BSI Weekend 2012

By SOB Webmaster Stu Nelan

I attended my fourth BSI Weekend in New York City this January 11 to 15. And what a wonderful time it was!

I was very lucky the first two years I attended—daughter Kamela lived in Manhattan. So I was able to stay with her, had a guide to the City at the same time, and a companion for some of the Sherlockian events. She has since moved to Washington, DC but still returns for a day or two for some of the doings.

I arrived Wednesday afternoon from Dallas. A short cab ride got me to the Roosevelt Hotel, headquarters for the BSI activities. And that’s Teddy Roosevelt, not FDR!

The Wednesday evening activity was the ASH dinner at O’Casey’s, a nice walk from the Roosevelt. About 50 people were there, including many ASHs, some familiar faces and some new ones—including several fairly young people from the NYC area.

Thursday morning was the Christopher Morley Walk, led by Jim Cox (San Francisco) and Dore Nash (NYC). Usually this event starts from the Algonquin and covers a lot of pavement in hunting down haunts of Morley—where he had an apartment, where the Saturday Review offices were, where he wrote some of his books, other places he had been to. But this time, due to the cold and rain, we went on a ferry ride down the East River to the Financial District to see the progress on the World Trade Center buildings. We still encountered some Christopher Morley, though, as he once worked near the Trade Center.

Lunch after the walk was at McSorley’s Tavern—once a favorite hangout of Morley’s. There was much sawdust on the floor now and several pictures of Morley on the wall. Since McSorley’s is very convenient to the Strand Bookstore, a small group of us headed there after lunch to see what we could find (a Magico reprint of Christ’s “Sherlock Holmes, Raffles, and Their Prototypes” for me).

Friday morning was devoted to Otto Penzler’s Mysterious Bookshop: Les Klinger and Laurie King were there autographing their new book, Volume 2 of “The Grand Game”, and there were many more treasures to be had! In addition, Otto opens his basement to Sherlockians to allow us to examine (and purchase) the rare books there! Here I found a nice Ian Henry Publications pastiche “Sherlock Holmes and… Continued on Page 3

Indiana Holmes and the Temple of Boom

By: SOB James Romnes

They say the Chinese invented gunpowder. I doubt it. Gun powder is simply not subtle enough.

There is also a lack of subtlety in the new Sherlock Holmes movie: “Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows” but no lack of gunpowder. Much of this gunpowder, unfortunately, is smokeless.

If the original film offered Webley blackpowder revolvers, the sequel has Mauser semi-auto broomhandle pistols and machine guns aplenty. Firearms verisimilitude may seem minor but a cinematic Victorian Holmes and Watson requires an eye for such detail. Flub the firearms and strange things may happen. For example, you may end up with Holmes and Watson traveling via horseless carriage. Or Holmes in painted underwear. Or even Mycroft without any underwear at all! Or you may fritter away major characters with untimely deaths or lifeless depictions. (Has there ever been a more flat uninteresting Moriarty than the one in “A Game of Shadows”? Brad Pitt why didn't you return those calls?)

Still, though “A Game of Shadows” may leave you unsatisfied an hour after consumption, it may serve as an appetizer to the BBC’s “Sherlock”. At least the Master’s name is on people’s lips and that, to quote the Chinese, is “to live in interesting times".

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A Locked-Room Mystery is EMPT!
The April 9 Business Meeting of The Sound of the Baskervilles will begin at 6:30 p.m. at T.S. McHugh’s Public House. The social hour starts at 5:30 p.m.!
Our 28th tale—in publication date order—appeared first in The Strand for October 1903. Oddly, Doyle ranked this case 6th in his list of favourite stories. Says PFL David: Col. Moran is alive and cheating at cards. Ronald Adair is dead “under unusual and inexplicable circumstances”. And, Watson is off to visit the murder scene...detecting?... and alone in the world, except for some “poor bibliophile” he’s picked up along the way! Are you up to unraveling the tangle Watson’s taken on? Read again “The Adventure of the Empty House” to discover the best surprise of all!

Maiwand 1880  Excerpted from Guns & Ammo Magazine, November 2011

“One of the rare instances where British troops were defeated by native forces, the Battle of Maiwand...began when British forces led by Brigadier-General George Burrows engaged a force of Afghans under Ayub Khan at Helmand, where he was deserted by his native levies. Burrows retired to Kushk-i-Nakud, in order to surprise Ayub Khan if he moved toward Kandahar. Burrows received information that the Afghans were indeed on the move and sent troops (numbering less than 2,500) to intercept them. (Unfortunately, Ayub Khan’s forces numbered 25,000.)

What follows in this article is an analysis of “an intermixture of archaic and modern arms” employed in the fateful battle, including full-colour photos of guns, bayonets and, of course, a “jezail projectile”.

Of import also is the sidebar titled “They were There: Dr. John H. Watson”, which notes: “The associate and chronicler of famed consulting detective Sherlock Holmes, Dr. John H. Watson had some early adventures of his own. As a surgeon with the 5th Northumberland Fusiliers, he took part in the Second Afghan War and was injured in the Battle of Maiwand. He mentions in A Study in Scarlet that he was wounded by a jezail bullet in the shoulder, “grazing the subclavian artery”. However, in The Sign of Four and The Noble Bachelor, Watson makes reference to a leg wound. One would think that if one was shot with a half-ounce lead ball he’d remember where he was hit. The only reasonable answer is probably that the good doctor was struck twice—one in the shoulder and once in the leg. Fortunately, wherever the bullet hit, it didn’t stop him from supplying us with a wealth of wonderful stories.”

Librarian’s Corner
“It is a great thing to start life with a small number of really good books which are your very own.”—Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

A Review of The Italian Secretary
by Caleb Carr (2005), commissioned by the ACD estate, afterward by Jon Lellenberg, U.S. agent for the estate.

The Italian Secretary, narrated by JHW, takes place sometime in the 1890s. Mycroft, via a coded telegram, asks Holmes and Watson to take an overnight train to Edinburgh and Holyroodhouse. Something strange is afoot there—two men have been killed very bizarrely. One is a renowned architect recently hired to restore Mary Queen of Scots’ rooms; the other his construction foreman. These rooms are the place where Mary’s Italian secretary and companion David Rizzo was brutally murdered by her husband Lord Darnley and a few co-conspirators in 1566. Mycroft vaguely indicates that there is a plot on to harm the Queen, so perhaps these murders are connected. He is traveling to Scotland to see the Queen and meet Sherlock. He actually leaves Pall Mall, it’s that serious! Any more of a synopsis here would be a spoiler. Suffice it to say that Holmes, of course, finds a practical solution in spite of the ghosts of Mary and Rizzo and medieval war engines. Did I like the book? Hmm—I’d say mixed. It’s a good read overall, but isn’t really Canonically plausible to my mind and is, therefore, weaker than other pastiches. For example, Holmes’ logic is not as tight at times and that he might “see” ghosts is pretty silly; the story gets quite weird as the practical solution unfolds. Perhaps you might try it and let me know what you think!

Sheila Holtgrieve, SOB Librarian, sheilaholtgrieve@gmail.com

Kudos & Thanks go to...SOBs who—as of this writing—have added a little something to their dues renewals:
☆ Larry Brown
☆ Terry Burns
☆ Nola & Daniel Cheff
☆ Peter & Kay Chelemodos
☆ Pat Connelly
☆ Charlie Cook
☆ Sheila Holtgrieve
☆ John Longenbaugh
☆ Pat McIntosh
☆ Jon Strandberg
Your generosity is most appreciated!

Come at 5:00, order dinner and catch up with the other SOBs!

Seil’s Book Sails Again!
Our own Bill Seil—will sign his Sherlock Holmes and the Titanic Tragedy (Titan, $9.95) on Saturday, April 7, from 12:00 until 2:00 at Seattle Mystery Bookshop (117 Cherry Street, Seattle)!
Come and help Bill celebrate and pick up a copy of his extraordinarily enjoyable adventure. PFL David & Terri will host appropriate refreshments—cake and bubbly—during Bill’s signing. Afterwards, those remaining may wish to join us for further refreshment at Collins Pub (526—2nd Avenue).
To assure adequate quantities, please contact Seattle Mystery Bookshop ([206] 587-5737, www.seattlemystery.com) in advance to reserve your copy of Bill’s book!

Ineffable Twaddle
Things to See, Buy, Do & Know

- From SOB Bill Sell: “Sherlock Holmes in the 22nd Century—Complete Series” is now available from Mill Creek Entertainment ($12.98). This is the cartoon series wherein, “After Sherlock Holmes is brought back from the dead, he is rejuvenated to that of a 25-year-old to help good friend Inspector Beth Lestrade battle an unprecedented crime wave wreaking havoc on this peaceful future. To assist Holmes, the personality of his loyal friend and companion, Dr. John Watson, is programmed into the brain of an android.”

- From SOB Librarian Sheila Holtgrieve: Follow this link to Toby Young’s comment that “It’s a national scandal that fewer than 100 pupils who sat for the most popular examination paper in English Lit studied a novel written before the 20th century” and his “list of the 10 Victorian novels every child should have read by the age of 18”:
  
  http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/tobyyoung/100082173/the-10-victorian-novels-every-child-should-read/

- From Entertainment Weekly, 2/24/2012: Reviewer Ken Tucker noted the upcoming “passing” of Hugh Laurie’s series “House”, saying “House paved the way for lesser grouches...and indirectly paved the way for lesser grouches...and indirectly helped bring the show’s origins full circle to the Sherlock Holmes revival that’s made Benedict Cumberbatch a Stateside cult favorite.”

- From SOB Pat McIntosh: I was given a Sherlockian DVD with Douglas Wilmer as Holmes and Nigel Stock as Watson by my sister as a birthday gift. They are pretty good. It’s a leisurely time to be able to sit down and watch them. There’s much I haven’t seen, so I can’t do much comparison; I hope to do more though!

- From Peter Blau:
  
  ⇒ At the William Gillette Luncheon in New York as part of celebration of Holmes’ 158th birthday, the Jan Whitney Award for the most whimsical piece in “The Serpentine Muse” last year was awarded to SOB Karen Murdock for her piece “Do You Write Like Arthur Conan Doyle”. She received a certificate and a check for $221.17.
  
  ⇒ John Linsenmeyer offers a discovery for anyone who’s investigating forensic or medico-legal aspects of the Canon. Important textbooks written by Alfred Swaine Taylor (1806-1880), who has been called the father of British forensic medicine, are available free at www.books.google.com by searching for “Alfred Swaine Taylor”.

  ⇒ “Professor Moriarty: The Hound of the D’Urbervilles” by Kim Newman (Titan Books, $14.95) is described by the author as “a novel disguised as a collection.” The book is full of interesting characters, some even borrowed from other authors. It is recommended.

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...the Midnight Bell”.

Friday evening was the Gaslight Gala, the highlight of the weekend. The theme was “Jewels in the Canon”, with songs, toasts, a buffet dinner, skits, quizzes, and more. I had been asked to read the list of over 30 Sherlockian scions and societies represented by the 100 people attending, with many countries and all parts of the U.S. represented: SH Societies of Japan, France and London; several Canadian societies; quite a few from the U.S., especially the NYC area and, of course, The Sound of the Baskervilles.

Saturday morning was the Vendor’s Room at the Roosevelt, where book dealers and others brought in their wares: Vinny Brosnan (SherlockinLA), George Vanderburgh (Battered Silicon Dispatch Box), Steve Doyle (Gasogene Books and Wessex Press), Gary Lovisi (Gryphon), Peter Stern, and quite a few others in a room that quickly became crowded with enthusiastic buyers. I picked up “The Dragnet Solar Pons” here, contrasting early and later versions of some of the first of August Derleth stories.

The Saturday evening dinner was appropriately named “Lost in New York with a Bunch of Sherlockians” at Pete’s Tavern. A wonderful venue up about 17 steps (I saw but did not observe the exact number) in a room crowded with Sherlockians, featured door prizes, raffles and a quiz on SH films and plays. (Can YOU name all 14 Rathbone/Bruce Sherlock Holmes movies?!) Kamela joined me for the Gaslight Gala (her fourth one, also), and we took the opportunity to do some non-Sherlockian things (herey, I know!)—an off-Broadway play, the Whitney Museum and MOMA. She’s considering starting a “Daughters of Sherlockians” scon society—where the only thing forbidden is to talk of Sherlock Holmes.

My fond memories include the hair-raising cab rides, being lost in the subway system, trains so crowded that we couldn’t move, and more! But especially the wonderful people—Sherlockians from everywhere, old friends and new, so many delightful people! I’m already looking forward to BSI Weekend 2013!
The Sound of the Baskervilles

By appointment of Her Majesty, Queen Victoria

Ineffable Twaddle

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News & Notes:

• SOB David Smith gave a rousing presentation on what it means to be British today, laying the groundwork for their acceptance of the monarchy! Very enlightening!

• PFL David reminded us that we are still looking for a volunteer to host the 2012 Will Crakes Jollification. If you’re willing and can offer your home on Saturday, December 8, please let PFL David know!

• SOB Ron Romines: “I went to Northwest Costumes in Tacoma and met Mary & Tom Johnson. Saw their 221B sitting room, and gave them an 1891 copy of the ‘London Times’. Also did a roadshow of Webleys for them. Brought a large metal traveling case filled with British revolvers that have ties to Holmes and Watson. Talked for 45 minutes about the mysteries of Victorian firearms. And that ballroom they have! Wow! What a venue that would be for a Holmesian meeting.”

• Writes SOB Elliott Black of Swannanoa, NC:
  “The time has arrived. I am moving back to the Chicago area (Lincolnwood) at the end of March (hopefully). I am not looking forward to Chicago winters but it’s where most of my kids, grandkids and old friends reside. I hate to leave beautiful Asheville, its culture, weather (at least most of the time), its ambience and new friends.”

• SOB Carol Clemens let us know she couldn’t attend the February 18 viewing at the Decks of the new season of BBC’s “Sherlock” saying, “I love that series! I will be in Portland for a baby shower for great-grandchild #2—a MUST attend!”

• From SOB Dwight Holmes: “Here I am on Christmas Eve with our oldest son and our 7th grandchild—newly arrived, special-delivery from Russia, 1-year-old Ella Rachel Holmes!”

Member News & Updates

SOBs attending the March Meeting, presided over by PFL David Haugen, were:

Sheila Holtgrieve  Margie Deck  Hank Deck
Stephen Adkins  Terri Haugen  Thom Wallis
Jon Strandberg  Stu Shiffman  Ed Funk
Margaret Nelson  Al Nelson  Joyce Funk
Lauran Stevens  DC Smith  Jim Nagle
Becky Geis  LCPL John Geis  Ann Milam
Pat McIntosh  Jim McIntosh  David Smith
Catherine Bancroft  Carol Smith  Jim Vavra

News & Notes:

• Two More New Members Join!
  ✓ Ed Weiss an attorney from the St. Louis area, found us via Classic Specialties when he bought our 2011 Beaten’s Christmas Annual! He liked what he saw and has joined the SOBs!!
  ✓ Jim Vavra found us at the Sherlock 2 movie premiere in December then came to the December Meeting. He works at Genie in Redmond info systems. He kept us guessing but now he’s joined! Welcome to you both!!

Dates of Interest

• March 31
  Our 32nd Anniversary Tea at The Haugens’ = 11:30 a.m.
  • April 7
  Book Signing, Seattle Mystery Book = Noon
• April 9
  Regular Monthly Meeting, Social = 5:30 p.m.; Business = 6:30 at T.S. McHugh’s
• May 5
  Our Annual Wreath Throw in Tumwater = 11:30 a.m.
  • May 14
  Regular Monthly Meeting, Social = 5:30 p.m.; Business = 6:30 at T.S. McHugh’s