

Aug 22 #1

Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press

This year's Baker Street Irregulars Trust annual webinar lecture will be given by Ray Betzner on Sept. 17 on "The Story of a Sherlockian Sonnet"; Ray's a fervent admirer of, and an expert on, the sonnet's author, Vincent Starrett <www.bsitrust.org/2022/08/register-2022-lecture.html>. The lecture will be free via Zoom, but space may be limited, and early registration is recommended.

The BSI conference on "Sherlock Holmes and the British Empire" at the Bear Mountain Inn went very well and was great fun. The conference proceedings will be published by the BSI, but if you weren't there, and would like to see what you missed, there's a short report, with nice photographs, at the BSI web-site <www.tinyurl.com/f3xrvnm4>. There's also a link to Burt Wolde's "I Hear of Sherlock Everywhere" report (with some interviews) on what went on.

Some of the old hands who were at the conference recalled the years when Bob Thomalen's "Autumn in Baker Street" was held at the Bear Mountain Inn, which then was far less fancy than it is now. But even then it was nicer than what the state of New York originally planned to build at the site: Sing Sing Prison.

If you are going to be at Bouchercon in Minneapolis: Dick Sveum will moderate a Sherlock Holmes morning panel on Sept. 10, with Dana Cameron, Laurie R. King, Leslie S. Klinger, and Liese Sherwood-Fabre.

According to Variety <www.tinyurl.com/yjavtyp3>, Millie Bobby Brown will receive \$10 million for her appearance in "Enola Holmes 2", and according to People/Entertainment Weekly <www.tinyurl.com/2cz2us9u>, the film will debut on Netflix on Nov. 4 (the story has some images from the film).

Peter McIntyre has reported that Dr. Doyle (a bay gelding) finished first at Monmouth Park, N.J., on July 31; he was the favorite and the payout was \$7.20/\$4.80/\$2.60.

The ACD Society has published a "terrifying update" on its continuing on-line annotated version of the manuscript of "The Terror of Blue John Gap", edited by Margie Deck and Nancy Holder <www.acdsociety.com>. it's a fine example of what on-line scholarship has to offer to anyone with access to the Internet.

It should be noted that Margie Deck does far more than perform as half of the ACD Society's "terror team"; her interesting "Dotings on Doyle" blog ("Reading & Writing with Arthur Conan Doyle & Sherlock Holmes") is on-line at <www.margiedeck.blogspot.com>.

Steve Doyle's Fortnightly Dispatch ended its current season with his interview with Ray Betzner and Steve Rothman, and a discussion of Alexander Woollcott, his relationship with and membership in the Baker Street Irregulars <www.youtube.com/watch?v=v50i6TTY19A>. Steve's next season will begin after a summer break.

Aug 22 #2 Emiel Van Wezel has reported Amanda Williams' interesting web-site <www.buzzaboutbees.net> devoted to "the wonderful world of bees," and a post about "Sherlock Holmes and Bees: Arthur Conan Doyle and the Retirement of His Famous Detective" that offers some interesting Sherlockian and Doylean clippings from various Australian newspapers, at <www.tinyurl.com/muc7w7wf>.

The Beacon Society continues to publish its "quarterly gazette for younger Sherlockians everywhere," and the summer issue of Sherlock's Spotlight is available at their web-site <www.beaconsociety.com>; the contents include material both by and for younger followers of the Great Detective.

Snoopy appears in Sherlockian costume in two production cels from "It's a Mystery, Charlie Brown" (1974) up for bids at Heritage Auctions on Sept. 23-25 <www.tinyurl.com/35rbyrj8?>.

Maggie Fox died on Mar. 21. She acted on film and television in Britain, but was best known for her many performances with her LipService partner Sue Ryding in parodies such as "Move Over Moriarty" (1996), in which she played Sherlock Holmes on tour for years in Britain and at least once in the U.S.

"I'm sitting low in a Watsonian basket, bolted securely to the side of Simon's burnished-red Royal Enfield Interceptor 650 motorcycle," Anna Hartley wrote in an article in the travel section of the Washington Post (Aug. 21) <www.tinyurl.com/mr2f5wu8>. One often sees the word Sherlockian, but the word Watsonian not so much; it's in the Oxford English Dictionary (and first noted as used by E C. Bentley in *Those Days* (1940)).

On the other hand (thanks to Roger Johnson, who knows more about what is going on in Britain): T. F. Watson, a Birmingham builder, patented a design for a folding sidecar, and Watsonian Squire still offers a wide variety of sidecars <www.watsonian-squire.com>.

"Drool over the personal bookplates of 18 famous writers" was the headline on Emily Temple's post <www.tinyurl.com/yc3uvnwd> to the Literary Hub web-site on July 19; one of the famous writers is Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, but the bookplate isn't his. The bookplate displays the ornate family coat of arms obtained by Adrian Conan Doyle from the Dublin Herald; Adrian placed in all of the books in his father's library when Adrian moved into the Château de Lucens

So Far Down Queer Street is a new on-line journal that focuses on "Aspects of Sherlock Holmes Canon and Adaptations Not Usually Covered" and its web-site's at <www.downqueerstreet.com>; click on the menu (at upper right) to find a link to the first issue.

The Hudson Valley Sciontists will celebrate their Fiftieth Anniversary on Sept. 18, with cocktails and dinner at the Vassar College Alumnae House in Poughkeepsie, N.Y. (with some of its founding members on hand for the festivities). Additional information is available from Lou Lewis (510 Haight Avenue, Poughkeepsie, NY 12603) <llewis@lewisgreer.com>.

Aug 22 #3 Adrienne Mayor's *Flying Snakes & Griffin Claws* (Princeton University Press, 2022; 430 pp, \$18.95) is a wide-ranging and entertaining exploration of "classical myths, historical oddities, and scientific curiosities" that includes a chapter on "Sea Monsters and Mer-People of the Mediterranean" (and mention of Conan Doyle's account of having seen what he believed to be a young plesiosaur off the coast of the Greek island Aegina in 1928).

June Thomson died on July 26. She was a featured speaker at the Sherlock Holmes Society of London's annual dinner in 2008, and a prolific author, credited with 24 novels, six collections of imaginative Sherlockian pastiches, and a fine biography of Sherlock Holmes.

Just the thing for Sherlockian geologists: a statue of a *Tyrannosaurus rex* in Sherlockian costume is one of the latest additions to Howard Ostrom's well-illustrated essay on "The World of Sherlock Holmes Statues", which is available at <www.tinyurl.com/2p8dc6vy>. If you want to see the statue, it's in Norwich (where Abe Slaney was condemned to death, as noted in "The Dancing Men").

Anyone who owns a copy of *The Sherlock Holmes Hexalogy*, which was letterpress printed and hand-bound at the Thornwillow Press (Oct 17 #2), will be aware of the fine work they do. You can see what else they have done (and are still doing) by exploring their web-site <www.thornwillow.com>. Copies of the *Hexalogy* still are available.

It has been said that Sherlockian chronology is the most abstract and confusing and contradictory aspect of the grand game that Sherlockians enjoy playing, and there's plenty of evidence for that in the electronic newsletter of the Sherlockian Chronologist Guild, founded by Brad Keefauver in 2021. Bruce Harris, is one of its members, and he believes that the best thing about Canonical chronology is that there are no right or wrong answers, but in his new *It's Not Always 1895: A Sherlockian Chronology* (124 pp., \$9.95 at Amazon) he offers his own dates for all sixty stories and an excellent look at what can be done with and to the Canon.

Jennie Paton has discovered an advertisement for Sherlock Home (A House of Conundrums) in San Antonio, Tex. <www.tinyurl.com/ymhxxz63>; the Airbnb is described as "a unique immersive overnight experience" in a house designed as an entire evening of game-play for 2-5 guests. "Become Sherlock Holmes surrounded by a Victorian/steampunk setting filled with escape-room-like puzzles and conundrums to solve while you stay."

Hank Ketcham's "Dennis the Menace" comic strip was nicely Sherlockian on July 17 <www.comicskingdom.com/dennis-the-menace>.

There was active bidding for the Sherlockiana and Doyleana in the Heritage Auctions sale 6253 last month (Jun 22 #5); a copy of Collier's *Once a Week Library* (1891, the first American edition of "The Sign of the Four") sold for \$13,570 (including the buyer's premium), and the three-volume set of *Dreamland and Ghostland* (1887, with five of Conan Doyle's non-Sherlockian stories, his first appearance in a book in Britain) went for \$2,250.

Aug 22 #4 Emma McGill has won the 2022 Irene Adler Prize: a \$1,000 scholarship for a woman pursuing a degree in journalism, creative writing, or literature. Established in 2017 by Lucas Aykroyd, an award-winning writer and public speaker in Vancouver, B.C.; it is indeed named for the heroine of "A Scandal in Bohemia". You can learn more about the prize, and read the winning essay, at <www.lucasaykroyd.com/scholarships>.

Peter Bowles died on Mar. 17. He had a long career on stage, screen, and television, with starring roles in the BBC series "Rumpole of the Bailey" (1978), "To the Manor Born" (1979), and "The Irish R.M." (1983). He also played Harvey Deacon in a BBC dramatization of Conan Doyle's "Playing with Fire" (1967) and Joseph Harrison in the BBC's "The Naval Treaty" (1968).

"I hear of Sherlock everywhere." This one (noted by Jennie Paton) is in Chester, Conn., and available for only \$32,900 <www.tinyurl.com/3fh66jj4>.

The ten-episode audio mini-series "Moriarty: The Devil's Game" (Jun 22 #4) is featured at the "I Hear of Sherlock Everywhere" blog, where Scott Monty and Burt Wolder interviewed Charles Kindinger, who wrote the script. He first encountered Sherlock Holmes watching "Wishbone" and went on to read all the stories and enjoy creating the mini-series.

Russian artist Margaryta Yermolayeva (now living in the U.S.) creates colorful canvas prints that include a "Sherlock Holmes" scene inspired by the Russian "Baskerville Dog" television program she watched while growing up <www.tinyurl.com/54scytwx>.

Publishers Weekly has reported that HarperCollins has bought, "in a six-figure preempt," Ali Standish's *The Improbable Tales of Baskerville Hall*; it's a three-book middle-grade series in which "a young Arthur Conan Doyle is selected to attend Baskerville Hall, a school for the extraordinarily gifted." The first book is due in fall 2023.

"The Store for All Sorts: Half Price Books Turns 50" is the headline on a grand story in D Magazine (July 15) <www.tinyurl.com/yc3mywk2> (forwarded by Bill Seil) about why the store (in Dallas, Tex.) has survived so long (now with more than 120 stores in 19 states); they also sell books on-line <www.hpb.com>.

What do you call a squirrel that solves crimes? Jennie Paton has reported a video: <www.youtube.com/watch?v=WzB2YVNU9e0>.

The "Sherlock Holmes Weekend" in Cape May, N.J., this fall will feature a new play "Send in the Clowns" (Oct. 14-16 and 21-23) and performances of Gayle Stahlhuth's "Sherlock Holmes' Adventure of the Norwood Builder" by the Cape May Players (Oct. 21-22) <www.tinyurl.com/28ex38fa>.

Reported: Martin Edwards' new anthology *Murder by the Book: Mysteries for Bibliophiles* (Poisoned Pen, \$14.99) includes a reprint of S. C. Roberts' classic pastiche "The Strange Case of the Megatherium Thefts". It's also available at Audible, read by Ben Onwukwe; you can sample the recording at their web-site <www.tinyurl.com/36kha84c>.

Aug 22 #5 When in Barbados: you can visit the Chase Vault in the cemetery of Christ Church Parish, which Conan Doyle believed was haunted. The vault is empty now, and open to any visitors brave enough to step inside, according to a story <ww.tinyurl.com/3ja2r8t4> in the Daily Mirror (Aug. 8). You can read what Conan Doyle had to say about the vault in his article "The Law of the Ghost" (1919), reprinted in *The Edge of the Unknown* (1930).

Conan Doyle Walk in Swindon is in the news (again). Five years ago, when John Blick lived there, he was charged with three counts of assault (Aug 17 #4). Now the Swindon Advertiser <www.tinyurl.com/5xsehczjz> has reported that James Dean Webdell, also a resident of Conan Doyle Walk, has been charged with brandishing a taser in a brawl in a local pub.

There was much more to the Festival of Britain in 1951 than the Sherlock Holmes Exhibition at Abbey House (some of the items on display there still can be seen at The Sherlock Holmes pub in Northumberland Street); there is a colorful commemoration of the Festival at the National Archives web-site <www.tinyurl.com/c5pffptc>.

David Warner died on July 24. His began acting on stage in 1962, and went on to play Hamlet with the Royal Shakespeare Company, and then had a long career in film, radio, and television, including a performance as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in the TV movie "Houdini" (1998).

Henye Meyer's *Detective by Design* (Brooklyn: Menucha Publishers, 2022; 245 pp., \$28.49) offers an answer to the question "what if Sherlock Holmes had been a Jewish woman?" The book is an homage rather than a pastiche: Mrs. Rosa Adler is the detective, in Victorian London, and is adept at observation and deduction.

Jem Belcher will be found in *Rodney Stone* ("Say `sir' when you speak to a genelman," said Belcher, and with a sudden tilt of the table he sent Berks flying almost into my uncle's arms.) and he's mentioned in "The Forbidden Subject" in *Three of Them*. A new film "Prizefighter: The Life of Jim Belcher" (2022) has an official trailer <www.youtube.com/watch?v=Viv3fOgxaeS> and was reviewed at Boxing Social on July 24 <www.tinyurl.com/2p8dem6d>; it's now streaming on Amazon Prime.

The BBC is celebrating its centenary this year with an interesting web-site that features 100 important objects <www.tinyurl.com/8wrkad3x> that include the "iconic Belstaff Milford coat worn by Benedict Cumberbatch on the BBC's "Sherlock" series.

Ken Greenwald died on May 14. A dedicated enthusiast old-time radio, he was the mastermind behind a company he called 221 "A" Baker Street Associates; in the 1980s and 1990s he produced a long series of audiocassettes with Sherlock Holmes radio programs he rescued from original transcription disks. He also adapted some of the Rathbone/Bruce scripts as short stories in *The Lost Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1989). You can listen to a warm tribute to Ken by John Tefteller (with two non-Sherlockian shows) at his "The Good Old Days of Radio Show" web-site <www.tinyurl.com/54tan9t7>.

Aug 22 #6 Curtis Armstrong has announced a call for nominations for the 2023 Susan Rice Mentorship Award, which is given each year to "one outstanding Sherlockian mentor who, like the late Susan Rice, is committed to bringing aspiring Sherlockians into the cause, and encouraging them to find ways to keep green the memory of Sherlock Holmes." Neither the mentor nor the mentee need to be a member of the Baker Street Irregulars, and the winner will be announced during the birthday festivities in New York in January 2023. Information about the criteria and history of the award can be found at <www.tinyurl.com/susanriceaward>. Nominations, with a brief explanation of how they honor Susan's spirit of mentorship, should be sent by Oct. 30 to <susanricementorshipaward@gmail.com>.

Jennie Paton has found "Der Hund von Baskerville" (1937) on-line at YouTube <www.youtube.com/watch?v=kVh9KBpernQ>. The film that starred Bruno Güttner as Holmes and Fritz Odemar as Watson, and a copy of the film was found by Allied troops in Adolph Hitler's private film library at Berchtesgaden (Edgar W. Smith reported this in the Apr. 1948 issue of the Baker Street Journal). Alas: there are no subtitles, so you'll need some German to understand everything.

Candidates for "favorite first lines" can be interesting indeed, and great fun. Janet Rudolph (edited of *Mystery Scene*) suggests "There's a time and place for erect nipples, but the back of a Seattle police car definitely isn't it." That's the opening of Jennifer Hillier's *Things We Do in the Dark* (Minotaur Books, July 2022).

Something new in Sherlockian scholarship: Anna Brindisi-Behrens' article "A Study in Speech: The Use of Lisps in the Sherlock Holmes Canon and Beyond" will be found in the summer issue of *Canadian Holmes*, which is published quarterly by the Bootmakers of Toronto, always with news of Sherlockian goings-on in Canada. \$30.00 a year (US or CA); single issues cost \$12.00 <www.torontobootmakers.com>. The issue also includes Ross Davies' discussion of "A Well-Armed, Whistful Colonel" [that's not a typo].

Simon Trelawney's *Sherlock Holmes and the CIPHERED LIST* (Cambridge: Breese Books, 2022; 339 pp., \$15.50) opens with Holmes agreeing to assist a lady who explains that she has accidentally killed a man who was blackmailing her, and quickly becoming involved in a battle against German spies; Watson is far more adventurous in this pastiche than in the Canon, but of course all's well at the end.

"There have been numerous allusions over the years of Clive Reston's rather infamous family tree. His father, though never referenced by name, is British secret agent, James Bond. His great-uncle is London's most notorious detective, Sherlock Holmes. Due to licensing rights, Marvel Comics has never directly stated that either of these literary figures are related to Clive Reston, but the various implications leave little doubt as to their true identities." Yes, that would make Mycroft Holmes the father of James Bond and the grandfather of Clive Reston, who is a character in the Marvel comic-book series "Master of Kung Fu"; you can read all about this genealogy at the PageLagi web-site <www.tinyurl.com/yp9cc2zf> reported by Jennie Paton.

Aug 22 #7 The Long Beach Shakespeare Company continues to offer excellent live radio productions, and has kindly made some of their older recordings available at no charge <www.tinyurl.com/2p9xjr48>. You can listen to their versions of "A Scandal in Bohemia", "The Final Problem", and "The Hound of the Baskervilles" (and many other non-Sherlockian shows).

In case you don't already have the two-volume *The Complete Sherlock Holmes* (1953) signed by Conan Doyle, there's a copy at auction at PBA Galleries in San Francisco <www.tinyurl.com/38smpbjd> on Sept. 9, with an estimate of \$10,000-\$15,00 and an opening bid of \$5,000.

Paul Spiring reports that Baskerville Hall is up for sale, with an asking price of £650,000 <www.tinyurl.com/yzywjdnj>. Alas: it's not the actual Baskerville Hall, but rather the home of B. Fletcher Robinson's coachman Harry Baskerville, whose name Conan Doyle borrowed for the story, and it's not where Harry Baskerville was living when the story was written.

Agatha Christie: Marple: Twelve New Mysteries (New York: William Morrow, 2022; 370 pp., \$28.99) is an anthology of stories featuring Miss Marple, not written by Christie but rather by a dozen authors whose work will be enjoyed by admirers of Jane Marple. Val McDermid and others do very well in the world of Miss Marple, in St. Mary Mead and elsewhere (including New York and a cruise ship on its way to Hong Kong).

Howard Ostrom reports a new addition to the list of people who have played both Holmes and Moriarty (sort of): Vincent Price, whose Ratigan in "The Great Mouse Detective" (1986) was modeled on the evil professor, is seen in Sherlockian costume in "Elvira Meets Vincent Price #5" in the Dynamite Comics mini-series <www.tinyurl.com/yphfm6bm>.

Josephine Tewson died on Aug. 18. She had a long career on stage and in television in Britain, perhaps best known for her supporting role as the neighbor in "Keeping Up Appearances". She had supporting roles in "Elementary My Dear Watson" on Comedy Playhouse (1973), "The Strange Case of the End of Civilisation as We Know It" (1977), and "The Hound of the Baskervilles" (1978).

Travis McDade's article "The Inside Story of the \$8 Million Heist from the Carnegie Library" ran in Smithsonian magazine in Sept. 2020; it recently appeared again at their web-site <www.tinyurl.com/ypa3cmdz>, and is well worth reading by anyone interested in the world of rare books, even if it doesn't mention Holmes or Conan Doyle.

Conan Doyle is not forgotten in Edinburgh: there's the statue of Sherlock Holmes, not far from the Conan Doyle Pub near Picardy Place, where Conan Doyle was born, and the Dunedin School now in Liberton Bank House, where he lived as a child, and the Conan Doyle Medical Center just next door at 4 Nether Liberton Lane <www.portobello-conandoylesurgery.co.uk>. According to the Edinburgh Evening News (Aug. 2) <www.tinyurl.com/38yej628>, Dr. A. Comiskey and Partners at the Conan Doyle Center were ranked second in a Scottish government health and care survey.

Aug 22 #8 *Exploits and Adventures of Brigadier Gerard*, with a fine introduction by George MacDonald Fraser (New York Review Books, 2001; 417 pp., \$18.95), collects all of the short stories about the Brigadier, and offers a chance to see just how good a story-teller Conan Doyle was (Fraser suggests that Conan Doyle "was touched with genius," and does a grand job of explaining why.

The Sewing Crow-Bees <www.sewingcrowbees.org> aren't a Sherlockian society, but they are based in Crowborough (where Conan Doyle lived at Windlesham), and they work hard at supporting local and national charities.

Our postage rates have gone up again: 60¢ for the first ounce and 24¢ each for additional ounces within the U.S., and \$1.40 for the first ounce outside the U.S. It cost me 3¢ when I wrote my first letter, and I remember the complaints when the rate rose to 4¢ in 1958.

Theatrics: Peter Colley's new play "The Real Sherlock Holmes" is running at the Lighthouse Theatre in Port Dover, Ont., through Sept. 3, and then will be at the Colborne Theatre in Colborne, Ont. Sept. 7-18' web-site at <www.lighthoustheatre.com/event/the-real-sherlock>.

Christopher M. Walsh's "Miss Holmes Returns" is on at the Lifeline Theatre in Chicago, Ill., through Oct.16 <www.lifelinetheatre.com>.

Paul Gosling's new "The Casebook of Dr. Watson (A Sherlock Holmes Parody)" will be produced at the Sue Townsend Theatre in Leicester, Leics., Sept. 8-9 <www.tinyurl.com/5ee8kjpf>.

Ken Ludwig's "Baskerville" is due at the White Rock Players' Club in White Rock, B.C., Sept. 29-Oct. 16 <www.whiterockplayers.ca>; at the Westchester Playhouse in Los Angeles, Calif., Mar. 17-Apr. 8, 2023 <www.kentwoodplayers.org>; and at the freeFall Theatre in St. Petersburg, Fla., Mar. 23-Apr. 23; web-site at <www.freefalltheatre.com>.

Owen Thomas' "The Return of Sherlock Holmes" (with Nigel Miles-Thomas as Holmes) has completed its run at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, and is set for an extensive tour: at the Shangri-La Chang Mai (Thailand), Sept. 30-31; at the Continental Hotel in Saigon (Viet Nam), Oct. 7-8; at the Sukhothai hotel in Bangkok (Thailand), Oct. 21-23; and at the Marriott Hotel in Phuket (Thailand), Oct. 27-29.

Eric Coble's "The Baker Street Irregulars" is due at the Trinity Preparatory School in Winter Park, Fla., Oct. 7-8 <www.cfcarts.com/sherlock>.

Richard James' "Sherlock Holmes and the Mystery at Mallen Hall" is to be performed at the Ritchie Memorial Hall in Eastleigh, Hants., on Oct. 27-29 <www.chameleontheatre.co.uk>.

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