



Ineffable Twaddle

"It is my business to know what other people don't know."

The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle

A monthly publication of
The Sound of the Baskervilles

A Scion Society of The Baker Street Irregulars • Since March 31, 1980

Serving the Greater Puget Sound Region of Western Washington



Volume 28,
Issue 9

September 2009

Book Review: Holmes Creator A Man For The Moment

Source: West Australian Newspapers Limited

"All our lives have been but a preparation for this supreme moment," wrote Arthur Conan Doyle in 1914. He happened to be writing this sentence in a propaganda pamphlet to muster public opinion against Germany in the Great War, but it could have been written at almost any moment in his life.

Doyle was a man for the supreme moment. His enthusiasms—detective fiction, the Channel Tunnel, submarines or motor cars—and some of his dislikes—miscarriages of justice, inequitable divorce laws—were for the first part of his life broadcasts to a sleepy population from someone alert to the rhythms of the future.

In his book The Adventures of Arthur Conan Doyle (Harvill Secker/Random House), Russell Miller is serviceable on the story of his subject's life and works. We get the facts: the family background, his father's alcoholism and madness, his Catholic education and subsequent skepticism, his medical studies and career, his married lives. The "Adventures" of the title is, however, putting it strongly.

After Doyle made his doomed attempt to kill off Sherlock Holmes at Reichenbach Falls, *The Strand* lost 20,000 subscribers, and workers in


the City of London wore mourning crepe tied around their top hats. Doyle was assaulted in the street. "It was as if a god had been destroyed by treachery," one critic wrote. But Doyle had had enough of his greatest and most profitable creation. He wanted respect as a writer of historical romances. And he had his causes to fight. He was a sportsman and moralist, a doctor, a novelist and campaigner.

Like Holmes, he worked from data. By the time of the Boer War, however, his patriotism was getting ahead of his empiricism. He could not believe the British were conducting the war with anything less than gentlemanly dignity, and refused to countenance reports of atrocities.

Doyle kept his passion, courage and imagination to the end but, in his interests and preoccupations, he became silly. The creator of the logician Holmes turned into a flag-waver for spiritualism and the "Cottingley Fairies", a photographic mock-up made by two whimsical girls.

Miller is a mostly reliable guide to the what-and-when of Doyle's life. But as the book goes on, his carelessness increases: It's generally agreed that the solicitor and amateur palaeontologist Charles Dawson was the perpetrator of the Piltdown Man fraud, contrary to Miller's remark that "the perpetrator of the hoax remains as elusive as the 'missing link'."

Miller writes that, because of his Irish ancestry, "it could fairly be said that Doyle was genetically programmed to believe in fairies" before going on, a little more persuasively, to remind the reader that Doyle's father, Charles, "had filled page after page of a sketchbook with fantastical drawings of fairies, elves, goblins and sprites while he was an inmate at the Montrose Royal Lunatic Asylum".

Given this paternity and the deaths of both his brother and his son in the aftermath of the "supreme moment" of the Great War, perhaps the question might not be how Doyle's shrewd mind could become seduced by such delusions as spiritualism and belief in fairies but rather to marvel at how strongly and how for so long it had clutched on to empiricism and logic. 

Inside this issue:

Book Review:	1
<i>Holmes Creator A Man For The Moment</i>	
Contributed by	
Karen Murdock	
Skip BLUE...Move On To "The Speckled Band"!!	2
Sun, Fun and Frosting at 13th Annual Watson Picnic	2
Things to See, Buy, Do & Know	3
Member News & Updates	4



Haugen At 26!!

No, while David Haugen seems to look "forever young", he's not turning age 26! Instead, September 2009 marks the 26th anniversary of his service as President of The

Sound of the Baskervilles.

Elected by popular vote in 1983 as our 5th fearless leader, elections have been dispensed with since 1984—as Ray DeGroat, BSI informed David that he would forevermore be called "President-for-Life", or "PFL". Then-Editor Mildred Broxon concurred, saying "If we held elections, we'd just vote you in again anyway."

Join us at the September Meeting, to give him a slap...er, pat on the back (*or a poke in the ribs*)!!

Photo above by Bill Seil



Holmes on the Case; Detects Typo!!

Did anyone else catch the typo on Page 1 in the August *Ineffable Twaddle*?

"Doyle's origins are easily traced via birth records...to May 22, 1959..." I think it should have been 1859!

I thought Doyle was older than me, not younger!

From Our Own
(Dwight) Holmes


Skip BLUE...Move On To "The Speckled Band"!!

The September 14, 2009 Meeting of The Sound of the Baskervilles will begin at 6:00 p.m. at T.S. McHugh's Public House, 21 Mercer Street, Seattle, (206) 282-1910. *Come early, order dinner and catch up with other SOBs!* Many arrive as early as 5:00.

While we are back to studying the Canon in publication date order, we will—as always—defer "The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle" to our December Meeting...moving directly to the "The Adventure of the Speckled Band"!!

Our 10th case, published in *The Strand* in 1892, is said to be the most popular of all entries in the Canon and was ranked first on Doyle's own list of faves.

Says PFL David: SPEC certainly has all the ingredients for success: a deliciously wicked villain, a damsel in distress to please Watson, and a clever mystery to entice Holmes. Will Helen Stoner live to marry? Will she suffer the same fate as her sister Julia, who died two years before on the eve of her wedding? Will our team's vigil uncover the cause of Julia's and prevent Helen's demise?

The public's interest in this case was confirmed by the success enjoyed by Doyle when he transformed "The Speckled Band" to the stage in 1910. Get your kicks with another read of "The Adventure of the Speckled Band"! 

Ineffable Twaddle

"He hurled the blacksmith over a parapet."



The Speckled Band

Interesting Facts From SPEC:


- ☞ We have two mentions of Holmes' seldom-mentioned physical strength when: 1) he straightens out a steel fireplace poker and 2) his hand closes like a vise on Watson's wrist.
- ☞ Did the coroner overlook the two puncture wounds on Julia because they were obscured by her hairline?
- ☞ In all but one edition, Holmes refers to Helen Stoner as "Miss Stoner"; in the Doubleday, he addresses her as "Miss Roylott"!

Sun, Fun and Frosting at 13th Annual Watson Picnic

It was perfect weather *again* for our Dr. John H. Watson Picnic. Chairman Paul Williams was able to again secure the south shelter at Seahurst Park, so we had little walking and less toting to do. While the shelter was newly-renovated, however, Paul found the grill to still be in a rusted and caked state and requiring much hard work! We surprised Paul with a birthday cake again too, but there were even more surprises in store!

Barbara Nelson had given the much-coveted Watson Trophy to David last month with the thought that someone else would win it, but her John had different ideas. After the initial round of the PFL's "Wicked Wicket" game, there was a heated tie between John and James Romnes, so a "wicket-off" was needed. By the slimmest of margins John again triumphed, taking home the trophy (that's three in a row for him!).

And, we couldn't overlook the two sesquicentennials we celebrated in July—for ACD and Big Ben—so a cake was naturally provided, with photos of each on top, and David's recitation of numerous remarkable factoids about both!

Another great day of sun, food, frosting and fun, and learning something new too! 



Photos by
Bill Seil



For more "action photos" from the Picnic, check out our website at: www.soundofthebaskervilles.com

Comic-Con Welcomes Robert Downey Jr.

The 44-year old actor stepped onto San Diego Convention Center's biggest stage in July unannounced and presented a clip from his forth-coming film "Sherlock Holmes" to an enthusiastic crowd of more than 6,000.

Downey called Holmes "an intellectual superhero" in the tale set in England in the 1800s.

The film is based on the original stories by Arthur Conan Doyle and the era's obsession with the occult.

Source: *Tacoma News Tribune*



Truth or Fiction??

"A Major Loss for Watson"

Is this the headline that Reuter's dispatched following Holmes' demise at Reichenbach?? Or does it convey some other tragedy?

In truth, on reading further, one finds this text in the article: "Watson stood...blinking away tears. He wasn't alone in his sadness."

To learn the truth, turn to Page 3!!

Things to See, Buy, Do & Know

• From PFL David:

⇒ A copy of OUR "Best of...Beaten's Christmas Annual" is now in the hands of Connie Willis, famed science fiction author who has won more awards than any other writer. Terri and I treated her and her family to breakfast in June just prior to her being inducted into The Science Fiction Hall of Fame. In an e-mail we received, Connie said she's looking forward to finding out all sorts of things about The Great Detective.

⇒ The PFL & PF-more have seen the trailer for the new Robert Downey "Sherlock Holmes" movie and advance posters for it. The trailer is all action and humour. The poster says "Nothing Escapes Him".

• From SOB Peter Chelemedos:

EDITOR'S NOTE: Tickets for the play below go on sale on October 1; call (206) 781-9708. Plans are to have SOBs meet for a performance between December 6 and December 20.

This Christmas

SHERLOCK HOLMES
AND THE CASE OF THE CHRISTMAS CAROL

by John Longenbaugh
WORLD PREMIERE
November 27- December 26

THESE THEN ARE THE FACTS: The year, 1894. The date, Christmas Eve. The location, 221B Baker Street. After being presumed dead for three years, a hardened Sherlock Holmes resurfaces, turning his back on the people who need him most. Three unexpected callers arrive on Christmas Eve uncovering clues from the detective's past, present and future. Can they save Holmes and his world from a dire end? They must "do it all in one night" to accomplish the task. A mystery full of Christmas spirits your whole family will enjoy.

• The 85-minute television film, "The Secret Life of Mrs. Beeton", that was broadcast in Britain by the BBC in 2006, and the U.S. by PBS-TV on "Masterpiece Theatre" in 2007, is available on a DVD (\$24.95) from Video Collection (Box 1380, Ottawa, IL 61350 [800-538-5856], www.videocollection.com). Recall, it was Isabella Beeton who created the famous Book of Household Management. She died in 1865, well before her husband began publishing Beeton's Christmas Annual (in which "A Study in Scarlet" appeared in 1887).

• **Received at our website from author Lee A. Matthias:** My long out-of-print Sherlock Holmes pastiche, The Pandora Plague, has been updated, revised, and annotated in a new third edition published by BookSurge. It is a novel-length account by Watson of the first association of Watson, Holmes, and magician Harry Houdini. Should your Members be interested, it's available on Amazon.com—being sure to select the one with the bright yellow and black

Truth or Fiction??

"A Major Loss for Watson"


No, this headline did not appear in a Reuter's dispatch or *The Times* back in May 1891.

It appeared in the *Tacoma News Tribune* in July 2009, reporting on golfer Tom Watson's loss of the British Open.


cover—the newly revised, expanded, and annotated 2009 3rd edition from BookSurge Publishing.

• From Peter Blau:

⇒ A reader spotted a zippered tote bag created by Quotable available for \$22.95 (www.quotablecards.com) that reads, "Life is infinitely stranger than anything the mind could invent". Their affiliate at www.fridgedoor.com/quotoba.html has the same quotations on flat magnets (\$4.95). Both sites offer store locators for those wanting to save shipping costs. The quote, in case you haven't got the Canon memorized, is from "A Case of Identity".



⇒ You can see two imaginative posters promoting the new "Sherlock Holmes" film in the U.K. at www.empireonline.com/news/story.asp?NID=25101.



• From Roger Johnson:

England's Secret Weapon: The Wartime Films of Sherlock Holmes by Amanda J. Field (£11.99) is available through Amazon.uk. Roger notes that his 1992 48-page chapbook, "Ready When You Are, Mr. Rathbone: A Review of the Universal Holmes Films" (published by the Northern Musgraves)—brief as it is—was for years the only substantial study of the 12 Sherlock Holmes films that Rathbone and Bruce made for Universal. Now Middlesex University Press has this much more substantial item. By examining them in the context of the time in which they were made, Ms. Field is able to show that Universal's Baker Street Dozen were considerably more than the poor relations of the two cinematic aristocrats that Fox had made in 1939. She works as a volunteer with the Lancelyn Green Bequest at Portsmouth, which gave her access to an extraordinary amount of primary material—scripts, contracts, correspondence with the Conan Doyle brothers—but she also dug deeper than any previous Holmes scholar among various archives in Los Angeles. She charts the less than straightforward development of the series, from blatant propaganda through gothic murder mystery to the introduction of the femme fatale. Despite the book's title, "The Hound of the Baskervilles" and "The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes" are dealt with in some detail, while "The House of Fear", "Pursuit to Algiers" and "Terror by Night" receive little attention.

⇒ "The Hound of the Baskervilles: A Sherlock Holmes Graphic Novel", adapted by Ian Edginton and illustrated by I.N.J. Culbard (SelfMadeHero, 5 Upper Wimpole Street, London W1G 6BP; £14.99) is now out. The address, so close to Conan Doyle's consulting room, inspires confidence, as does the foreword by Daniel Stashower. It's very stylish and obviously done with affection and intelligence, as the careful floor plan of 221B indicates.

FOR SOBs ONLY...

From: M.C. Black of

Detective Walks

"Walk in the footsteps of Sherlock Holmes"



Should any of your Members be visiting London, I'd be pleased to offer them a substantial discount on a Detective Walk.

E-mail: mc.black@detectivewalks.co.uk, or Go to: <http://myweb.tiscali.co.uk/detectivewalks>

From Peter Blau:

"Many thanks for the latest issue of *Ineffable Twaddle*...nice piece on Big Ben. There's a mention of Big Ben in the Canon...see 'Lady Frances Carfax'."

Peter is, of course, correct! Wish we'd thought to check in advance!!

And, here it is:

"Five minutes had not passed before we were flying in a hansom down Baker Street. But even so it was twenty-five to eight as we passed Big Ben, and eight struck as we tore down the Brixton Road..."

Also from: M.C. Black, of Detective Walks

In the August 2009 issue of *Ineffable Twaddle*—which I



read with much interest and pleasure—I noticed that you quoted the Tacoma News Tribune and that quotation referred to "The City".

★ To Londoners, "The City" refers to the square mile of the City of London; it does not refer to either the City of Westminster (where Big Ben is located) nor to the rest of London—which Londoners refer to as "town". ★ You must blame your local newspaper for that! "City" is a difficult concept in English. There are two cities in London; The City and Westminster. ★ I know this is a little confusing but I thought that you might be interested.

Yes, we are! Many thanks, M.C.!

"King's" crown



The Sound
of the
Baskervilles

By appointment
of Her Majesty,
Queen Victoria

Ineffable Twaddle

A monthly publication of
The Sound of the Baskervilles
A Scion Society of the Baker Street Irregulars since March 31, 1980
Serving the Greater Puget Sound Region of Western Washington

President: David Haugen, PFL, SOB, PSC

Treasurer: Allen Nelson

Secretary/Editor: Terri Haugen (terri@soundofthebaskervilles.com)

Webmaster & Historian: Lloyd Hedberg, WFL
(lloyd@soundofthebaskervilles.com)

Website: www.soundofthebaskervilles.com

Direct correspondence to:

3606 Harborcrest Court N.W.

Gig Harbor, WA 98332-8981 USA

Phone: 253-853-5187 • Fax: 253-853-5187

Email: david@soundofthebaskervilles.com

The Sound of the Baskervilles is a scion society of the Baker Street Irregulars, serving the greater Puget Sound Region of Western Washington, U.S.A., and has met monthly since March 31, 1980.

\$20 per year brings Members the monthly newsletter "Ineffable Twaddle", a copy of Beaten's Christmas Annual, and the incalculable benefits of association with a group of certifiable Holmes aficionados.

Meetings are held at 6:00 p.m., the 2nd Monday of each month. Location of the meetings may vary. Regularly scheduled additional events throughout the year include: "The Master's Dinner" celebrating Holmes' birthday (January), "The Annual Wreath Throw" commemorating Holmes' loss at Reichenbach Falls (May), "The Dr. John H. Watson Picnic" (July), and "The Will Crakes Memorial Jollification" (December). Other activities—book crawls, teas, plays and gaming events—are as announced.

To join, send your check for dues—\$20 for individuals, \$30 for families (U.S. funds only)—to the address shown at left.



Dates of Interest

- September 7
Labor Day
(USA)
- September 14
Regular
Monthly
Meeting,
T.S. McHugh's
- October 12
Regular
Monthly
Meeting,
T.S. McHugh's
- November 9
Regular
Monthly
Meeting,
T.S. McHugh's
- December 5
**The Will Crakes
Memorial
Jollification,
1:00 p.m., at the
John Nelsons'**

Member News & Updates

Those attending the August SOB Meeting, presided over by **PFL David Haugen**, were:

Margie Deck	Hank Deck	Terri Haugen
Margaret Nelson	Al Nelson	Barbara Nelson
John Nelson	Becky Geis	John Geis
Jean Macdonald	Joyce Funk	Ed Funk
Peter Chelemados	David Smith	Carol Smith

News & Notes:

• **Peter** was there, again sans **Kay**, but it looked like he got a take-away dessert to carry home to her!! Hoping you're doing well, Kay! ★ Those of us not members of the local "Richard the Third" club got to meet new SOBs **David & Carol Smith!!** His comments during our story discussion showed his knowledge! ★ **Margie & Hank** were back after a short absence, part of which included a visit to their daughter and grandson Evan in Texas.

• **Jean** was the winner of the story quiz on TWIS! Second place was a tie between **Becky** and **Margie**. This was as determined by PFL-ess Terri, who admits to not being able to hear at all well, with the kitchen clatter nearby!

• **Don Mathews** gave Haugens a ring, with his new contact info. It sounds like he's settling in well in Idaho but wants to visit us soon!

• **Haugens** spent several days on the Oregon Coast with **Geoff Jeffery & Cara Cross**, a highlight of which was attending "Sherlock's Secret

Life" by Ed Lange at the Coaster Theatre in Cannon Beach. That's four Sherlockian plays this year!

But wait.....

⇒**Peter** provided news of another Sherlockian play coming soon!!! Taproot Theatre has the world premiere of John Longenbaugh's "Sherlock Holmes and the Case of the Christmas Carol" opening November 27 and running through December 26!! See details on Page 3!!

• **SOB Librarian Verne Johnson** let us know that his absence of late is attributable to wife Diane's Mom not doing at all well. So they've been busy caring for her. We told him we'd muddle through somehow but that we hope things improve soon for his mother-in-law.

• We heard from **M.C. Black of Detective Walks in the U.K.** who says that our Club Crest—used in the masthead above—is inaccurate, as it uses a "King's" crown rather than a "Queen's" crown (at right)! After 20+ years of use, who knew??? See more from **M.C. Black** on Page 3!!



Due to rotten seating and noisy circumstances at the August Meeting, PFL David has deferred to the **September Meeting** our revisit to the "Dogs of The Canon"!!

So bring your ideas and be ready to vote on **THE WORST STORIES IN THE CANON!!**

PFL David will bring along our prior list of "dogs", author Les Klinger's picks, and the list of ACD's favorites—which you may disagree with!