

"Magic, Meaning, and Discovery in Handwritten Materials" was the title of a lecture by Glen Miranker, who talked about some of the treasures in his collection at the Grolier Club in New York on Jan. 20, and you can watch a recording of the lecture (without the technical problems encountered that evening) at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=LeraQfpa\\_to](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LeraQfpa_to) and see some of the discoveries he has made in the manuscript of "The Sign of the Four".

When was Beeton's Christmas Annual for 1887 published? Well, it was advertised as "Just ready" in the Illustrated London News (Nov. 26, 1887), and a page with the advertisement will be auctioned at William George in Bury on Mar. 12 [www.tinyurl.com/yck4kkjb](http://www.tinyurl.com/yck4kkjb) with an opening bid of £15.

There is still time to enter the competition for this year's 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 named in honor of the heroine of "A Scandal in Bohemia". There's more information about the prize, and links to all the winning entries, at Lukas Aycroyd's web-site [www.lucasaykroyd.com/scholarships](http://www.lucasaykroyd.com/scholarships).

"Barker and Llewellyn Novels by Will Thomas" [www.tinyurl.com/35j8p3xx](http://www.tinyurl.com/35j8p3xx) is a Facebook page for fans of Will's novels, recently described as "Sherlock adjacent." Cyrus Barker is a private enquiry agent (thought by many to be an homage to Holmes' rival in "The Retired Colourman"). The latest novel was *Season of Death* (Feb 24 #7), and the "Book Series in Order" web-site [www.bookseriesinorder.com/will-thomas](http://www.bookseriesinorder.com/will-thomas) has a detailed discussion of the series.

You can pretend you're Michael Caine: a Sherlockian costume worn by Roger Kincaid in the film "Without a Clue" (1988) will be offered at Propstore on Mar. 27 [www.tinyurl.com/bdfzkzfr](http://www.tinyurl.com/bdfzkzfr), estimated at \$2,000-\$4,000.

There was a great of press coverage at the end of January about the discovery of a long-lost portrait of Robert Burns that is now on display in Edinburgh [www.blackiehouse.org/the-lost-portrait](http://www.blackiehouse.org/the-lost-portrait). You'll find mention of Conan Doyle, and an article published in the International Psychic Gazette (Nov. 1926).

*The Archives of Sherlock Holmes: Volume I*, written and illustrated by Ben Congdon (Leander: Ben Congdon Fine Art, 2025; 157 pp., \$14.99), has three of the unrecorded cases, told in traditional style. You can see some of his artwork at his web-site [www.bcongdon.com](http://www.bcongdon.com).

Rupert Holmes was the guest speaker at the Baker Street Irregulars' Thursday-evening lecture during the birthday festivities last month, and if you would like to see what he has been up to recently, he is credited for the adaptation of "Pirates! The Penzance Musical" (on Broadway from April to July last year). You can see a trailer (and listen to the original cast album) at [www.tinyurl.com/mnphtwd5](http://www.tinyurl.com/mnphtwd5).

Feb 26 #2 Vincent Starrett, who contributed so much to the Sherlockian world, has three screen credits (as a writer), and one of them is of particular interest. His story "Recipe for Murder" (in Redbook magazine, Nov. 1934) was quickly published as a book, *The Great Hotel Murder* (1935), and just as quickly adapted into a film the same year. Ray Betzner's "Studies in Starrett" blog offers three chapters about this, including Starrett's bewildered comment on the film <[www.tinyurl.com/35wcjr56](http://www.tinyurl.com/35wcjr56)> (click on "newer" at the end of the first and second chapters). Ray does not mention the references to Sherlock Holmes in the film, which is conveniently available at YouTube <[www.youtube.com/watch?v=781rDazqgNM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=781rDazqgNM)>. The Sherlockian dialogue is in the screenplay, but not in Starrett's novel.

A bit more about Simpson's in the Strand (Jan 26 #5): Samuel Reiss' Grand Cigar Divan opened in 1828, and soon was recognized as the home of chess in England. John Simpson expanded the premises 1848, adding a restaurant and a new name: Simpson's Grand Divan Tavern. Simpson's had its own chess sets, and Don Izban has reported that the U.S. Chess Federation now offers a replica set called The Strand Series <[www.tinyurl.com/yda727mt](http://www.tinyurl.com/yda727mt)> for only \$699.00.

The first chatbot is not only older than this newsletter, but quite likely older than many, if not most, of its readers. ELIZA was released in 1966, and if you're interested in history you can read (or listen to) an interview with a modern chatbot at the Journal of the American Medical Association's web-site (Jan. 29) <[www.tinyurl.com/yrrj2wpf](http://www.tinyurl.com/yrrj2wpf)>.

Dwight Garner's *Read Me: A Century of Classic American Book Advertisements* (New York: Ecco/HarperCollins, 2009) is an interesting (and entertaining) look at how publishers have advertised books, including "A WORD FROM DR. WATSON; COLLEAGUE OF SHERLOCK HOLMES" explaining why people ought to want to read the George H. Doran 1917 edition of *His Last Bow*. It's just Watson's preface to the book, but it is certainly an imaginative advertisement. And Dave Eggers' foreword to Garner's book is well worth the price of admission (plenty of copies available from on-line dealers).

Jennie Paton has reported "Die Liga der Rothaaringen" (with Erich Schellow and Paul Edwin Reich as Holmes and Watson), broadcast by ARD in Germany in 1967, at YouTube <[www.youtube.com/watch?v=XXLcj7Vw6Po](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XXLcj7Vw6Po)>. It's nice indeed that modern technology allows people to use "settings" to translate German subtitles into English.

Alexander Orlov has reported "The Hound of the Baskervilles" staged as a musical comedy in Russia <[www.muzkom22.ru/spectacles/id/151699](http://www.muzkom22.ru/spectacles/id/151699)>. You can watch a bit of video at <[www.ok.ru/video/7356718975659](http://www.ok.ru/video/7356718975659)> and the finale at <[www.vk.com/video-228360395\\_456314578](http://www.vk.com/video-228360395_456314578)>.

There's still considerable interest in Sherlock Holmes: the Deadline website reported (Feb. 13) <[www.tinyurl.com/48akf6y3](http://www.tinyurl.com/48akf6y3)> that the second trailer for the "Young Sherlock" series scored a Prime Video record of 223 million views during the first week it was available on-line. The series, which is directed by Guy Ritchie and is based on the series of books by Andrew Lane, debuts on Prime Video on Mar. 4.

Feb 26 #3 The Beacon Society continues to publish its "quarterly gazette for younger Sherlockians everywhere," and the winter issue of Sherlock's Spotlight is available at their web-site (check the menu at the left) <[www.beaconsociety.com](http://www.beaconsociety.com)>; the contents include material both by and for younger followers of the Great Detective, and the gazette is intended to provide younger Sherlockians with information and entertainment.

In the summer of 2021, the society published a nice collection of Charles M. Schulz's "Peanuts" comic strips with Sherlockian themes, still conveniently on-line in the Spotlight archive at the society's web-site.

The Brick Fanatics web-site reported (Feb. 9) <[www.tinyurl.com/5ywwzaw9e](http://www.tinyurl.com/5ywwzaw9e)> that the LEGO Sherlock Holmes Book Nook (Aug 25 #3) will be retired in December.

"For Competition 3431, you were invited to submit a passage in which Sherlock Holmes solves one of the great mysteries of our time," according to James Walton in the Spectator (Jan. 10), and you can read the winning entries at the magazine's Australian web-site <[www.tinyurl.com/mprafd2e](http://www.tinyurl.com/mprafd2e)>.

"The Birth of the Travel Guide" was a recent post at the web-site of the (British) National Archives <[www.tinyurl.com/bdcjtwrh](http://www.tinyurl.com/bdcjtwrh)>. There's discussion of Bradshaw and Cook (both mentioned in the Canon) and much more.

My compliments to everyone who realized that the "invitation" you received from me this month was suspicious, because it certainly was. Someone managed to hack into my address book, created a fake Paperless Post message, and sent malware to all my e-mail contacts. It's the first successful attack of this sort since I started using e-mail for the newsletter in Oct. 1993; I've no idea how they got through my anti-virus defenses. Beware of anyone who says only "open this," and check before downloading anything.

"Will you do what your father did? No, I am going to work." Written by Conan Doyle on a piece of notepaper with the heading "Notes on Children", one of the items on display in the "Loops, Swoops, and Curliques: A Legacy of Handwritten History" exhibition at the Toronto Reference Library, running through May 10.

Alex Hutchinson's Cameron Hollyer Memorial Lecture at the Toronto Reference Library on "Conan Doyle's Lost World: Filling in the Blank Spaces on the Map" (May @5 #1) is now on-line <[www.tinyurl.com/bzbf2eta](http://www.tinyurl.com/bzbf2eta)>. The introduction begins at 19:45, and the lecture at 24:00.

News from Edinburgh: "The Sir Conan Doyle room was, of course, named after Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and features one king-size bedroom, a spacious living room with sofa bed and piano, dining table, marble bathroom, and historic Edinburgh city views," according to the Edinburgh Live web-site on Feb. 8 <[www.tinyurl.com/s7z36dn3](http://www.tinyurl.com/s7z36dn3)>, "In the low season, this room would set you back anywhere from £1,200 a night. In the busy season the price jumps up to anywhere from £2,500 a night." The hotel's The Caledonian, which is now a Hilton <[www.tinyurl.com/4nr8t25m](http://www.tinyurl.com/4nr8t25m)>.

Feb 26 #4 The Country Life web-site reported (Feb. 11) that the home of the late Rolling Stones drummer Charlie Watts, in rural Devon, is for sale for £2.75 million. The story includes an image of Watts' library, where he kept his collection of rare books. The collection, which was sold at auction at Christie's in London (Oct 23 #1) included a copy of the first edition of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* signed by Conan Doyle and inscribed "I perambulated Dartmoor before I wrote this book." It sold for £214,200 [\$226,555] (including the buyer's premium), setting a record for a printed book from the Canon.

Jonathan Orr-Stav's *Sherlock Holmes and the Mistress of History* (Qualum, 2025; 83 pp., \$5.99) has Holmes and Watson traveling to Egypt and the Sinai in 1911, pursuing an ancient inscription. They encounter noted Egyptologists Flinders Petrie and Alan Gardiner, and at last find the inscription, which sheds light on the development of the world's first alphabet.

From the early 1900s: the Farnham Herald reported (Feb. 14) on the discovery of a book of photographs <[www.tinyurl.com/4d87yvxf](http://www.tinyurl.com/4d87yvxf)> with one showing Conan Doyle as a cricketer with the Hampshire Hogs. The web-site of the Hampshire Hogs Cricket Club <[www.club.hampshirehogs.org.uk](http://www.club.hampshirehogs.org.uk)> doesn't mention Conan Doyle, or explain how the club, founded in 1887, got its name, but Hampshire pigs are important enough to warrant an entry at Wikipedia. The club's web-site does mention other cricket clubs such as the Somerset Stragglers, the Devon Dumplings, the Sussex Martletts, and the Wiltshire Queries.

"These idiots, in my opinion, have simply read too much Conan Doyle," said Russian television figure Vladimir Solovyov, commenting on forensic conclusions that Alexei Navalny was murdered with a South American dart-frog poison in a gulag prison two years ago. "This is like the Sherlock Holmes stories," Solovyov added.

Robert Duvall died on Feb. 15. He began his acting career in television in 1960 and made his last film in 2022. A consummate actor, he said that his favorite role was as the lawman-turned-cowboy Gus McCrae in the 1989 television series "Lonesome Dove", and he received high praise from Sherlockians for playing Watson as far more than a mere sidekick in "The Seven-Per-Cent Solution" (1976). Scott Monty has posted a very nice tribute to Duvall at <[www.tinyurl.com/4s7jtwj3](http://www.tinyurl.com/4s7jtwj3)>.

"Step into the world of veterinary diagnostics with Detective Canis Holmes and Felina Watson. Through a series of intriguing clinical cases, uncover hidden parasites, silent hitchhikers, and unexpected indoor threats." On Mar. 3, in an online lecture <[www.tinyurl.com/e5ct8fht](http://www.tinyurl.com/e5ct8fht)>, kindly reported by Sonia Fetherston.

David Haig's new play "Magic" will have its world premiere in Chichester this spring, starring David Haig as Arthur Conan Doyle, Hadley Fraser as Harry Houdini, Jenna Augen as Bess Houdini, and Claire Price as Jean Conan Doyle) <[www.cft.org.uk/events/magic](http://www.cft.org.uk/events/magic)>. John Bulleid is credited as the illusion designer, so audiences will get to see Houdini perform.

Feb 26 #5 There still are some who believe that it was Conan Doyle who helped Dorando Pietri across the finish line in the Marathon during the Olympic Games in London in 1908, because a photograph showed a man with a mustache and a straw boater who resembled Conan Doyle, with Dorando <[www.tinyurl.com/2vmrknbf](http://www.tinyurl.com/2vmrknbf)>. Cliff Goldfarb and Peter Lovesey were able to identify the man as Jack Andrew, an Olympics official (Dec 02 #6). A different photograph <[www.tinyurl.com/ymkyeh4w](http://www.tinyurl.com/ymkyeh4w)> was offered at RR Auction this month, and it sold for \$346, to Cliff, who's happy to add it to his modest 1908 Marathon collection.

Reported: an excerpt from "The Maracot Deep" in Prema Arasu's *The Book of Sea Monsters: Leviathans of Literature* (Bloomsbury, 2025).

The Tavistock Times Gazette reported (Feb. 20) <[www.tinyurl.com/2rj4kfyZ](http://www.tinyurl.com/2rj4kfyZ)> that 50-acre Swincombe Valley, near Princetown, will be protected under a plan by the Dartmoor Preservation Association. The nearby Fox Tor Mire, believed by many to have been the inspiration of the Grimpen Mire in "The Hound of the Baskervilles", is a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

Charles Harold St. John Hamilton was a prolific English writer whose specialty was long-running series of boys' public-school stories. His Sherlockian parodies (written under his pen-name Peter Todd from 1915 to 1961) featured Herlock Sholmes and Dr. Jotson, but Hamilton's best-known for his Billy Bunter series, which he wrote as Frank Richards, starring Billy Bunter at Greyfriars School. Roger Johnson has kindly noted that *Billy Bunter's First Case* (1953) is Sherlockian, and conveniently available on-line <[www.tinyurl.com/5n7f7kbh](http://www.tinyurl.com/5n7f7kbh)>, as well as from used-book dealers.

Planning for the next Holmes in the Heartland conference (July 24-26) continues. For their after-dinner entertainment Max Magee (who presides over the James Phillimore Society for Sherlockian magicians) will conduct a seance during which Conan Doyle will answer questions. See their web-site <[www.shorturl.at/B3onQ](http://www.shorturl.at/B3onQ)> for more information about the conference.

An interesting letter written by Conan Doyle during his 1894 lecture tour in the U.S., was offered at Goldberg Auctioneers on Feb. 25. Writing from his hotel in Detroit, likely to his tour manager J. B. Pond, Conan Doyle said that "I realize that the depression has by no means passed away and that the number of people who can be counted on is limited. Now as Chicago is the very heart of the depression, it seems to me a little doubtful whether the second lecture would be good policy. That is my feeling but you are the best judge." The "Panic of 1893" rates an entry at Wikipedia; Conan Doyle had lectured in Chicago on Oct. 12, and did lecture again on Oct. 26. The letter <[www.tinyurl.com/mjuzpp2b](http://www.tinyurl.com/mjuzpp2b)>, estimated at \$900-\$1,500, sold for \$1,000 (plus 25% buyer's premium).

"My spearsman is foaming at the leash or straining at the pod, and since he is a Bantu and has worked for Conan Doyle, the deaths he inflicts are excruciatingly painful." F. Scott Fitzgerald, in a letter to Gilbert and Amanda Seldes, offered at Heritage Auctions on Feb. 26 with an opening bid of \$6,000 <[www.tinyurl.com/2aa2tmmk](http://www.tinyurl.com/2aa2tmmk)>. Bidding didn't reach the reserve, and the letter's now available for \$9,375 (including the buyer's premium).

Feb 26 #6 "We can partly thank Sir Arthur Conan Doyle for popularizing the Winter Olympics' newest sport," according to an article in The Guardian (Feb. 19) <[www.tinyurl.com/bdefesaz](http://www.tinyurl.com/bdefesaz)>. That newest sport is ski mountaineering (skimo), which is what Conan Doyle wrote about in 1894, when he made a "perilous 15-mile journey across the 8,000-foot high Maiefelder Furka Pass" that involved skiing and mountaineering. If that link doesn't work for you, try <[www.tinyurl.com/3yv4593f](http://www.tinyurl.com/3yv4593f)>.

If you would like to see some or even all of the often weird and wonderful names people have chosen for Sherlockian societies, there's a list of almost a thousand societies available at the web-site of the Beacon Society <[www.tinyurl.com/57phtfh7](http://www.tinyurl.com/57phtfh7)>; scroll down to "click here to view societies".

A copy of the first edition of *The Lost World*, inscribed in 1913 "From the Author's Mother" <[www.tinyurl.com/msrhay6c](http://www.tinyurl.com/msrhay6c)>, was offered at Quire Auctions on Feb. 25, estimated at £200-£300, it sold for £150 (plus 17% buyer's premium).

221B Con (A Fan Con for All Things Sherlock Holmes), scheduled on Apr. 10-12 in Atlanta, Ga., has posted its schedule of panels (click on the title of the panel for a bit more information <[www.221bcon.com/schedule](http://www.221bcon.com/schedule)>.

Some theatrical news: Peter Colley's "The Real Sherlock Holmes" is running at the Castor Little Theatre in Castor, Alb., through Mar. 8; web-site at <[www.castorlittletheatre.com](http://www.castorlittletheatre.com)>.

"The Hound of the Baskervilles" (by Steven Canny and John Nicholson) is on at the Blackfriars Playhouse in Staunton, Va., through May 17; web-site at <[www.americanshakespearecenter.com](http://www.americanshakespearecenter.com)>.

The Livewire Theatre Company will perform their new version of "The Hound of the Baskervilles" at the Thirsk Racecourse in N. Yorks., Mar. 5-7; web-site at <[www.tickettailor.com/events/livewiretheatrecompany/2053755](http://www.tickettailor.com/events/livewiretheatrecompany/2053755)>.

Ken Ludwig's "Baskerville" will be produced at the Brockville Arts Centre in Brockville, Ont., Mar. 6-7 <[www.tinyurl.com/y4tjdu9j](http://www.tinyurl.com/y4tjdu9j)>, and at the Aldridge Theatre in Farnham, Surrey, Mar. 19-21 <[www.tinyurl.com/5333rcs3](http://www.tinyurl.com/5333rcs3)>.

C. P. Stancich's "Sherlock Holmes and the Spinsters of Blackmead" will be produced at the Island Theater in Fleming Island, Fla., Mar. 20-29; web-site at <[www.theislandtheater.com](http://www.theislandtheater.com)>.

Ken Ludwig's "Moriarty" has been scheduled at the Briston Opera House in Bristol, Ind., Apr. 10-19 <[www.elkhartcivictheat5re.org](http://www.elkhartcivictheat5re.org)>.

Christophe M. Walsh's "Miss Holmes" will be produced at the Mud Creek Barn Theater in Indianapolis, Ind., Apr. 17-25 <[www.mudcreekplayers.org](http://www.mudcreekplayers.org)>.

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