

Canadian Holmes

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Canadian Holmes

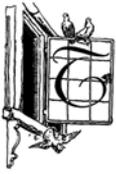
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One-hundred fiftieth issue

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ACES OF BOOTPRINTS

New York beckons and welcomes

Half of the editorial team spent a week in New York for the annual BSI gathering in early January. Mark was fortunate enough to not only attend the weekend but participate in it by receiving an award for co-editing a new BSI book (see review on page 30), reciting the Musgrave Ritual at the annual banquet, and greet and chat with hundreds of Sherlockians in the sales room.

With Sherlockians visiting from all over the globe, there was very little actual discussion of Sherlock and his world. Instead, the weekend is full of social events where old friends see each other, shake hands, hug, break bread, down a few pints, and new friendships are made.

The New York weekend (closer to a week now with various events starting on Wednesday and ending Sunday) is all about camaraderie and chatting with like-minded friends. There is a lecture, usually very well attended, by a guest speaker, some scholarship at the dinner, well considered and clever toasts with most of the discussion being informal and between friends. The BSI weekend is about seeing old friends, staying up late, and making new friends from across the globe and around the corner.

This year Mark got to meet with more than a couple of names from this very issue. Charles Prepolec, from Calgary, who did a final proofing of this issue, received his BSI investiture (he is now known as The Man With the Twisted Lip); Constantine Kaoukakis from Edmonton, who wrote a book review for us, had his first taste of the BSI weekend, Peter Calamai, who now resides in Stratford, Ontario, was there to sign books and receive his award for co-editing the book with Mark; Donny Zaldin was in NYC again and covered the event for our Diary pages, and our own Lomax, Peggy Perdue, was on hand to see old friends and also rub shoulders at the BSI reception.

Although there are a couple of invitation-only events throughout the weekend, most activities are open to all and a welcoming handshake to all Sherlockians is always extended. Although it isn't a trip to the Big Apple, enjoy this issue with contributors from around the globe and see it as your own Sherlockian trip.

From Mrs. Hudson's Kitchen



This column is by Mrs. Hudson herself and dictated to Wendy Heyman-Marsaw, a Sherlockian and Master Bootmaker living in Halifax. Mrs. Hudson provided this photograph of herself at age 24, taken on the occasion of her betrothal to Mr. Hudson.

Country Inns

"I have unwittingly condemned you to the horrors of a country inn."
Sherlock Holmes, "The Adventure of the Retired Colourman"

Not all of the inns that Mr. Holmes and Dr. Watson visited were actually "horrors." Indeed, The Chequers Inn from the "Adventure of the Creeping Man" appears to have been frequented before by Mr. Holmes as he observed, "...the port was above mediocrity, and the linen beyond reproach." In total, the gentlemen frequented no less than seven inns in their published stories, including: The Westfield Arms from *Valley of Fear*, The Fighting Cock in the "Priory School," The Crown Inn from the "Speckled Band," The Green Dragon in "Shoscombe Old Place," The Black Swan from "The Copper Beeches," The Chequers (as mentioned above) and The Hereford Arms in "The Boscombe Valley Mystery."

The first inns were likely established when the Romans built their system of roads two millennia ago. Using archeological data, some inns can be traced as far back as 460 AD. The Domesday Book identifies one inn, being onsite in Stratfordshire since 1086. Inns tended to be older and grand establishments providing not only food and more extensive lodging than pubs, but also stabling and fodder for traveller's horses and even fresh horses, should they be needed. Some of the earliest great inns were built by monasteries in centres of pilgrimage. Inns also served military purposes, with one of the oldest said to have been a recruiting station for volunteers to accompany King Richard I on his crusade to the Holy Lands. In common with other tradesmen of the 14th century, inns began to display pictorial signs which could be identified in an illiterate age. The earliest signs were drawn from heraldry but by Georgian times there were greater variations.

By 1577 it is estimated that there were some 2,000 inns throughout England and Wales. The larger inns had more scope for events. The type built with galleries around the courtyard provided an arena for plays and cockfights.

The inns played a large role in the 19th century with the expansion of the English railway transportation system. Industry was on the rise and people were travelling more to keep and maintain business. The inn was an important part of English infrastructure as they helped maintain a smooth flow of travel throughout the country.

Inns, like pubs, also acted as community gathering places. Indeed, Mr. Holmes believed that here were the best places to collect local gossip as he observed in “The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist.”

The Hereford Arms in “The Boscombe Valley Mystery” was located in the Midlands, an area known as the home for Melton Mowbray pork pies and the happy accident of two chemists, Lea and Perrins, who were working on developing a new spiced condiment for one of their customers. The original batch was too strong and was left in a barrel in the basement of their shop only to be rediscovered some time later when it fermented and mellowed. The partners then sold it with great success. The region is also the home of Stilton and Cheshire cheeses, the latter being made continuously from the 12th century. Notable, too, is the cider, which has a much higher alcohol content than usual.

Many romantic legends grew around inns. Tales of ghosts, highwaymen, royal connections and tunnels are but just a few elements in the mythology. Mr. Holmes would no doubt caution us to believe nothing unless it can be substantiated from primary sources.

Recipe:

Lamb Chops with Mustard Sauce – serves 4

Ingredients: 1 Tbs. rosemary leaves finely chopped, 4 Tbs. olive oil, 8 loin lamb chops, scant ½C lamb or beef stock, 2 Tbs. wholegrain Dijon mustard, 1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce, salt and ground black pepper, 2/3C sour cream.

Mode: Mix rosemary with olive oil and rub mixture over chops. Let stand 30 minutes or longer if chilled. Season lightly with salt and pepper. Heat a large frying pan, add the chops and cook over medium heat for 5-8 minutes per side until cooked. Lift chops out of pan and keep warm. Pour the stock into the hot pan, scraping up any sediment and add the mustard and sour cream. Bubble gently for 2-3 minutes. Heat until mixture comes to a boil and is reduced by about 1/3. Stir in Worcestershire sauce and adjust seasoning. Serve chops with mustard sauce spooned over.

Billy Grows Up

By Bob Coghill

Bob Coghill (Vancouver, British Columbia) is a retired teacher and archivist, a Baker Street Irregular, and a Master Bootmaker, renowned for introducing children to Sherlock Holmes. Since 2013 he has been travelling the world, meeting Sherlockians and adding friendships as he goes.



Recently, I took a friend out for lunch. Well, a former student actually, but still a friend. The occasion was his 29th birthday. Problem is, I still think of him as 12, the age he was when I was his teacher. He shall always really be 12 to me. That happens when you are a middle school teacher/guidance counsellor. You meet hundreds of students – all of whom grow up, but somehow, always remain 12, the age they were when I first met them. Which brings me to Billy. Billy the Page. The Boy in Buttons. Somehow he always remains just the way he was in the Sherlock Holmes stories. The way he was when we first met him. Most likely 12. But of course, he grew up. And I think I know, at least in part, what became of him. But first – who is Billy?

For Bootmakers, Billy is and always will be Chris Redmond, our former *Canadian Holmes* editor and our most celebrated member, author of several books, creator and former host of the amazing sherlockian.net, erudite scholar and presenter, whose investiture as “Billy” in the Baker



Street Irregulars took place in 1966. He was the youngest ever Irregular and his presence in the Sherlockian world is immense. And his investiture refers to a Baker Street regular – one of the household at 221B Baker Street, which consisted of Holmes, Dr. Watson, Mrs. Hudson and the occasional maid or cook.

I want to take a look at what the Canon says about Billy; what the writings on the writings say and finally, I want to draw a conclusion about how Billy grew up based on the evidence and using a bit of conjecture. Not Holmes's method, but certainly available to and used by Sherlockians.

Most of what we know about Billy comes from the story "The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone." In it, we get the fullest picture of the page of Baker Street. But it is certainly not the first we hear of him. A page, boy in buttons or Billy is mentioned in 10 of the original stories.

Here are all the references found in the Canon. The first story chronologically that mentions him is "The Adventure of the Yellow Face." (For my chronology, I am using "A Basic Timeline of Terra 221B" by Brad Keefauver)

In the Yellow Face, first published on March 29, 1884, we get some colourful dialogue from "our page boy."

"Beg pardon, sir," said our page-boy, as he opened the door. "There's been a gentleman here asking for you, sir."

Holmes glanced reproachfully at me. "So much for afternoon walks!" said he. "Has this gentleman gone, then?"

"Yes, sir."

"Didn't you ask him in?"

"Yes, sir; he came in."

"How long did he wait?"

"Half an hour, sir. He was a very restless gentleman, sir, a-walkin' and a-stampin' all the time he was here. I was waitin' outside the door, sir, and I could hear him. At last he goes out into the passage, and he cries, "Is that man never goin' to come?" Those were his very words, sir. "You'll only need to wait a little longer," says I. "Then I'll wait in the open air, for I feel half choked," says he. "I'll be back before long." And with that he ups and he outs, and all I could say wouldn't hold him back."

No name is given to "our page-boy." In fact, he is only mentioned by name in three of the stories and it has been suggested that "Billy was nothing more than a kind of pet-name which was applied to every page irrespective of what his real Christian name happened to be." (Newton, 1955)

His next appearance is in “The Adventure of the Naval Treaty (July 29, 1887).

“You come at a crisis, Watson,” said he. “If this paper remains blue, all is well. If it turns red, it means a man's life.” He dipped it into the test-tube and it flushed at once into a dull, dirty crimson. “Hum! I thought as much” he cried. “I will be at your service in an instant, Watson. You will find tobacco in the Persian slipper.” He turned to his desk and scribbled off several telegrams, which were handed over to the page-boy. Then he threw himself down into the chair opposite, and drew up his knees until his fingers clasped round his long, thin shins.”

Here we get a description of one of the many roles of the page. “A boy or lad employed as a servant or attendant, hence a male servant in his lowest grade in his line of service.” (O.E.D.) The page was “a household or professional servant, almost invariably a young boy, whose primary duty is to answer the door and show callers in...” (Tracy) Likewise, the “boy in buttons was a uniformed pageboy who was employed to clean boots, run errands, etc. – a jack of all trades in a Victorian household.” (Kelvin, 1988)

In “The Adventure of the Noble Bachelor,” the page introduces the client. (October 6, 1887)

“But there is a ring at the bell, Watson, and as the clock makes it a few minutes after four, I have no doubt that this will prove to be our noble client. Do not dream of going, Watson, for I very much prefer having a witness, if only as a check to my own memory.”

“Lord Robert St. Simon,” announced our page-boy, throwing open the door. A gentleman entered, with a pleasant, cultured face, high-nosed and pale, with something perhaps of petulance about the mouth, and with the steady, well-opened eye of a man whose pleasant lot it had ever been to command and to be obeyed.”

The phrase “throwing open the door” suggests a confidence and comfort level that demonstrates how much this page was at home at 221B.

The only one of the longer stories that mentions the page is *The Valley of Fear* (January 7, 1888), and it is the first to give the page the name Billy.

“Holmes’s calculation was fulfilled within a very few minutes by the appearance of Billy, the page, with the very letter which we were expecting.”

Then later, “There, Watson! What do you think of pure reason and its fruit? If the green-grocer had such a thing as a laurel wreath, I should send Billy round for it.”

And finally, “Holmes had the impersonal joy of the true artist in his better work, even as he mourned darkly when it fell below the high level to which he aspired. He was still chuckling over his success when Billy swung open the door and Inspector MacDonald of Scotland Yard was ushered into the room.”

Billy ushers in the police in *The Valley of Fear* and a client in “A Case of Identity” (April 16, 1888).

“As he spoke there was a tap at the door, and the boy in buttons entered to announce Miss Mary Sutherland, while the lady herself loomed behind his small black figure like a full-sailed merchantman behind a tiny pilot boat. Sherlock Holmes welcomed her with the easy courtesy for which he was remarkable, and, having closed the door and bowed her into an armchair, he looked her over in the minute and yet abstracted fashion which was peculiar to him.”

In “The Adventure of the Greek Interpreter” (June 20, 1888), Holmes asks Watson to send our boy off to get transportation.

“Excellent,” said Sherlock Holmes. “Send the boy for a four-wheeler, and we shall be off at once.”

Wisteria Lodge has him running off on a different kind of errand. (March 24, 1892)

“I am entirely at your service,” said Sherlock Holmes, ringing the bell. “You will show these gentlemen out, Mrs. Hudson, and kindly send the boy with this telegram. He is to pay a five shilling reply.”

The next story, according to Keefauver’s chronology, is “The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone” (June 1, 1894). It is in this story that we have more of Billy than any other. I will return to it.

In Thor Bridge, we have Billy mentioned by name again. (October 4, 1900)

“Billy had opened the door, but the name which he announced was an unexpected one. Mr. Marlow Bates was a stranger to both of us. He was a thin, nervous wisp of a man with frightened eyes and

a twitching, hesitating manner – a man whom my own professional eye would judge to be on the brink of an absolute nervous breakdown.”

And the final mention (May 26, 1903) is from Shoscombe Old Place.

“The door had opened and the page had shown in a tall, clean-shaven man with the firm, austere expression which is only seen upon those who have to control horses or boys.”

Back to the Mazarin Stone.

“Finally, his eyes came round to the fresh and smiling face of Billy, the young but very wise and tactful page, who had helped a little to fill up the gap of loneliness and isolation which surrounded the saturnine figure of the great detective.

“It all seems very unchanged, Billy. You don’t change, either. I hope the same can be said of him?”

The conversation between Dr. Watson and Billy goes on for several more paragraphs, provides us our fullest exchange in the Canon which gives our roundest and most complete portrait of young Billy.

So those are the 10 canonical references to the pageboy, or rather pageboys, of 221B Baker Street. As Chris Redmond says in *A Sherlock Holmes Handbook*, “The ‘Billy’ who ushers in visitors in *The Valley of Fear*, circa 1889, can hardly be the same boy who is there for “Thor Bridge” and “The Mazarin Stone” more than a decade later. We should remember also that just because Billy is not mentioned by name or there is no reference to “our page boy” or to “the boy in buttons” it does not mean he was not there. Like the dog in the night time – nothing does not exactly mean nothing. It is hard to imagine 221B without the presence of Billy, or at least a Billy, after he was introduced in “The Yellow Face.”

According to the Keefauver chronology, there is a difference of 19 years. If the page is 12 years old in “The Yellow Face,” that same young man would be 31 at the time of “Shoscombe Old Place.” Keefauver, in his wonderfully titled paper “A Page from the Life of Sherlock Holmes” (Keefauver, 1980) asks “just how did Billy remain unchanged for a twenty-year span? The answer is obvious. Billy was a midget.” That, of course, is more a reflection of Keefauver’s sense of humor than the truth about Billy.

G. B. Newton describes Billy as a “vividly drawn minor character” who has “by some means or another...succeeded in winning for himself a warm corner in all our hearts.”

Billy was one of those children in the Canon who help us see a particular side of Holmes. As I described in my 1979 presentation to The Bootmakers, “A Sherlockian Tribute to Children” :

By a careful ‘reading between the lines’ of the four long and 56 short stories of Holmes’s adventures, we get to see the human side of Holmes. The clearest and closest we see this is in his relationship with children.

Two clear examples of young boys who were special to Holmes were Billy, Holmes’ page, and Cartwright, the 14-year-old companion of the detective in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.

Holmes’s page is mentioned by name only three times. It is quite possible that he had several different boys over the period of the time in Baker Street. Billy, though, seems to be the one that was closest to Holmes. It is quite possible that Holmes selected him from among the Baker Street Irregulars. We can be sure that when Watson was away that Billy was a comfort and a support to Holmes, especially as he grew older. Billy was wise and tactful, and certainly trusted by Holmes. (Coghill, 1979)

Edward Quayle, in “Suffer the Little Children” (1948) suggests “a little research into his relationship with children.” While Quayle concludes that many of the children in the Canon are fairly sinister, he describes “Billy, the page and young Cartwright” as being on the side of the hounds “along with the Baker Street Irregulars.”

The Sherlock Holmes Society of London had a panel discussion in 1979 on Children in the Canon. While many of the panellists agree with Quayle that, “like women, children are never to be entirely trusted – not the best of them,” Elaine Hamill is “less unkind than my companions towards the youngsters” and goes on to describe the actions of Cartwright on the moor, who “is expected to visit 23 hotels to find mutilated copies of *The Times*” and of Billy, who in the course of “The Mazarin Stone,” in addition to his regular duties, “had to negotiate 272 steps in a short period of time on a lovely summer’s evening” (Mitchell, 1979).

It is clear that Billy is one of “the good children,” as described in “The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness” by Sue Flaherty. Canonical children fall into four categories; good, bad, involved and heard about but not seen. Like the Baker Street Irregulars, Cartwright and

Simpson, Billy, the “first boy being mentioned as an employee” apparently “feels some affection for Holmes, as the page says, ‘I’m frightened for his health.’ ” (Flaherty, 1975)

James Keddie Jr., in his essay “Billy” in the *Baker Street Fourwheeler*, describes Billy as, “an eager youth with a love of adventure and excitement. He must have had imagination. He was helpful. He admired the master and had his interest at heart.”

“Wiggins, the leader of the Baker Street Irregulars,” writes Les Klinger, makes only one appearance and the Baker Street Irregulars appear in only two other stories. It is “another youth (who) has a more permanent role in the lives of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson... a “boy in buttons” a “small black figure” the uniformed pageboy who was employed to clean boots, run errands, etc.” Klinger suspects that William Gillette himself may have paid a visit to Baker Street and met the yet unnamed page there. It is in his play that we first hear the name Billy. That was in 1899, many years before we see the name Billy in the Canon itself.

And speaking of Gillette’s Billy, we cannot fail to mention the Charlie Chaplin autobiography, where Chaplin describes his memories of playing

Billy alongside H. A. Saintsbury’s Holmes and later with Gillette himself in “The Painful Predicament of Sherlock Holmes.” As Michael Pointer notes in “Billy, You’re a Smart Boy!” Chaplin “is well remembered” for the role of Billy. A review at the time says, “A faithful portrait of Billy is given by Master Charles Chaplin, who shows considerable ability, and bids fair to develop into a capable and clever actor.” (Pointer, 1967) From *My Autobiography*, Chaplin writes “the stage manager brought me to Mr. Gillette’s dressing-room, and his words after I was introduced to him: ‘Would you like to



Charlie Chaplin as Billy

play in ‘Sherlock Holmes’ with me?... and later, “It was like tidings from heaven to receive a telegram from Mr. Postant, Gillette’s manager, asking if I were available to come to London to play the part of Billie(sic) with William Gillette in the curtain-raiser.” Cornelis Helling writing to *The Baker Street Journal*, praised the book. “Mr. Chaplin’s book is certainly one of the most captivating and important biographies ever written.” (Helling, 1964)

While Billy, whether mentioned by name or not, is only found in the 10 Canonical stories mentioned, he certainly lives on and on. He is featured, in addition to the Gillette play, in many other theatrical versions of the stories, in several movies and in no less than 95 Sherlockian pastiches, according to the website www.schoolandholmes.com’s list of Historical and Fictional Characters in Sherlockian Pastiche.

Billy even has his own sets of adventures in “The Exploits of Billy the Page” by Willoughby Lane. The hero of these exploits, “Billy,” is page boy to a large middle-class household in London’s Baker Street. ... A page boy’s life was hard, and his long hours of work and Spartan accommodations would not today be permitted. Yet there was nothing “hard done by” about the Billy of our stories, for he came from a home where his father was unemployed and his mother took in washing. ... So, our particular Billy is small, smart and cheeky, learning all the time, from life around him and from the methods of his master’s profession. He is more than polite to visitors and to his master, but a “holy terror” “below stairs” (Lane, 1986).

I think that the Willoughby Lane stories of Billy, like many of the nearly 100 pastiches, are likely fictional. But we don’t need to resort to fiction to find out what happened to Billy after Baker Street.

While he may have once been a Baker Street Irregular, who was favoured – much like Wiggins, Simpson or Cartwright – and given a special role, I don’t think he followed in the footsteps of Holmes. Wiggins, the organizer, developed skills he could use in business or industry. Simpson certainly showed signs of being a good amateur detective and Cartwright, showed signs that could lead him to a career as a gentleman’s gentleman, or even an innovator of living in the out of doors – perhaps working with Lord Baden Powell in organizing his new movement for boys. But Billy was destined for other things. He did learn from a master at Baker Street, but not a master detective, rather a master story teller.

Yes, while under the influence of the good doctor, Billy was trying his hand at becoming a writer. It is clear that Dr. Watson did not write *The Mazarin Stone*. Nor was it, like *The Blanched Soldier* or *The Lion’s Mane*, written by Holmes. I think that Billy tried his hand at writing and that the

story he came up with was The Mazarin Stone. Clearly not as good as Watson, it was a good attempt and it would explain why so much of the story features Billy himself. While it was indeed a Sherlock Holmes adventure, it was also partly autobiography.

Well, done Billy.

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Ragged Children and Ragged Schools

By Richard E. Brown

Richard Brown is a psychology professor at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, and was a Visiting Fellow at St. John's College, Oxford. He has been a member of the Spence Munros in Halifax for over 30 years and a member of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London since 1985.

This article was first presented at the birthday luncheon of the Spence Munros of Halifax on January 13, 2014. Not only did members toast the Master's health — they also learned about a school system which may well have helped Wiggins and the other members of the Baker Street Irregulars.



In *A Study in Scarlet*, the Baker Street Irregulars are introduced as follows:

“It’s the Baker Street division of the detective police force,” said my companion, gravely; and as he spoke there rushed into the room half a dozen of the dirtiest and most ragged street Arabs that ever I clapped eyes on.

Their leader was young Wiggins, “the spokesman of the street Arabs,” who was described as having an “insignificant and unsavoury person.”

Holmes summons The Irregulars by telegram in *The Sign of Four*. As Watson recounts “... there came a swift pattering of naked feet upon the stairs, a clatter of high voices, and in rushed a dozen dirty and ragged little street Arabs.”

In this article, I wish to examine these “dirtiest and most ragged street Arabs,” their association with the Ragged Schools, and their connection with Canada.

In the mid-19th century, there were thousands of children living on the streets in London and other major English cities. Charles Dickens described their lives in his novels *A Christmas Carol* (1843) and *Oliver Twist* (1838). These children lived in destitute, neglected conditions. They were:

homeless; many of them are entirely neglected by their parents; many are orphans, outcasts, street beggars, crossing-sweepers, and little hawkers of things about the streets; they are generally very ignorant, although in some points very quick and cunning... We have children of convicts who have been transported; children of convicts in our prisons at home; children of thieves not in custody; children of the lowest mendicants and tramps; children of worthless drunken parents, a large class; children of stepfathers or stepmothers, often driven by neglect or cruelty to shift for themselves; children of those who, although suitable objects for a workhouse, prefer leading a vagrant life, pilfering when they can, sometimes in employment but oftener engaged in practices of a doubtful or criminal nature; children of parents who, though honest, are too poor to pay even one penny a week for a school, and who cannot clothe their children so as to obtain admission to better schools; children who have lost parents, or are deserted by them, or have run away from home, and live by begging and stealing; youths who, disliking the workhouse, have left it, and lead a vagrant life; youths who are at work during the day as ostler boys, labourers' assistants, and in other ways, or who go about selling articles in the streets, such as fish, fruit, and vegetables, and who cannot therefore attend a day school, even if free admission be offered; girls who are driven into the street by cruel and worthless parents, and live by begging and selling water-creases, oranges, and lucifer matches.

This description comes from William Locke's *Report of the Standing Committee on Criminal and Destitute Juveniles*, 1852, and can be found on The Dictionary of Victorian London website (www.victorianlondon.org/education/raggedschools.htm).

These are the street children whom Holmes hired for a shilling because they were able to "go everywhere and hear everything" and were "sharp as needles, too; all they want is organization." Holmes organized them into the Baker Street Irregulars but when they were not working for Holmes, what were they doing? Most likely one or more of the tasks listed above.

Many of these street Arabs were so impoverished that, in 1844, a number of Ragged Schools opened in London. The Ragged Schools were charitable schools for the free education of destitute children. They were started in areas where some charity or church organization had been concerned enough to want to help disadvantaged children toward a better life. The schools were named Ragged Schools because the children who



The former Ragged School building in Marylebone, London. Photograph by Richard Brown

attended had only very ragged clothes to wear, and they rarely had shoes. This describes Wiggins and the others who startled both Mrs. Hudson and Watson when they appeared at 221B.

It is possible that Wiggins and the other Irregulars attended the Ragged Schools. The nearest Ragged School to Baker Street was the Grotto

Ragged and Industrial School, established in Grotto Passage, Marylebone, London W1. Although the school was established in 1846, the current building, which is still standing, was erected in 1860. By 1895, it was known as the Grotto Passage Home for Lads, and it seems reasonable to suggest that Wiggins and others attended this Ragged School. One wonders how Holmes could have dispatched a telegram to Wiggins from the Great Peter Street Post Office if Wiggins were living homeless on the street. It is possible that Wiggins lived in some squalid building near Baker Street or that he was accommodated in the Grotto Ragged School.

Henry Mayhew, writing in the *Morning Chronicle*, March 29, 1850, described some of the lodgings near the Lambeth Ragged School:

The Ragged School to which I directed my attention is situated in one of the worst quarters of Westminster. The street — in which it is the best and cleanest house — and all the circumjacent streets, with their many courts and alleys, and what are well described as “blind passages” — is mainly occupied by the destitute and the criminal. Low lodging-houses abound. The shattered and ill-patched windows of very many houses — where sheets of brown paper occupy the place of glass — and the open and unpainted doors, allow even a cursory observer to notice much filth and laziness in the rooms within. In some houses each room has its family, and sometimes almost every upper window has its yellow patched or ragged linen hanging out to dry on something like a small bowsprit rigged out of the window.

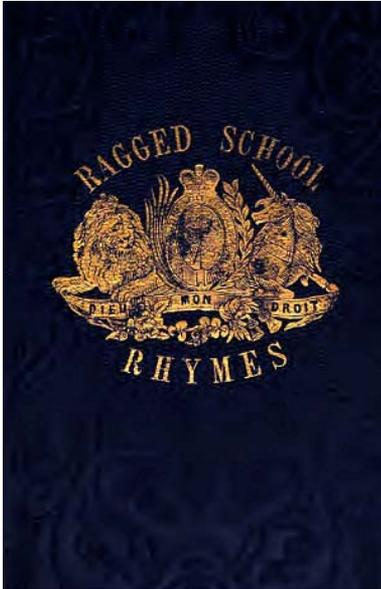
On the other hand, some Ragged Schools provided food, clothing, lodging and missionary services for the street children, as well as free education. (1) So Wiggins and the others could have lived at the Grotto school. In the Lambeth Ragged School, for example, there was accommodation provided in separate apartments for boys and girls. There was also accommodation for a daily infant school. The Lambeth school accommodated about 800 children. There were two large classrooms — one for boys and one for girls; there were also two reception rooms for the training of the children on their first admission, and four smaller classrooms where young persons who showed more than usual diligence were taught in the higher branches of education.

In *The Times* of November 24, 1855, the superintendent of the Ragged Schools Union, Mr. Locke, detailed all the things achieved by the Ragged Schools and the difference they had made to the children who attended. He said the schools had been able to find employment for many of the children, who were taught to be careful with their money. As well as

learning to read and write, the children were also given moral guidance. Locke said the Ragged Schools Union officials were certain there were “thousands upon thousands of children who roamed the streets unheeded and uncared for, to plunder and do mischief.”

The Dictionary of Victorian London website also quotes a book titled *Cruchley’s London in 1865: A handbook for strangers, showing where to go, how to get there and what to look at*, stating that the Ragged Schools Union kept records of many of the children from their schools. One Union report (1855) states that the “society also interests itself in procuring employment for deserving industry, and in promoting the emigration of suitable persons,” so they obtained jobs for them or paid for them to emigrate.

The same site quotes an 1858 report from the magazine *The Leisure Hour* stating that the Field Lane Ragged



Ragged School Rhymes was written by Alexander Maclagan in 1851 for the children of the Ragged Schools and to “enlist the sympathy of a few warm hearts in the benevolent and truly Christian movement.”

School (the one visited by Dickens) claimed that “Since this dormitory was opened, over 10,000 men and boys have availed themselves of the shelter provided; of whom 1,326 are known to have obtained permanent employment. During the past year alone, no less than 3,959 persons were admitted into the dormitory, of whom 342 either obtained work, or were restored to relatives who had mourned over them as lost or dead prodigals.”

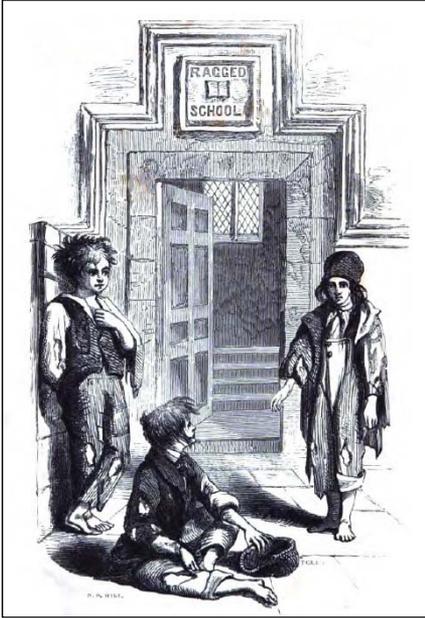


Illustration from Ragged School Rhymes.

The largest Ragged School in London was opened by Dr. Thomas Barnardo in East London in 1867 (with 2,347 children attending) and continued to operate until 1908, three years after Dr. Barnardo died. This school is now the Ragged School Museum, found at 46-50 Copperfield Road, London.(2)

Barnardo had far more destitute children than he could accommodate at his Ragged School, so he started boarding them out with families, often in rural settings. The first major scheme began in 1886-1887, when 330 boys were sent to “good country homes” — well away from the slums and pollution that he believed were so injurious to their physical and moral well-being. Dr. Barnardo also “boarded out” children by sending them

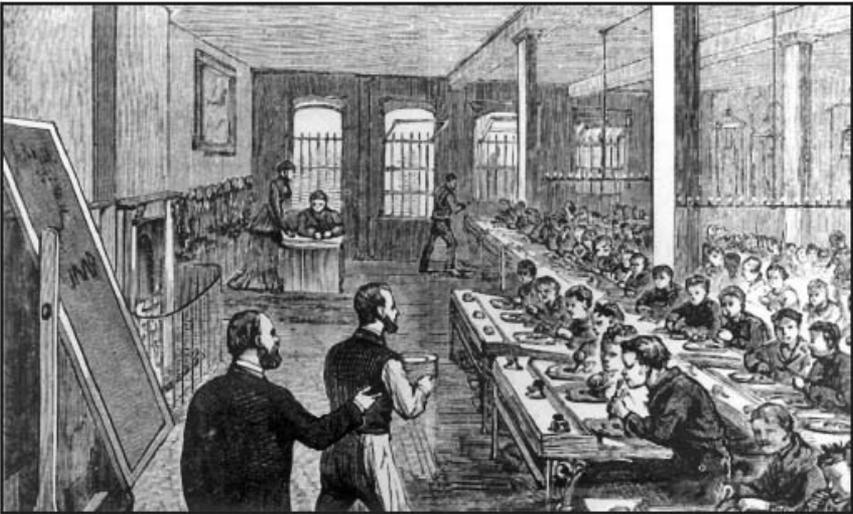
abroad. In 1850, Britain had passed legislation to allow children from workhouses to be sent to Canada, South Africa and Australia. Most of the children went to Canada, where they were known as “British Home Children.” The first group of 51 boys were sent from East London to Canada in 1852, and by 1900 about 1,000 children per year were being sent to Canada.

There is a British Home Children’s website, britishhomechildren.org, and a website with a catalogue of children sent to Canada as British Home Children, the Children’s Society Records and Archives, canadianbritishhomechildren.weebly.com. The first website notes that 118,000 British children were sent to Canada between the late 1860s and 1948. As well, Library and Archives Canada has a Home Children

database, and the Canadian Museum of Immigration (Pier 21) in Halifax has a story collection about the British Home Children.

What happened to Wiggins and the other members of the Baker Street Irregulars? Did they find employment? Were they returned to their families? Were they boarded out in England? Or did they emigrate? Was Wiggins one of those sent to Canada? Maybe he was sent to the Wiggins Male Orphan Asylum in Saint John, N.B., or maybe he found his way to Montreal, Ottawa or Newfoundland? Was Wiggins Avenue in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, named after him?

If Wiggins were sent to Canada, then that may explain why the Baker Street Irregulars vanished from the Canon. And maybe today the descendants of Wiggins are somewhere in Canada.



Copperfield Road Ragged School in 1879. Credit: Ragged School Museum.

Endnotes

- 1) Ragged schools, Wikipedia, accessed Jan. 15, 2013.
- 2) Smith, M.K. (2002 ‘Thomas John Barnardo (“the Doctor”)', the encyclopedia of informal education, Last update: May 29, 2012) (infed.org/mobi/thomas-john-barnardo-thedoctor/)

The Island of Uffa

By John Linsenmeyer, B.S.I., etc.

John Linsenmeyer is a retired commercial barrister, an investitured Baker Street Irregular for which he edited the Baker Street Journal for five or so years, and is member of the Five Orange Pips, the Toronto Bootmakers, etc. He lives in Riverside, Connecticut.



r Watson, that old teaser, mentions at least 80 cases of Sherlock Holmes's, including a fair number which seem more interesting than the one we're reading at the moment, such as "The Tracking and Arrest of Huret, the Boulevard Assassin." Another is "The Singular Adventures of the Grice Patersons in the Island of Uffa," dated specifically to 1887 in his list in "The Adventure of the Five Orange Pips."

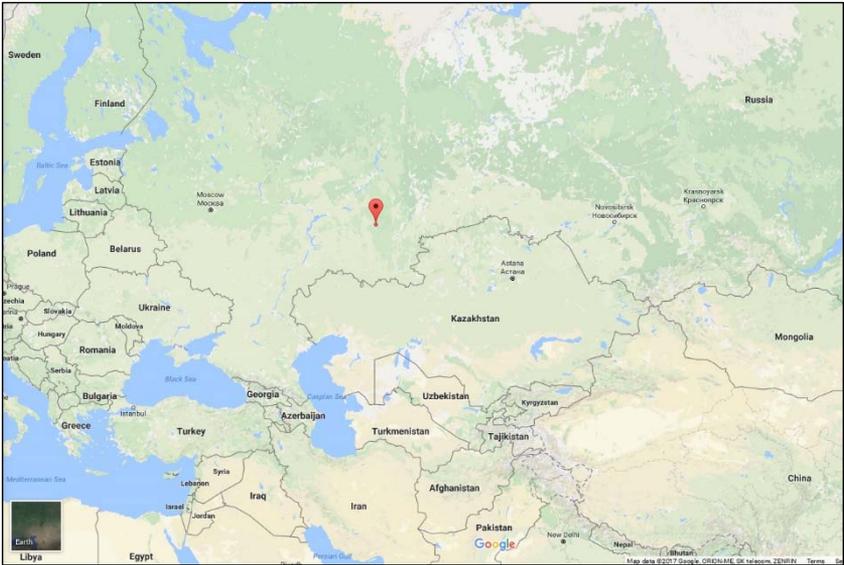
Watson shares neither a clue as to who the adventurous people were, nor where on Earth is Uffa. Even our legendary Commissionaire, Dr Julian Wolff of blessed memory, frankly wimped out on the topic. His wonderful "Sherlockian Atlas" on the map "The world strictly according to Doyle" merely has a small insert of a blob-shaped island on an unnamed 'ocean' without geographical co-ordinates or other identifying feature, except one dot marking 'Grice Paterson house.' No help at all.

But I believe I have solved the question as to where Uffa is and why it is very reasonable to assume that the High Victorian Grice Patersons – man and wife? Brothers? Father and son? Who knows? – had an adventure there that involved Queen Victoria's go-to man Holmes. And for a push in this direction I am indebted to my daughter Barbara's close friend, Svetlana Kalinichenko, who was in fact born, raised and educated in Ufa. Svetlana told me that her hometown is pronounced 'oo-FAH,' not "uff-uh" and she should know: her father, a Russian Air Force pilot, was born there, as was her grandfather, who was killed fighting the Nazis in 1942 – Svetlana received her baccalaureate in economics at its university, one of Russia's 'top ten.'

Ufa was, in essence, founded by Czar Ivan the Terrible, who ordered a large fortress to be built at the junction of the Belaya and Ufa rivers – which, of course, contain several islands – on the site of a city dating back to the Golden Horde called Bashkort. In the first decade of the 19th century, the basic outlines of the present City of Ufa were laid out by a Scottish architect named William Heste.

And why would the 1887 adventurers the Grice Patersons and our Sherlock have been remotely interested in this fairly remote, growing city – by 1887 approaching 100,000 in population? I think the answer is that the Russian Empire was then in the process of absorbing Bashkortostan, a heavily Muslim region of Turkik-speakers following the Sunni-Hanafi rubrics of Islam; indeed “Ufa” means “small” in Turkik. Those were the days of the Great Game[1] – the Russians called it “Turniry Teney” (tournament of shadows). This was the strategic rivalry between the British and Russian Empires for supremacy in Central Asia, as bit by bit the Khanates of Central Asia became Russian vassals or were simply incorporated in the Russian Empire. While Her Majesty’s Government cared little or nothing about remote Khanates and satrapies [2] populated by wild, violent Muslim hillbillies [3], they cared a great deal about possible encroachments on India, the “Jewel in the Crown.”

Uf[f]a in Bashkortostan was a logical front line in this Great Game, a potent mixture of Muslims and encroaching ethnic Russians (like the fair Svetlana’s ancestors), and I suggest that this is a far more logical venue for a matter involving Sherlock Holmes, doubtless going to Ufa to rescue the Grice Patersons from whatever pickle they had got into – far, far more



The push pin marks where Ufa is located.



City of Ufa coat of arms

likely than some remote, unheard-of island in the middle of nowhere. Holmes generally had bigger fish to fry.

End Notes

[1] While the phrase “The Great Game” actually appears to have been coined in the 1830s by an Army intelligence officer, it was put into the mainstream by Rudyard Kipling’s wildly popular novel *Kim*. Afghanistan, though in most respects just as worthless as the Russian Khanates, was a special playground in the Great Game because it was adjacent to the Muslim North West Frontier of British India [now Pakistan] and its Pathan population was ethnically the same as much of the North West Frontier Province. For a comprehensive history of the Great Game, see *Tournament of Shadows* by Karl Ernest Meyer and Shareen Blair Brysac, 1999. In the chapter “Her Majesty’s Indian Secret Service,” both Dr. Watson’s wound at Maiwand and Kipling’s novel *Kim* are mentioned, along with fine descriptions of the espionage shenanigans, both along the frontiers and in ‘hostile’ territory. By the by, Mr. Meyer was investitured by Commissionaire Dr. Julian Wolff of the Baker Street Irregulars as ‘Fritz von Waldbaum’ in 1977, five years after my own investiture.

[2] This was, of course, before those Khanates became important for their oil reserves.

[3] The most famous opponent of these Russian takeovers was Shaml the Avar, the leader of the Trans-Caucasus Muslims. He was captured, treated with respect, even luxury, in Moscow and Kiev, and died on a pilgrimage to Medina. His dramatic life is recorded in *Sabres of Paradise* by Leslie Branch [1960].

Colonel Spence Munro and Violet Hunter

By Michael Duke

Michael Duke has been a Holmes fanatic since receiving Baring-Gould's Annotated as a 30th birthday present. In 1996 he founded the Sherlock Holmes Society of Melbourne, is a member of The Sherlock Holmes Society of London, The Bootmakers of Toronto and The Sydney Passengers. "Still questing and commentating!"



In *The Adventure of the Copper Beeches* (published June 1892), Miss Violet Hunter stated that she had been the governess for the family of Colonel Spence Munro for five years. Some two months before the canonical tale, usually dated as 1890, she was abruptly dismissed as “the Colonel received an appointment at Halifax, in Nova Scotia, and took his children over to America with him.” Her salary as governess with the Spence Munros was “four pounds a month,” £48 a year. She was an orphan and had no relatives whom she could consult, nor close friends nor local clergyman, adds Isaac George (1949). When she met Sherlock Holmes, Miss Hunter was destitute and in debt to tradesmen. Her new and extraordinary salary with the Rucastles was to be £120 a year, more than double the usual going rate (Simpson, 1959, pp 6-7). Miss Hunter decided to take this lucrative post during the process of, and in my view not before, giving her story to Holmes and Watson.

The literature is sadly lacking in explanations for much of this. This essay seeks to examine the necessary prequel to the canonical case.

Language:

First let us examine language. During her narrative to the detective and the doctor, Violet Hunter abruptly switches into the passive voice – “the Colonel received an appointment” she says – when telling Holmes and Watson about her own dismissal. Not ‘The Army sent him to Canada’. She goes back to the active voice – “took his children over to America” – then back to passive “I found myself without a situation.” And not ‘The Colonel sacked me.’ This subtle change removes agency, the idea of the person doing or making the action. Who is the hidden actor or agent responsible for Spence Munro receiving “an appointment” and then for sacking Ms.

Hunter? Who is victimized by the sacking? It is as if the Colonel had no responsibility for or even engagement in the intercontinental move nor her sacking. Why would she speak thus? Bureaucrats use this passive voice extensively to exculpate themselves from the onus of any results of their orders: “Your letter has been received, it has been decided” they say and similar. Not, “I got your letter” and “I decided.” Was Miss Hunter unconsciously attributing some blame to the Colonel which she could not bear to make manifest? And every excuse, even by this indirect means, is a confession.



Violet Hunter from The Strand Magazine, June 1892

That Interval:

The Canon appears to have an unexplained interval from the time Miss Hunter arrives promptly at 10:30 am until she leaves, giving Holmes and Watson “good-night.” It seems likely that Watson in his writing abridged the consultation with Holmes, and many more details of the Spence Munros and their treatment of her were vouchsafed during those eight or so hours. Unless the interview itself had been so onerous for her, despite her “brisk” presentation, that she was addled as to its duration. Nonetheless, it does seem that Miss Hunter changed her mind about what to do with regard to the Rucastles while she, in her turn, had been assessing Holmes and Watson.

Wedding Belle?:

Some commentators, possibly influenced by Holmes’s stated admiration for this strong woman, try and find matrimonial designs on the increasingly famous Holmes or Watson (George, op cit, 1949; Shackelford, 1986; Bell, 1932). George notes that Hunter lived in Montague Place, which is at right angles to Montague Street but also adjacent to the British Museum, like Holmes’s former lodgings. He portrays her as a scheming woman who may have known of Holmes in

those days and was out to capture him for marriage. As a woman with no paid job for two months, destitute and owing money, the option of becoming someone's wife or even concubine may have seemed a last desperate option. But, "observant" lady that she is, it does not take her much time to know that Holmes is not interested, merely proffering his usual 'bedside manner' and Watson married, and both faithful to this life choice. So she decided to venture to the suspicious Rucastle household. What could possibly go wrong that she had not already had happen?

Bell (p 68) mentions that Holmes displayed no further interest in Miss Hunter once the case was over. Indeed, Holmes is invulnerable to other female charms, according to Michael Atkinson (1996), as he is psychologically married to Irene Adler. Hunter herself was described as having a "face freckled like a plover's egg," and to have long gorgeous auburn or chestnut hair, which was cut short by the time Holmes and Watson met her for the second time in Winchester. Whether Watson thought that Hunter's hair, long or short, would sway Holmes is unclear but Watson himself kept up with her later for at least two years, married man or not, and it is unusual in the Canon to have an after-story for clients.

A Gaggle of Governesses:

The Sherlock Holmes Society of London Handbook for its 1997 Expedition, *A Gaggle of Governesses*, does contain some useful information. Governesses appear in several tales: most important are "Miss Burnett" in "The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge," Violet Smith "resident music teacher" in "The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist," and Grace Dunbar in "The Problem of Thor Bridge." Miss Dobney is the "old governess" of Lady Frances Carfax in the eponymous tale but does not appear personally. Mary Morstan, later wife of Dr Watson, is a governess for the Forrester family when first met in *The Sign of the Four* and had been since 1882 – some six years. Miss Burnett took her post to wreak revenge on "The Tiger of San Pedro." Violet Smith, "the young and beautiful woman, tall, graceful, queenly", had lost her father James Smith, which left her and her mother very poor. The "much older" Carruthers engaged her as a resident music teacher purportedly because of the lady's poverty, although there was, of course, an ulterior motive. Grace Dunbar answered the Gold King's advertisement to become a governess to his two children. She was described as having a "strong, clear-cut and yet sensitive face," "a brunette, tall, with a noble figure and commanding presence." Her reasons for accepting the post are not given but her not leaving, when the impropriety of relations between herself and her married employer was increasingly obvious, suggests poverty as well. The Canon also tells us

that Miss Dunbar was “supporting others,” although we are not told whom. In human beings’ usual rationalizing way, she says “it was only my desire to influence his power to good ends which kept me under his roof.” A princely or rather kingly salary may have had some consideration as well.

The Handbook also identifies all three of Arthur Conan Doyle’s sisters as governesses at one time or another. Annette Mary Frances Conan Doyle (“Nan”), born 1857, was a governess in Portugal in the 1870s. She died in Lisbon in 1890. Caroline Mary Burton Doyle (“Lottie”), born 1866, and Constance Aimee Monica Doyle (“Connie”), born 1869, were also in Portugal in their sister’s profession until Arthur brought the two surviving sisters back to England in 1892. Thereafter they did not follow that profession.

Literary governesses are also covered in the *Handbook*. Professor B.J. Rahn (pp 53-63) covers some 32 other literary governesses from authors as diverse as Jane Austen, the Bronte sisters, Charlotte and Anne; Charles Dickens; Wilkie Collins; Elizabeth Gaskell and so on. With these precedents, most of whom the duo would have read, it is little wonder that Watson, Holmes (and Doyle) were able to empathise with the canonical ladies who presented to them. Hunter had certainly read *Jane Eyre* (1847), as she remarks that this second Mrs. Rucastle is not mad but she gets a panic attack when entering the locked attic. But there is no mad first Mrs. Rucastle (how close that is to Rochester) hidden there.

Out With the Old:

But let us go back a step. If Colonel Spence Munro’s children were still in need of a governess, why and how was she dismissed? Finding a satisfactory new governess in a strange land would surely be more difficult than the convenience of taking the current one. The third-class fare for Hunter would be only about £10 sterling or (at 1890 conversion rates) about US \$15.

Was there a Mrs. Spence Munro? Obviously there had been, as there were two children. She is one of the many invisible women in the Canon. We are given no name, nor if she is even alive. Puerperal sepsis and other maladies killed one woman in 20 after childbirth in that era. Did Mrs. Spence Munro survive her two confinements, as they were called? If there were only the Colonel and the children, the presence of a beautiful governess may have other implications, which I come to below. The second Mrs. Rucastle also is given no first name, just her title, Mrs. Rucastle, by Miss Hunter. It is as if Miss Hunter, theoretically a modern woman – decisive, active, firm – still harboured a habit of treating her sisters as appendages to their male consorts.

Did the children still require a governess? After five years of Miss Hunter's tutorials they may have been too old or sent off to boarding schools. Neither their age nor their gender was ever stated. In Victorian times this may have meant that the two children were female, as a son and heir would be often paraded in speech from a fond father. Having said that, Miss Hunter was our informant, not the Colonel. Boarding schools for girls were still less common or useful: "At the beginning of the Victorian era, then, the education of women was scanty, superficial and incoherent" (Gillard, 2011, Chapter 2), and "the majority of upper- and upper-middle-class girls were educated at home, with only a minority attending expensive, fashionable boarding schools with a non-academic curriculum". By the latter part of the century, however, "campaigns for girls' secondary education began to have an impact and many advances were made during the last years of the century" (Gillard, 2011, Chapter 3). Whether this despatching of children out of the home may have been the reason for laying Miss Hunter off is uncertain. But if the children were sent to Board Schools, why did they get sent to "America."

"America":

"America" not Canada! Why did Hunter say this? Of course, Canada is on the continent of North America, but it is an insensitive person who calls a Canadian an American. Canada, oh Canada, the only country given an indigenous name by the settler colonists. No, do not call a Canadian an American. Did the children get sent to a separate part of the continent? If so, why? And even the first child of Jephro Rucastle was allegedly in "America" too, in this case specifically Philadelphia. This is shown to be a lie: poor Alice had been incarcerated by her father. This does not help us with the destination of the two young Spence Munros. And we are not told whether Miss Hunter has stayed in touch with her old charges, as Miss Downey and Lady Frances Carfax did.

Passive Holmes:

What does strike the dispassionate reader is how passive Holmes himself is in the actual case. Violet does the spade work. It is Watson who shoots Carlo, the mastiff, when he is mauling Rucastle, killing the dog with a single shot. Did Holmes wish for the man's demise? The shrinking Violet, unusual for this determined and brave lady, was indeed cowering against the wall. Holmes sprang between her and Rucastle: that is the extent of his intervention! Was she suffering from what we now call Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, from her possibly traumatic time with the Spence Munros? And did Holmes know this? Some trigger from the appearance

of Rucastle with his cudgel may have elicited an anxiety reaction, despite two men at her side.

Exegesis:

Now inference and speculation must take the place of factual research. First the Canon is full of villainous colonels. Not all but many. One thinks of Colonel Sebastian Moran from “The Adventure of the Empty House;” of Colonel Valentine Walter from “The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans.” Perhaps Colonel Spence Munro himself may have been erotically inclined toward the beautiful governess but his wife, like Mrs. Maria Gibson, nee Pinto, in *The Problem of Thor Bridge*, was appropriately jealous so forced the dismissal. And surely the Colonel’s initials “S and M” do not give us any hints as to his proclivities. Watson used pseudonyms, we are often assured. Moreover, the trope of a subordinate female being seduced or made pregnant by the master of the house or his son, or other males from the dominant social class visiting the house, is now commonplace. Miss Hunter’s use of the passive voice may just suggest at this. Then it may be logical for “children,” should they include a teenage son who may be the malefactor, to send them off to “America” as a solution. And Miss Hunter to be got rid of one way or the other.

Even should one or both of the “children” be female, a ‘crush’ or female to female infatuation is scarcely rare, and Miss Hunter may well have been the recipient of unwanted advances or declarations from her enamoured teenage girl student. If these *billets-doux* were in writing, as is so common, then they may have been discovered by the parents. Even if not illegal, female-female sexuality was hidden and scandalous. Not to mention the modern concept of ‘boundary violations’ whereby a student is seen to be seduced by his or her teacher. So Hunter, even if innocent of any initiation or reciprocity, would have been scapegoated. And the repulsion the family felt toward their (horror) possibly lesbian daughter may have impelled them to send her to a place separate from themselves in Halifax.

Watson was interested enough to follow up Hunter after the denouement of the canonical case and found she was the “head of a private school at Walsall.” Queens Mary’s Grammar School is in Walsall (www.qmgs.walsall.sch.uk/) but was boys only until quite recently. Female Principal: I don’t think so, not in the 1890s. Although there has been a suggestion that this was in fact a female detective agency (Harrington, 1992 {Harrington is the author of the recent *William Washington, American Light Dragoon: A Continental Cavalry Leader in the War of Independence* published in 2014}), or even Mycroft’s Secret Service (Donegall, op cit, p101, echoed by Harrington), this begs the

question of why she was terminated by Spence Munro. And whether she got any severance pay from the Rucastles.

Halifax:

Halifax was a plausible destination for the Colonel in 1890, as one of the two surviving garrisons for British troops, even after the Confederation of the Canadian nation in 1867 (Chambers Encyclopaedia, 1895, Vol II). The Canadians had suppressed the Louis Riel Rebellion in the west in 1885, with Nova Scotians being among the fighters, but this was well and truly over by the time the Colonel moved to the province, if the chronologists are correct. Most give the canonical date as 1890 (for instance, Delay, 2008), although there are outliers: Dakin gives 1885, which may have meant that Spence Munro was involved in the War, but all others propose later dates. Did he seek the transfer? Was he sent there by the Army, just following orders? Still no help in why Hunter did not accompany the family!

The Truth:

I now turn to the most likely back story to all this. Hunter left the Spence Munros without a reference. This was then, as now, an enormous handicap to future employment. Hence the two months of whittling away at her meagre savings. Hence her entertainment of taking the odious Rucastle job but grasping at the straw of Holmes taking her for another role, as assistant (Donegall, 1993) or even financially supported woman, lover or fiancée to be. Why did she have no reference from Colonel Spence Munro? The aforementioned possible erotic family shenanigans would usually force the dismissing employer to give a reference on the admittedly difficult threat of exposure. Impropriety of another kind is thus almost certain. Miss Hunter stole from the Spence Munros. Her behaviour at the Rucastles echoed this as she entered locked rooms uninvited. She got a “chill” to her heart when seeing Carlo the mastiff patrolling the grounds at night, and mentions herself that no burglar could have given her such a sentiment. As a thief herself, another burglar would hold no fear for her. She was detected by the Colonel, his family or the other staff and summarily sacked. If she gave an accurate curriculum vitae with any subsequent application, this lack of a reference would stand out. Miss Soper’s Governess Employment Agency, Westaway’s, took her onto their books despite this. But clearly it would exasperate Soper utterly that Hunter then rejected the only offer she was made.

Holmes, that forgiver of murderers like Dr. Leon Sterndale in “The Adventure of the Devil’s Foot” and thieves like Ryder in “The Adventure

of the Blue Carbuncle,” knew and helped anyway. Watson, that married man with an approving eye for fair females, would support her and, of course, Holmes. Into that noted interval where, dog in the night-time-like, Watson has left us left a gap in information, now we can reveal the truth about Miss Hunter.

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Letter to the Editor

Sir & Madam,

Readers of Donny Zaldin's excellent article about Charles Dickens might fall into the trap of thinking that people in England place a high value on locales associated with the novelist. Unfortunately, this is not the case. An extract from a recent posting on the Victoria Listserve:

The site of the Strand Union Workhouse/Middlesex Hospital Annexe in London's Cleveland Street has been eyed by developers ever since the main Middlesex Hospital was demolished. The Workhouse was built in the 1770s on an open meadow, and surrounded by a graveyard for the poor that was consecrated by the Bishop of London in 1790.

The great novelist Dickens had twice lived only a few doors away from this particular workhouse, for several years in childhood and young adulthood. Confirmation that this place is likely to have been inspirational for his famous novel *Oliver Twist* was obtained when it was subsequently proved that while Dickens had been writing the novel, a tallow chandler's shop opposite the Workhouse was run by a man called Bill Sykes! The regime inside the workhouse was very like that portrayed in the book – there was a reiterated ban on extra helpings of food, and even Oliver's uniform was the same regulation brown.

The developers propose to demolish the Workhouse and replace it with condos.

O tempra, o mores.

– Peter Calamai

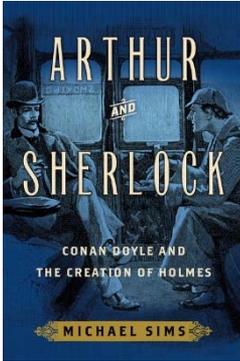
Reviews

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treasures from Sherlockian scholarship, fiction written by Conan Doyle and anything associated with Sherlock Holmes. The book ends with Canadian Sherlockian scholarship from noted Sherlockians such as Peter Calamai and Christopher Redmond. This is a much-needed book on Sherlockian scholarship because many might not know the important Canadian contributions to the Sherlockian world, whether it be in scholarship, societies, theatre, movies, fiction or collecting. In Canada, the game is always afoot even in the snow.

– Constantine Kaoukakis

“Holmes gave me a brief review”



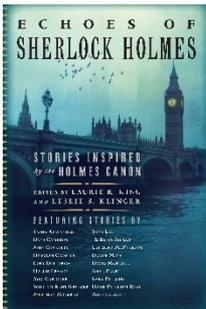
Arthur and Sherlock, and the creation of Sherlock Holmes, by Michael Sims (Bloomsbury \$27.00 US)

Many of our bookcases groan under the weight of Doyle biographies. You should add one more to that shelf. Sims’s new biography is not a cradle-to-grave biography but instead pays attention to those influences in Doyle’s life that led to the creation of Sherlock Holmes.

At times this book goes over well-covered ground that most Sherlockians are aware of: Doyle’s family problems, his medical education, Dr. Joseph Bell and the trials and tribulations of establishing himself in Southsea as a doctor and author. The depth and detail presented here is impressive and most Sherlockians will learn new things about their favourite author.

The style of this book is often termed narrative biography. Sims tells the story of Doyle’s life, not a mere recitation of facts, figures and timelines. This style draws you into the time and characters almost like a novel. Many Sherlockians will hope that Sims continues telling the story of Doyle’s life in subsequent books.

– Mark Alberstat

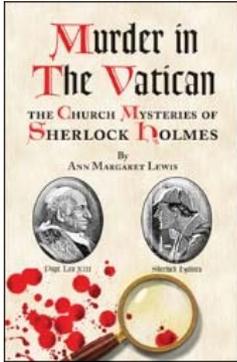


Echoes of Sherlock Holmes: Stories Inspired by the Holmes Canon, edited by Laurie R. King and Leslie S. Klinger (Pegasus Crime, \$33.95)

Third time’s a charm for King and Klinger, who have compiled collection No. 3 of Holmes-themed short stories. As with the previous books, *Echoes of Sherlock Holmes* features an impressive lineup of authors from both sides of the Atlantic. Readers get to sample stories from their favourite writers and discover new talent. In some contributions, the Great

Detective appears in the flesh, although he’s almost unrecognizable wearing bellbottoms at a disco. After all, he is a master of disguise. A more conventional after-dark appearance has Holmes confronting Doyle in the family’s psychic book shop. But in other stories, the Holmes is reflected in the personalities and storylines (with some “Sherry” and “Watson” monikers thrown in for good measure). A favourite tale features a 10-year-

old boy trying to convince a therapist that Moriarty really is after him. Other more familiar characters also get a bit of air time, including Watson, who has a graveyard encounter with a French crime fighter; and Irene Adler, making her first fateful encounter with a Bohemian Crown prince. The latest installment in this story anthology will strike a chord with those fascinated with Doyle's character and his methods, and eager to see how both transfer through time and place. — JoAnn Alberstat



Murder in The Vatican — *The Church Mysteries of Sherlock Holmes* by Ann Margaret Lewis (Gasogene Books, \$30.95 US postage included).

Recently, the once burbling brook of Sherlockian pastiches has swollen to a torrent. Much of this is the worse sort of dreck, perpetrated by writers who don't realize that the English wouldn't refer to something being "blocks" away, but instead say "streets." Most of the self-published fan-fiction is an affront to the prose standards of Conan Doyle.

Yet eschewing this flood runs the risk of missing out on a few worthwhile pastiches, such as this three-story collection originally published in 2010. Ann Margaret Lewis had the clever idea of combining unchronicled cases with a religious theme — *The Death of Cardinal Tosca*, *The Vatican Cameos*, *The Second Coptic Patriarch*.

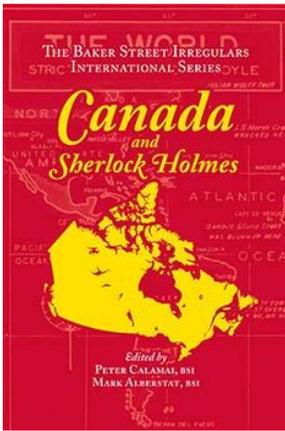
The clear writing of all three stories is a joy. The plot of *Tosca* is the most successful. While this adventure has been well explored (including the still-performed play by Canadians Alden Nowlan and Walter Learning), Lewis has added a whole new dimension by having the aged Pontiff, Pope Leo XIII, play a pivotal role, outshining Watson and rivalling Holmes. She describes the inner workings of the Vatican state with authority, and her depiction of the Pope's private apartments is convincing. And the manner of Cardinal Tosca's death (which is, of course, a murder) cleverly interweaves elements from other adventures.

The Vatican Cameos has many of these same admirable elements but suffers because the narrator is not Watson, who remained in London when Holmes was dispatched to the Vatican to find a set of missing cameos that the Pope meant as a gift for Queen Victoria. Instead, Lewis has a younger Leo XIII tell the story in the form of a lengthy missive. Unfortunately, Gioacchino Vincenzo Raffaele Luigi Pecci (Leo's original name) is no John H. Watson when it comes to telling an exciting story. Nonetheless, the story has Italian honey bees as a key element and explains how the

former site of Tothill Fields Prison became home to Westminster Cathedral. (Unfortunately, the book misspells Tothill.)

The Second Coptic Patriarch struck me as a make-weight piece not up to the standards of the others in plot or characterization.

A final note about the cost to Canadians of this slender (150 page) volume. The cover price is \$18.95 U.S. and Gasogene charges \$12 to ship books to Canada, amounting to \$39.95 US in total price. That shipping charge is actually a bargain; the lowest rate of the US Postal Service is \$15.50. Little wonder that printed books are increasingly the purview of the well off.
– Peter Calamai



Canada and Sherlock Holmes, edited by Peter Calamai and Mark Alberstat (Baker Street Irregulars, \$39.95 (US) plus \$22.95 (US) shipping)

One does not normally associate Sherlock Holmes with Canada. The Canon rarely mentions Canada, and apart from Sir Henry Baskerville in *The Hounds of the Baskervilles*, there are scarcely any references. However, in this title, the sixth in a multi-volume series published by Baker Street Press and edited by noted Canadian Sherlockians Peter Calamai and Mark Alberstat, we learn that Sherlock Holmes and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle have influenced

Canada. This volume is an endeavour that has never been attempted before.

The most fascinating part is the section on the Sherlockian societies, active and inactive, throughout Canada. The main Canadian Sherlockian group is The Bootmakers of Toronto, with nine scion societies across the country and one overseas. An important contribution to Sherlockian scholarship can be attributed to the Bootmakers' journal, *Canadian Holmes* which premiered in September 1979 and has since been published quarterly. The earliest Sherlockian scholarship can be credited to James Bovell Mackenzie in 1902.

In addition to Holmes's influence, Conan Doyle visited Canada four times for various reasons. Conan Doyle was so fascinated with Canada that he wrote a poem entitled "The Athabaska Trail," written in Jasper Park, Alberta in 1914. Another interesting section is the one on the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection at the Toronto Public Library, where one can find

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Letters From Lomax

Musings and comments from Peggy Perdue, Curator of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection of the Toronto Reference Library



When I was a kid my grandmother's house had a basement full of comics. If you think that sounds like an idea set-up, you'd be right. Ice cream sodas were also involved, and plenty of peace and quiet inside while my brothers were out in the backyard setting off fireworks or shooting each other with BB guns. Naturally, these halcyon days of youth passed for me as they do for all of us. My grandmother's house eventually became a dental office, and in the move the comics were either thrown out or adopted by an uncle. It seemed likely that I would never come across such another Aladdin's cave of "Biff!-Pow!" wonderment...but then I started working with the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection.

In the storage area below the Arthur Conan Doyle Room, there are many treasures, and included among them are boxes and boxes full of hundreds of comic books. I will hasten to add that this storage area is optimized for storage of rare book materials, so we will not overwork the comparison to the grandparental basement. While working on an upcoming exhibit for the Toronto Reference Library's gallery (Pop Sherlock! August 19-



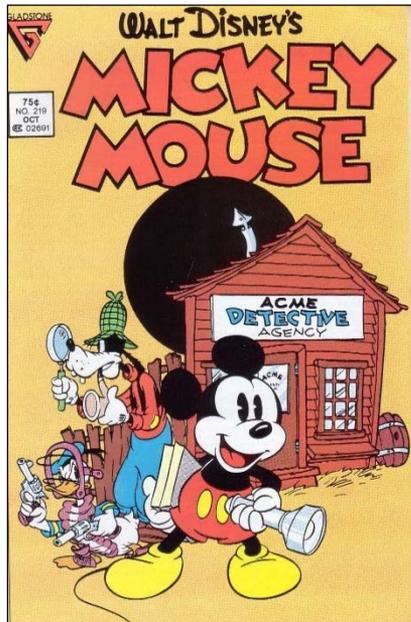
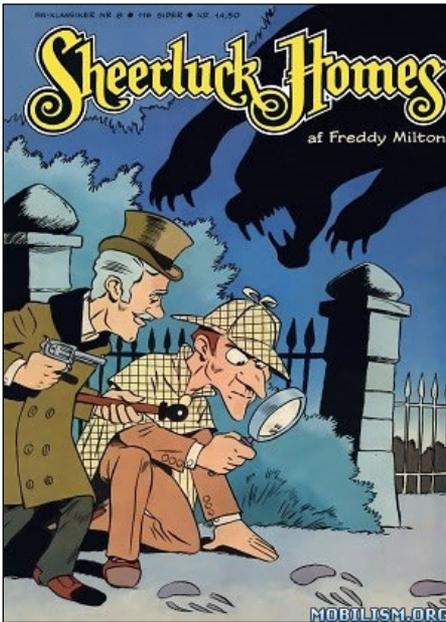
Advertising image for Pop Sherlock!

October 21), I've had the opportunity to take a deep dive into this trove. Choosing the best of what's on offer for the show has proved to be quite a challenge because the range is extraordinary. The items go back as far as the 1890s and are as recent as last month. They run the gamut from dramatic to humorous, from low-brow slapstick in trashy pulp publications to the finest examples of the graphic novelist's art. In them, Sherlock

Holmes meets superheros and super-schmoes, or is reinterpreted in the guise of a variety of beloved characters such as Bugs Bunny, Mickey Mouse and the gang from *The Beano*.

Not all of the comics can be found in the library's online catalogue yet but there is a project underway to catalogue them so that people looking for a specific titles will be able to find them. In the meantime, please feel free to ask me directly if you have questions about the library's holdings. As well, I hope that some *Canadian Holmes* readers will be able to come see the Pop Sherlock! Exhibition. In addition to comics, there will be a selection of items related to Holmes's role in movies, theatre, merchandise and advertising. For further information see:

<http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/programs-and-classes/exhibits/pop-sherlock.jsp>



See comics like this and much more at the Pop Sherlock! Exhibit, August 19-October 21 in Toronto.

Canadian Roundup

Stratford On Avon – This society has been very active as of late and even experimented with a new acquisition, a Victorian gasogene from Paris.

The result? Rather disappointing – a small glass of salty iced tea with little sparkle. Society leader Jack Winn reports he cannot find specific instructions on how to operate it. Great fun, even with the fear of an explosion.

We are also presented in our ceremonial robes in *Canada and Sherlock Holmes* (see review page 33), a wonderful collection of writings upon the writings, edited by Peter Calamai and Mark Alberstat.

Climbing the 39 steps to our Stanger's Room has become a wonderful gathering of Sherlockian camaraderie on 23 occasions thus far.

Edmonton – The Wisteria Lodgers birthday dinner took place on Tuesday, January 24th, 2017.

Eight Wisteria Lodgers attended a dinner to celebrate the birthday of Sherlock Holmes. Throughout the dinner, toasts were made to the Master, Dr. Watson, The Woman and Mrs. Hudson.

The Sign of Four was the story examined, with a quiz and general discussion.

The evening featured a beautiful dinner with delicious dessert hosted by Barb and John. Before the dinner commenced, Constantine read an appropriate excerpt from *The Sign of Four*. “*Our meal was a merry one. ... When the cloth was cleared, Holmes glanced at his watch and filled up three glasses with port. ‘One bumper,’ said he, ‘to the success of our little expedition. and now it’s high time we were off.’*”

Vancouver – On January 7th, the Stormy Petrels of Vancouver held their annual Sherlock Holmes birthday brunch in the fireplace room at the White Spot Restaurant. Eighteen Petrels and guests attended.

On March 18th, the Petrels held their 29th annual “Master’s Dinner.” Twenty-one members and guests attended. Following the President’s welcome speech, toasts were offered and skits were performed. Bags of “Colonel Sebastian Meringues” were distributed. Each diner was given a copy of an actual letter to 221b to read out, and a game of “Who said it” was played. To end the evening, President Fran Martin and Research Officer Krista Lee read out Vincent Starrett’s 221b sonnet.

The Petrels are now ready to invite the world to their 30th Anniversary celebration, to be held on September 16, at The Billy Bishop Legion Pub.

BOOTMAKERS' DIARY



... it is a page from some private diary.

— The Five Orange Pips

January 28, 2017

The Annual Blue Carbuncle Awards Dinner 2017

Forty-four members and one guest assemble at the York Masonic Temple for the 2017 Annual Blue Carbuncle Awards Dinner.

After the social hour, Michael Ranieri, as Meyers 2017, welcomes everyone to this evening's festivities. He begins by thanking some people for their help:

- Thelma Beam was thanked for her help in arranging the dinner, although she was unable to attend due to illness
- Edith Reese acted as the greeter
- Donny Zaldin for his help in organizing the awards
- Vicki Delany for being our guest speaker tonight
- The staff of the York Masonic Temple
- James Reese was thanked for a great year in 2016. James then presented Michael with a whistle to help in calling the meetings to order.

As the dinner progresses, toasts are offered.

Barbara Rusch begins her toast to "A Certain Gracious Lady," by showing a portrait of Queen Victoria, painted by Laurie Fraser Manifold.

Bruce Aikin gives the toast to Sir Arthur Ignatius Conan Doyle. After his toast, Bruce announces that in honour of Canada's 150th birthday, he was going to stop taking quizzes so Canadians could win. But he warned members that the last time he stopped there was a meeting where nobody took the quiz so he started taking them again. So keep taking the quizzes!

Margot French gives the toast to the Hound of the Baskervilles, which was greeted by a chorus of howling from the attendees.

Dave Sanders gives the toast to Professor James Moriarty, for where would Sherlock Holmes be with no mysteries to solve.

Steven Wintle gives the toast to Mr. Sherlock Holmes. The "Noble Bachelor," was not Lord Robert St. Simon, for he was, in truth, not very noble. The title instead belongs to Sherlock Holmes.

Michael Ranieri gives a toast to the Bootmakers of Toronto. For the first time in the history of the organization he gives a singing toast.

After a brief break, we reassemble to take Donny Zaldin's quiz on the Literary Holmes. Donny has found lists of the 100 Greatest Mystery Novels of All-time and the 100 Greatest Crime Novels. He gives each table a list numbered 1 to 10. Our task was to compile a list of the best novels written between the years 1800 to 1910. No Sherlock Holmes novels were to be included. The winning table receives a bottle of wine.

Our guest speaker is author Vicki Delany, who has written 25 books. Her work is mostly mysteries but she has also written books for adult literacy and other genres. Her 24th book, which is set for release in March, is entitled, *Elementary, She Read*. It is the first novel in a planned series about the Sherlock Holmes Bookshop. The Sherlock Holmes Bookshop and Emporium is owned by Gemma Doyle, a resident of New London, Massachusetts, near Cape Cod. Mrs. Hudson's Tea Room is next door. With the aid of her friend Jayne Wilson, she investigates who left an original copy of the 1887 *Beeton's Christmas Annual* in her bookshop. The local police detective is named Astrada.

At the end of Vicki's talk, Michael Ranieri thanks her for her excellent presentation and gives her a token of appreciation from the Bootmakers.

Next was time to present the awards.

The winner of the True Davidson Award for the best formal paper given at a meeting is announced by Edith Reese. The winner is Cliff Goldfarb, for his paper on "Dogs that Do and Don't Bark," given at the Silver Blaze mini-conference in July.

The Warren Carleton Award for the best informal presentation at a meeting is announced by Doug Paton and Karen Campbell. There are two winners this year. The first is Donny Zaldin for his quiz on Sherlock Holmes Goes to Hollywood. The second is Karen Gold for her song about "The Boscombe Valley Mystery," *Black Jack of Ballarat*.

The Derrick Murdoch Award for the best article in *Canadian Holmes* is presented by Jean Paton to David P. Greenfield and Peter H. Jacoby for "M'Naghten, Moriarty and the Insanity Defence," in the Winter 2015/2016 issue.

The status of Master Bootmaker was conferred by Donny Zaldin, Barbara Rusch and Dayna Nuhn on three deserving members. They are James Reese, Edith Reese and Angela Misri.

The Emerald Tie Pin is awarded to members who are Master Bootmakers and have belonged for 20 years or more. This year's recipients are Philip Elliott, Dave Sanders, Doug Wrigglesworth and Peter Calamai.

Chris Redmond reads Vincent Starrett's sonnet 221B.

Mr. Meyers declares the festivities adjourned at 10:14 p.m.

The Marlene Aig Memorial Brunch

Sunday, January 29, 2017

The 21st annual Marlene Aig Memorial Brunch was held at the Café California, 538 Church St. Nine members are in attendance: Phil Elliott, Dave Sanders, Barbara Rusch, Donny Zaldin, Bruce Aikin, Kathy Burns, James Reese, Ed van der Flaes and Frank Quinlan.

After enjoying their meals, attendees listen to Ed van der Flaes talk about Marlene Aig. Marlene studied journalism at the University of Toronto and joined the Bootmakers during the 1970s. She was also a member of the Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes (ASH) and many other scions. She used to come to Toronto by train for the Annual Awards Dinner every January. She organized a brunch for out-of-town members and local members so waiting for the train home would not be boring. Since her untimely death at the age of 43, the Bootmakers have carried on the brunch in her memory.

Wednesday January 4 to Sunday January 8, 2017: BSI Weekend in N.Y.

Sherlockians from over half a dozen countries attended the 83rd annual Sherlock Holmes birthday celebrations of the Baker Street Irregulars. Organized by the BSI's Wiggins, Mike Whelan, together with Mary Ann Bradley, the long weekend is filled with formal and informal opportunities to gather for the common purpose of celebrating the Master's 163rd birthday. Festivities include: The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes (ASH) informal dinner; the Christopher Morley walking tour and lunch; The Baker Street Babes charity ball; The William Gillette Memorial Luncheon; the annual (open-to-all) Gaslight Gala or (by-invitation-only) Baker Street Irregulars Dinner; paying homage to the year's new BSI investitures at 2:21 a.m. at O'Lunney's Irish Pub; the cocktail reception; The Very Irregular Lost in New York with a Bunch of Sherlockians Dinner; and the ASH Brunch. Scholarship is the order of the weekend at the Distinguished Speaker Lecture, featuring Sara Paretsky, award winning author of the V.I. Warshawski detective fiction series; the pilgrimage of international bibliophiles to Otto Penzler's Mysterious Bookshop; annual meetings of the Beacon Society and Junior Bloodstain Society; and, at the Merchants' Room, at which Sherlockian collectibles, ephemera and books are on sale.

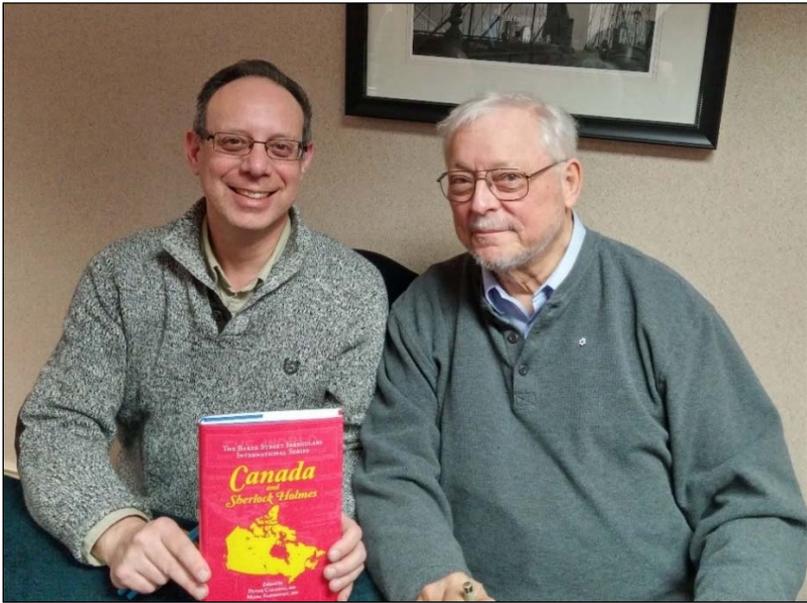
Canadian highlights of the 2017 Weekend:

- The BSI Birthday Weekend is attended by 15 Bootmakers (Mark Alberstat, Peter and Mary Calamai, Bob Coghill, Cliff and Doris Goldfarb, Constantine Kaoukakis, Peggy Perdue, Charles and Kris Prepolec, Stephanie Thomas, George Vanderburgh, Edwin Van der Flaes, Barbara Rusch and Donny Zaldin).

- Nine Bootmakers plus one honorary Canadian, Philip Cunningham of Chicago, attend the traditional Canadian Dinner at Virgil's Real BBQ

- At the BSI Dinner Bootmaker Charles Prepolec of Calgary becomes the latest Canadian BSI, receiving the Investiture "The Man with the Twisted Lip;" Peter Calamai and Mark Alberstat receive an award from the BSI for editing the 2017 BSI anthology, *Canada and Sherlock Holmes*; and Mark Alberstat leads the post-prandial recital of "The Musgrave Ritual."

- At the Merchants Room, editors Mark Alberstat and Peter Calamai sign dozens of books while article author Barbara Rusch signs her contribution to the volume. Donny Zaldin also signs copies of his article on the Cubitt Family Autograph Album, featured in the 2017 BSI Manuscript Series volume, *Dancing to Death*.



Mark Alberstat and Peter Calamai in the sales room with Canada and Sherlock Holmes. Photo by Constantine Kaoukakis



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