



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



Volume 43 Issue 6 ■ June 2024

Story & Meeting Content for 2024 SOB Meetings

Our 5-year Cycle continues on the subject, "Rule Britannia" with...

June 16 **The Sign of Four**
In-person meeting

PFL David suggests: Your assignment—if you choose to accept it—is to read the entire text of "The Sign of Four" and highlight for our discussion your favourite parts!

We continue our 5-year Cycle with 3 stories on the theme, "The European Situation" (GLOR, SIXN, SECO)

July 21 **Watson Picnic & The Gloria Scott**
In-person meeting

August 18 **The Six Napoleons**
via Zoom + a presentation
by SOB Tim Kline

September 15 **The Second Stain**
In-person meeting, with
SOB Margie Deck presenting

We move forward in our New 5-year Cycle—on the theme, "The State of Royalty and Aristocracy" (ILLU & BERY)

October 20 **The Illustrious Client**
via Zoom

November 17 **The Beryl Coronet**
via Zoom

We interrupt our Canonical study—returning as we do each year—to our visit to BLUE"

December 15 **The Blue Carbuncle**
In-person meeting

Join The SOB's Next In-Person Meeting, Sunday, June 16, 2024!

At the Seattle Public Library on Queen Anne Hill, located at 400 West Garfield

Door to the Meeting Room, which is on the lower level, opens at Noon. The meeting will start at 12:30 p.m. and end by 4 p.m.

Your contribution to the snacks table will be most appreciated!

Getting there: From north- or southbound I-5, exit at Mercer Street and head west. Turn right on Queen Anne Avenue and head up the hill. At the 3-way stop sign at the top, turn left onto West Galer Street. At 4th Avenue, turn right. The library is one (1) block north on the northwest corner, at the cross with Garfield Street.

Says Program Chair Sunny Even

The "Reluctant Empire"

I have called *The Sign of the Four* the re-boot of Sherlock Holmes and John Watson, or "Holmes 2.0." A generous novel-length story, Conan Doyle pulls out all the stops both in adventure and characters and in placing the Victorian readers in their larger world. Published in 1889-1890, it was set at the height of the British Empire, and of the British Raj in India, and provides a subtle message on the dangers of Empire.

Oxford historian J.R. Seeley is unfairly remembered to have said, "we seem, as it were, to have conquered and peopled half the world in a fit of absence of mind." In his famous "Expansion of England: Two Courses of Lectures," he actually argues otherwise. While Britain as a whole did not look for increased direct imperial authority, nor did public opinion demand it, an "informal imperialism" usually followed trade interests and missionary activity. The need to safeguard India and the route to sub-continent informed imperial policy, leading Britain to control Egypt, South Africa and others. Turkey's influence on the route also led to British involvement in the Crimean War. Expansion into Egypt followed Turkish decline. Mineral wealth in South Africa led to conflict with the Boers, and more. So, while Britain did not embark upon the classic ...

Continued on Page 2



Happy Father's Day, to all our Dads, Uncles & Grand Dads! ♥

Says Program Chair Sunny Even...

Continued from Page 1

...continental expansion of empire, a la Alexander or Napoleon, it was most certainly both pre-meditated and backed by substantial military power.

However, to the average Briton, these far-flung dominions were mostly familiar as settings for adventure, or mysterious sources of wealth, exotic plants or bizarre animals. It wasn't until the Indian Mutiny of 1857 that the cost of the expanding empire was brought to the attention of the self-same average Briton (*note the costs to indigenous peoples were never reckoned*). The unstable grip of the East India Company and its muddled finances obscured the growing debt to govern India. Revenue streams and trade deficits as a commercial concern were mingled with the taxes and expenditures incurred as a territorial power, disguising a growing debt that jeopardized the government-guaranteed 10.5 percent rate of return for company shareholders. In effect, the British people were ultimately responsible for the governing of India. The crown eventually stepped in, and took over governance of the subcontinent, while regular Parliamentary interventions in Indian affairs became more common. Ordinary Britons began to discuss India more frequently and with more interest.

Throughout the 19th century, but especially after this shift, India figured prominently in British nonfiction, fiction and poetry. Some of these works were extremely influential in shaping British attitudes toward India. By the end of the century India represented the pinnacle of British imperial achievements, the last arena to prove heroic masculinity (Rudyard Kipling). On the other hand, India with its exotic customs and mysterious religions dramatized the dangerous appeal such exoticism could pose to English values (Arthur Conan Doyle and H. G. Wells). Literature published between 1885 and 1916, described as "Imperial Gothic," explored this volatile combination of pride in British accomplishments, fears that civilization could succumb to barbarism, and the desire for new stages upon which to prove England's greatness. *The Sign of the Four* is one of those influential works still shaping attitudes today.



“...and my conscience swelled nightly within me at the thought that I had lacked the courage to protest.”

A Quiz on SIGN by: SOB Charlie Cook

1. Where did Holmes keep his hypodermic syringe?
2. Holmes claimed to be the only what in the world?
3. Holmes compares Watson's writing as one who tries to work a love story into what mathematical work?
4. Holmes regards what three qualities necessary for the ideal detective?
5. What did Holmes consider to be a shocking habit, destructive to the logical faculty?
6. What gift did Mary Morstan receive on May 4th for six years?
7. What book did Holmes believe to be one of the most remarkable ever penned?
8. Name the four men of the title.
9. What are the names of the Sholto brothers?
10. What detective investigated the murder at Pondicherry Lodge?
11. What was the name of Mordecai Smith's steam launch?
12. What was the name of the savage Andaman islander?



“There was a grumbling sound and a clanking and jarring of keys. The door swung heavily back, and a short, deep-chested man stood in the opening, with the yellow light of the lantern shining upon his protruded face and twinkling, distrustful eyes.”

Answers to this Quiz may be found on Page 6



SOB Kris Hambrick's Sherlock on Screen: "The Sign of Four"

I frequently talk about how often, or how little, a given story is adapted. So it should come as little surprise that, next to "Hound," this is the most-referenced story on screen, with sixteen that I know of. The earliest of these, from 1905, is lost. The most recent that I am aware of is from 2020 in the form of an episode of the anime "Moriarty, the Patriot," which is among my favorite new additions to Holmesiana. This globe-trotting record is appropriate as, in these 115 years, the story has been done in silent form, in German, animated three times, in Russian twice, and with puppets!

Readers will no doubt be familiar enough with the story to figure out why this might be—"The Sign of Four" has everything. Treasure, a secret pact, eccentrics, exotics, a dog, a boat chase, a damsel in distress/love interest...what's not to love? And as an adaptation, unlike many other stories its length means it does not demand any filler.

So, you might ask, which of these should I track down and see? That depends on what you want from the experience. **For similarity to the novel, Granada.** If you want to feel unique and special because no one else has bothered to see it, **try Ian Richardson's 1983 version, for a shorter, warmer Sherlock.**

If **you for some reason think Charlton Heston was ever a good idea in the lead role**, there's "**Crucifer of Blood.**" If you can **remember Max Headroom**, and do so fondly, there's **Matt Frewer's 2001 outing.** If you want to be **sad we never got to see Peter O'Toole play the role** in the flesh, he does **the voice in the cartoon version.**

But my favorite of all of these has to be, I think, **the Soviet version by Lenfilm with Vasily Livanov and Vitaly Solomin, part of their Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson series of films that goes under the title of "The Treasures of Agra."** I've extolled the virtues of these two often, and this one does not disappoint—along with SIGN, you get "A Scandal in Bohemia" thrown in and a very funny Toby scene that has the most awkward talking-while-walking-a-dog scene I think I've ever witnessed.

And I think the most important takeaway here is that a story like this, which relies heavily on melodramatic tropes and a uniquely British colonial history, can nevertheless be adapted on multiple continents in different genres and media speaks to the quality that ACD brought to his best tales. At its heart, SIGN is a rollicking good adventure, and it's worked for over a hundred years.

The May 19 Zoom Meeting's "Raffle on Zoom" a Boon to Several!

Our **May 19 "Raffle on Zoom"** had the best participation yet with eight (8) Members placing bids for the ten items offered—four were locals, the other four were out-of-towners. With so many high-quality hardbound books in this month's offerings plus a set of busts of Cumberbatch and Freeman, we weren't surprised.

Cameron B. of Virginia won the pair of busts, while **Frank C.** of Wales, UK, **Danny M.** of Illinois, and **Naching K.** of Eastern Washington were the long-distance winners of a bunch of books, with **Dawn J.** and **Margaret N.**, the locals, winning one book each. We're sorry that we had two Members winning nothing, but **Treasurer Melinda** has all the winnings in her hands and they soon will be enroute to the winners!

Our July 21 In-Person Event is a combined Meeting & Annual Picnic!

Mark your calendar now for our combined Meeting & Picnic on Sunday, July 21. The story we'll cover is "**The Gloria Scott**" and the Picnic will be our (nearly) annual celebration of all things Watson—the 27th "**Dr. John H. Watson Picnic**" at Seahurst Park in Burien, WA. Watch for further details next month!

Our August 18 Zoom Meeting Being Chaired by VP Konecki!

Vice-President Kashena will ably chair this meeting, at which time we'll study "**The Six Napoleons**" (SIXN). An added treat will be a **presentation by SOB Tim Kline** titled "Playing the Game: Sherlock was never so much fun!"—a review of games that are played around the world.

Things to See, Buy, Do and Know

⇒ From SOB Maffie Rafferty:

- You probably already have heard about this—[Andrew Scott on the Sinister and Seductive New 'Ripley' | Vogue](#)—starring Terri's favorite **Andrew Scott**, but then there's also—[Fans Can't Stop Watching Jenna Ortega's New Movie On Netflix, But Also Can't Stop Complaining About It](#)—starring **Martin Freeman!** The latter sounds rather disturbing, though! Check them out!
- So you mentioned the NYT crossword puzzle at our last meeting. Well I have some more Sherlock puzzle mentions for you! You may remember that Dave & I and SOB Beth Gallego are members of the **National Puzzlers' League**. In the May issue of their magazine, one of the puzzles has a clue "*Home of a giant rat in Sherlockiana*" that's 7 letters, so we all know what that is! And earlier in their April issue there's a cryptic crossword clue "*Forty all emulate Sherlock Holmes after head of department vanishes*" that's 5 letters, **see the inverted text box below for the answer!** The May clue was written by Mark Diehl of San Jose, CA and the April clue was written by Christian Morrow of Wayne, PA.

DEUCE—defined as "Forty all" and given in wordplay form as deduce (emulate Sherlock Holmes) after head of department (the second d vanishes. No need to worry if you didn't get it since, of course, you wouldn't have had the benefit of having some surrounding squares already filled in like I did.

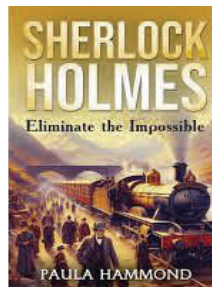
⇒ PFL David notes these items:

- **Guy Ritchie is set to helm "Young Sherlock," a new TV series** based on the novel series of the same name by author Andy Lane. Per the official synopsis (H/T [Variety](#)), the series is an "action-packed origin story of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's beloved detective in an explosive re-imagining of this iconic character. At age 19, Sherlock Holmes is disgraced, raw, unfiltered, and unformed, when he finds himself caught up in a murder mystery at Oxford University which threatens his freedom. Diving into his "first-ever" case with a wild lack of discipline, Sherlock manages to unravel a globe-trotting conspiracy that will change his life forever." For more, [Looks Like Guy Ritchie Is Returning to 'Sherlock Holmes' After All \(msn.com\)](#) **Ed. Note:** What about Gloria Scott??
- **"7 Problems A Sherlock Movie With Benedict Cumberbatch Would Need To Overcome"**: Though it aired its last few episodes in 2017 there has been persistent talk of a *Sherlock* movie to wrap things up. Co- ↗

creator [Mark Gatiss recently reaffirmed his commitment to a *Sherlock* movie](#), but he was quick to note some of the potential problems that production would face. In particular, he cast doubt on the availability of stars Benedict Cumberbatch and Martin Freeman, who have both become much busier since the fourth and final season of *Sherlock*. *The writer feels that the movie would need Professor Moriarty to be successful, but the series already has eliminated him.* Go to: [7 Problems A Sherlock Movie With Benedict Cumberbatch Would Need To Overcome \(msn.com\)](#)

- Check out **"10 Best TV Series Adapted from Famous Novels,"** a series about a certain consulting detective is mentioned. What are your thoughts on their description and the other programs listed? <https://www.msn.com/en-us/entertainment/news/10-best-tv-series-adapted-from-famous-novels/AA1jSdi1?ocid=msedgntp&pc=U531&cvid=0ce2bbabb1684428af297f100983c68b&ei=118>

- Now available is **Sherlock Holmes - Eliminate The Impossible** (MX Publishing, hc/pb) by Paula Hammond (April 19, 2024): This book collects six canonical tales in which Holmes and Watson encounter mummies, angels, phantoms, invisible assassins, and arcane machines...or so it might appear to those without a carefully stocked brain attic. From Medieval London, to the snow-capped mountains of Turkey, from dusty Admiralty vaults, to the glitz and glamour of the Orient Express, from the days of fledgling friendship, to the backdrop of World War I, this new collection invites you to celebrate deduction, forensic science, and logic.



- What's your take on **"9 Reasons Benedict Cumberbatch's Sherlock Holmes Is Better Than Robert Downey Jr's Version"**? Some thoughts:
 - ◆ Cumberbatch's Sherlock is more accurate to the original book's canon, with his physical description aligning with Doyle's description of the character.
 - ◆ The chemistry between Cumberbatch and Freeman in BBC *Sherlock* is exceptional, highlighting the importance of Watson to Sherlock's character.
 - ◆ Cumberbatch's Sherlock is more complex due to the longer format of the TV series, allowing for a deeper exploration of the nuances of his character.

Go to: https://screenrant.com/sherlock-benedict-cumberbatch-robert-downey-jr-better-reasons/?utm_source=syndication

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Things to See, Buy, Do and Know

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- Why Sherlock Holmes ruined Arthur Conan Doyle's credibility:** In astonishing footage filmed at the turn of the 20th century—and shown in the current BBC Two documentary *Killing Sherlock: Lucy Worsley on the Case of Conan Doyle*—the author sits in an austere wintry garden. “I’ve written a good deal more about Holmes than I ever intended to do. But my hand has been rather forced by kind friends who continually wanted to know more. And so it is that this monstrous growth has come out of a comparatively small seed.” How could he possibly regard Holmes, the character who made him rich and famous, as a “monstrous growth”? This question is addressed in the absorbing three-part series, in which the historian and Sherlock “stan” Lucy Worsley explores exactly why Conan Doyle came to despise his celebrated creation—to the point of conceiving a murderous rage for him. To read more go to: <https://www.msn.com/en-us/tv/news/why-sherlock-holmes-ruined-arthur-conan-doyle-s-credibility/ar-AA11F7Dz?ocid=msedgntp&pc=U531&cvid=16030291a2ad4684a7baafdfd06fddb2&ei=208> **Adds David:** There is still nothing yet on a PBS date for seeing Worsley’s three BBC series.
- ➔ **From Peter Blau’s newsletter, *Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press*:**
- The Baker Street Irregulars Press** has published two new titles. Both of them (and many others) can be ordered at: www.bakerstreetirregulars.com/tag/books

 - ♦ **Sherlock Holmes and the British Empire**, edited by Ross E. Davies (211 pp., \$29.95), offers the proceedings and papers of the BSI’s conference at the Bear Mountain Inn in 2022, with colorful images of the performers, and all of their scholarship.
 - ♦ **Clutches of a Fiend** is the new addition to the Manuscript Series (179 pp., \$49.95); edited by Steven T. Doyle, it offers a facsimile of the manuscript of “The Illustrious Client”, with an annotated transcription and scholarly commentary on the manuscript and on various aspects of the story (the Manuscript Series continues to offer readers an opportunity to come close to the moment when the stories were written, and the commentary is delightful).
- The envelope in which the **September 1964 issue of the Baker Street Journal** arrived also contained a copy of a **100-question Sherlockian quiz** prepared by Elliot Kimball, recommended by Bob Schutz, as one of the most remarkable quizzes ever penned. ➔

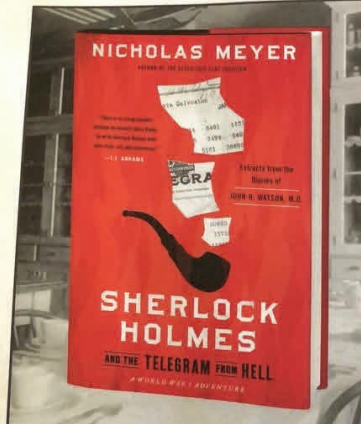
Thanks to SOB Bill Seil for this squib:
Nicholas Meyer’s new novel, coming in August from Mysterious Press:

MYSTERIOUS NEWS FROM

Sherlock Holmes

Vol. B No. 221 “I Hear of Sherlock Everywhere” August 27, 2024

Seven-Per-Cent Solution Author Returns



“Nicholas Meyer has managed the impossible, which is to sound exactly like Arthur Conan Doyle. . . Irresistible.”—Julian Fellows, creator of *Downton Abbey* and *The Gilded Age*

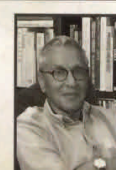
Nicholas Meyer’s new novel, *Sherlock Holmes and the Telegram from Hell*, will be in stores this August from Mysterious Press

June, 1916. With a world war raging on the continent, exhausted John H. Watson, M.D. is operating on the wounded full-time when his labors are interrupted by a knock on his door, revealing Sherlock Holmes with a black eye, a missing tooth and a cracked rib. The story he has to tell will set in motion a series of world-changing events in the most consequential case of the detective’s career.

Germany has a secret plan to win the war and the British Secret Service dispatches the two aging friends to learn what the scheme is before it can be put into effect. In pursuit of a mysterious coded telegram sent from Berlin to an unknown recipient in Mexico, Holmes and Watson must cross the Atlantic, dodge German U-boats and assassination attempts, and evade the intrigues of young J. Edgar Hoover, all while enlisting the help of a beautiful, eccentric Washington socialite as they seek to foil the schemes of Holmes’s nemesis, the escaped German spy master Von Bork.

Sherlockian Finds Fame Among Star Trek Aficionados

Nicholas Meyer is the “editor” of several Watson manuscripts, including *The Seven-Per-Cent Solution*. His screenplay of the film received an Oscar nomination. His film credits include writing and directing *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*, *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home*, and *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country*. A native of New York City, he lives in Santa Monica, California.



Meyer

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Now the quiz is being reoffered as part of the Beacon Society’s Fortescue Scholarship exam program, and if you would like to see (or take) this remarkable quiz, it is available by e-mail from Steve Mason at: mason.steve8080@gmail.com.

- The **2023 Baker Street Almanac** is now on-line and available without charge at: www.greenbag.org/almanacs/BS/2023.html, more than 364 pages, so it takes a while to download the PDF file, but it’s well worth it. That means that the print version of the 2024 Almanac is almost ready; the URL also offers information on how to subscribe to it.
- Ray Betzner’s “**Mrs. Hudson and the Return of Sherlock Holmes**” (with Curtis Armstrong as Holmes, Ashley Polasek as Mrs. Hudson, and Ken Ludwig as the narrator and the bust), performed at the William Gillette Luncheon in New York on January 12, is now online in the “**Inner Circle**” at the Red Circle of Washington’s website: www.redcircledc.org.

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The Sound
of the
Baskervilles

By appointment
of Her Majesty,
Queen Victoria

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SOB Nagle Reviews Upcoming Play!

My wife and I are just returning (May 25) from seeing "Sherlock Holmes and the Precarious Position" at Seattle's Taproot Theater. **It was delightful.** Even Annie, who is not a particular Sherlock fan, enjoyed it!

If you are not familiar with the Taproot, the little Coffee/Tea area opened at 1 o'clock for the 2 p.m. matinee and served coffee, tea, wine, and pastries.*

If you get there earlier and need a substantial meal, Razzi's Pizzeria is around the corner on Greenwood Avenue.

While waiting in the lobby, I noticed that the music playing was soundtracks from the Basil Rathbone Sherlock movies and then from the Jeremy Brett series.

Have a wonderful time!

All best, SOB Jim Nagle

* **Ed. Note:** With the Box Office opening at 5 p.m. for the 7:30 p.m. evening performance, the Coffee/Tea area might also be opening around that time!

More Things to See, Buy, Do...

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- **The Jeremy Brett Sherlock Holmes Podcast** has announced "Brettcon 2024": The 40th Anniversary Celebration, scheduled for May 25 in Guildford (Surrey). The podcast—at www.sherlockpodcast.com—was created by Gus and Luke Holwerda ↗

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 the 3rd Sunday 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.

Answers To Cook's Quiz on Page 2: "The Sign of Four"

1. In a neat Morocco case.
2. An unofficial consulting detective.
3. The 5th proposition of Euclid.
4. Power of observation, power of deduction and knowledge.
5. Guessing.
6. A very large lustrous pearl!
7. Winwood Reade's "Martyrdom of Man."
8. Jonathan Small, Mahomet Singh, Abdullah Kahn and Dost Akbar.
9. Bartholomew and Thaddeus.
10. Athelney Jones.
11. Aurora.
12. Tonga

in 2019, and they've hosted more than 40 episodes that will be of interest to fans of the Granada series. Episode 41 is a delightful interview with now-94-year-old June Wyndham Davies, who produced the series and tells great stories about it; episode 40 provides a discussion of and a link to video of "The Adventure of the Abbey Treasure" (filmed by Jeremy Brett and Edward Hardwicke in 1988 for the Abbey National Bank). The podcast is well worth exploring, and there's a handsome video trailer for the convention.

