



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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Holmes on the Radio

By SOB & Playwright John Longenbaugh

When asked if there was interest in this newsletter for an article about Holmes on the radio, your Editor told SOB John Longenbaugh, "You bet, we've got old time radio fans amongst our Members, our subscribers and our e-readers!"

Sherlock Holmes, the World's First and Most Celebrated Consulting Detective, is older than radio itself by a few years—he first appeared in print in 1887,



six years before Nikolai Tesla made the first tentative experiments in wireless communication. Holmes was also at the very beginnings of radio drama, and he's still being

heard across the airwaves, including as a regular character on Jim French's *Imagination Theater* on Seattle local station KIXI. (So for the record, that means Holmes has had the longest run of any fictional character in radio—Take that, Lone Ranger!)

Part of the appeal for radio is that when it comes to Holmes, the listener's imagination is already primed to meet the story more than halfway. The hawk-like visage and deerstalker cap, the gaslight eerily haloed above the fog-enshrouded streets, the cozy if eccentric accoutrements of 221B Baker Street—each person has a perfect picture of this late-Victorian world, and it takes little more than the recorded sound of a jingling hansom cab or a snatch of violin music to evoke it.

But the stories of Sherlock Holmes also fit themselves to radio because The Great Detective was always at his most effective in the form of the short story. With the brilliant exception of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, Doyle's sleuth was always happiest solving a crime in 30 pages or so, or a half-hour of radio listening. That's not to say that the novels haven't been successfully adapted to radio—there have been several versions, of

the novels, including *The Sign of Four* and *The Valley of Fear*. But despite their quality and faithfulness to Doyle's books, this listener always finds it hard to imagine it taking longer than a half hour's narrative for Holmes to solve any particular crime before returning to his violin, his newspapers, and the noxious shag tobacco stored in the toe of his Persian slipper.

The first radio play featuring Sherlock Holmes aired in 1930, an adaptation of *The Speckled Band* starring the most famous stage actor to ever play Holmes, William Gillette, who even at the age of 77 sounds exuberant in the role. Actor Richard Gordon took over after this first broadcast and continued to play Holmes until 1933, when tired of the repeat broadcasts, he left and Louis Hector took over the role of Holmes.

I've heard a snippet of the Gillette (apparently all that's left) and have had no luck finding any recordings featuring Gordon, but have heard several of the episodes with Hector. These shows aren't the best, and not just because of the poor quality of the recordings. Hector's performance features a caustic and cold Holmes who is at times downright crotchety.

One important feature of these early shows, however, is that several of the episodes step outside of "the Canon," or adaptations of those tales that Doyle himself penned. Holmes is simply too fun a character to be bound to the narratives of one writer. The first scriptwriter to pen new adventures for Holmes was surprisingly enough a woman, Edith Meiser, a strikingly attractive actress/playwright who began writing new tales when she ran low on adaptable material. She continued to work as the prime author on several different... **Continued on Page 2**



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**Don't Miss Our
30th Anniversary
Tea & Auction
on March 27!!**



There will be...

- ⇒ Loads of food, as all SOB events require.
 - ⇒ Tons of new stuff to choose from in the Auction ...books, books-on-tape, videos and artwork!
 - ⇒ A "live auction" and "silent auctions" throughout the afternoon.
 - ⇒ "Sign Sales" that let you choose one or more from a group of items at the price shown on the sign.
- You've all been most generous in your contributions, so come down to Gig Harbor and enjoy the fun!

"I am so delighted that you have come."

The Adventure of The Copper Beeches



Watch this space—*above right*—for some special fun with Margie Deck at our April 12 Meeting!!

For more about Sherlock Holmes on the radio, we refer you to

Beaten's Christmas Annual for 2000 (PP. 28-31), wherein PFL David's presentation "Sherlockian Radio Plays"—a history of radio broadcasts in the U.S.—given at Bouchercon 2000 in Denver appeared. Sharing that panel with David was SOB Bill Seil, who provided input on radio broadcasts in the U.K.



More "Librarian's Corner" Info

While Librarian Verne Johnson is temporarily indisposed...



⇒ To receive a full listing of titles in the SOB's Lending Library via e-mail, **OR**
⇒ To order a title from the SOB's Lending Library,

please e-mail Editor Terri at: terri@soundofthebaskervilles.com.

Out-of-town Members: Postage costs will be required for shipping.

One of our Violets, Entangled in Beeches!

The March 8, 2010 Meeting of The Sound of the Baskervilles will begin at 6:00 p.m. at T.S. McHugh's Public House (21 Mercer Street, Seattle, (206) 282-1910). **Come early, order dinner and catch up with other SOB's!** Many arrive as early as 5:00.

Our 14th tale in The Canon—based on publication-date order—is this curious case which Jack Tracy says is variously dated as having taken place in 1885, 1889, 1890 and 1891. **Says PFL David:**

Ms. Violet Hunter is pursued by country gent Jephro Rucastle...not for romance, but as governess to his child. The pay-raise from her prior post is fantastic, so why does Violet question her employer's requirements and consult Holmes & Watson? Interestingly, this is one of only two Adventures in which a child gives Holmes insight into the true solution to a mysterious situation.

Read The Adventure of the Copper Beeches to see Watson's failed effort to "fix up" Holmes with the lovely Violet!



Holmes on the Radio

Continued from Page 1

...Sherlock Holmes series throughout the '30s and mid-'40s, including one featuring the most famous acting duo to take on the roles, Basil Rathbone as Holmes and Nigel Bruce as Watson.

After their premiere in 1939's film *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, Rathbone and Bruce had reprised the roles through the forties in a handful of movies and dozens of radio shows. For many people Rathbone remains a definitive Holmes, and radio highlights his gifts of quick intelligence and classically-clipped diction. Bruce's Watson, on the other hand, is the same blustering nincompoop of the films, if not more so—his repeated failure to grasp the obvious is at best a triumph of comedy over subtlety. Even-

tually Rathbone grew tired of the role both on film and radio, though Bruce continued on with a new Holmes, Tom Conway, doing a serviceable Rathbone impersonation. When the show moved to the East Coast in 1947, Bruce and Conway both dropped the roles and were themselves replaced first by John Stanley as Holmes and Alfred Shirley as Watson, then two years later Ben Wright as Holmes and Eric Snowden as Watson took us to the close of the golden age of American Radio Drama.

Tune in next month for another exciting episode of "Holmes on the Radio", when Longenbaugh tells us, "*My own favorite radio incarnation is a 1954-55 collection of twelve episodes featuring John Gielgud as Holmes...*".



Librarian's Corner

"It is a great thing to start life with a small number of really good books which are your very own." Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

⇒ NEW TO THE SOB LENDING LIBRARY ARE...

★ **Sam Fry's paper**, "*The Influence of Mr. Sherlock Holmes on Twentieth Century Arctic Exploration*", which was summarized in our 2009 *Beaten's Christmas Annual*; it came to us from Sam's estate through a donation from his widow Louise.

★ A full-color, stunning reproduction of the 10-page feature "**Sherlock Holmes' London**" from the January 2010 *Smithsonian Magazine*, donated to us by SOB Pat Connelly.

⇒ OF INTEREST TO OUR OLD-TIME RADIO BUFFS... will be: a) The Lost Adventures of Sherlock Holmes: Based on the Original Radio Plays of Denis Green & Anthony Boucher by Ken Greenwald (HB, 1993, Barnes & Noble) and b) "The Forgotten

Adventures of Sherlock Holmes: Based on the Original Radio Plays of Denis Green & Anthony Boucher" by H. Paul Jeffers (trade PB, 2005, Carroll & Graf).

⇒ AND, WHAT WOULD A LENDING LIBRARY BE WITHOUT MISSING BOOKS! Please return the following titles—no questions asked—at your earliest opportunity: ★ The Nine Wrong Answers, John Dickson Carr; ★ The Greatest Cases of Sherlock Holmes, Arthur Conan Doyle; ★ The Original Illustrated Strand Sherlock Holmes, Arthur Conan Doyle; ★ Out of The Shadows: The Untold Story of Arthur Conan Doyle's First Family, Georgina Doyle; ★ The Malabar Rose, Davies Martin; and ★ The American Detective: An Illustrated History, Jeff Siegel.



Things to See, Buy, Do & Know

• From Roger Johnson:

⇒ Two more plays recorded by **The Old Court Radio Theatre Company** can now be heard or downloaded free on the London Society's website, www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk. M.J. Elliott's scripts venture into apocryphal territory in "The Man with the Watches" and "The Lost Special". The two plays are available from me on CD for £5.00, €9.00 or \$12.00, postpaid (US dollar checks to Jean Upton).

⇒ At www.guardian.co.uk/sherlock-holmes-themovie/the-real-sherlock-holmes, you can download a four-part "Sherlock Holmes Audiowalk", taking in the Whitehall-Northumberland Avenue area and ending appropriately at the Sherlock Holmes pub.

• From SOB Karen Murdock:

⇒ Saw the **obit on Edward Woodward** in "The Australian" for 18 November 2009, under the headline "Screen's legendary hard man falls silent". While there's no mention of it in this obit, Sherlockians will remember Woodward playing Sherlock Holmes in "Hands of a Murderer" (1990).

⇒ Found a source for **deerstalkers and Inverness capes**: Scotweb (Weavers To The World), www.scotweb.co.uk. Hats are \$41.64 in wool tweed; \$141.57 in Harris tweed. Capes are \$867.50.

• From SOB **Bill Seil**: Go to www.publishersweekly.com/article/CA6715287.html to you read an article about **whether the new Holmes movie will result in more books being written** about The

Great Detective. By Otto Penzler's estimate "more than half of recent published works put Holmes in conflict with vampires, werewolves, supervillains, and in futuristic settings. There's also been an increase in Holmes comics...Perhaps the most significant trend has been books that, as Holmes expert Peter Blau puts it, 'enter the world of Sherlock Holmes through different doors, such as works by David Pirie that are not imitations of Doyle but are inspired by his characters and his imaginative storytelling.'"

• **SOBs Kay Chelemedos & Bill Seil** found an interesting article in the NY Times discussing **the problems of Doyle's heirs here in the U.S.** It appears that Holmes is copyrighted here through 2023. It's a complex situation since Dame Jean Conan Doyle died. Bill followed that with a January 23 editorial from the Times (www.nytimes.com/2010/01/24/opinion/24sun4.html?emc=tnt&intemail1=y) that said there have been enough extensions of the copyright laws and that Holmes should belong to everyone.

Roger Johnson's review of our 2009 Beaten's is most effusive! "As always, its 48 pages contain scholarship and entertainments in satisfying proportions, with articles on Moriarty's math skills, Holmes' firearms, beekeeping and Victorian prisons, a decent pastiche concerning a missing diplomat, and more." And he loves Gayle Holmes' "iconic" cover art! We've already sold copies to three non-Members!!

More on the New Holmes Film

From our Aussie Friend Steve Duke: "I've been rung up twice by a newspaper on the Gold Coast (Queensland) and asked what the feeling amid Sherlockians was in regards "The Film". It seems they were one of the first places to premiere it. Having now seen the film, let me warn you that strong stomachs might be needed."

From SOB Manson Polley: *Here's what the Tri-City Herald (WA) said about the new movie on opening day...* "Sherlock Holmes' is a mess. Physically and literally. Start with five screenwriters and director Guy Ritchie stuck with how to make the legendary and cerebral sleuth palatable to today's technology-addicted, text messaging, everything's-gotta-go-fast moviegoer. Their answer: throw Indiana Jones and Harry Potter themes at the screen and see what sticks."

From SOB David Smith: *Here's an excerpt from the NY Times Book section on January 5...* "Doyle grew so to hate his greatest creation that in 1893 he tried to kill him off...Had Doyle been able to consult with the writers of 'Sherlock Holmes,' the movie, he might have

devised, as they did, more vengeful and imaginative perils, like having Holmes almost bisected by a buzz saw or crushed by a runaway hull in a shipyard...Holmes is now unkillable—though purists will doubtless argue that Robert Downey Jr.'s rendition of him, which at times resembles a Victorian version of 'Fight Club,' is a fate worse than death... Would Doyle have disapproved of the new movie? Of course."

From SOB Karen Murdock: *Saw this Associated Press release...* "Jude Law and Robert Downey Jr. have been described as having a powerful chemistry in Guy Ritchie's movie 'Sherlock Holmes'. At a press conference ahead of the movie's world premiere on December 14, Law was asked about romance and being in love. Law, who was sitting to the right of Downey Jr, told reporters jokingly: 'The only person I'm in love with at the moment is sitting on my left.' Ritchie told how he saw Watson as being an attractive character. 'I wanted a good looking Watson and (the media) then coined him 'Hotson'."



Sheila Holtgrieve

pointed PFL David to a fascinating article (Associated Press, December 20) that discussed just how the world's largest Sherlock Holmes collection ended up at the University of Minnesota—85 feet below ground. Happily, numerous of our Beaten's are part of the collection!



A dozen happy SOBs see "Sherlock Holmes" on January 17—many for the 2nd time; one, a 3rd time!

Stu Shiffman wrote: "It seems Warner Bros. was so certain the new SH film would be a hit (cost \$90 million, current take \$300 million worldwide) that they hired a new set of writers *last September* to start on a sequel. The start date for the new movie will be in June."

Adds PFL David: "It certainly doesn't hurt that 'Sherlock Holmes' has been nominated for two Oscars—for Best Art Direction and Best Original Score."

NEWS FROM DOWN UNDER

Our Aussie friend **Steve Duke** (President of the SH Society of Victoria / *The Elementary Victorians*)



⇒ Watch out for **the "Dark Detective" comic book** soon out! It an all-Sherlockian production.

⇒ Did you hear, the Germans are having no end of trouble as their **bank computers don't recognize the year 2010!** The Y2K bug hits.

⇒ And **Britain is to phase out cheques** in 2018. What will Holmes do for payment then????



The Sound of the Baskervilles
By appointment of Her Majesty, Queen Victoria

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

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

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

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



Dates of Interest

- **March 8**
Regular Monthly Meeting, 5:00 p.m. at T.S. McHugh's
- **March 27**
Our 30th Anniversary Tea & Auction
1:00 p.m. at Haugens' in Gig Harbor
- **April 12**
Regular Monthly Meeting, 5:00 p.m. at T.S. McHugh's
- **May 1**
Our Annual Wreath Throw, Tumwater,
11:30 a.m., lunch at 1:00 p.m.

Member News & Updates

Those attending the February 8 SOB Meeting, presided over by **PFL David Haugen**, were:

- | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Al Nelson | Margaret Nelson | John Nelson |
| Barbara Nelson | Terri Haugen | Joyce Funk |
| Ed Funk | David Smith | Carol Smith |
| Lauran Stevens | Sheila Holtgrieve | Margie Deck |
| Hank Deck | Ann McElvaney | Bryan Romnes |
| Michael McElvaney | Peter Chelemedos | Ginie Romnes |

News & Notes:

- At this Meeting we also welcomed **Peter's** grandnephew Adam, and Bill Mosteller—a Sherlockian from back east—and his friend Sarah Fleming! ✂ When polled on the new SH film, there were 10 "thumbs up" for Downey Jr. as Holmes; others only for Downey as an actor. But there were loads of "thumbs up" for Law as Watson! **David S.** felt the film didn't feel authentic, as it "glamorized filth"! ✂ There was a 4-way tie for 1st place on our quiz for BERYL: John, Sheila, Bryan and Ginie. And guest Adam came in 2nd!
- **Your contributions of food (cakes, cookies and savories) to our 30th Anniversary Tea & Auction on March 27 will be most appreciated!!!**
- **Picnic Chair Paul Williams** tells us that Seahurst Park is booked for our Dr. John H. Watson Picnic on Saturday, July 24 for noon to 4:00 p.m.!
- In the December issue of the London Society's District Messenger, Roger Johnson offered two copies of a recording of a play by David Stuart

Davies, if you could name the story where Watson's wife calls him "James". The winners would then be drawn from a hat. One of those winners is our very own **Geoff Jeffrey!**

• That's **SOB & Marine John Geis** at right. He's got his assignment (two years of studying Chinese). Please write him at: PFC John Geis, 431 Rifle Range Road—1392, Monterey, CA 93944.



• **Joann & Bill McCall** from Tigard, OR, sent good wishes with their dues renewal. Said Joann: "We hope to come back someday for a meeting. We really enjoy *Ineffable Twaddle*."

• With only a one-word comment—"Sad"—**Paul Williams** sent the AP release excerpted here: "A mysterious visitor who each year leaves roses and cognac at the grave of Edgar Allan Poe on the writer's birthday failed to show (on January 19), breaking with a ritual that began more than 60 years ago. The tradition dates back to at least 1949, according to newspaper accounts from the era, said Jeff Jerome, curator of the Poe House and Museum. Since then, an unidentified person has come every year to leave three roses and a half-bottle of cognac at Poe's grave in a church cemetery in downtown Baltimore. About three dozen stood huddled in blankets during the overnight cold, peering through the churchyard's iron gates hoping to catch a glimpse of the figure known only as the "Poe toaster." At 5:30 a.m., Jerome emerged from the church and announced that the visitor never arrived. He allowed an AP reporter inside the gates to view both of Poe's grave sites, the original one and a newer site where the body was moved in 1875. There was no sign of roses or cognac at either tombstone."





**Puget Sound's
Sherlock Holmes Society:
The Sound of the Baskervilles**

Mail your check for \$20 (\$30 for families)—payable to "The Sound of the Baskervilles"—by March 31, 2010 to:

**Allen Nelson
32904 - 4th Avenue S.W.
Federal Way, WA 98023**

Keep valuable, informative, insightful and fun-filled "*Ineffable Twaddle*" coming to your home each and every month!!

Ensure that you *never* miss a single issue of *Beaten's*, our Christmas Annual, which is jam-packed with finely-researched historical articles, puzzles, pastiches and scholarly features!!

Get preferred pricing on future Club offerings, which in the past have included mugs, lapel pins, silver paperweights and books.

All this, plus exciting monthly meetings and not-to-be-missed Club get-togethers—picnics, parties and other weekend events!!

Renew your membership *now* with The Sound of the Baskervilles!!!

\$20 for individuals,
\$30 for families
(U.S. funds only)
brings you all these
benefits and more!!



Return this portion by March 31, 2010 with your check to:

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I have added an additional \$ _____ as a cash donation. *Thank you!*

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Your Canonical Name: _____ From which story? _____

(Note: Canonical Names must be registered with the Club Historian, Lloyd Hedberg)