature" series at <www.tinyurl.com/yalw4ebj> and his conversation with Burt Wolder and Scott Monty at "I Hear of Sherlock Everywhere" <www.tinyurl.com/y89egfls>.



Catherine Cooke found an imaginative Sherlock Bones Pug figurine (about 10" tall) in a shop in London (£15.99); it benefits the British Heart Foundation <www.bhf.org.uk> but isn't available at their web-site. Their web-site does, it should be noted, have two Sherlockian birthday cards <www.tinyurl.com/y9tbbkuy> <www.tinyurl.com/y2t47o>.

What was the "A.D.P. brier-root pipe" that was owned by John Straker (in "Silver Blaze")? Sherlockian scholars have long wondered, with many if not most suggesting an Alfred Dunhill Pipe, but now Dino Argyropoulos, editor of the Grimpen Mire Gazette (published by Hugo's Companions), has discovered an advertisement for a trademarked A.D.P. pipe in 1885 in the British Trade Journal. If you'd like to know more, you can request a PDF copy of the newsletter from Dino <dargy@sbcglobal.net>.

Another Sherlockian cocktail, from the St. James Bar at The Balcon in London: the 221B (Metaxa Greek brandy, chai tea-infused crème de fig, liquorice bitters, lime juice, honey, and dark chocolate syrup, shaken with egg white), described as complex and velvety, dangerously easy to drink, in an article in The Telegraph (July 14) <www.tinyurl.com/yzof5gft>.

The animated movie "Sherlock Gnomes" (formerly known as "Gnomeo and Juliet: Sherlock Gnomes" and scheduled for release on Jan. 12) will now be released on Mar. 23. Johnny Depp voices the title character: the world's greatest ornamental detective, who is called in to investigate why gnomes are vanishing from England's suburban gardens.

Richard Masloski sculpted Holmes and Watson in the 1980s. Alexander Orlov has kindly reported Masloski's post at Facebook <www.tinyurl.com/y8esf7rc> about his sculpture "The Game Is Afoot" (a model for a proposed life-size monument to Holmes and Watson). You also can see him with an older sculpture at <www.tinyurl.com/y9nnzhun>.

Conan Doyle's WHY WE MUST FIGHT AN UNENDING WAR is a book that doesn't exist, except on p. 37 of Stephen Baxter's THE MASSACRE OF MANKIND (New York: Crown, 2017; 453 pp., \$27.00). In Baxter's sequel to H. G Wells' THE WAR OF THE WORLDS, set in 1920, the Martians are back, and in Michael Dirda's Washington Post review of the book <www.tinyurl.com/y9e7594v>, he mentions Conan Doyle having written "a jingoist book" praising General Marvin, who managed to knock out one of the Martians' original fighting machines.

Sep 17 #3 "I hate reformers," Dorothy Parker once wrote, "They raise my blood pressure." And she hated the movie censors: "They insist that Sherlock Holmes is made to say, 'Quick, Watson, the crochet needle!'" That's just part of a poem ("Reformers: A Hymn of Hate") she wrote for NON-SENSEORSHIP, an anthology published in 1922 and recently discovered by Ross Davies. Good luck finding a copy of the first edition: as this paragraph was written, only one copy was advertised on-line, for \$350.00. But if you only want to read the poem, the book has been digitized, and you'll find it at <www.tinyurl.com/y96wwqv7>.

The Research Society for Victorian Periodicals <www.rs4vp.org> has issued a call for papers for a special issue of Victorian Periodicals Review devoted to The Strand Magazine; they're seeking original essays on a wide variety of topics, with abstracts due by Dec. 1.

Ehsan Ehsani presides over the on-line magazine "Mystery Tribune" and offers an interesting list of "six top apps for the ultimate Sherlock Holmes fan" <www.tinyurl.com/y7hufqgx>.

Sharks are mentioned in two of the stories ("The Sign of the Four" and "The Valley of Fear"), and in a third story if you want to include Count Negretto Sylvius ("The Mazarin Stone"); eight sharks are shown on an attractive mini-sheet issued by the U.S. Postal Service earlier this year.



The Sherlock Holmes Society of London offers a wide variety of Sherlockian merchandise at its web-site <www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk/shop>, and has discounted the price of TO KEEP THE MEMORY GREEN, the tribute to Richard Lancelyn Green edited by Steven Rothman and Nicholas Utechin in 2007. A SINGULAR COUNTRYSIDE is the Society's just-published handbook for its expedition to Norfolk this year, and their Christmas card for 2017 is a handsomely-colored of Sidney Paget's wintry artwork for "The Abbey Grange".

Sep 17 #4 "If you want to do a cop's job, but you're not a cop, what are your options?" Anthony Lane asked in a review of (non-Sherlockian) films in The New Yorker (Sept. 11); he began his answer by noting that "Sherlock Holmes called himself a 'consulting detective,' on the strength of which he was repeatedly invited by members of the police force to demonstrate that they were dithering fools."

I don't recall anyone reporting the really big news from Comic-Con in San Diego in 2016: Mark Gatiss announced that there will not be a fifth season of "Sherlock". You can watch the "Sherlock" panel at YouTube, and that's exactly what he said, adding that there will be a sixth season.

RSI (radiotelevisione svizzera) broadcast some colorful coverage of the Sherlockians who toured Switzerland and Italy in August and September (Jan 17 #5): the coverage starts at 6:48 <www.tinyurl.com/ybzvv4uz>.

The "Pop Sherlock" exhibition in the TD Gallery at the Toronto Public Library continues through Oct. 22, <www.tinyurl.com/grnc2q5>; it celebrates Sherlock Holmes as the "ultimate pop culture icon" with "an eclectic array" of items from the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection.

Belanger Books (in association with Arkham House Publishing) has launched a Kickstarter campaign for David Marcum's THE PAPERS OF SOLAR PONTS, a collection of new stories featuring Solar Pons, the delightful homage to Sherlock Holmes created by August Derleth; Vincent Starrett once called Solar Pons a "clever impersonator, with a twinkle in his eye." Kickstarter has more information about the book at <www.tinyurl.com/ybaywlu6>.

Big Chief Studios is now at work on figures of Sherlock and John from "The Abominable Bride", but they're also offering a 30% discount on their "221B Baker Street Door Diorama" <www.tinyurl.com/y7dxmjpp>, ideal for displaying their upcoming 1:6 figures of Sherlock and John, or their current versions.

The Royal Mail has issued a set of eight stamps honoring Ladybird Books for the long series of books that helped generations of children learn how to read. None of the stamps show the Sherlockian titles published by Ladybird, but there were some: THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES (1982) and BASIL, THE GREAT MOUSE DETECTIVE (1987).



"Quote Investigator: Dedicated to Tracing Quotations" is a useful web-site maintained by Garson O'Toole <www.quoteinvestigator.com>; a few years ago (May 13 #5) the web-site had imaginative Sherlockian artwork, but now there also are some interesting hits if you search for [sherlock holmes].

Maria Konnikova has written MASTERMIND: HOW TO THINK LIKE SHERLOCK HOLMES (2013) and THE CONFIDENCE GAME: WHY WE FALL FOR IT...EVERY TIME (2016), and her next book will explore the balance of luck and skill in our daily lives (using No-Limit Texas Hold 'Em as a metaphor for life); she has spent more than a year playing professional poker, and worked her way up to the World Series of Poker, and you can read all about it in the blog at her interesting web-site <www.mariakonnikova.com>. She also has ten interesting podcasts about con artists at The Grift <www.thegriftpodcast.com>.

Sep 17 #5 Sherry Thomas' new A CONSPIRACY IN BELGRAVIA (New York: Berkley Books, 2017; 317 pp., \$15.00) is a sequel to A STUDY IN SCARLET WOMEN (Aug 16 #1); she's an established writer of historical romances, and the series features Charlotte Holmes, who does her detecting pretending to be "Sherlock Holmes" and finds both mystery and romance in an imaginative tale that offers nice surprises, and interesting characters. The author's web-site is at <www.sherrythomas.com>.

Alexander Orlov has noted that the German film "Sherlock Holmes: Die graue Dame" (1937) with Herman Speelmans as Jimmy Ward/Sherlock Holmes is available at YouTube <www.tinyurl.com/yb756v4f>. It's all in German, of course, and one can only hope that some day there will be English subtitles.

Treasure is where you find it: builders renovating the home of a late cinema owner in Penarth (Wales) discovered 66 film posters that been used as carpet underlay after being displayed in local theaters from 1936 to 1940. One of them was a 12-sheet poster for "The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes" (1939) estimated at £600-£1,000 <www.tinyurl.com/y6vr6w72>; it was sold for £13,000 (apparently because it is a variant so rare that it's not recorded at Google Images. It was the second-most expensive poster in the auction; first place went to a 12-sheet poster for "Stage Coach (1939), which sold for £31,000. Ben Rogers Jones (the auctioneer) was quoted in the Antiques Trade Gazette as saying that the Texas-based buyer of the poster "told us that there is quite a good market in the U.S. for posters that suggest the British stiff upper lip."



If you've wondered about Sherlock's fancy chair at 221B Baker Street in the BBC television series, a story in the Financial Times (sorry: there's a pay-wall) explains that it's a Le Corbusier 1959 Grand Confort LC3. The chair was designed by the Swiss-French architect in 1928, and you can buy the 1959 model from the Conran Shop <www.conranshop.co.uk> for £4,728 or find modern versions in other shops and on-line at lower prices. There's also a love-seat available, in case you want a mind palace built for two.

"Asian-American Actresses Describe Struggle of Being Typecast as Sherlock Holmes" is the headline on an amusing story in The Onion, kindly forwarded by Dana Richards <www.tinyurl.com/ycc4xsov>. The Onion, self-described as "America's Finest News Source, was founded in 1988 long before the phrase "fake news" became so popular.

The show runners of "Sherlock" (and the actors) continue to tantalize fans with confusing answers to questions about a continuation of the series, and Radio Times, noting that Jodie Whittaker has been cast as the next Doctor Who, asked Benedict Cumberbatch whether he thought there might be a female Sherlock. "Why not," Cumberbatch replied, "I don't care." And he offered a suggestion: "Sherlockina, it's coming to you soon."

Jennie Paton has noted a video devoted to "Litigation and Literature in the N.Y. Courts: Shaw, Shakespeare, and Sherlock" <www.tinyurl.com/ydgc9ndn>; the interesting program was presented by the Historical Society of the N.Y. Courts on Feb 17, 2016, with the Hon. Albert M. Rosenblatt (the society's president) presiding, and with readings by Paxton Whitehead.

Sep 17 #6 Anyone who wants to follow in the footsteps of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle can pay a visit to Rochester Square in London, where the inscription on the foundation stone of the Rochester Square Spiritual Temple notes that it was laid by Sir Arthur in 1926 (Oct 90 #5). But you need to visit soon: the Spiritualists' National Union, which owns the building, proposes to demolish the temple, to make way for flats and a basement gallery, according to a story in the Hampstead & Highgate Express on Sept. 9 that includes an image of the foundation stone <www.tinyurl.com/y8vc8zld>.

Bill Barnes has reported from Australia that Sherlock Holmes, a six-year-old chestnut gelding, had his second race there on Sept. 23; he started at \$18 and finished fourth in a field of thirteen, his best result since moving to Australia from his native Ireland.

Conan Doyle lived briefly in Plymouth (in Devon) in 1882, when early in his medical career he joined the practice of George Turnavine Budd (there's a fictionalized account of his time in Plymouth in THE STARK MUNRO LETTERS, published in 1895); the house where they lived now has a blue plaque, unveiled at a ceremony this month <www.tinyurl.com/y7y7xaf7>.

Pam Verrey has reported "Yukoko no Moriarty" (an on-line manga by Takeuchi Ryousuke and Miyoshi Hikaru) at <www.tinyurl.com/y82n2426>; that's "Moriarty the Patriot" and it's in English, exploring his motivation in becoming the greatest criminal Britain has ever seen.

"Sherlocko the Monk" (the Gus Mager comic strip with 430 episodes in newspapers from 1910 to 1925) is now completely available on-line at the Arthur Conan Doyle Encyclopedia <www.tinyurl.com/ycqxhc39>; our thanks to Howard Ostrom for reporting the new archive. It should be noted that Groucho Marx said in THE GROUCHO PHILE: AN ILLUSTRATED LIFE (1976) said that he took his name from a character in Mager's comic strip.

Acorn <www.acornonline.com> offers a nice variety of Sherlockiana, including a Mystery Lover T-shirt (\$19.95) and sweatshirt (\$29.95) with a colorful (mustached) Sherlockian caricature.

An intriguing development in the bookstore business is Amazon's decision to sell books in bricks-and-mortar stores: their ninth and tenth stores opened in Bellevue, Wash., and San Jose, Calif., in August, and Bill Seil has forwarded a story in the Seattle Times <www.tinyurl.com/y8pkhebg> that offers a look at what customers can (and cannot) expect. Amazon stores stock only books that have received high ratings from Amazon reviewers, have room for about 3,700 titles, and are small enough to fit into city neighborhoods.

I've noted in past issues that members of The Baker Street Irregulars have acted in films, and we can add Michael J. Quigley, who has appeared as an extra in two films. The rest of the list: Elmer Davis, H. C. Potter, and Evan Wilson (as themselves); Curtis Armstrong, Paul Singleton, and Richard Shull (as actors); Al Gregory, Jerry Margolin, John Pforr, Donald Pollock, Mary Ellen Rich, Philip Shreffler, and Bill Ward (as extras), and Jean Upton (as voices). If you'd like to include children of members of the BSI, add Peter Ashman's daughter Jenny (as an actor). Additions to the list are of course welcome.

Sep 17 #7 THE MX BOOK OF NEW SHERLOCK HOLMES STORIES: ELIMINATE THE IMPOSSIBLE (London: MX Publishing, 2017) is a welcome addition to the series of anthologies edited by David Marcum for those who believe that short stories are the best way to revisit Holmes and Watson; there are two volumes (459/566 pp., \$44.95 each), with 48 stories (and poems and scripts) by old hands and new who have responded to the editor's request for "apparently supernatural investigations, but with rational solutions," and they are nicely done indeed. MX's web-sites are at <www.mxpublishing.com> and <www.mxpublishing.co.uk>.

Also from MX: Dan Andriacco's QUEEN CITY CORPSE (2017; 233 pp., \$14.95) is the latest in his series about Jeff Cody and Sebastian McCabe, who are in Cincinnati for a mystery convention and encounter mystery and murder, and a surprising solution; it's a lively story, and Andriacco maintains an (often-Sherlockian) blog at <www.bakerstreetbeat.blogspot.com>. Wendy Heyman-Marsaw's MEMOIRS FROM MRS. HUDSON'S KITCHEN (2017; 119 pp., \$11.95) offers a collection of columns from Canadian Holmes, expanded and edited by JoAnn and Mark Alberstat; it's a nice cookbook, with commentary on life in Victorian times in London and the English countryside. Rob Nunn's THE CRIMINAL MASTERMIND OF BAKER STREET (2017; 336 pp., \$18.95) answers the question "what if Sherlock Holmes had turned to crime instead of detection?" by retelling the Canonical cases from a new viewpoint; his "Interesting Though Elementary" blog is at <www.tinyurl.com/yd5hw4hn>.

More from MX: Arthur Hall's THE DEMON OF THE DUSK (2017; 204 pp., \$12.95); Holmes and Watson are in Warwickshire, investigating a curse, a ghost, and a series of vicious murders. And Hall's THE ONE HUNDRED PER CENT SOCIETY (2017; 141 pp., \$10.95) pits Holmes and Watson against another vicious murderer, in a complicated and bizarre mystery. Mark Mower's THE BAKER STREET CASE-FILES (2017; 173 pp., \$14.95) is a collection of short stories, some new and most reprinted from MX BOOK anthologies. John Sutton's IN UNHALLOWED REST (2017; 137 pp., \$10.95) has Holmes and Watson in Suffolk in pursuit of vampires. And Richard K. Tobin's CANON OF THE NON-SACRED WRITINGS (2017; 120 pp., \$9.95) is a collection of five new stories told in non-Watsonian style. John Sutton's IN UNHALLOWED REST (2017; 137 pp., \$10.95) has Holmes and Watson in Suffolk in pursuit of vampires. Janina Woods' MYCROFT HOLMES AND THE ADVENTURE OF THE DESERT WIND (2017; 303 pp., \$16.95) sends Mycroft, his fellow Secret Service agent Victoria Trevor, and Dr. Watson in pursuit of the villains who have kidnapped Sherlock Holmes, in a case that involves supernatural forces.

Hugh Hefner died on Sept. 27. When he founded Playboy magazine in 1953 he launched an empire that affected both the publishing world and a sexual revolution that reflected, and was reflected by, his own life-style. Those who bought the first issue of Playboy to see the photograph of a nude Marilyn Monroe were surprised to find that the lead fiction in the issue was an excerpt from "The Sign of the Four". "A Scandal in Bohemia" and "The Copper Beeches" followed in the next two issues, and Playboy continued with a variety of Sherlockiana, including delightful cartoons by Gahan Wilson and Nicholas Meyer's "The West End Horror", and Laura Lyons was Playmate of the Month in the Feb. 1976 issue. None of this was accidental: Hugh Hefner was an enthusiast, and once explained that his trademark pipe smoking was inspired by Holmes.

Sep 17 #8 If you would like to have breaking news about Sherlockian theatrics, Howard Ostrom offers just that (and a great deal more) at his <www.twitter.com/HowardOstrom>. Note his link at the left to his alphabetic index of actors who have performed as Sherlock Holmes (more than 3,500 at the moment, and the list is growing).

F. Andrew Leslie's "The Hound of the Baskervilles" is running at the Port Tobacco Playhouse in La Plata, Md., through Oct. 8 <www.ptplayers.com>.

Ken Ludwig's comedy "Baskerville: A Sherlock Holmes Mystery" is running at A Local Barn in Durango, Colo., through Oct. 14 <www.merelyplayers.us>; and at the Oregon Cabaret Theater in Ashland, Ore., through Nov. 5; their web-site's at <www.oregoncabaret.com>. And it's due at the Live Theatre Workshop in Tucson, Ariz., Oct. 5-Nov. 11 <www.livetheatreworkshop.org>; and at the Jacklin Arts and Cultural Center in Post Falls, Idaho, Oct. 12 through 15 <www.cdsummertheatre.com>. Also at the Royal Off-the-Square Theatre in Brownstown, Ind., Oct. 13-21 <www.jcct.org>; the Fringe Club in Hong Kong, Oct. 18-26 <www.hkfringeclub.com>; and Murry's Dinner Playhouse in Little Rock, Ark., Oct. 31-Nov. 25 <www.murrysdp.com>.

"The Hound of the Baskervilles: A Sherlock Holmes Adventure" (a new "hiking play" written by Lauren LaCasse) is being performed by Arts in the Open at the Chautauqua Picnic Shelter in Boulder, Colo., through Oct. 29; web-site at <www.chautauqua.com>.

Ken Ludwig's "Postmortem" (an earlier version of "The Game's Afoot") will be performed at the Mundelein High School in Mundelein, Ill., Oct. 6-8; the web-site's at <www.kirkplayers.org>.

Christophe Delort's dramatization of "Sherlock Holmes et la mystère de la vallée de Boscombe" will be performed at the Théâtre du Gymnase Marie-Bell in Paris, Oct. 12-Jan. 27 <www.billetreduc.com/194998/evt.htm>.

Tim Kelly's dramatization of "The Hound of the Baskervilles" will be performed at the Xenia Area Community Theatre in Xenia, Ohio, Oct. 27-Nov. 5 <www.xeniaact.org>.

Ken Ludwig's play "The Game's Afoot, or Holmes for the Holidays" is scheduled at the Ivoryton Playhouse in Ivoryton, Conn., Nov. 1-19; the web-site is at <www.ivorytonplayhouse.org>. And at Cheriton Village Hall in Cheriton (near Alresford), Hants., Nov. 15-18 <www.thecheritonplayers.org.uk>; and at the Ajax Community Theatre in Ajax, Ont., Nov. 16-26; their web-site is at <www.ajaxcommunitytheatre.com>. Also at the Triple Locks Theater in Coshocton, Ohio, Dec. 1-16 <www.footlightplayers.com>; and at the AFD Theatre in Arlington, Mass., Dec. 8-17 <www.afdtheatre.org>.

"Sherlock Holmes: The Baker Street Irregulars" (written by Eric Coble and based on the graphic novels by Tony Lee and Dan Boulwood), has been scheduled at the Alaska Fine Arts Academy in Eagle River, Alas., from Nov. 10 to 18 <www.akfinearts.org>.

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