



EXPLORATIONS



FROM THE PRESIDENT

The 55th Anniversary of the Norwegian Explorers has come and gone. We look back to the report of the first meeting that was filed in *The Baker Street Journal*, Vol. 3, Number 2, 1948 in which Sigerson E. W. McDiarmid noted:

On a bitter cold evening, January 23rd (21 degrees below zero), seven loyal Sherlockians foregathered at the Covered Wagon (in memory of John Ferrier) to drink the canonical toasts and discuss appropriate topics from the Master's life and work.

55 years later we're still meeting and discussing appropriate topics and certainly drinking canonical toasts. And January in Minnesota still seems to be as cold as it was that evening in 1948. Happily we have more than seven Sherlockians at any event and we can look back to those founders with apprecia-

tion for their scholarly works and good humor. We can particularly appreciate that January has come and gone and we look forward to spring. The Norwegian Explorers are, as founder Bryce Crawford, Jr. wrote in May of 1974, "the resident scion society with conanical jurisdiction in and for the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul."

It seems appropriate that I take a moment to thank everyone whose efforts continue to make The Norwegian Explorers a vital society. I would like to thank:

- 1) John Bergquist, Phil Bergem and Karen Murdock for their work on the monthly Study Group
- 2) John Bergquist for his hard work in editing this newsletter
- 3) Wade Manthie for selecting the venues

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

AN EMBARRASSMENT OF RICHES

As winter turns to spring and the natural world comes to life in the frozen North, I sense an embarrassment of riches, echoing the embarrassment of riches I have enjoyed in the Sherlockian world. First, the richness of the Canon itself. Add to that the richness of the Writings on the Writings, "the fruit of

pensive nights and laborious days" of untold scholars over many decades. In recent years, the richness of the camaraderie of fellow Sherlockians has made the world of Holmes more meaningful to me on a human level. And now, I have an embarrassment of riches in electronic aids to Sherlockian research.

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EXPLORER NEWS

CHRISTMAS ANNUAL RECAP

The Norwegian Explorers' 2002 *Christmas Annual* has been well received. The Annual, which was distributed at the Explorers' Annual Dinner in December and at the Baker Street Irregulars Annual Dinner, the Baskerville Bash and *The Woman* dinner during the New York Birthday Weekend in January, was labeled the best item in the dinner packets by Brad Keefauver in his *Holmes & Watson Report*. When President Julie McKuras emailed Brad on behalf of the Explorers to thank him for his comment, he wrote back:

"[The Explorers'] Christmas annual was far and away the best enclosure, and a great example of the big-hearted Sherlockian spirit I've always loved, a

definite 'good old days of Sherlockiana' sort of production. I hope you get plenty more kudos on it, as they are deserved.

Peter E. Blau mentioned the Annual in his *Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press* newsletter, giving special mention to the cataloging of extant copies of the 1887 *Beeton's Christmas Annual* by Phil Bergem and "Watson's Books," by Gary Thaden. The publicity resulted in a number of mail orders, including one for several copies from Otto Penzler's The Mysterious Bookshop in New York, which lists the Annual in their most recent catalog. ❖

John Bergquist, Editor

FROM THE PRESIDENT (CONTINUED)

(Continued from page 1)

- for the Annual Dinner and Baker Street West dinner
- 4) the Board for assisting in the planning and implementation of meetings
- 5) Mike Eckman for his steady hand on the checkbook of the Explorers as well as minutes of meetings
- 6) Bob Brusic and the Red-Throated League for their performances
- 7) Tim Johnson and Dick Sveum for their able work in assisting me with all of the mailings

I would also like to thank my husband Mike for his unsung heroics in being married to the president of the Explorers. It can't be an easy task. Many a time he's heard those unhappy words emanating from our home office; "Mike, there's something wrong with the database! Can you come help me?" He's spent countless hours folding the mailings that go out. He's certainly spent a great deal of time being a sounding board for ideas and helping host Board meetings. And the man never complains.

Considering our happy history and continuing hard work, it looks like the Explorers are ready for another year. The Feb. 20 Hounds evening went well and the Pavak event is scheduled for April 12. The study group meets monthly for lively discussion. (please contact me if you're interested in joining.) I would also like to welcome four new members to the Explorers. Pat Frovarp and Gary Schulze are the new owners of *Once Upon a Crime* and have plans for some interesting author appearances this spring. Art Bergstrom met with the Study Group on March 22, and David Wiljamaa who has been a study group attendee for some time has now joined the Explorers. Please take a moment to greet our new friends at the next meeting.

The Norwegian Explorers were well represented in New York for the January birthday weekend. I hope you enjoy reading of the adventures of a group of Minnesotans in the Big Apple. I know we all enjoyed the activities and camaraderie of such a spirited assemblage. ❖

Julie McKuras, ASH, BSI



**"The Explorers' Christmas Annual is a great example of the big-hearted Sherlockian spirit I've always loved."
— Brad Keefauver**

EXPLORER GATHERINGS

2002 NORWEGIAN EXPLORERS ANNUAL MEETING AND DINNER

The Norwegian Explorers' Annual Dinner for 2002 was held at the Minneapolis Golf Club on Thursday night, December 5. The Club provided an elegant and appropriate setting for the gathering, which featured guest speaker Don Izban, BSI, who entertained us with "Sherlock Holmes, Hypnotism and You."

During the brief Annual Meeting portion of the evening, the incumbent officers and board of directors were re-elected by acclamation. Dick Sveum conducted a quiz on the Baker Street Dozen, in honor of the fifteenth anniversary of its publication, and on the *Norwegian Explorers 2002 Christmas Annual*, which made its debut at the dinner. The Sigerson Awards for 2002 were presented to Mike Eckman, Phil Bergen, Gary Thaden and Doug Anderson. Garry Peterson and Mike Miller finished the program with their annual twisted quiz, this year in the form of a list of devilish Sherlockian crossword clues titled "An Add-Homonym Attack". (Example: "Polka dots prohibited? ... Speckled banned." *Groan...*)

Thanks to Julie McKuras for providing the witty printed programs and serving as MC, Rev. Robert Brusica for delivering a poignant blessing, editor John Bergquist and all the contributors to the Christmas Annual, the Thaden family (Gary, Andy, Madeleine and Sophie) for supplying the hand-made Sherlockian Christmas ornaments, Julie McKuras and John Bergquist for judging the Sigerson Awards, Minneapolis Golf Club member Wade Manthie for making the dinner reservation, and Phil Bergem for supplying lists of the first magazine publications of the Holmes stories and arranging toasts. See Tom Gottwalt's moving toast to Holmes on page 6, and look for other toasts to be printed in future issues. ❖

BAKER STREET WEST

The Norwegian Explorers' celebrated the Master's birthday at the annual Baker Street West Dinner, held on Monday, January 6 at Brit's Pub in Minneapolis. Under the gaze of Queen Victoria and the Duke of York (actually visages on pub signs) in a private dining room, 27 Explorers and their dinner companions enjoyed British ales and hearty pub fare. Spontaneous toasts were offered to Dr. Watson, to the founders of the Norwegian Explorers, and to Sherlockian friends. ❖

FILM EVENING

On February 20, the Norwegian Explorers met at the Elmer L. Andersen library to view *A Hound It Was ...: Projecting the Baskerville Curse*, a collage of film clips of varying versions of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, assembled by Maribeau Briggs and Paul Singleton, with script and narration by Paul Singleton. After the group had seen Holmes, Watson, Sir Henry, the Hound and the rest portrayed in versions from silent to black & white to dramatic to gory to German to Russian to just plain silly, for comparison we viewed the scene of the climactic chase across the moor from the latest filmed *Hound* (see Pj Doyle's review of this televised production on page 10). Most present thought that the computer-generated hound from the new production still fell short of the mark compared with the reader's imagination. To top off the evening, Julie McKuras led an exasperatingly tough quiz on the *Hound* penned by John Bennett Shaw.

Thanks to Tim Johnson for providing and setting up the A/V equipment, John Bergquist for providing and introducing the videos and Julie McKuras for providing the authentic movie-house refreshments. ❖



"The Minneapolis Golf Club provided an elegant setting for the gathering, which featured guest speaker Don Izban."



“How many players are needed to play the game, Mr. Morley? ... You say, ‘One and a bottle?’”

2003 NEW YORK BIRTHDAY WEEKEND

Members of the Norwegian Explorers were well in evidence at the 2003 Sherlock Holmes Birthday Weekend in New York. Explorers and spouses attending all or some events included Allen Mackler, Dr. C. Paul Martin, Julie and Mike McKuras, Dr. Richard Sveum and Jennifer Olson, John and Inez Bergquist, and Judith Freeman. The weekend officially ran from Thursday, January 9 through Saturday, January 11, although many diehards gathered informally throughout the week. Here is a run-down of the highpoints, with help from various hands. -Ed.

BSI DISTINGUISHED SPEAKER'S LECTURE

by Richard J. Sveum, MD, BSI

The first official event was on Thursday evening, when we gathered at the Williams Club to hear the BSI Distinguished Speaker's Lecture. In calling the group to order, Michael Whelan, Wiggins of the BSI, had to fight to be heard over the boisterous greetings of reuniting Sherlockians from across the United States and throughout the world.

This year's lecturer, Douglas G. Greene, is a professor at Old Dominion University and a mystery scholar and publisher. He has authored 17 books including an award winning biography, *John Dickson Carr The Man Who Explained Miracles*, and he has put out 50 Crippen & Landru books with his wife Sandy.

Greene's lecture, which revealed the speaker's encyclopedic knowledge of detective fiction, covered much ground — centering on early female detectives, which Greene termed “Female Ferrets.” In the 19th century the female detective was put into an unfeminine position, as investigative work was not considered a proper role for a woman. Today the female sleuth comes in every genre and sub genre, hard, soft, professional and amateur.

A lively question and answer session

followed the lecture. Greene believes that Arthur Conan Doyle didn't really add anything to the female detective literature with the completion of his friend Grant Allen's *Hilda Wade*. My maniac collector ears perked up when Greene stated that *Lingo Dan* by Percival Pollard is the hardest to find book in the Queen's Quorum. But then, that could be the subject of another lecture.

FRIDAY BREAKFAST, LUNCH AND DINNERS

by John Bergquist

Friday offered a full slate of activities (mostly centered around eating), with the Martha Hudson Breakfast at the Algonquin Hotel, the William Gillette Luncheon at Moran's Chelsea Seafood Restaurant — featuring readings by Andrew Joffe and Paul Singleton of congratulatory letters to Gillette and a brief talk by Susan Dahlinger, an afternoon wine-and-cheese open house at Otto Penzler's Mysterious Bookshop, and the weekend's two centerpiece dinners: the BSI Dinner and the Baskerville Bash.

The Baker Street Irregulars Annual Dinner was held at the elegant Union League Club. During the pre-dinner cocktail hour, Janice Fisher was honored as the latest *the Woman*. The traditional photo was taken (but untraditionally in color) and the traditional toasts were given, two of them by Julie McKuras and Dick Sveum. Entertainment included an updated version of “Aunt Clara” sung by Bruce Montgomery; Phil Shreffler and Mary Ellen Rich giving their version of Holmes arranging his itinerary for the Great Hiatus with a long-suffering travel agent (“And you'll be traveling to Tibet under what name, Mr. Holmes?”); and Paul Singleton doing a Bob Newhart-type telephone routine in which Christopher Morley tries to explain his idea for “the game” to an employee of a game manufacturer (“How many players are needed, Mr. Morley? ... You say, ‘One and a bottle?’”) At the climactic Birthday

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2003 NEW YORK BIRTHDAY WEEKEND (CONTINUED)



"All of the food and drinks were followed – as it is at any good Sherlockian gathering – by more food and drinks."

Honours portion of the program, six deserving individuals were honored with investitures, and Don Novorsky was presented with the Two-Shilling Award.

THE BASKERVILLE BASH

by Judith Freeman, ASH

Once again the Bash was a smashing success. This year Hortense Harker (Marilynn Klatt) and Jamie Stanger (Catalina Hannan) anchored the news desk of the Canonical News Network or CNN. A major news story was The Case of the Missing Sherlettes, which Holmes (Drew Thomas) and Watson (Andrew Joffe) manage to solve by the end of the evening at the request of Allan Devitt (played by Ron Hosek).

Our guests also enjoyed an episode of "You Bet Your Life" with Jay Pearlman doing a marvelous Groucho. The contestants were the King of Bohemia (Andrew Joffe) and Eugenia Ronder (Elyse Locurto). Trish Pearlman aided and abetted as Georgette Fenneman.

Peter McIntyre had fun portraying Les-trade and a rather manic weatherman. And two guests briefly joined the cast. Bruce Aikin played a corpse and 10-year-old Pierre-Emmanuel Nicolas (visiting from France) delivered a telegram and lots of laughs.

Catalina Hannan, Chuck Kovacic and Joseph Coppola generously contributed our auction items. Our raffle was for an original Cynthia Wein sweatshirt. The toasts were delivered by Don Hobbs, Laurie Manifold, Linda Anderson and Roland Nicolas (Pierre's papa). The evening ended with the traditional singing of "Holmes's and Watson's Time."

Editors note: The Baskerville Bash evolved from the Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes (ASH) Annual Dinner.

Saturday morning presented temptations for book collectors, as many vendors displayed their wares in the Dealer's (Huckster's) Room at the Algonquin. –Ed.

THE B.S.I. COCKTAIL PARTY

by Julie McKuras, ASH, BSI

The last of the official events for the weekend was the B.S.I. cocktail party. All are welcome at this soiree, which is held at the National Arts Club. This beautiful building was host to more than 240 people. (my thanks to Peter Blau for supplying this number – I just knew it was crowded.) An open bar with a great selection of appetizers usually bodes well for any event and it was a great afternoon. All of the food and drinks were followed – as it is at any good Sherlockian gathering – by more food and drinks as the buffet opened. The program for the late afternoon began with Mary Ann Bradley introducing those in attendance to the women who, over the years, have been honored as "The Woman," including the 2003 Woman, Janice Fisher.

Father and daughter Al and Betsy Rosenblatt, poets extraordinary, reported on the events of the past year including what occurred at the Distinguished Lecturer series on Thursday evening, the Gillette luncheon and the dinners on Friday. Among those occurrences noted was the passing of Minnesota's own Sen. Paul Wellstone. Bob Schultz, a member of the Norwegian Explorers who resides in Vermont, was applauded as the winner of the Morley-Montgomery Award for the best article in *The Baker Street Journal* in 2002.

Peter Blau then presided over the traditional auction that raises money for the Watson Fund. The spirited bidding for some beautiful and interesting, and always unique, items raised money for this fund that is available for

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2003 NEW YORK BIRTHDAY WEEKEND (CONTINUED)

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Sherlockians who could not otherwise attend the birthday weekend.

It was with a mixture of happy memories and some sadness that many left the cocktail party, knowing that we would not be together as a group until next year. Good-byes and wishes for safe journeys resounded amongst the scramblings for taxis and another successful birthday weekend drew to a close. ❖



NEWBERRY LIBRARY EVENTS

Chicago's Newberry Library celebrates the acquisition of the Kittle Collection of Doyleana with the exhibit and celebration *Sir Arthur Conan Doyle: Beyond Holmes*. The exhibit will run from April 9–July 12, 2003, and a celebration and dinner for Sherlockians, featuring a talk by Richard Lancelyn Green, will be held April 11. Donors Dr. Fred Kittle and his wife, Ann, will be in attendance. For details contact:

Donald J. Terras
Grosse Point Lighthouse
2535 Sheridan Road
Evanston, IL 60201
D-Terras@neiu.edu

GASLIGHT AND FOG

Plans are underway for a "new Sherlockian experience." It is described as an autumnal weekend of Sherlockian Fun and Frolic and will be held at the Nevele Grande Hotel in the Catskill Mountains October 10-12 of this year. Information on this weekend is available at www.Gaslightandfog.org or by email to gaslightnfog@aol.com

A TOAST TO THE MASTER

Delivered at the Explorers' Annual Dinner on December 5, 2002 by Tom Gottwalt

We are here tonight to celebrate the pleasure of knowing a great man.

We learn much about him upon our first meeting. He is quiet in his ways, an early riser and a man of regular habits.

He is a violin player and likes tobacco. We learn that he is ignorant of many things, not the least of which are the composition of the Solar System and the Copernican Theory. He also knows little of contemporary literature, philosophy or politics.

We are told he is an expert singlestick player, boxer and swordsman, and that he is a first class chemist and well up in anatomy. He is cold-blooded, conceited, sarcastic, proud and self confident.

We learn these things in the first record of his exploits and, on the surface, they alone are not qualities that would endear us to him.

But, as we learn more about the him, from his dealings with THE Woman to his stand upon the terrace, there is much to admire. His intelligence is supreme and matched by his strength and fortitude. He protects the downtrodden and eschews fame or financial gain, seeking his reward solely in the pleasure of his craft and the justness of his cause.

He is thorough, tenacious, patient and brave. He is a good friend, a gentleman and a loyal and patriotic citizen. He is kind, merciful and just.

In short, he represents many qualities we strive to possess and emulate in our own lives. He is, for many, the best and wisest man they have ever known.

Join me in raising a toast to The Master. Mr. Sherlock Holmes. ❖

"[Holmes] seeks his reward solely in the pleasure of his craft and the justness of his cause."

INTERNET EXPLORATIONS

"He sits motionless, like a spider in the centre of its Web..."

The sitting rooms of 221B conjure up varying images in all our minds. For this month I would like to start by exploring the interpretations that many talented Sherlockians have developed of the sitting rooms. Most of these sites are quite graphics-intensive and can take a long time to load if you do not have a high speed connection, but they are well worth the wait. One site is devoted to the Mini-Tonga Society, hosted by Trish Pearlman, ASH. The members of the Mini-Tonga Society create miniature scale models (generally 1 inch = 1 foot) of the famous sitting room that are amazingly detailed and a joy to view. Included are some photos of Dorothy Rowe Shaw's work now on display at the Andersen Library. Ms. Pearlman presents two pages of photos of various reproductions by members of the Society. The main page is at <http://hometown.aol.com/minitongasociety/mini1.htm> and there is a link to the second page. Towards the bottom of the main page there are also links to several pages of full scale reproductions.

Chuck Kovacic of Los Angeles has a web page, <http://www.221bbakerstreetla.com/>, displaying his full scale Baker Street sitting room. By clicking on various points of the main photo you can view close-ups of the mantelpiece, chemistry bench, desk and other areas. A second link takes us to the page of Denny Dobry of Reading, Pennsylvania, at <http://home.ptd.net/~dobry/>. He has various views of his sitting room, including close ups and a sequence showing the construction. The third link takes us (although not directly) to a photo showing the living room as prepared for the 1951 Sherlock Holmes Exhibition in Westminster. The page is at <http://www.westminsteronline.org/holmes1951/>

[exhibition/index.htm](#) and this is the room that has been, by and large, recreated at the Sherlock Holmes Pub in London. These pages show us the time and effort that Sherlockians are willing to put in to the pursuit of the Master.

In closing I would like to share one more site I found while recently exploring. It is totally unrelated to the previous subject, and is very strange. It involves some characters, 'weebl' and 'bob' that are hard to explain. They look like the old Weeble toys ('Weebles wobble but they don't fall down'), enjoy pie, and mumble their way through various episodes. The animation is good quality although the material is pure nonsense. The page at <http://www.weebl.jolt.co.uk/bobs%20week%20in%20france%20pt7.htm> involves Sheerluck Weebl and is based on old Sherlock Holmes radio or movie shows. I found it quite amusing and admire the talent behind it all. Clicking on the Archives button lets you access other episodes to find out more background of the characters or the particular episode. It won't be for everybody, but is not obscene and is a good example of one of the more bizarre Sherlockian items out there on the website. ❖

Phillip Bergem



"These pages show us the time and effort that Sherlockians are willing to put in to the pursuit of the Master."

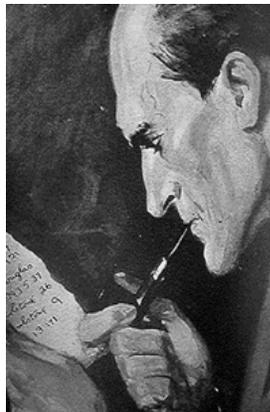
SHERLOCK HOLMES STUDY GROUP

THE RESIDENT PATIENT

"However, wretch as he was, he was still living under the shield of British law, and I have no doubt, Inspector, that you will see that, though that shield mail fail to guard, the sword of justice is still there to avenge," states Sherlock Holmes, at the end of "The Adventure of the Resident Patient." Yet British justice failed to avenge, and a "Higher Court" presumably prevailed, as the three murderers of a Mr. Sutton, alias Mr. Blessington, were thought to be aboard the "Norah Creina" when it sank.

Luckily, Watson's tales often avoided messy trials. Villains were instead dealt with by a "Higher Court." This streamlined the stories and let Watson focus on the investigations. In the case of "The Resident Patient," the Sherlock Holmes Study Group felt that British justice would have prevailed, had the murderers not fled the country and drowned. British justice allowed Sherlock Holmes's lack of evidence documentation, although our modern American justice system might have let the criminals go free. Holmes methods were sufficient for the world he will always live in, we agreed.

"The Resident Patient" appeared in "The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes," in 1892. Some versions of this story begin with a sequence from "Cardboard Box," in which Holmes demonstrates that he can read Dr. Watson's mind. Conan Doyle's publishers apparently felt that this famous "mind reading" sequence was so exceptional that it needed to be shared with readers. As we recalled, Conan Doyle originally blocked publication of "Cardboard Box" because of the subject material.



After a Holiday break, the Study Group resumed monthly meetings in January.

"The Resident Patient" is one of many Canonical stories in which Sherlock Holmes is consulted before the murder is committed. In this case, however, Blessington kept Holmes from preventing his own demise.

The gathering of about ten Norwegian Explorers at the Hillcrest Recreation Center, on January 18, 2003, enjoyed this story but felt that it too, "had more than the usual number of inconsistencies."

Maybe it was true that Dr. Watson's failing memory and shoddy record-keeping caused these topics for discussion. Still, members could not understand why the Worthington Gang kept arriving during Blessington's "constitutional," even though they had obviously bribed the page. We wondered how the old cataleptic was able to fool the expert, Dr. Percy Trevelyan? Why were the contents of the box not inventoried after the murder? This might have answered some of our questions. How could the gang have surprised and subdued Blessington, locked in his room? Blessington had demonstrated his alertness and pistol on the previous evening. We wondered why the block and tackle was thought needed for a hanging. Why not just a rope? Was it for the box and loot? Why did it take forty-five minutes for Dr. Trevelyan to make a fifteen minute cab ride? Some speculated that Trevelyan might be part of the gang.

Inconsistencies are what our group thrives on. We had an enjoyable discussion, cider, and cookies. Thanks to Karen Murdock for providing them. ❖

Charles Clifford

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**"Inconsistencies
are what the
Study Group
thrives on."**

SHERLOCK HOLMES STUDY GROUP (CONTINUED)

(Continued from page 8)

THE GREEK INTERPRETER

“The Greek Interpreter” was the subject of the February 2003 meeting of the Sherlock Holmes Study Group, led by John Bergquist. Members gathered around a long table in the Varsity Grill room of The University Club of Saint Paul on Saturday, February 22nd. Possibly due to the weather, or warm surroundings, nearly twenty of us attended. After the meeting, some of us searched for the signature of F. Scott Fitzgerald, which John said was supposedly carved into the Varsity Grill bar, but we were unable to locate it. (Sherlock would have been disappointed, as none of us had thought to bring a hand lens.) Phil Bergem passed out copies of his fine “Summary of First or Early Periodical Appearances of the Sherlock Holmes Stories.” From it, we can see that “Greek Interpreter” first appeared in the *London Strand* and *Harper’s Weekly* in September of 1893.

The star of our story this month is Mycroft Holmes, Sherlock’s older brother. Mycroft also appeared in “The Bruce Partington Plans” and was mentioned in two other stories of the Canon. Everyone who has read the Canon seems to know Mycroft well, despite his reticence to appear. John asked for thoughts on why Mycroft looms so large in Sherlockian lore. Anyone who is “smarter” than Sherlock Holmes

sure seems to get our attention. Anyone who “is” the British Government is truly worthy of our thoughts. It was pointed out that while Mycroft is a great “thinker,” Sherlock is both a great thinker and a great “doer.” Someone proposed the possibility that Conan Doyle might have been considering replacing Sherlock with Mycroft in his stories, but apparently changed his mind. Mycroft would no doubt have had to lose a lot of weight and occasionally venture out of the Diogenes Club in order to solve cases the way Sherlock did.

“The Greek Interpreter” does not employ the standard Canonical format. Two separate introductions or “cozies” are employed. Just when the action starts to pick up, the story abruptly ends. Mycroft definitely carries the story. We discussed, for two hours, the details of charcoal asphyxiation, sticking plaster, ammonia and

brandy as stimulants, and snuff. Plenty of loose strings were left dangling by Dr Watson just for our benefit. Perhaps the group needs the input of a psychologist. No, we’re not in need of analysis, but the story served up a great topic for argument when Sherlock postulated that it was the Vernet line, in his ancestry, that was responsible for his, and Mycroft’s, extraordinary powers of observation. The group failed to knock this topic around entirely. It was pointed out that Mona Morstein had addressed this topic extensively in her provocative book *The Childhood of Sherlock Holmes*. ❖

Charles Clifford



“The star of our story this month is Mycroft Holmes, Sherlock’s older and smarter brother.”

MASTERPIECE THEATRE'S THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES

A REVIEW BY PJ DOYLE



**"Of the nearly 20
screen
adaptations of
The Hound, this
version falls
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most."**

With an ASH investiture of "221A", I make no apologies for an avid interest in how Baker Street is portrayed in multi-media productions and pastiches. I was thus, noticeably taken aback when the recent PBS Masterpiece Theatre adaptation of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* bolted onto the screen without the signature opening in those hallowed rooms. Rather like a course where a golfer neglects to tee up the ball before beginning the game, the inevitable divots and gaps were bound to spoil the play.

Conan Doyle's original adventure manages to capture all that is most excellent about Sherlockiana in its novella-length pages: the Victorian atmosphere, the fascinating puzzle, deductive reasoning, effective dialogue, a strong supporting cast of characters and the core of all adventures – Holmes and Watson at their best. There's even a dollop of the supernatural added to the mix.

Of the nearly 20 screen adaptations of *The Hound*, this version falls further short of the mark than most. Holmes loses stature in inches and common sense. His hawk-faced appearance becomes rather boringly average. His sharp countenance degrades to mundane, even pleasant, then erodes into nasty. Not curt, but nasty. His cocaine usage is blatant. Watson looks more the villain than the solid Englishman of the Canon, and his deference to the Master is lost in the egalitarian partnership presented by screenwriter Allan Cubbitt. Holmes shoots up cocaine and shoots off his mouth – "...don't be an idiot, Watson!" and the core relationship of the two is sadly lost.

In addition to some obvious exclusions, like the opening scene at Baker Street, the production has some odd additions. In a nod to today's fascination with forensics, the film opens with an autopsy. There is a sense of déjà vu at one point when the viewer is treated to a séance scene that seems boosted directly from the 1939 *HOUN* directed by Sidney Lanfield.

Not to say the experience is devoid of entertainment. The costly adaptation is stylish and the Devonshire locations capture the dark and foggy atmosphere of Dartmoor. The lure of the moor is here: the harsh, chaotic weather, inhospitable to human life, yet fertile ground for an ethereal hound. And, it is, after all, a marvelous adventure. One can hardly expect to recapture the suspense enjoyed by the readers of 1901 who waited from month to month for the next of the nine installments of the original serialized novel. Conan Doyle's cliffhanger endings insured that *The Strand's* readers would be back for more.

Australian-born Richard Roxburgh moves from his role as the iniquitous duke in *Moulin Rouge* to the job of Sherlock Holmes. He comes up to the Master Detective neither in inches nor in character. He does, however, portray an interesting detective. Ian Hart, who was Professor Quirrel in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, joins in the action as the duo delve into the legend that haunts the Baskervilles. He was far more believable as the poor, stuttering professor. Roxburgh and Hart could make an interesting partnership for some other adventure whose plot was truly a mystery. As Holmes and Watson, they are uninspiring.

This production aired first in Canada in November 2002, in Great Britain in December 2002 and on PBS in January 2003. It is already available on DVD (BBC/Warner, \$19.98) and includes a 20-minute documentary narrated by the screenwriter Cubbitt on the making of the film. ❖

Pj Doyle, ASH

Note: The Masterpiece Theatre section of the PBS Web site has some good material on the *Hound* at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/masterpiece/hound/>. The site features thoughtful essays, interviews, a teacher's guide and other nicely presented materials, including links to other sites of interest (such as my Sherlockian Resources on the Internet site!) -Ed.

SARAH, HOLMES, WHALES, AND POLES: A VANCOUVER REMINISCENCE

Travel report and book review by Robert Brusic
(According to Bob, "Most of [what follows] is true,
and that which isn't is nearly so." -Ed.)

"In Vancouver, Holmes and I discovered to our delight that the Royal Box of the new quarter million dollar theater had been reserved for us. That evening, Madame Sarah's performance of *La Dame aux Camélias* was undoubtedly the most moving theatrical experience I have ever had. And as the final curtain fell, my friend Sherlock Holmes unashamedly wiped away a tear before he stood up to applaud."

In Vancouver last summer my wife and I discovered, to our surprise, that two seats in a downscale waterfront theater had been reserved for us. That evening, the performance of "The Rocky Horror Show" was undoubtedly one of the most moving theatrical experience I have ever had, though it was entirely different from that of my friend Sherlock Homes. And as the final curtain fell, my wife and I ashamedly wiped away a tear or two as the applause mounted before we stood up to drift out of the theater.

While the words immediately above are fact, the parallel paragraph is found on page 91 in a short story pastiche by Richard C. Weyman which appears in his *Sherlock Holmes: Travels in the Canadian West*. Knowing I would be in Vancouver for a few days, I took this book of short stories with me, for it has increasingly become a practice of mine to never leave home without Holmes.

In this case the choice of travel literature was fortuitous, for Weyman places Holmes in Western Canada in 1892, just 110 years before my own first visit to that beautiful part of the North American continent. While Holmes's travels in the Canadian West were highly unlikely, they were nonetheless considerably diverting. In these five stories Holmes experienced a number of improbable adventures, like sharing a thrilling train ride through Kicking Horse Pass on a cow catcher with Sarah Bernhardt. This escapade occurred just before the detective's tearful experience in the theater as noted above. Otherwise, Holmes

and Watson traveled by stagecoach, sleigh, horse, naval ship, inland canoe, and fifty-foot war canoe. In the course of these energizing travels the duo had coffee in the elegant home of Sir Matthew Begbie (a person of real significance in Canadian history), venison in a teepee, whisky in a house of ill repute; and they hunted buffalo on the plains as well as whales in the northern sea.

This latter escapade takes place in a tale entitled "Sherlock Holmes and the King of Siam." I, as the reader, was blowing bursts of disbelieving hot air through my spout just like the whales off the coast at Bella Coola. Yet, when I later took a boat trip to do a little whale watching of my own, I, like the pasticheal Watson "watched with considerable fascination, as the great creatures surfaced and blew great sparkling fountains of water into the sunlight." (102)

Moreover, like this adventuresome amanuensis, I too "had heard of the totem figures of the Indians of Western Canada, as remarkable works of art...I had retained the binoculars, and through their magnifying lenses the totems leaped into focus. Against the great mountains, blue with distance, carved poles by the score stood out in the vagrant sunshine, with their emblems of raven and whale, and many grotesque figures I could not identify." (103) What more could one ask experientially and vicariously than to accompany Holmes to a Vancouver theater and then later join him in a whale hunt and a totem pole watch? If this be not bliss, what, one wonders, is?

Upon reflection I confess to a shivering solace in my recent real-life experiences in the Canadian West, for in part they paralleled the adventures of a non-canonical Holmes and Watson of eleven decades ago. While I am aware that many may hold pastiche in low esteem, I continue to revel in the genre. Indeed, there is for me a large measure of fictional comfort in the fact that it is becoming increasingly possible to travel to many places on the globe while following in the "footsteps" of Sherlock Holmes. All the more reason to never leave home without Holmes. ❖ Robert Brusic



"While I am aware that many may hold pastiche in low esteem, I continue to revel in the genre."

RANDOM NOTES

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK (CONT.)

(Continued from page 1)

I recently added the searchable Adobe Acrobat version of the complete *Sherlock Holmes Journal* to my electronic bookshelf, which already included Acrobat versions of the complete *Baker Street Journal*, *The Universal Sherlock Holmes*, *The Encyclopaedia Sherlockiana*, *A Sherlock Holmes Commentary*, *An Irregular Anglo-American Glossary* and other reference works – along with two versions of the Doubleday Canon. After having copied the contents of all these CD-ROMs into a folder on my hard drive, I now can search any or all of these sources at will, finding in an instant – for example – 98 references to Watson at the Battle of Maiwand. In a matter of seconds, I can open a promising article or reference from the Acrobat search results list and print it out or copy a brief passage to insert as a quotation or bibliographical entry into an article of my own. Amazing! And humbling.

When reading Christopher and Barbara Roden's fascinating story of the making of Jack Tracy's *The Encyclopaedia Sherlockiana* in *The Baker Street Journal 2001 Christmas Annual*, I was struck by the realization that Tracy had compiled his monumental work without aid of a computer. If Tracy, Baring-Gould, Bigelow, De Waal and other giants in the field were able to compile their works largely unaided by computer technology, what should contemporary scholars be able to accomplish with the tools at their disposal? Humbling indeed. I approach my next research project grateful for my tools but filled with awe at what has come before.

Speaking of Sherlockian scholars, with this issue we are delighted to welcome back Pj Doyle as a contributor to *Explorations*, with her review of the controversial recent television adaptation of the *Hound*. Bob Brusic reviews another collection of pastiches, we bid farewell to a favorite Twin Cities restaurant, and Phil Bergem guides us to views of 221B in "Internet Explorations." Charles Clifford reports on the Study Group, and Explorers who traveled to New York in January relay their impressions of

the Birthday Weekend. We recap recent Explorer happenings and point out some upcoming events in the wider Sherlockian world.

Submissions are always welcome. Please email items in Word or plain text format to bergq003@tc.umn.edu. ❖

John Bergquist, Editor

SHERLOCK'S HOME CLOSES

Sherlock's Home brewpub and restaurant in Minnetonka closed its doors on December 31, 2002. (See Phil Swiggum's review of Sherlock's in the previous issue of *Explorations*.) As both a Sherlockian and an amateur brewer who appreciates craft-brewed beers and single-malt Scotch whisky, I felt a double blow at the demise of this fine establishment.

Owner/brewmaster Bill Burdick was a pioneer in Minnesota, with his pub being the first restaurant in the state allowed to sell beer brewed on the premises. According to reports, Bill plans to open another brewpub along the lines of his Granite City pub in St. Cloud while hoping to find a buyer for the Sherlock's Home pub and "concept." Local and visiting Sherlockians are eagerly hoping that a buyer does come forward to preserve this cozy corner of Victorian London in suburban Minneapolis. Ed. ❖

A SHERLOCK HOLMES ALMANAC

A team of Sherlockian editors has completed an updating and expansion of Svend Petersen's *A Sherlock Holmes Almanac*. The original Almanac was printed in a very limited edition in 1956 and has been difficult to find or obtain. Norwegian Explorer Karen Murdock, one of the contributors to the new volume, researched her contributions at the Sherlock Holmes Collections at the University of Minnesota. The new volume is being published by George Vanderburgh's The Battered Silicon Dispatch Box.



"I now can search all my Acrobat files at will, finding in an instant – for example – 98 references to Watson at the Battle of Maiwand."

The Norwegian Explorers

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**“ YOU MAY HAVE
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