



Ineffable Twaddle

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

The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle

A monthly publication of
The Sound of the Baskervilles

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

Serving the Greater Puget Sound Region of Western Washington



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February 2008

Toasts to Rivers, Drivers, Doctors & Boxes

Saturday, January 5 found 28 SOB's and guests at Barnaby's again for our 25th Master's Dinner—in celebration of Holmes' 154th birthday!

Bob Geis came the furthest, being on leave from duty in Kuwait, but **Jodi Holm** braved weather and traffic to come from Bellingham!

PFL David's toasts included those to Queen Victoria, the literary agent, Dr. Watson, the birthday boy, the friendship between Holmes and Watson, and the Officers and Members of the illustrious Sound of the Baskervilles...all of whom without whom!!

Other toasts were offered by **Barbara Nelson** (to Mrs. Hudson), **Al Nelson** (to the Thames), **James Romnes** (to the hansom cab driver) and **Ed Funk** (to famed physician Sir James Saunders).

As we do each May at the Wreath Throw, David also saluted Members who are no longer with us—including **Will Crakes, Frank Darlington, Carol Darlington, Samie Jane Keith, Paul Lindenmeyer, Rudy Mathews, Ruth Mitchell and Ginny Suttle**—saying, "May they be where it is always 1895!"

In his "Year in Review", David reminded us that we held another 12 Meetings at which we discussed 12 different Adventures; had 5 Saturday events; and changed our Membership year-end to the end of February—*making dues now payable on March 1st, rather than January 1st.*

Then it was on the "**Footprints of a Gigantic Hound**" award! **Bill Seil**, in an unusual move, was both nominated and voted this year's winner at the November Meeting. So while there was no suspense at the banquet as to the winner, he is an able successor to those who have won before: 1) Bill is a past President of this Club, 2) he has substituted for the PFL on a number of occasions, 3) he's played Watson in many of the PFL's playlettes, 4) he regularly supplies the PFL and Editor Terri with new Sherlockian news and tidbits, 5) he has become the de facto official photogra-

pher at our functions, 6) he is a published author, and 7) he is the only person who has continuously been an SOB since the Club's founding in March, 1980.

As the festivities came to an end, a raffle was held for a book donated by **Al Nelson**! The lucky winner of London, the Biography by Peter Ackroyd was **Geoff Jeffery**!

Michael Phillips also put forth a new idea for next year's banquet, which met with much glee: A grab bag give-away!!

And, while our self-published book "The Best of Beaten's" was not delivered*, other popular giveaways were provided, including an original drawing by **Stu Shiffman** (concept by PFL David), a bookletized copy of Al Nelson's winning entry in our short-story competition, additional Blue Carbuncle jewels compliments of **Marge Nelson** and, not to be missed, a 2008 fridge magnet!!

Following PFL David's recitation of Starrett's "221B" poem, half the group repaired to **Jean Macdonald's** for the annual dessert buffet and continued fun!

And, now, as space permits, following are toasts offered:

The River Thames, by Al Nelson

Last year, I (toasted) that "great cesspool to which the loungers and idlers of the Empire are irresistibly drawn", the City of London. This year I would like to recognise a great thoroughfare of that City. It is mentioned in six of the stories of the Canon, mostly for geographical purposes or in narrative passing, but prominent in one. In "The Sign of Four", it is the scene of a furious chase of the launch Aurora and the death of Tonga, the Andaman Islander. It is a thoroughfare that sets up the London landscape of the Canon, dividing it by class (high and low), social standing (low life and high) and good and evil. It has done this from the time of Roman occupation...

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* The Club just purchased software necessary to submit the completed project to a printer; it will also allow us to send "Ineffable Twaddle" to certain of our out-of-town subscribers, saving quite a bit in postage.

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From the Editor:

Apologies go to **Ann Deussenberry** for not being credited with contributing the first article on the Holmes Comet! See *Ineffable Twaddle* for January 2008, Page 2, "Holmes as Fuzz Ball?" (Volume 27, Issue 1). We are greatly remorseful by this error!



Study Lady Frances Carfax for February Meeting!!

The February 11 Meeting of The Sound of the Baskervilles will begin at 6:00 p.m. at T.S. McHugh's Public House, 21 Mercer Street, Seattle, (206) 282-1910. *Come early to order dinner and catch up with other SOBs!* Many arrive as early as 5:00 p.m.

We may have been on a break for December and January, but Holmes and Watson were not!!! This case came up only 4 days after our last (3GAR) on July 1, 1902. **Says PFL David:**

Lady Frances Carfax is the daughter of the Earl of Rufton, but being a woman is not in line to inherit the Earl's fortunes. But she has disappeared from a spa in Switzerland, along with some "very remarkable old Spanish jewellery of silver and curiously cut diamonds to which she was fondly attached...". Was her lover, the Hon. Philip Green—"a bulky, bearded, sunburned fellow"—involved in her abduction? After all, he was seen near her just before she vanished!

Surely Dr. Shlessinger, a good missionary recovering from a dread disease, could not be involved! Or could he? Take a trip to the Alps to learn all the details, by reading The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax!



"The fellow gave a bellow of anger and sprang upon me like a tiger...His hand was on my throat and my senses were nearly gone before an unshaven French ouvrier in a blue blouse darted out from a caberet opposite, with a cudgel in his hand, and struck my assailant a sharp crack over the forearm, which made him leave go his hold."

The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax

Toasts to Rivers, Drivers...

Continued from Page 1

through the Victorian era of our stories. Although these distinctions are blurring in our modern era, they were particularly strong in the very recent past, in which our men Holmes and Watson lived. I give toast to the great dissector of our beloved City...The River Thames!

The Hansom Cab Driver, by James Romnes

A cold London night, fog as thick as pea soup, street lamps flickering, and there is the clop, clop, clop of hooves on the stones. Watson is complaining about Holmes waking him at an ungodly hour, but what about the man who has been awake since 3:00 a. m.? I'm talking about the noble cab driver. He braved fog and cold for a pittance. Granted, there were a few—like Holmes—who generously tipped, but the more usual situation was what 'Punch' depicted in an 1888 cartoon which had two well-to-do gentlemen departing a hansom. The driver counts his meager tip grumbling, "Saved up a long time for this trip, did ye?" Another 'Punch' cartoon titled "Crossed Communications" had a hansom driver opening the trap door on the roof while the passenger leaned out the window. Both were trying to shout to the other but without success. In the Canon there are also times of crossed and sometimes deliberately confused communications such as in "The Hound of the Baskervilles". There a cab driver believes his passenger is the detective Sherlock Holmes when it is really the murderous Stapleton. So, here's to that brave and noble soul...the hansom cab driver!

The Battered Tin Dispatch-Box, by Margie Deck

Editor's Note: *While Margie and Hank weren't able to attend The Master's Dinner this year (because first grandchild Evan came just before Christmas in Texas), we are printing her toast from last year!*

As we gather to honor Mr. Sherlock Holmes
For the singular adventures of
The oft-read and well-remembered fifty-six
and four, It seems fitting to offer a toast to
Watson's elusive tin box, Holding the secrets
to the hundreds more:

The identity of the most winning woman;
The particulars of that little affair of the Vati-
can cameos; What the Arnsworth Castle
business is. The Tin Box could tell
Why Cardinal Tosca suffered a sudden death
And who was poisoned in the case of
Camberwell

It knows where are the lost: Phillimore,
the husband Ethredge, The no less remark-
able cutter sailed into a small patch of mist
And the complete failures with no forthcom-
ing final explanation

These little problems are still of interest to,
us, the students, With no regard as our hon-
orable Dr. Watson had

For the annoyance of the casual reader, or
exalted quarters consternation

So I ask you, Sherlockians,
to lift your glass and toast

With much hope and without despair
For someday a vault in a bank in Charing
Cross May yet reveal a battered tin dispatch-
box Containing the records of a certain rat,
and, indeed, All the stories for which the
world is not yet prepared.

Interesting Facts from LADY:

☞ Watson may be accused of blundering in this case, but he is quick to notice facial features and it is Holmes who is heard asking himself, "What has become of any brains that God has given me?"

☞ The word "trumpery", applied by Peters to Lady Frances' jewellery is derived from the French verb *tromper*, which means "to trick or fool".

Excerpts from PFL David's Toasts

Doctor John H. Watson: How important is this Doctor? In FIVE, our honoree said he had no friends except for this Doctor. That friendship lasted over numerous cases and many decades. It is through the eyes of this Doctor that we really get to see and understand our honoree.

How important is this Doctor? In SCAN (only the 3rd published Adventure), our honoree states, "I am lost without my Boswell."

Sherlock Holmes: His original first name was to have been Sherringford (Can you imagine us being Called Sherringfordinians?), and he was to have collected rare violins. If Doyle decreased his supply of violins, he increased his ability to observe and deduce from what he saw. These were exceedingly important to him because as he said of himself in BLUE, "It is my business to know what other people don't know."

Master's Dinner, 2008

Barbara Nelson surprised...no...shocked PFL David by presenting him with a plaque and silver plate (she of Sil-



ver Blaze fame) recognising his contribution to the Club. He is rendered speechless ...a rare occurrence ...when he opens the silver plate!



At left are Bob, Becky & John Geis. Did you know Becky was the Club's

first elected President?

Above right, on the left, are James & Ginie Romnes—sans kids Bryan and Emily. At right are much-traveled, long-term SOBs Kay & Peter Chelemedos.



Below, left to right, are Jodi Holm (from Bellingham), James Romnes, Barbara



Nelson (note her Footprints medal) and Walter Choy!



Finally, Bill Seil (right) is our 6th recipient of "The Footprints of a Gigantic Hound" award.

Photos by Bill Seil and Terri Haugen

Things to See, Buy, Do & Know

• Thanks to Peter Blau for these:

⇒ Al Hirschfeld's limited edition lithograph "The Game is Afoot" shows Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce as Holmes and Watson and—though Mr. Hirschfeld has passed away—is still available from the Margo Feiden Galleries in New York for \$1,600. See www.alhirschfeld.com.

⇒ "The Complete Conan Doyle Sherlock Holmes" (that is, the BBC 4 Programs that starred Clive Merrison and Michael Williams) is now available on 64 CDs. The list price is \$250 but they are discounted to \$139.99 by Tower Media. See www.tower.com (Per PFL David, David Timson is currently in the process of recording *The Complete Unabridged Canon*.)

⇒ The November Issue of *Smithsonian Magazine* has an article about the Mary Celeste ("Phenomena: Abandoned Ship") with a mention of Conan Doyle's story "J. Habakuk Jephson's Statement". The December issue of the magazine has a

full color portrait of Sherlock Holmes by Frederic Dorr Steele on its "This Month in History Page" honoring the 120th anniversary of the appearance of "A Study In Scarlet" in Beeton's Christmas Annual .

⇒ Scott Monty and Burt Wolder have now reached episode #13 in their podcasts at www.lhearofsherlock.com, with a 55 minute interview with Jon Lellenbert and Daniel Stashower about their work on *Arthur Conan Doyle: A Life In Letters*, about their letters, and about Conan Doyle.

⇒ Andrew Lycett's *The Man Who Created Sherlock Holmes: The Life and Times of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle* (New York Free Press, 2007) is the American edition of his similarly-titled British book *Conan Doyle: The Man Who Created Sherlock Holmes*. Lycett had access to far more sources than any previous Doyle biographer and was able to make some corrections to the British edition.

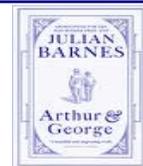
Running on M.D.?



According to Ken Tucker, Entertainment Weekly (Nov.

23, 2007) reviewer, "Despite flashes of brilliance in it's fourth season, *House* shows symptoms of strain...The character of Dr. Gregory House—originally conceived as a medical version of Sherlock Holmes, solving dire problems with eccentric intuition—is in nearly every scene of Fox's medical whatdunit. And that premise seems to be getting weary for the show's writers, too...Even Arthur Conan Doyle tried to kill off Holmes when he thought the sleuth overstayed his welcome, and *House* has already presented more cases than Holmes ever tackled."

From Ann Deusenberry
If this hasn't been in *Twaddle* yet...*Arthur and George* by Julian Barnes is now in



paperback! (Vintage; Reprint edition [January 9, 2007], ISBN-13: 978-1400097036).

Here's an excerpt from the Publishers Weekly review:

Arthur is Sir Arthur Conan Doyle; George is George Edalji, the son of a Parsi father (a Shropshire vicar), and a Scots mother. In 1903, George, a solicitor, was accused of writing obscene letters to his own family and of mutilating cattle. He was convicted of criminal behavior in a blatant miscarriage of justice based on racial prejudice. In this combination psychological novel, detective story and literary thriller, Barnes elegantly dissects early 20th-century English society as he spins this true-life story with subtle and restrained irony. Every line delivered by the many characters rings with import.

Short listed for the 2005 Booker (*but not the winner*), this novel about love, guilt, identity and honor is a triumph of storytelling.

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By appointment of Her Majesty, Queen Victoria

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Serving the Greater Puget Sound Region of Western Washington

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

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

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

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



Member News & Updates

Dates of Interest

- **February 11**
Regular Monthly Meeting,
T.S. McHugh's
- **March 10**
Regular Monthly Meeting,
T.S. McHugh's
- **March 29**
Anniversary Tea & Auction
- **March 31**
Dues are due!!
- **April 14**
Regular Monthly Meeting,
T.S. McHugh's
- **May 3**
Annual Wreath Throw, Tumwater
- **May 12**
Regular Monthly Meeting,
T.S. McHugh's

News & Notes:

- As no January Meeting was held, we hope all will be anxious to join us on February 11th, again at T.S. McHugh's, for a study of "Lady Frances Carfax"—the story, not the Lady!!
- **Genie Romnes** reported at The Master's Dinner that **James** had sat that morning for an American Society of Clinical Pathologists exam and is now—in just 2 months (rather than 2 years)—a certified assistant pathologist. Proud Dad James added that **Bryan** is another foot taller and **Emily** is now 10!!
- **Paul Williams** told us that our designated shelter at Seahurst Park will remain closed through July for refurbishment. So he's booked our Dr. John H. Watson Picnic for Saturday, **August 2nd** instead! **Mark your calendars!!**
- **Bill Seil** saw the new Titanic Exhibit while in Phoenix at the holidays and recommends seeing it again, as it has changed dramatically!!
- **Jean Macdonald** was a real brick in hosting our post-Master's Dinner dessert buffet. Her pain was apparent, as she was heading two days later into hip replacement surgery! **Kay Chelemedos** reported she too would be under the knife again later in January for the same procedure! Ouch...we wish them both well! **Cards and calls to both ladies are encouraged!!**
- Regrets came from **Ron Carlson** (due to ill

health) for his absence at The Master's Dinner, but we're not sure what happened to **Renée and Antoine Riley!**

- **Avis Jobrack** also had to miss The Master's Dinner—because of work. Said she, "I shall lift a glass to Holmes tomorrow (the 6th) as I read some of my favorite Adventures." Here, here!
- Our Minnesota SOB, **Karen Murdock**, says she is "a jobless pedestrian" as her contract at Century College has ended after 4+ years and her car ("Gus the Bus") has died. She sounds in good spirits, though, adding, "May the New Year bring you blessings, challenges, new opportunities, and the wisdom to recognize them when they come." Good advice for all!
- **Kathleen Dunlap's** holiday letter told of her trip to Paris for the 60th anniversary of George Marshall's "Marshall Plan" speech and the symposium which her foundation hosted; a fall she took in summer that broke her ankle (and a 2nd fall that took her "back to square one" 4 weeks later); and her receipt of her Rotary Club's award "for service to the club, community, work and family". She says 3-times-per week physical therapy is getting her back into shape, but it was "a most eventful year"!
- With **James Romnes** now chairing the Wreath Throw in Tumwater on May 3rd and **Margie Deck** chairing the May 12th Meeting, we just need a chair for the June 9th Meeting!! Any takers?? Please contact PFL David!!

