

Canadian Holmes is published by The Bootmakers of Toronto, the Sherlock Holmes Society of Canada.

Bootprints (editors) are Mark and JoAnn Alberstat, 46 Kingston Crescent, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, B3A 2M2, Canada, to whom letters and editorial submissions should be addressed. E-mail: markalberstat@ns.sympatico.ca

Membership and subscription rates

Canadian Individual - Cdn\$35.00

Canadian Joint (One copy of CH per household) - Cdn\$45.00

Canadian Student (Full-time student 16+) - Cdn\$25.00

U.S. Individual - US\$40.00

U.S. Associate - US\$35.00

International - US\$40.00

Past Issues of Canadian Holmes, including postage - Cdn\$12.00 per copy

Further Subscription information and details are available on the society's website, www.torontobootmakers.com.

Business correspondence should be addressed to The Bootmakers of Toronto, PO Box 1157, TDC Postal Station, 77 King Street West, Toronto, Ontario, M5K 1P2, Canada.

Copyright © 2013 The Bootmakers of Toronto. Copyright in all individual articles is hereby assigned to their respective authors.

Canadian Publications Mail Sales Product Agreement Number 40038614, The Bootmakers of Toronto, PO Box 1157, TDC Postal Station, 77 King Street West, Toronto, Ontario, M5K 1P2, Canada. Return postage guaranteed.

ISSN 0319-4493.

Printed in Canada.

Cover: This cover was designed by the Bootprint, Mark Alberstat. The text on the cover, deciphered reads: The Dancing Men edition of *Canadian Holmes*.

Canadian Holmes

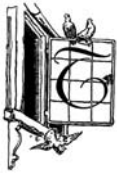
Volume 35 Number 3

Spring 2013

One hundred and thirty-fifth issue

Contents
Canadian Holmes
Spring 2013
Volume 35 Number 3

Traces of Bootprints <i>By JoAnn and Mark Alberstat</i>	1
Letters to the Editor	2
From Mrs. Hudson's Kitchen <i>By Wendy Heyman-Marsaw</i>	4
Designing the Penguin Covers	6
Strictly Personal: Karen Campbell	8
Arthur Conan Doyle and the Cubitts of Happsburgh <i>By Thelma Beam</i>	9
The Cipher in 'The Dancing Men': A Study in Sources <i>By Donny Zaldin</i>	17
From the Editor's Bookshelf	31
Letters From Lomax <i>By Peggy Perdue</i>	33
Bootmakers' Diary <i>By Donny Zaldin</i>	36



GRACES OF BOOTPRINTS

Deciphering Holmes

Spring cleaning is in the air and I, for one, am looking over my collection and seeing what items I can live without. But alas, there are very few of those.

Bootmakers are fortunate to be associated with one of the world's foremost public collections, one that should always continue to grow — the ACD Collection of the Toronto Reference Library. The collection now includes a small diary that not only contains Conan Doyle's signature but also features small drawings that may breathe new life into one of Conan Doyle's short stories, 'The Adventure of the Dancing Men.'

This issue contains two articles that have come out of the Collection's purchase of that diary. Thelma Beam looks into the Cubbit family, in Norfolk, who once owned the diary and primarily shines a light on the boy who created those stick figures. Donny Zaldin takes another tack and delves into the origin of 'The Dancing Men' cipher, one that has been studied by many Sherlockians. Has Donny figured out the origin of the cipher? Read on and find out for yourself through his dogged detective work.

Peggy Perdue, curator of the Collection is, of course, in this issue with her Letters from Lomax, this time giving readers a virtual walk-through of a recent Sherlockian exhibit.

Some collections strive to have one of everything and that now must include a complete set of the recently released Penguin books. The new and vibrant covers of this set are also discussed by the team that created them.

This issue also contains a letter and two book reviews by Peter Calamai. Peter is well-known to the Sherlockian world for his many contributions to this and other journals, as well as the 2011 Cameron Hollyer lecture. The editors are happy to add that Peter won the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal for his tireless work in adult literacy. In January, Peter also received the Morley-Montgomery Award from the B.S.I. for his article 'Why He isn't Sir Sherlock Today.' He is only the second Canadian to win the award. The other was S. Tuper Bigelow, who was recognized in 1962 for 'The Hoof-Marks in The Priory School.'

With spring almost here, it is almost time for us to sit on the back deck, cottage porch or park bench and read of the adventures of those two friends we all know so well, Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson.





Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor:

In the Fall 2012 issue, in the ‘Strictly Personal’ column, Doug Wrigglesworth says that if he could ask Doyle one question, it would be, “Tell us REALLY what your opinion was of Oscar Wilde.”

By an odd coincidence, on the same day that I read that, I read something that I think gives Mr. Wrigglesworth his answer.

I’d just picked up a pamphlet by Walter Klinefelter, *The Case of the Conan Doyle Crime Library* (Sumac Press, La Crosse, Wisconsin; 1968). It was a bit of a disappointment. Telling the story of a collection originally described as “Conan Doyle’s crime library, every volume used for reference when he created Sherlock Holmes and his countless adventures!” It turned out, Mr. Klinefelter discovered, to have had the majority of its items bought by Doyle from the estate of W. S. Gilbert in 1911.

Besides Mr. Klinefelter’s essay, the pamphlet prints a detailed catalogue of the books, including Doyle’s inscriptions, which mostly say, “Arthur Conan Doyle from W. S. Gilbert’s Library.” I didn’t read this catalogue section but I did browse through it and when I saw that one title had a different inscription, I stopped to see what it was. Here’s the description:

(Famous Old Bailey Trials of the XIX Century). (Sherard, R. H.), *Oscar Wilde: Three Times Tried...* (1914). Inscribed on title: “Great genius is to madness close allied. Arthur Conan Doyle.”

While someone could think that Conan Doyle might have modified his real opinion in public pronouncements or writings, I can’t imagine what reason he would have for writing a false opinion on the pages of one of his own books. So it seems safe to say that this is what he really thought and Mr. Wrigglesworth’s question is answered.

Greg Darak



Dear Sir:

My apologies for being so tardy in commenting about an article in CH Winter 2011/2012 but I have only just unearthed my copy, which went missing at the time. Despite the delay I believe it important for your readers to correct misinformation which appeared in ‘Musings Upon The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle’ by Lloyd R. Hedberg Jr.

In his observations about the number of days of morning papers which Holmes would have had at hand, Hedberg categorically states that: “There was no paper on Christmas Day...”

I attach a PDF of the front page of *The Times* for Dec. 25, 1889. *The Times* also published on Christmas Day 1890. It did not publish on Christmas Day

1887 but only because that fell on a Sunday. However, other Sunday papers, such as *The Observer*, would have published then.

In fact, all of the U.K. national papers most likely published on Christmas Day throughout the late-Victorian and Edwardian eras. As well, they also published on Dec. 26, meaning that the employees worked on Christmas Day.

The Times continued to publish on Christmas Day up to 1912, according to the digital online database of the paper.



Bootmakers' Diary continued from page 40

including six variations on the axiom about the truth being whatever remains, however improbable, after the impossible has been eliminated. Prize winners are **Frank Quinlan, Edith Reece and Anita Boyd-Diamond**.

Chris Redmond speaks briefly about two significant developments in the Sherlockian world: firstly, the recent interest and following by youthful aficionados of Sherlock Holmes, drawn like fireflies to the light by the BBC's 2010 to date production of "Sherlock," a contemporary update of Conan Doyle's Victorian/Edwardian consulting detective and biographer, starring Benedict Cumberbatch (as Sherlock Holmes) and Martin Freeman (as Dr. Watson); and, secondly, the Indiana, U.S. lawsuit of noted American Sherlockian **Leslie S. Klinger** against the Conan Doyle Estate. The former claims that Holmes, Watson and other Canonical characters and themes are now in the public domain and belong to the world versus the latter's claims to continuing ownership and royalties to Sherlock Holmes et al., based on the unexpired copyright (in the U.S.) of the last 10 of the 60 stories.

From Mrs. Hudson's Kitchen



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

In Service to Mr. Holmes

Mrs. Hudson was a long-suffering woman. Not only was her first floor flat invaded at all hours by throngs of singular and often undesirable characters, but her remarkable lodger showed an eccentricity and irregularity in his life which must have sorely tried her patience. His incredible untidiness, his addiction to music at strange hours, his occasional revolver practice within doors, his weird and often malodorous scientific experiments, and the atmosphere of violence and danger which hung about him made him the very worst tenant in London.

Dr. Watson, 'The Adventure of the Dying Detective'

Despite dear Dr. Watson's observations, I never had cause to seriously regret being Mr. Holmes' hostess, landlady and housekeeper. Indeed, I take pride in my small role supporting his unique work as a consulting detective. He treated me with the utmost courtesy and respect. Whenever possible, he was mindful to inform me of his chaotic schedule and commitments.

Ours was a small but unpredictably busy household. My variety of duties necessitated assistance. I engaged a cook, Mrs. Violet Turner, my sister-in-law. Flexible hours and duties meant she could earn some pin money without neglecting her family. The maid-of-all-work, Molly, was only 14 but efficient and hard working. We had two pageboys, both named Billy. They ran numerous errands for Mr. Holmes and occasionally assisted me in greeting and directing clients. The pages ran up and down our stairs constantly. They slept in a small alcove to be handy for jobs at all hours. Our second Billy was a favourite of Dr. Watson and Mr. Holmes. When he outgrew his position, he joined Scotland Yard.

My responsibilities were many. I paid the bills for all of the upkeep of 221B. My housekeeping-accounts book was kept daily and precisely. *Mrs. Beeton's Book of Household Management* outlines the qualities of a good housekeeper thusly: "honesty, industry and vigilance...as if she were the head of her own family. Cleanliness, punctuality and method are essentials in character." Method was a trait highly valued by Mr. Holmes.

Additional domestic duties included preparing breakfast for my gentlemen (who, thankfully, slept later than most). In the kitchen I had superintendence of menus and meals preparation. I baked bread, pastries and cakes, and put up preserves and relishes. I noted when to replenish supplies and ensure the entire kitchen was scrubbed and the stove cleaned and prepared for the next day.

The cleaning of 221B was sometimes amusing and often a frustrating challenge. Molly and I had to work together. I provided the complex direction regarding Mr. Holmes' somewhat odd preferences. The only time their rooms got a thorough cleaning was when they were pursuing a case outside London. Their bedrooms provided insight into their habits. Mr. Holmes' bed was never made and linens and pillows were often left on the floor. His argument was that he will only sleep in it again the next night or not at all. Although a man of impeccable personal cleanliness, his wardrobe was in complete disarray, save his evening wear. His well-worn mouse-coloured dressing gown appeared anywhere in the rooms. The good doctor, however, never forgot his army training. His room was neat as a pin – bed perfectly made, clothes hung in orderly fashion and window open for airing.

The parlour was daunting at times. Mr. Holmes claimed to have complete order in the mountain of disorder. Since Dr. Watson and Mr. Holmes were heavy smokers, it was essential to air the room and wash windows, looking glasses and glassware, etc. Often Molly and I were assaulted by disgusting odours emanating from the chemistry apparatus. Dust and ash lay everywhere. Newspapers, particularly the agony columns, were strewn all over the floor. If we gathered them in a neat pile to clean the rugs, Mr. Holmes would become quite agitated. So I simply lifted the papers whilst Molly cleaned under them. Remnants of aged meals would occasionally be discovered as well.

For now, you may welcome these recipes for useful and effective household aids:

To Restore Whiteness to Scorched Linen

Ingredients: ½ pt. vinegar, 2 oz. fuller's earth, 1 oz. of dried fowl's dung

An Excellent Pomatom (Hair Pomade)

Ingredients: ½ lb. lard, ½ pt. olive oil, ½ pt. castor oil, 4 oz. spermaceti, bergamot or any other scent, elderflower water

To Clean Marble

Mix with ¼ pt. of soap lees, ½ gill or turpentine, sufficient pipe-clay and bullock's gall to make the whole into a rather thick paste. Apply it to the marble with a soft brush, and after a day or two, when quite dry, rub it off with a soft rag. Apply this a second or third time till the marble is quite clean.

Polish for Boots

Take 4 oz. of ivory-black and 4 oz. of treacle, 1 oz. sulphuric acid, 2 spoonfulls of your best olive oil, 3 ½ pts of your best white wine vinegar: mix the ivory-black and treacle well in an earthen jar; then add the sulphuric acid, continuing to stir the mixture; next pour in the oil; and lastly, add the vinegar, stirring it in by degrees, until thoroughly incorporated.

Designing the Penguin Covers



Sherlock Holmes comes in many different looks and sizes. How do designers decide what style to use on a new book cover? Designer Coralie Bickford-Smith and Illustrator Mike Topping took on that challenge for Penguin when the publisher released a new set of the original Holmes stories. A version of the following article first appeared online at faceoutbooks.com.

Coralie

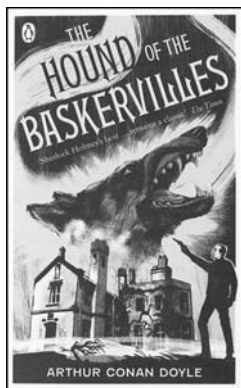
The Sherlock Holmes series came about shortly after I designed the first series of boys' adventure books — classic yarns with retro illustrations — and the idea was to pitch the Holmes series at the same market. They needed their own distinct style but there was a similar emphasis on the adventurous nature of the stories. I worked with Mike Topping (aka Despotica), who had illustrated one of the adventure books (*The Prisoner of Zenda*) and was a long-standing fan of the Holmes books.

Mike

The thing that immediately came to mind was the necessity of avoiding the deerstalker and curved pipe that are inextricably linked with Holmes in the public consciousness. I wanted to get back to the Holmes of the books, a complicated, drug-addicted genius, as handy with fists and pistol as with a magnifying glass.

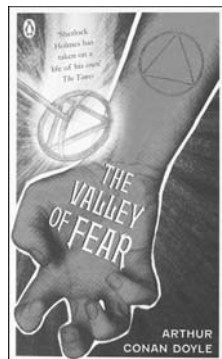
Coralie

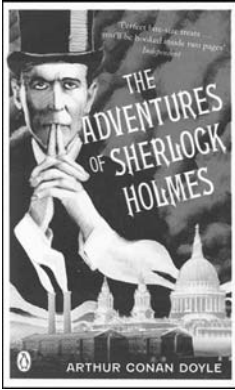
It's not often you get your hands on a character as iconic as Holmes. That's exciting in itself but the opportunity to challenge the widespread perception and present a side of the books that is less well known was irresistible.



Mike

There's so much great material to work with in the stories. Considering they're all in the detective genre, they cover an awful lot of ground — not just murder but espionage and shades of the supernatural. I wanted to combine some of the more sensational aspects of the stories in my illustrations and really pique the interest of people who had never read any Conan Doyle.





Coralie

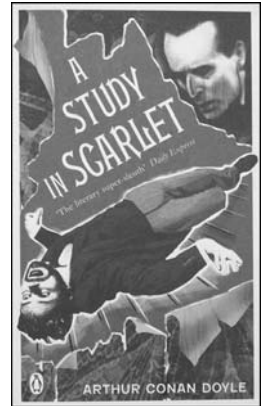
My initial brief to Mike was to use old engravings as a basis for the illustrations — partly because they had an appropriate period feel but also because we needed to turn eight covers around in a fairly short amount of time. However, the limitations of that approach soon became clear. Of the initial roughs, *Hound of the Baskervilles* really stood out, with the hand-painted elements making for a unified image with a lot of energy and atmosphere. Some of the collages felt cluttered and flat by comparison.

Mike

I love collaging old engravings but for this project I found the technique too restrictive — especially with eight covers to do. It was a really useful stage of the process though, as it was my attempts to breathe some excitement into them that gave me the idea of using film-poster-style composition. It soon became obvious that we were onto something with that but that to make it work I needed to have more control over the elements of the composition by creating them myself.

Coralie

The early film-poster aesthetic was really strong and captured the excitement and adventure in the stories. It also had a nice interplay with the type — Gable Antique for the titles and Fenwick for the author name. One of the things I like to do with classics is to incorporate something to the setting or publication date but to do so in a kind of design that wouldn't have featured on book jackets of the period. Once we were on this track, I encouraged Mike to make the composition of each jacket as strong as possible by only incorporating as many elements as necessary and focusing on atmosphere.



Coralie

As with all series, design and colour was a crucial element. Each cover uses two Pantones, with black on some. The limited palette helped tie the series together and the combinations were chosen to amplify the sensational feel. The final piece of the jigsaw was the use of Colorplan uncoated cover board for a really satisfying tactile quality to the books.



Strictly Personal

Canadian Holmes puts a prominent Canadian Sherlockian under the microscope.

Name: Karen Campbell

Age, birthplace: 47, Cambridge, Ont.

Occupation: High school English teacher

Current city of residence: Toronto

In school I excelled at: English – and bless the English teacher who first introduced me to Sherlock Holmes!

A great evening for me is: Curling up with a light-hearted sitcom

Goal in life: To touch young people's lives for the better

Other hobbies and interests: Singing, travelling, writing. I taught in Japan for two years and try to keep up with what's happening with my friends back there. I'm afraid I've forgotten most of my Japanese, though – it's a good thing they haven't forgotten their English!

Favourite dining experience: Mandarin "birthday dinners" with my Sherlockian friends

First Sherlockian memory: The puppet, Sherlock Hemlock, on Sesame Street

Three favourite Canonical tales: 'The Speckled Band,' 'The Devil's Foot' and 'The Three Garridebs'

Least favorite Canonical tale: 'The Blanched Soldier'

Favourite Non-Sherlockian reading: The Irish Country Doctor series by Patrick Taylor

Favourite Sherlockian movie: *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* starring Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce. Rathbone will always be Holmes to me.

Favourite non-Sherlockian movies: *The Court Jester* and *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*

Most prized items in my Sherlockian collection: My first copy of *The Collected Sherlock Holmes* with the Sidney Paget illustrations

If I could live anywhere in the world it would be: Right here!

If I could live at any time in history, it would be: Right now!

If I could ask Holmes, Watson and Doyle each one question, they would be: Where is Cox and Co.?



Arthur Conan Doyle and the Cubitts of Happisburgh

By Thelma Beam, M.Bt.

Thelma Beam is a long-time member of The Bootmakers of Toronto and will be serving as Meyers in 2014. She is a winner of the society's 1989 and 2011 True Davidson Award and the 1990 Derrick Murdoch Award.

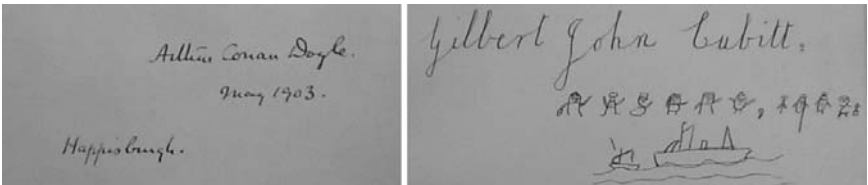


he Adventure of the Dancing Men is a story about a cipher. In all other ways it is typical of Victorian mysteries: a heroine with a secret past, a husband kept in the dark, a jealous ex-lover, murder and mayhem. But the cipher of the dancing men is what makes the story unique and memorable among the cases of Sherlock Holmes.

There has been much speculation about the origin of this cipher and various people have claimed to be the model for Hilton Cubitt. The Norfolk village of Happisburgh has a local legend that Arthur Conan Doyle got the idea of the dancing men from a child, one Gilbert John Cubitt, whose mother ran a hotel in Norfolk where Conan Doyle sometimes spent a few days' holiday. In 2008, some evidence was discovered that strongly reinforces this version of the source of the dancing men, in the unlikely form of a young lady's autograph album. The album was purchased by the Toronto Reference Library and now resides in the ACD Collection.

The album is only about half full but it contains the signatures of the famous and not-so-famous guests of the hotel, as well as those of friends and family members. On one page, there is the familiar autograph of Conan Doyle, dated 1903, the same year 'The Adventure of the Dancing Men' was written. A little further along, we see an example of a stylized alphabet using stick figures, signed by Gilbert John Cubitt (GJC) and dated 1902, and another similar effort by his sister, Edith Alice Cubitt.

The significance of these two pages hit me like a wall. I became intrigued with these two signatures. How did GJC come to create his dancing-men alphabet? Did he and his sister have some kind of secret way of communicating,



Two pages from the Cubitt album: the left-hand page shows ACD's 1903 signature and the right-hand page shows Gilbert's 1902 stick men.

like Elsie Patrick and Abe Slaney? Was he or one of his relatives the model for Hilton Cubitt? And what happened to GJC when the Sherlock Holmes story was published? Did he become a local hero? Did Conan Doyle privately acknowledge his creativity, or give him any type of remembrance or a signed copy of the story? How did his contact with the famous writer affect his life?

I began searching for Gilbert John Cubitt on the Internet, hoping to find the answers to some of these questions. After a few dead ends, I found an article by John Campbell. He is GJC's grandson. I contacted John, who was able to give me some details about his grandfather. He put me in touch with his uncle, Michael Cubitt. Mike had many wonderful family stories to share with me, being a bit of an historian himself. I wrote and spoke at length with him, and he was kind enough to refer me to his niece and John's sister, Alison Melville. Alison was a tremendous asset in sorting out the Cubitt relatives and the story of the autograph book. We traded theories on its contents and its history. Finally, Alison put me in touch with another relative, Pat Riches, whose name I had found in an old newspaper article of the *Eastern Daily Press*, about Conan Doyle's visits to Norfolk. Alison also encouraged her mother, Mary Cubitt Campbell, to recall what she could about this piece of family history and sent me her remembrances. This article is really their story. It is a tale of Conan Doyle, the Cubitt family and the mystery of the autograph album.

The story begins in 1903, when Conan Doyle was still living at Undershaw with his first wife, Louise. He was an avid motorist and sometimes went alone on short motoring holidays, where he would drive around and hike.

John Campbell (Gilbert John Cubitt's grandson) recalls:

"I have heard a recording of my grandfather in his later years recalling the time the first motor car came to his village and how the young lads ran alongside it. I have read that Conan Doyle went on pioneering motoring trips of East Anglia in the early years of the 20th century, and I think it highly likely this is what he was recalling."¹

The Happisburgh village website also gives credit to Conan Doyle for bringing the first motor car to the village.

While in Happisburgh, Conan Doyle stays at the Hill House Hotel. The proprietress of the Hill House is Emma Dorcas Cubitt (née Elden). She is a widow with seven children. Her husband died in 1895 from pneumonia and she continued to run the hotel with the help of her family. It was a difficult life.

Alison Melville comments on her great-grandmother Emma:

"Grandad commented in the (newspaper) article that his mother was remarkable, and he always said so. Apart from anything else, she raised them as a widow (Cyril was a baby when her husband, Robert Thomas Cubitt, died) and on the proceeds of running a hotel sent them all to fee-paying schools (I'm pretty sure this includes the girls) and on to apprenticeships for which, in those days, the apprentice had to pay."²



The Cubitt children. GJC is second from left.

In 1903, the seven Cubitt children ranged in age from nine to 20 years. At the time when Conan Doyle signed the autograph album, GJC was about 10 years old and his sister Edith Alice was 19.

When Conan Doyle stayed at Hill House, he used the Green Room at the back of the hotel. Pat Riches (granddaughter of Edith Alice Cubitt) recalls:

“The Hill had a three-storey building attached and mother said he had his study on the ground floor. The room

connected by its own door to the yard so that he could come and go as he pleased without disturbing other residents. His study was linked to his bedroom by a private staircase. His room was at the back of the house, his writing desk placed in the window facing the bowling green and the sea.”³

Edith Alice Cubitt would wait on Conan Doyle as he wrote his stories. According to the family mythology, Doyle’s room was littered with pictures of dancing men as he developed the cipher used in the story.

If only those drawings had survived!

According to GJC himself, it was while signing Hilda’s autograph album that Conan Doyle saw GJC’s entry, and got the idea for the cipher of dancing men. It is noteworthy that GJC’s dancing men were not a cipher per se. Nor did he ever claim that it was. Rather, it was more of a stylized alphabet. He writes:

“I did not invent secret writing or amuse myself by writing my signature in dancing men. My girl cousin requested my mother to ask Sir Arthur to write something in her autograph album, in which I previously at the age of about seven, had written my name and address in the form of the dancing men. Sir Arthur frequently stayed with us after the Boer War where he had financed and run a hospital and medical service. The album gave birth to the idea and he left many drawings about, evidently working out his code and messages.”⁴



Hill House in 1900

This letter led to some speculation,

before the discovery of the autograph album, that Conan Doyle did not base his cipher on Gilbert's stylized alphabet. In *A Study in Sources*, Donald Redmond writes:

“It is now well known that the Cubitt lad did not invent the Dancing Men, a cipher found under various guises, including an appearance in *St Nicholas* magazine, long before publication of Doyle's story.”⁵

However, it now seems clear that GJC's denial was that he created “secret writing” – the cipher. It is NOT a denial that his stick figure alphabet was the inspiration for Conan Doyle's story. GJC's brother Humphrey Cubitt summarized the contribution most succinctly in a letter in 1956:

“My brother G.J. Cubitt wrote his signature in a cousin's autograph book and, when she asked Conan Doyle for his signature, he saw the Dancing Men and evolved the story while staying at the Hill.” (letter dated May 23, 1956)⁶

And how did young Gilbert John Cubitt come to create this dancing-men alphabet in the first place?

“Mr. and Mrs. Hales (daughter of Edith Alice Cubitt) were absolutely clear about Gilbert's connection with the code. They said they had on more than one occasion discussed it with him, the last being in November 1977, the month before he died. Gilbert was in the habit, both as a child and as an adult, of cutting out dolls made from strips of paper repeatedly folded and of hanging them on thread. He was, Mrs Hales said, extremely skilled at it. It was these paper figures which Conan Doyle admired and which were the young Gilbert's dancing men.”⁷

In view of the discovery of the autograph album, I am personally inclined to doubt this version of events. In fact, none of the other Happisburgh Cubitts have any memory of GJC doing any such thing as cutting out dolls. Michael Cubitt writes:

“The story of Gilbert's signature in the album is quoted in the Redmond book... but I don't know where the information would have originated, from my father or perhaps Edith at Happisburgh.”⁸

“I personally have no recollection of him ever cutting out strips of paper, and the suggestion that these were the origin of the Dancing Men!”⁹

This view is seconded by Alison Melville and her mother, Mary Campbell:

“I was just discussing this with my mother (Mike's older sister) and she also says she has no memory of him cutting out dolls though careful

to say that she won't deny that he ever did. I am sure that I have no memory of him doing so for me, although a granddaughter is a likely recipient of such things, I would say."¹⁰

It is noteworthy that GJC never showed anyone the autograph album in order to prove his claim to be the inspiration for Conan Doyle. Hilda never brought the album forward either. This is strange because GJC was still in touch with Hilda into the early 1950s. Had Hilda lost the album by then? Alison Melville writes:

"Hilda came and stayed with Gilbert John Cubitt and his wife for a few days at a time over the course of years, and my mother remembers her from then... She was still visiting them up till the late 1940s, early 1950s."¹¹

That he couldn't refer directly to the album is obvious from the small mistakes in memory that he makes later in life when speaking of it in *Sherlock Holmes by Gas-Lamp* in 1953. For example, he refers to himself as being seven years old at the time, not 10 (which he would have been in 1902). He also said that he had written his name and address, but actually all that he wrote in dancing men was "Hasbro 1902." Clearly, he is speaking from memory and has not seen his entry in the album for many years.

Another question I had was about the name used in the Sherlock Holmes story, Hilton Cubitt. Was this character based on one of the Cubitt family? Apparently, there were more Cubitts in Conan Doyle's life than the ones in Happisburgh! He was also acquainted with another branch of the family in Bacton. Donald Redmond cites part of a letter from a Colonel R.G. Cubitt in North Walsham; Col. Cubitt wrote:

"In reply to your letter about The Case of the Dancing Men, I can perhaps help you by throwing a little light on it, although my information is second-hand and deduced from memory a good many years ago.

Undoubtedly, the character in the story, Hilton Cubitt, was my father, or so my father told me, although his Christian name was not Hilton.

Conan Doyle was staying at the time at Bacton and my father used to meet him. My father had at that time built a new farmhouse at Church Farm, Ridlington, immediately opposite the church and I have always understood that Doyle used that house as his 'Ridlingthorpe Manor' in the book..."¹²

In any case, none of the Happisburgh Cubitts believe the character was based on their family. Pat Riches writes:

"Mother was once asked about the name Hilton as there was no trace of a Hilton amongst the 64 Cubitts documented and she wondered if it was a play on words from the address 'The Hill House'."¹³

If this is indeed the case, then the name “Hilton Cubitt” is the only tribute that Conan Doyle made to the boy who gave him the idea for the dancing men cipher. He never spoke about the story with GJC or anyone in the family, nor made any other gesture or acknowledgement about GJC’s contribution. Even so, the story of GJC’s dancing-men alphabet is something of a local legend, commemorated by a blue English Heritage plaque in the village.

I endeavored to find out how this brush with the famous writer had affected GJC. Apparently, he was a very pragmatic person and, aside from his amusement at being an object of curiosity by several Sherlockian societies, his family reports that it did not affect him very much. In a newspaper article from the 1960s, GJC is quoted as saying:

“I once got a letter, asking about his days at Hill House Hotel from one of those Sherlock Holmes societies, the Baker Street Irregulars in the United States.”¹⁴

Alison Melville says:

“I don’t think he was very ‘affected’ by contact with ACD; quite a few minor celebrities stayed in the area as a getaway and it was all in the run of things. I recall when the article I mentioned was in the paper he refused to have his picture taken, saying the stories were not about him.”¹⁵

Gilbert John Cubitt served in the Army during the First World War and in the RAF during the Second World War. He was married twice. Between wars he was a civilian instructor with the RAF and retired in 1956. He died in 1977. Edith Alice Cubitt, the other dancing-men artist, took over the Hill House Hotel from her mother in 1919 and ran it until 1934, whereupon it was sold. The Hill House Hotel is a local icon and is still going strong, although the adjacent building where Conan Doyle stayed was sold during the 1920s.

Hilda Hewitt, the owner of the autograph album, is more difficult to trace as she was not an object of curiosity for Sherlockians and lived a quiet life in relative obscurity. She was born Annie Edith Hilda Hewitt in November 1881 in Norwich. Her mother was Annie Tanner Hewitt, who was Emma Dorcas Cubitt’s sister. She never married. Alison Melville writes:

“Her stepfather was a butler at a large house in Huntingdonshire and she spent summers with the Cubitts at the hotel in Happisburgh. In later life she was a governess and then a lady’s companion.”¹⁶

Personal memories of Hilda are few. Alison continues:

“My mother remembers her as quite refined and ladylike, with her hair pulled back into a little bun. Her clothes were things like tailored skirts and blouses and cardigans or twinsets. She doesn’t think Hilda had

any noticeable accent. She agrees with Mike that there was never any word of a sweetheart.”¹⁷

For me, the great mystery in this story is the whereabouts of the autograph album between the time Hilda was at Hill House and when it appeared in a Norfolk antique market.

Many of the signatures are undated. However, among those that are, we can see that Hilda was very active in obtaining autographs from 1901 to 1903. Entries continue at a much reduced pace until 1913 and then the signatures stop altogether. In 1947, we see a newspaper clipping from the wedding of Princess Elizabeth and Prince Phillip that included the register and signatures of the wedding party. If we make the assumption that it was Hilda who pasted this article, we know that it must still have been in her possession at least until 1947, nine years before she died (1956).

Later in life, Hilda moved in with a maiden aunt and lived with her until the aunt's death in 1939. At this point no one remembers where Hilda was living. Alison Melville writes:

“Pure supposition – Hilda may have stayed on as the Edrich's tenant after Rosa died. My mother points out that since she was under 60 at the outbreak of the War she would have had to do war service. Heaven knows what this may have been but she might not have remained in the area. Outside chance, I suppose, that some things were boxed up and remained there, forgotten, but I wouldn't put much hope on that. However, if the book was still with Hilda when she died in the 1950s, why was it not just cleared and sold then?”¹⁹

Why indeed? Clearly, it was not given to any of the Cubitt relatives for safekeeping. This is as far as I was able to trace the whereabouts of the autograph album. It falls on a more skilled detective than myself to discover what happened to it between 1947 and 2008.

Wherever it was before, in 2008 a man called Gerald Fuller purchased the album at an antique fair in Norwich. The vendor claimed that the book was part of an estate sale. Gerald Fuller originally bought the book because it looked interesting and had some nice watercolours. He did not discover Conan Doyle's signature until later and then realized that he had bought a very valuable book.¹⁹

This is the end of the story of Conan Doyle and the Cubitts of Happisburgh. Whether or not his association with Conan Doyle affected young Gilbert, this episode from the family history has become a large part of the mythology of the Cubitt family and among Sherlockians around the world.

I wish to express my thanks to Michael Cubitt, Alison Melville, John Campbell, Mary Campbell and Pat Riches for sharing their family history with me and allowing me to tell their story in their own words.

NOTES

- [1] Personal correspondence with author, October 16, 2012
- [2] Personal correspondence with author, October 17, 2012
- [3] Personal correspondence with author, November 9, 2012
- [4] Schreffler, Philip A., *Sherlock Holmes by Gas Lamp: Highlights From the First Four Decades of the Baker Street Journal*, Fordham UP New York, 1993, pages 331 – 335
- [5] Redmond, Donald, *Sherlock Holmes: A Study in Sources*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Kingston and Montreal 1982, pg. 124
- [6] The Sherlock Holmes Society of London, *In the Country of the Broads, The Cubitts of Bacton and Happsburgh Appendix VI*, 1984
- [7] The Sherlock Holmes Society of London, *In the Country of the Broads, The Cubitts of Bacton and Happsburgh Appendix VI*, 1984
- [8] Personal correspondence with author, November 21, 2012
- [9] Personal correspondence with author November 27, 2012
- [10] Personal correspondence with author, November 27, 2012
- [11] Personal correspondence with author, November 13, 2012
- [12] Donald Redmond cites letter from the journal article by Charles O. Merriman, "In Search of Sherlock Holmes" in the *Sherlock Holmes Journal* 8, 1966, 9-10
- [13] Personal correspondence with author, November 9, 2012
- [14] *Eastern Daily Press*, October 1969
- [15] Personal correspondence with author, October 17, 2012
- [16] Personal correspondence with author, October 17, 2012
- [17] Personal correspondence with author, November 13, 2012
- [18] Personal correspondence with author, November 14, 2012
- [19] Correspondence with the Toronto Reference Library, March 5, 2012

**“Come at once if convenient - if inconvenient, come all the same.”
on Saturday, July 13, 2013**

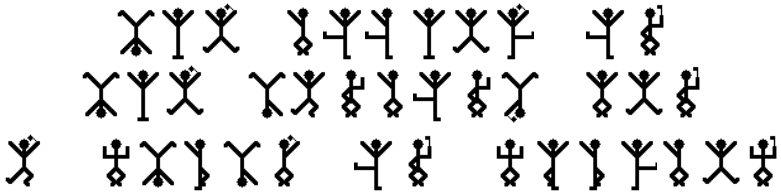
CAN-AM SILVER BLAZE DAY (2 events)

Hosts: The Bootmakers of Toronto
Guests: The Baker Street Irregulars



1. 12:00 noon: Race at Woodbine Race Track, with buffet lunch (\$45)
2. 7:00 p.m.: BOT story meeting at Toronto Reference Library (\$10)

Space Limited. For information and reservations, contact:
Colonel Ross / Donny Zaldin
Tel: (416) 565-9555; Email: donaldzaldin@rogers.com



The Cipher in ‘The Dancing Men’: A Study in Sources

by Donny Zaldin, M.Bt., B.S.I.

Donny Zaldin is a past Meyers and co-Quiz Master of the Bootmakers and a winner of several Warren Carleton Awards. He serves as organizer of the society’s annual Silver Blaze Event and as diarist and copy editor for Canadian Holmes. He is also a member of the Baker Street Irregulars under the investiture “John Hector McFarlane.” (NORW)



Whenever I read a Sherlock Holmes story, I wonder how the idea of a crime or mystery came to the mind of Conan Doyle. Was it from his knowledge of “sensational literature?” Or from a person he knew, place he visited or event which he experienced first-hand? Or from his own imagination? To wit: what led Conan Doyle to base his Sherlockian adventures on a legendary family curse of a spectral, hellish hound (*The Hound of the Baskervilles*), the genetic trait of red-headedness (‘The Red-headed League’) or a cipher of stickmen (‘The Dancing Men’)?

Thanks to a recent acquisition by the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection of the Toronto Reference Library, I can now cross the last one off my list of queries and conjectures.

The Cubitt Family, Happisburgh, Norfolk:

In 1903, Conan Doyle travelled to Norfolk County, in part to develop an idea for the fourth story in *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*. He arrived on May 9, visiting and possibly consulting with his brother-in-law, E.W. Hornung, himself a celebrated author of detective fiction as the creator of the gentleman thief A.J. Raffles.

In 1901, Happisburgh boasted 126 families and a total population of 547. While in that picturesque coastal village (pronounced “Haisbro”), Conan Doyle stayed at (or at least visited) the Hill House Hotel, owned and operated by Emma Cubitt [1858-1919], widow of Robert Cubitt [1852-1895]. While there,

Conan Doyle signed an autograph album, probably belonging to a first cousin of the Cubitts' seven children, on their mother's side.

This great treasure, a 6" x 7½" album of pencil, pen and ink, and watercolour drawings, literary quotes, poems and, of course, autographs. Most entries are dated between 1901 and 1917.

Two pages are of particular interest to Doyleans and Sherlockians: one with an entry reading "Arthur Conan Doyle / May 1903. / Happisburgh" and another in which Robert and Emma Cubitt's 11-year-old son, Gilbert John Cubitt [1891-1977], signed his name alongside 10 stickmen figures, the characters of which formed a simple cryptographic cipher, spelling out "HASBRO, 1902." [See images page 9]. The album also contains four other artistic or literary works of the Cubitt children.

Canonical Ciphers:

In addition to the simple substitution cipher in 'The Dancing Men,' Holmes was called upon to solve three codes (of which we are aware): an open-text code in 'The Gloria Scott,' a light-flash message in 'The Red Circle' and a book code in *The Valley of Fear*. Holmes also amused himself reading ciphers in the agony column (*The Valley of Fear*), was the author of a "trifling" monograph in which he analyzed 160 separate ciphers ('The Dancing Men') and as Altamont, he claimed to have acquired the new naval codes for Von Bork ('His Last Bow').

Possible Sources of ACD's Dancing Men:

Rumours of the Cubitt-Conan Doyle connection surfaced in print as early as 1948, in John Dickson Carr's biography of Conan Doyle: "His idea for 'The Dancing Men,' he got [sic] on a motoring visit to the Hill House Hotel, at Happisburgh in Norfolk, then kept by a family named Cubitt. The hotel proprietor's small son had a habit of writing his signature in dancing men. Conan Doyle worked at the story in the Green Room, overlooking the bowling green, and left his room strewn with dancing sketches." Four years later, Gavin Brend wrote in a two-part article in *Coming Events in Britain* of his discovery of a first-hand Norfolk version of the origin of Conan Doyle's adventure story: that a little boy, G.J. Cubitt, had invented them and "then and there," Conan Doyle "set to work upon the story as we know it, embellishing it with Mr. Cubitt's patronymic." In 1954, Gilbert John Cubitt himself wrote Dutch Sherlockian Cornelius Helling: "I did not invent secret writing to amuse myself by writing my signature in dancing men [as Mr. Brend wrote]. ... my mother ... ask[ed] Sir Arthur to write something in ... [the] autograph album, in which I previously, at the age of about seven [sic], had written my name and address in the form of the dancing men." Sir Arthur frequently stayed with us after the Boer War ... The album gave birth to the idea and he left many drawings about, evidently working out his code and messages." Gilbert John even sent Helling a "very accurate facsimile of his name and former address in dancing men!"

G.J. Cubitt



Hill House



Happisburgh



Note: The “accuracy” of Gilbert John’s 1953 “facsimile” of his name and address in his dancing-men alphabet is not borne out when it is compared to his actual 1902 entry in the autograph album, which appears on page 9.

Various writers on-the-writings (Christopher Morley, Donald Redmond, William S. Baring-Gould, Richard Lancelyn Green and Leslie S. Klinger) list the following as possible sources for Conan Doyle’s dancing-men cipher:

1. An early medieval (500-1300 C.E.) tree alphabet, known as the ‘Alphabet of Hermes or Mercury;’
2. A secret writing used by an early 19th-century covert revolutionary Italian society;
3. Edgar Allan Poe’s 1843 short story, ‘The Gold-Bug;’
4. A U.S. Civil War era (1866) manual of army signals;
5. An 1874 British children’s magazine puzzle alphabet; and
6. The 1903 Cubitt autograph album.

‘The Dancing Men:’ A Study in Sources

I reviewed the writings-on-the-writings about these possible sources but I found no detailed examination of them. I therefore searched out each of these six possible sources and then compared each of them against the dancing-men of Conan Doyle in order to determine if the latter may have been based on the former.

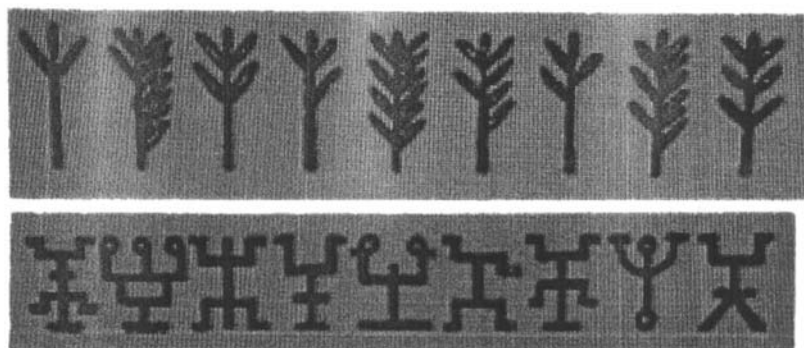
My observations and deductions with respect to my examination and direct comparisons follow.

Tree Alphabet and Alphabet of Hermes or Mercury:

The writings-on-the-writings: Similarities were cited between ACD’s cipher in ‘The Dancing Men’ and a ‘Tree Alphabet,’ and the ‘Alphabet of Hermes or Mercury,’ illustrated in Dr. Albert Mackey’s 1874 *Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*. In 2005, Klinger cites that “Irving Kamil points out the similarities of the cipher to the Easter Island and Indus Valley scripts described by Charles Berlitz in his *Mysteries from Forgotten Worlds* (1972).”

My research: I located and studied the Tree Alphabet and the Alphabet of Hermes (Greek) or Mercury (Roman) in Dr. Mackey’s 1874 treatise on Freemasonry. The tree alphabet was the most common one used among the Persians and Arabs (B.C.E.) as a secret cipher, although it was later adopted and recognized as an ordinary mode of communication. The philosopher Dioscorides

(40-90 C.E.) wrote several works on the subject of trees and herbs, using characters of this secret alphabet, making prominent the secret characters of this alphabet. The characters were distinguishable by the number of limbs on the left side and the number of branches on the right side of the tree.



Samples of Tree Alphabet and Alphabet of Hermes or Mercury

An illustration of the engraving of this letter alphabet with nine of these mystic letters and their relative values appeared in the 1874 *Encyclopedia of Freemasonry* by Dr. Mackey. The above image reproduces part of the frontispiece of the 1912 edition (in which the 1874 entry remained unchanged). The characters in the lower line are the relative value, known as the Alphabet of Hermes or Mercury.

Note: There is no confirmation that Conan Doyle ever saw this entry in any edition of Dr. Mackey's *Encyclopedia of Freemasonry* or that he knew about either the tree alphabet or the alphabet of Hermes or Mercury.

My observations and conclusion: The tree alphabet does not appear to be a source of Conan Doyle's cipher, as the dancing-men do not resemble the tree letters. However, the Alphabet of Hermes or Mercury does employ various rudimentary permutations and combinations of stick-men, with arms and legs, standing upright or upside down. Thus, it is possible that it served as an inspirational and design source of 'The Dancing Men' cipher, if Conan Doyle ever saw the alphabet, which I find unlikely.

Secret Societal Writing:

The writings-on-the-writings: There was unconfirmed speculation that Conan Doyle may have gotten the idea for his dancing-men cipher from a form of secret writing of the *Carbonari*.

My research: I have been unable to locate either any 19th- or 21st-century record of the design or characters of this secret writing of almost 200 years ago. Nor is there any evidence that Conan Doyle ever saw it.

The Carbonari (Italian for "charcoal burners," which was descriptive of the society's first members and of the society's initiation rites) were groups of secret

revolutionary or conspirational societies. They were founded in early 19th-century Italy, and were an offshoot of Freemasonry and organized in like fashion. Banned and excommunicated by the Papacy and hanged for treason if discovered, members communicated with each other by way of secret writings. The Carbonari appeared in Victorian literature, in the stories of Robert Louis Stevenson, Wilkie Collins, Conan Doyle (who featured them in ‘The Adventure of the Red Circle’) and, more recently, by Italian philosopher and novelist Umberto Eco.

Note: Although there is confirmation in ‘The Red Circle’ that Conan Doyle knew about the Carbonari, there is no confirmation that he ever saw the design or characters of any secret form of writing of this society.

My observations and conclusion: Since I can find no record of what this secret form of societal writing looks like, it is impossible for me to confirm either way that the secret writing of the Carbonari was a predecessor format that was a source of the dancing-men cipher. On the evidence extant, however, I believe that this is highly unlikely.

Edgar Allan Poe’s ‘The Gold-Bug:

The writings-on-the-writings: The text of Poe’s story ‘The Gold-Bug’ offered a cipher suggestive of Conan Doyle’s dancing-men, published exactly 60 years later in 1903.

My research: This short story, first published in three installments, earned Poe [1809-1849] the largest sum he ever received for any of his works and was his most popular and widely read work. The story is set in Sullivan Island, South Carolina, with the plot following William Legrand (who had been recently bitten by a scarab-like gold-coloured bug) on an adventure in which he uses letter frequencies to decipher a secret message, leading to a buried treasure. Although Poe did not invent cryptography (it is said that he was inspired by an interest in Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*), he introduced and popularized this theme in detective fiction. Robert Louis Stevenson readily acknowledged that his 1883 novel, *Treasure Island*, was inspired by Poe’s ‘The Gold-Bug.’

I compared Poe’s story with Conan Doyle’s story and Poe’s cipher with Doyle’s cipher, and I compiled the following two charts with respect to two aspects of the authors’ respective ciphers: text and design, respectively.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
DANC 1903	⌘	⌚	⌛	⌜	⌝	⌞	⌟	⌠	⌡	⌢	⌣	⌤	⌥
GOLD 1843	5	2	-	†	8	1	3	4	6	,	7	0	9
	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
DANC 1903	⌦	⌧	⌨	〈	〉	⌫	⌬	⌭	⌮	⌯	⌰	⌱	⌲
GOLD 1843	*	‡	.	\$	()	;	?	¶]	¢	:	[

Note: Conan Doyle was a great admirer of Poe’s writing, calling him “one of the great landmarks and starting points in ... literature ... so stimulating to the mind of others ... original and inventive ... a root from which a whole literature has developed ... opening up pioneer tracks for other men to explore.”

My observations and conclusions: While Poe’s story may have provided Conan Doyle with the inspiration for the idea of a mystery story based on a substitution cipher, Poe’s tale was simplistic when compared with Conan Doyle’s. Moreover, substitutes employed by Conan Doyle bore no resemblance whatsoever to those employed by Poe. In ‘The Gold-Bug,’ letters are represented merely by numbers, punctuation marks and symbols, while in ‘The Dancing Men,’ letters are depicted by upright or upside-down stick-men with one, two or no arms and one or two legs [as appears in the following chart]. I therefore conclude that the format or design of Poe’s cipher was not a source of the format or design of Conan Doyle’s dancing-men cipher.

<i>Author</i>	Edgar Allan Poe	Arthur Conan Doyle
<i>Story</i>	‘The Gold-Bug’	‘The Dancing Men’
<i>Year of First Publication</i>	1843	1903
<i>Character</i>	William Legrand	Sherlock Holmes
<i>Frequency Analysis</i>	“Now in English, the letter which most frequently occurs is e ... E predominates so remarkably that an individual sentence of any length is rarely seen, in which it is not the prevailing character.”	“As you are aware, E is the most common letter in the English alphabet and it predominates to so marked an extent that even in a short sentence one would expect to find it most often.”
<i>Axiom</i>	“... it may well be doubted whether human ingenuity can construct an enigma of the kind which human ingenuity may not, by proper application, resolve.”	“What one man can invent another can discover.”

U.S. Civil War Manual of Signals:

The writings-on-the-writings: A U.S. Civil War era book, *A Manual of Signals*, written by Major Albert J. Myer, described various methods of transferring letters of the alphabet into field signals, using pictographs based on what the military author called “ludicrous sketches of little figures of men.”

My research: I located and examined *A Manual of Signals*. The second printing in 1866, describes various methods, principally devised by Maj. Myer, of transmitting field signals of flags, standards, torches, etc. that are incapable of being deciphered (by the enemy) if and when intercepted. His invention used different combinations of flag size, colour, staff length and shapes to increase the readability of the signal, day or night, to distances of eight to 15 miles, although less in rain and fog.

The manual's chapter titled 'Cryptograms' contains the images of homographic signals for use in daylight or at night, using different alphabets, including the principal alphabet used by the Union Army, the General Service Homographic Alphabet, in which each letter is represented by two numbers.

At page 261 of Myer's manual: "Letters may be sent in ludicrous sketches. Thus letters may be indicated by little figures of men." In 2005, Klinger cites that "Renowned cryptographer David Shulman puts forward a remarkably similar cipher published in the United Service Magazine, a British publication, in 1832, also using flags; and, that "William Smith concludes that the [dancing-men] cipher was likely derived from one used by Major Albert J. Myer in his *A Manual of Signals* (1864) [sic], which involved men using flags."

Myer lists the following concordance of figures to numbers:

Figures standing upright are "ones."

Figures holding up a right arm are "twos."

Figures holding up a left arm are "threes."

Figures with a right foot raised are "fours."

Figures with a left foot raised are "fives."

Below is an actual cryptogram (set out on page 262 of the manual), which was commonly sent by one army unit to another during the American Civil War:



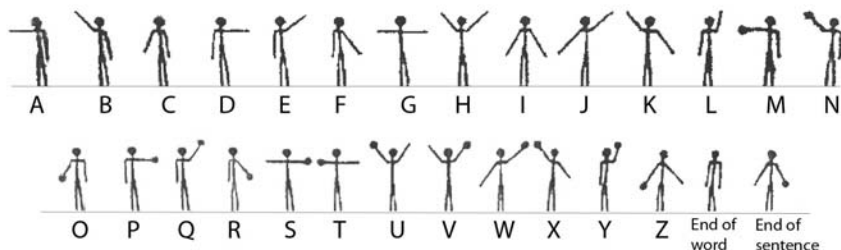
The reader is encouraged to try to decipher the above message, remembering that each letter of the alphabet is represented by two numbers so that each encrypted letter will be depicted by a pair of men-figures. For example, the most common letter, E, is represented by two numbers, 5 and 1, and is, therefore, depicted by the above pair of men-figures.

Solutions should be e-mailed to the author at donaldzaldin@rogers.com. Winners will be contacted by the author and announced at an upcoming Bootmaker meeting. A Sherlockian prize will be awarded to the winner of a random draw of all those who have submitted correct entries by May 30, 2013.

Note: I found no confirmation that Conan Doyle saw or knew about this U.S. army treatise on ciphers and cryptograms.

My observations and conclusion: Almost four decades before the American Civil War, the 1832 British military journal proposed the "official" introduction

of the following “Signal Alphabet” as practised informally by a Colonel Babcock in his outpost duties, as a system of field-signals.



An April 1903 article in *The Strand* on “Human Railway Signals” may have been a further influence; and, the flag at the end of a word could have come from the coast guard semaphore of that era.

The homographic signals and figures described in Myer’s 1866 manual employ different permutations and combinations of upright figures of men with their arms and legs in different poses, as do Conan Doyle’s dancing-men. Given our knowledge of Conan Doyle’s extensive research into the subjects on which he wrote, I deduce that Conan Doyle researched ciphers and cryptograms and that it is possible that he sought out or came across Myer’s writings on the subject. Given the similarity in format and design of Conan Doyle’s dancing-men to Myer’s 1866 cryptographic homographs, I conclude that Conan Doyle was likely aware of Myer’s men-figures, and that they were a possible and even a likely source of the format and design of Conan Doyle’s 1903 dancing-men cipher.

British Children’s Magazine Puzzle Alphabet:

The writings-on-the-writings: Conan Doyle’s cipher may have originated with the stick figures of ‘The Language of the Restless Imps,’ which appears in the May and June 1874 issues of a British children’s monthly periodical, *St. Nicholas Magazine* [sic]. In 2005, Klinger cites that “an article in *The Bookman* by Lyndon Orr (April 1910) suggests that the cipher was based on these children’s alphabet figures.

My research: I located and studied these issues, in which young readers are encouraged to use a whimsical alphabet of acrobatic figures to solve “puzzles” and decipher children’s verse.

I compared ‘The Language of the Restless Imps’ cipher with Conan Doyle’s cipher and compiled the following chart:

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
DANC 1903													
IMPS 1874													
	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
DANC 1903													
IMPS 1874													

Note: I discovered no evidence that Conan Doyle was aware of this particular children magazine’s alphabet of (rounded) stick-men.

My observations and conclusion: Of the 1874 “Restless Imps” (which were reprinted as the “Restless Fays” in the Boy’s Own Paper (Jan. 29 – Feb. 5, 1881) and the Boy’s Own Book (1888), Conan Doyle called the similarity in format “pure coincidence.” Conan Doyle’s dancing-men resemble the impish stick-men (signalling with arms and legs in different poses) in the above chart. I found no evidence that Conan Doyle was aware of the Restless Imps puzzle alphabet. He was, however, 15 years old when it was published in a popular children’s magazine and given the similarity in the design of the characters, I conclude that it is likely that the 1874 Imps were a possible and even a likely source of the format and design of Conan Doyle’s 1903 dancing-men cipher.

The Cubitt autograph album:

The writings-on-the-writings: A child’s autograph album belonging to the extended Cubitt family of Happisburgh, Norfolk, and signed by Conan Doyle, and containing an entry by an 11-year old boy of alphabet letters in a rudimentary form of stick-men, was cited as a possible source of Conan Doyle’s dancing-men alphabet cipher. The claim was based on the recollections and testimony of the Cubitt family, without any documentary proof, including the autograph album, which could not be located and produced.

Accordingly, without concrete evidence confirming that Conan Doyle was aware of the Tree Letters and the Alphabet of Hermes or Mercury, the secret writing of the Carbonari, Major Myer’s Civil War era manual of army signals, or the ‘Language of the Restless Imps,’ it was the consensus of Sherlockian scholars prior to 2008 that Poe’s ‘The Gold-Bug’ was the likeliest source of Conan Doyle’s stick-men cipher in ‘The Dancing Men.’

Nevertheless, the undocumented claim that the stick-men cipher of Gilbert John Cubitt was an important source of Conan Doyle’s cipher persisted unabated and gathered momentum over the years. After Conan-Doyle’s death in 1930, his editor and friend, H. Greenhough Smith, wrote in an article in the October 1930 issue of *The Strand*, titled “Some Letters of Arthur Conan Doyle,”

that “the sight of a child’s scribbled drawing gave him the idea of using these little figures as letters in a cryptogram.”

In the *Oxford Sherlock Holmes*, citing Christopher Morley and Donald A. Redmond, editor Richard Lancelyn Green notes two striking connections between the Cubitt family of the Hill House, Norfolk, and squire Hilton Cubitt of Conan Doyle’s ‘The Adventure of the Dancing Men.’

1. The family name of the Norfolk squire in the story is “Cubitt,” the family name of the landlord of Conan Doyle’s likely hotel lodgings in Happisburgh, Norfolk — though Cubitt was also the family name of Conan Doyle’s then co-Deputy Lieutenant of Surrey, the Honourable Henry Cubitt, the son of Lord Ashcombe, an old Norfolk family. According to the census records of 1901, Cubitt was not an uncommon English family name and “the graveyards [in Norfolk] are rich in Cubitts,” a variant on the word, “cubit,” an ancient measure of length.

2. The Cubitt ancestral home in the story is “Ridling (or “Riding” in American publications) Thorpe,” a hybrid of two real villages, Ridlington and Edingthorpe, which are near Happisburgh. Abe Slaney was staying at lonely Elrige’s Farm, East Ruston, Norfolk. The farm’s name may have derived from Ebridge Mills, owned by Cubit and Walker, in North Walsham, a market town six miles west of Happisburgh and 16 miles north of Norwich. East Ruston, where Conan Doyle’s brother-in-law E.W. Hornung had his country home, was a village five and a half miles from North Walsham.

There is a further link between the Cubitts of Happisburgh and the Cubitts of ‘The Dancing Men.’ When caught out by Holmes, Abe Slaney explains the origin of the cipher to Holmes and Watson as follows: “First of all, I want you gentlemen to understand that I have known this lady since she was a child. There were *seven* of us [emphasis mine] in a gang in Chicago, and Elsie’s father was the boss of the Joint. He was a clever man, was old Patrick. It was he who invented that writing, which would pass as a child’s scrawl unless you just happened to have the key to it.” It is arguably no coincidence that there were *seven* Cubitt children, including Gilbert John and Edith Ann.

Gerry Fuller of Spalding, Lincolnshire, purchased the Cubitt album which was lost to the Cubitt family in about the 1930s, at a Norfolk antiques and book fair in 2008. It seemed to finally confirm the long-running but previously undocumented claim that ‘The Adventure of the Dancing Men’ was inspired by Conan Doyle’s stay or visit at the Hill House in Happisburgh in May 1903. The “deduction” that 11-year old Gilbert John Cubitt’s basic cipher was a primary source of Conan Doyle’s dancing-men became so compelling that it was heralded in the press by Roger Johnson, founder and spokesperson of The Sherlock Holmes Society of London.

Following Fuller’s discovery of the album, both Poe’s gold-bug cipher and Gilbert John’s Cubitt’s stick-men are now acknowledged as having provided Conan Doyle with inspiration for his dancing men.

Almost immediately following the discovery of the Cubitt album, the extent of the Cubitt-Conan Doyle connection was subjected to considerable

embellishment. Historical and travel websites now state that Happisburgh was a favourite haunt of Conan Doyle and served as a perfect retreat for the famous author seeking inspiration and solitude. The official town website claims that Conan Doyle wrote to his mother from the hotel about his ideas for a new story, 'The Dancing Men.' Patricia Riches, a great-grand-daughter of Robert and Emma Cubitt, claims that her mother Phyllis Hales told her that Conan Doyle

HILL HOUSE HOTEL,
HAPPISBURGH.

My dear Smith

I think perhaps this would meet the case. I have a strong bloody story for the fourth "The Adventure of the Dancing Men" We could put this third and so separate the two crimeless stories. That would give a stronger start to the series.

I must say that I cannot agree with your estimate of the "Norwood Builder". I read it to a roomful of people and I was never more conscious of holding an audience absolutely spell bound.

The other is a dramatic & ingenious plot, but it is weakened by Holmes having little to do with the denouement.

Yours.

A.C.D.

Shall be back on Tuesday.

got the idea for the dancing-men from her uncle Gilbert, who cut strips of paper dolls in 1902, and that ACD used an upstairs bedroom or study at the hotel, his writing desk overlooking a bowling green and the North Sea, to write all or part of the story, while attended by either a maidservant or Gilbert's then 18-year-old sister, Edith Alice.

A century after Gilbert John and Conan Doyle signed the autograph album, Happisburgh has more than doubled in population to 1,372 and the Hill House pub, with three-room inn, is owned and operated by Clive and Sue Stockton. The interior walls are adorned with press cuttings and framed Sherlockian photographs. Two commemorative blue plaques are affixed to the exterior wall. One, bearing the image of Holmes, with deerstalker and pipe, reads "The Hill House, 1903, Arthur Conan Doyle," and the other, "SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE wrote 'The Adventure of the Dancing Men' here in 1903, in which Sherlock Holmes cracks a code inspired by Conan Doyle's visits to The Hill House."

My observations and conclusion: Regrettably, there is no documentary evidence such as the guest register, a confirmatory letter to or from the hotel, or one of the "many drawings" which Gilbert claims Conan Doyle "left ... about, evidently working out his code and messages," which prove that Conan Doyle stayed at the Hill Hotel in Happisburgh, other than that singular visit in May 1903, or that he wrote any portion of the story there.

The historical record, in Conan Doyle's own hand, suggests that although the tale was, in part, inspired by the stick-figures of Gilbert John, Conan Doyle did not devise his alphabet and commence his manuscript until he had left Norfolk, arriving in London on May 16. In *Arthur Conan Doyle: A Life in Letters*, Jon Lellenberg, Daniel Stashower and Charles Foley quote pertinent correspondence written by Conan Doyle about the dancing men, which is dated by Andrew Lycett in *The Man Who Created Sherlock Holmes: The Life and Times of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*. On May 14, 1903, Conan Doyle wrote *The Strand* editor, H. Greenhough Smith on Hill House letterhead. In a second (undated) letter to "My dear Smith," also written from the hotel, Conan Doyle writes, "I have a strong bloody story for the fourth [story in *The Return*, 'The Dancing Men']" (letter reproduced on page 27). He then writes his mother from the Grand Hotel, Trafalgar Square, London, "I must have another bull for my fourth. No one could help me in my actual writing. It is only in talking over the plot before I begin that I get assistance ... 'The Dancing Men' still hangs fire. I have really had so little quiet time. But it will come." Conan Doyle then writes Smith from Undershaw, "I have finished 'The Adventure of the Dancing Men.' I hope it is long enough and strong enough to make a good story for your Xmas number." Another letter to Smith from Undershaw reads: "[P.S.] The Dancing Men are being typed," followed by yet another, "I am sending you the Dancing Men. You see that Norfolk is playing its part." 'The Dancing Men' was published in *The Strand Magazine* in the U.K. and in *Collier's Weekly* in the U.S. in early December 1903. Taken together, these letters, which also reside in the Arthur

Conan Doyle Collection at the Toronto Reference Library, offer ample evidence that Conan Doyle did not write ‘The Dancing Men’ at the Hill House Hotel.

Although Conan Doyle was inarguably connected with The Hill House and the Cubitt family of Happisburgh, Norfolk, in 1903, his story ‘The Dancing Men’ was not written at their hotel. Notwithstanding, the ACD Collection is indeed fortunate to have acquired this significant historical gem, which confirms the Cubbitt autograph album as inspiration and a definitive source of Conan Doyle’s celebrated cipher.



Endnotes:

1) In DANC, the six messages of Abe Slaney contained 18 different letters of a distinctly anthropomorphic alphabet, with some inconsistencies between the messages (i.e. the transcript in *The Strand* used the same or similar characters for the letters C and H and for the letters P and V).

As a result, Holmes’ deciphering of these messages did not provide readers with characters of the following eight letters, namely: F, J, K, Q, U, W, X and Z.

In the past century, several scholars created substitutions for these missing letters, including Danish Sherlockian Aage Rieck Sørensen, who devised, circa 1980, a coherent icono-semantic system which filled in the missing letters in a symmetric hidden pattern. The complete 26-character alphabet is pictured below:

Main Characters without flags

a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j
l	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	t	u
w	x	y	z	å	ä	ö	,	.	!

Considering the number of combinations of the two-head positions, seven right-arm positions, seven left-arm positions, five right-leg positions and five left-leg positions, there are 2,450 different possible dancing-men figures.

Subsequently, Sørensen’s alphabet formed the basis of a web-based substitution cipher tool developed by RUMKIN, for use encrypting several different ciphers, including Morse code, Braille, Poe’s ‘The Gold-Bug’ and Conan Doyle’s ‘The Dancing Men.’

The RUMKIN web address is: <http://rumkin.com/tools/cipher/substitution.php>

2) At Conan Doyle's suggestion, *The Strand* publisher Greenhough Smith switched around the order of the third and fourth stories of *The Return*, to "separate the two crimeless stories" ['The Norwood Builder' and 'The Solitary Cyclist'] and place 'DANC' (which he considered to be "a strong bloody story") before 'SOLI' (which he considered weaker "in Holmes not having more to do").

Bibliography

- Baring-Gould, William S., *The Annotated Sherlock Holmes*, 1967
- Klinger, Leslie S., *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes*, 2005
- Brend, Gavin, *Coming Events in Britain* (Oct. and Dec. 1952), 'The Haunts of Sherlock Holmes,' cited by J. Finley Christ, 'The Dancing Men,' *Sherlock Holmes Journal*, v.1, no. 4, p.24, (Dec 1953)
- Carr, John Dickson, *The Life of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*, Harper Bros., New York, 1948
- Colburn, Henry and Bentley, Richard, *The United Service Journal and Naval and Military Magazine*, 1832, Part II, William Clowes, London, 1832
- Cubitt, Gilbert John [1891-1977], Cubitt Family autograph album, 1901-17, 1949, ACD Collection, Toronto Reference Library
- Cubitt, Mike [1930-present], (82-year-old son of Gilbert John Cubitt), E-mails and telephone, Farnham, England, Oct.-Nov., 2012
- Helling, Cornelius, 'The True Story of the Dancing Men,' article at pages 331-33 of Philip A. Shreffler's *Sherlock Holmes By Gas-Lamp: Highlights from the First Four Decades of the Baker Street Journal*, BSI, 1989
- Lancelyn Green, Richard, editor, *The Oxford Sherlock Holmes: The Return of Sherlock Holmes*, 1993, introduction
- Lellenberg, John; Stashower, Daniel; and Foley, Charles; *Arthur Conan Doyle: A Life in Letters*, Penguin Books, 2007
- Lycett, Andrew, *The Man Who Created Sherlock Holmes: The Life and Times of Arthur Conan Doyle*, Free Press, 2007
- Mackey, Albert G, M.D., 33°, *Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and Its Kindred Sciences*, The Masonic History Company, NY and London, 1874
- Myer, Albert J., *A Manual of Signals: For the Use of Signal Officers in the Field, and for Military and Naval Students, Military Schools, Etc.*, NY: Van Nostrand, 1866, 2nd printing, 398p
- Poe, Edgar Allan, "The Gold-Bug," *The Dollar Newspaper*, (Philadelphia, PA), Vol. 1, No. 22, 1st installment June 21, 1843, 2nd installment June 28, 1843
- Redmond, Donald A., *Sherlock Holmes, A Study in Sources*, McGill-Queens University Press, Kingston and Montreal, 1982, revised and enlarged edition, The Battered Silicon Dispatch Box, 2002
- Scribner's Sons, Charles, St. Nicholas Illustrated, May and June, 1874, Vol. 1, Nos. 7 and 8, The Riddle Box, Something New: 'The Language of the Restless Imps,' Little Drops of Water (children's verse), edited by Mary Mapes Dodge
- Tracy, Jack, *The Encyclopaedia Sherlockiana*, 1977, entry on cryptography

From the Editor's Bookshelf

The Sherlock Holmes Miscellany by Roger Johnson and Jean Upton. The History Press. \$19.95 Cdn.

On *Desert Island Discs*, a BBC radio program first broadcast in 1942, castaways on a mythical island are allowed eight gramophone records and one book. (The Bible and the complete works of Shakespeare are on the island).

Substitute the complete works of Arthur Conan Doyle for Shakespeare, and for followers of the world's first private consulting detective, the book of choice should be *The Sherlock Holmes Miscellany*.

Unlike other excellent Sherlockian handbooks (Christopher Redmond's second edition being *primus inter pares*), this volume is truly portable. At seven inches by 4 ½ inches and 223 pages, it slips easily into purse or pocket so is likely to survive any adventure, including shipwreck. With the *Miscellany* in hand you can guide the Sherlockian uninitiated and dazzle fellow fans with your grasp of the arcane, the obscure and the titillating in the Canon.

The spousal team of Roger Johnson and Jean Upton (a Briton and an American) have been everywhere, seen everything and overheard everyone – to paraphrase Holmes's description of the Baker Street Irregulars. Consider their comment on *The Incredible Murder of Cardinal Tosca*, written by Canadian poet Alden Nowlan and actor-director Walter Learning: "This production is almost unknown outside Canada, and seems to have been unjustly forgotten there."

Magisterial in scope, witty in judgment and crystalline in prose, *Miscellany* seldom fails to satisfy either casual curiosity or scholarly inquiry. My only objections are the faint font used for the page numbers and the parsimonious absence of an index. — Peter Calamai

Sherlockian Picture Puzzles: A Monograph on Eliot Keen's 1905 Illustrations by John Addy. The Musgraves (Anne Jorhad, Hallas Lodge, Greenside Lane, Cullingworth, Bradford, BD13 5AP). USA & Canada \$30.00 (postage included).

This publication unveils a little-known series of non-canonical drawings featuring Sherlock Holmes that appeared in various American newspapers in 1905. These picture mysteries were originally aimed at children but will be



enjoyed by anyone. Addy writes a brief introduction to the pictures and then lays out 12 puzzles. Fear not, the answers to most of the puzzles are included. The Holmes in these puzzles is clearly influenced by the art of Frederic Dorr Steele. For any collector of Sherlockian comics and/or art, this collection will be hard to find elsewhere. — Mark Alberstat

Sherlock Alive Sherlockian excerpts from VS's Books Alive Column in The Chicago Tribune 1942-1967. Compiled and annotated by Karen Murdock. The Battered Silicon Dispatch Box. \$35.00 Cdn.

Vincent Starrett is certainly one of the best-known early Sherlockians. Bootmakers have a special pride knowing he was truly one of us, having spent his early life in Toronto. Karen Murdock has certainly put all Sherlockians in her debt by producing this special treat.

The editor provides much more than the actual columns in this book. In a brief introduction, by Susan Rice, the reader gets a look at both Starrett's working life and his Sherlockian concerns. His columns show no specific plan in dealing with Holmes but offer ever-changing, tasty bitfuls of Holmesian treats, from the commonplace to the sublime. We are offered unending glimpses of the Sherlockian world in all its aspects from the late 1940s until the period just before its meteoric growth in the early 70s, justly attributed to Nick Meyer's classic *Seven-Per-Cent Solution*. There is no question that Starrett stood at the forefront of Sherlockian activities during this era. Though he was not overly active in the Baker Street Irregulars, most of its active members acknowledged him as the "Dean of Sherlockians."

This book is not one to be blasted through in a feeding frenzy but rather digested slowly over a period of weeks or months. This is a snack to be nibbled at slowly, permitting the mouthfuls to be chewed over thoroughly, letting each small spoonful linger on our taste buds, savouring each tantalizing tidbit.

The Tribune columns are only the red cherry on the sundae, though. A great many other courses are available to tempt even the most jaded diner. A plate of extras appears in a series of appendices. Among these: Chris Morley's quiz, a list of Holmes pastiches starring Gilbert & Sullivan (11 in total), pastiche lists of Dutch Steamer *Freisland*, Burton Rascoe on Starrett, and more. If these topics seem jarring and out of place, just remember, you are dealing with Vincent Starrett, a man who considered anything and everything to be reconcilable to whatever the human mind could conceive.

If the above still doesn't whet your appetite, don't worry. We're not done yet. There is still another host of topics to be considered. The first is a list of brief biographies of Sherlockians and others mentioned in the columns. Though well known in their day, today's readers will appreciate this feature. The remaining items are the old faithfuls — brief chronology, bibliography and index.

For readers who read and enjoy this book, I have two other suggestions for similar reads. Dahlinger & Klinger's *Sherlock Holmes, Conan Doyle and the Bookman* is another delicious sortie into past literary delights of the first third of the 20th century. In 2000, *Magico Magazine* published John Nieminski's *Sherlock in the Trib*. This time the columns are by Charles Collins and ran from 1939 until 1951. Keep these two books in mind whenever the urge to gallop down a literary memory lane reappears. — Morley Wills



Letters From Lomax

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

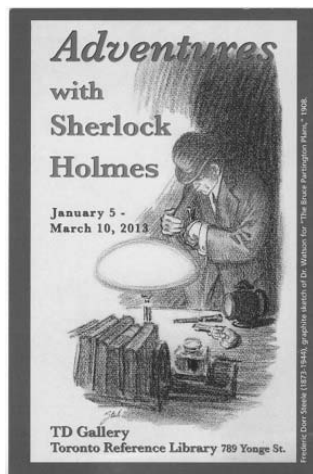


ou may have heard about the “Adventures with Sherlock Holmes” exhibition running in the Toronto Reference Library’s spanking new TD Gallery from January 6 to March 10, 2013. I know that many Bootmakers will not be able to make the trip to Toronto to see the show, so I’d like to use this issue’s ‘Letters from Lomax’ column to take readers on a virtual walk through the exhibition.

The first thing you see as you approach the new gallery is a wall of LCD screens, which are meant to let people in the library know what’s going on inside. Content on these screens changes for every exhibition. For this exhibit, they contained images of items on display, program information and some classic Sidney Paget drawings and Basil Rathbone movie trailers to put people in the right frame of mind to commune with Mr. Holmes. A final screen shows clips from the newly released documentary *The Real Sherlock Holmes*. The Toronto production company Storyline Entertainment kindly allowed us to show the entire documentary at one of our programs.

Upon entering the gallery’s hallway, you are greeted by representations of Sherlock Holmes as he appears in films, on stage and in other media. There are also original works by Paget and Frederic Dorr Steele displayed alongside cases of sculptures and memorabilia. This hall leads you into the main room of the gallery. The first thing you’ll notice is a set of four backlit stained-glass works hung on the rear wall. These one-of-a-kind artworks depict scenes from Baker Street and portraits of Holmes and Moriarty. Created by Joseph Aigner of Toronto and donated by Peter Lemiski, they have proved to be among the most popular items in the show. One visitor remarked that the glow of the coloured glass gave the gallery the feel of a sacred space — and he wasn’t even a Sherlockian!

Wall and case items in the main gallery tell the story of Holmes’ rise to fame, starting with a case called ‘The Beginnings of Sherlock Holmes’ that displays our copy of *Beeton’s Christmas Annual* (STUD) and *Lippincott’s Monthly Magazine* (SIGN). The cognoscenti are aware that this small, unassuming display case is one of the most valuable in the room. Even those less in the know can appreciate the rarity of a magazine that has only 33 extant copies. The next



case, ‘Arthur Conan Doyle, Sherlock Holmes and *The Strand*,’ introduces the long publishing relationship that was responsible for Holmes’ rise to fame. It features vintage copies of *The Strand* and some examples of the Collection’s letters from Arthur Conan Doyle to *The Strand* editor H. Greenhough Smith.

As *Canadian Holmes* readers know, regular exposure in *The Strand* did indeed make Holmes famous. A little too famous for his creator, you might say. And so, Conan Doyle created Moriarty to finish him off (at least temporarily). Near *The Strand* case are the wall and case items dedicated to our favourite arch villain, including a first edition of *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*, a couple of striking art representations of the Professor and some 19th-century prints of The Reichenbach Falls. A second grouping in what you might call the ‘Rogues Gallery’ section of the exhibition is dedicated to *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. As in the Moriarty section, interpretations of the Hound are a mixture of the playful and the fearsome. There are film posters and artists’ books representing this famous case and its titular canine villain. Among the rarer items on display are a letter regarding HOUN to Conan Doyle’s *Strand* editor Smith and a newsstand ad jubilantly announcing the story’s upcoming publication. The ad was recently donated by Glen Miranker, and is one of the items that can be seen on the show’s online exhibit: <http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/ve/sherlock-holmes/>

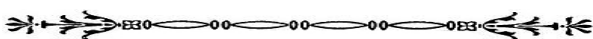
Of course, we must have a case devoted to Conan Doyle as well. A glimpse of some of Doyle’s non-Holmesian work is featured, as well as manuscript items and photos related to his passion for sports and spiritualism. Holmes-related items on display in this case include the first page of Conan Doyle’s manuscript of “Some Personalia about Mr. Sherlock Holmes” and the manuscript of *The Crown Diamond*. These latter two items are both from the Anna Conan Doyle bequest that arrived in 2011, and we’re glad to have a chance to put them in the spotlight.



To tell the story of Holmes strictly according to Doyle would be to tell less than half of the story so two sections devoted to pastiches highlight some of his experiences at the hands of other writers. The ‘Early Imitators’ case includes Sexton Blake, the parody ‘The Great Pegram Mystery’ and other Holmes imitators that appeared shortly after the detective’s alleged demise at The Reichenbach Falls. My favourite item in this grouping is an 1895 issue of *Comic Cuts* with a Chubblock Homes comic strip on the front page. Of course, these early examples were only the tip of the iceberg. By the time Conan Doyle got back to writing Holmes stories again, the tradition of parody and pastiche was well underway and continues to this day. A case devoted to later pastiches

shows uncanonical adventures such as *Sherlock Holmes Saved Golf*, *The Exploits of the Second Mrs. Watson* and *The Adventure of the Peerless Peer*.

The final stop on the tour is ‘A little more Sherlock Holmes,’ a case filled with examples from our miniature book collection. It’s meant as a sort of dessert, a “wafer-thin mint” for gallery visitors who have just gorged themselves on all things Sherlock. That the public does have an appetite for the Great Detective is evident in the large number of people who have turned out to visit the show or attend one of the associated programs and tours offered. It was great to be able to share some items from the Collection during this time when our Arthur Conan Doyle Room is still closed for renovations. I hope to see many of these visitors again when the room reopens.



Editor’s Bookshelf continued from page 32.

Beeton’s Christmas Annual. The Battered Silicon Dispatch Box. \$15.00 Cdn.

If you have a time machine, whisk back to England in November 1887 and plunk down a shilling for a copy of *Beeton’s Christmas Annual*. Today this paperback is rarer than Shakespeare’s First Folio and the most expensive magazine in the world.

How rare? There are 33 known copies, of which 21 are held by libraries.

How expensive? In 2007, a complete copy with a facsimile spine sold at auction for almost \$160,000. In July 2010, Sotheby’s offered a copy with the original paper covers and inscribed by the best-known author represented in the magazine. Bidding reached \$445,000 but that was still below the reserve price.

The magazine contains much of interest – a heart-warming play about true love triumphing in the Napoleonic wars and ads for patent medicines, including a pain reliever composed of opium dissolved in alcohol, tincture of cannabis and chloroform (Dr. J. Collis Browne’s Chlorodyne).

The magazine’s collectability, however, rests on containing *A Study in Scarlet*, the first publication of a Sherlock Holmes story by Conan Doyle.

Since most Sherlockians will never own an original Beeton’s, three facsimiles have been produced. Yet even those have become relatively expensive, with \$200 the current price for the version which originally sold for \$7 in 1960.

Now, however, thanks to the indefatigable George Vanderburgh, anyone can possess the next best thing for a mere \$15 – an electronic PFD version of the 1988 centenary facsimile edition, which was overseen by John Michael Gibson.

The cover and some adverts are reproduced in striking colour. The highly legible text is searchable. A scholarly bonus is contained in four commentaries by Gibson, Costa Rossakis, Philip G. Bergem and Randall Stock.

But squint your eyes, imagine this is the real *Beeton’s Christmas Annual* and you have just read: “In the year 1878 I took my degree in Doctor of Medicine of the University of London and proceeded to Netley ...”

Ah, priceless.

— Peter Calamai

OOTMAKERS' DIARY

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

- *The Five Orange Pips*

By **Donny Zaldin**, *BOT* Diarist. (Readers are encouraged to submit Diary entries to donaldzaldin@rogers.com)

Saturday, December 8, 2012: Fifth Story Meeting, 'Shoscombe Old Place'

About 40 Bootmakers and guests are greeted by **Marilyn Penner** at the Beeton Auditorium of the Toronto Public Library for the year's fifth story meeting, 'The Adventure of Shoscombe Old Place' (SHOS), organized by Meyers 2012 **David Sanders**.

The Bootmaker's Annual Meeting convenes and elects **Philip Elliott** as President (Meyers) 2013, **Thelma Beam** as First Vice-President (Right Shoehorn / Meyers 2012), and various other officers and directors.

David Sanders presents a musical introduction to the story in the form of a song parody which he penned, sung to the tune popularly known as "Camptown Races," a minstrel song written by Stephen Foster in 1850.

Doug Wrigglesworth makes a presentation, titled "He sits at the Centre of a Web," about Arthur Conan Doyle's travels and service in South Africa during the Boer War. His dresser at the Langman Hospital, a London senior medical student, Charles John (C.J.) Blasson, kept a handwritten diary (of accounts, ephemera and photographs), which was passed down inside his family for 110 years before being examined, transcribed and published in 2012 by Ken Cooper. The volume contains a letter (owned by the speaker) to Mr. Blasson's mother, written by Conan Doyle, consoling her that her son, who "was a very fine fellow [and] ... died in the service of his country just as truly as any man who fell upon the field and that is the noblest and most unselfish end a man can meet."

ACD Collection curator **Peggy Perdue** offers up another selected "Treasure from the Collection," a particular letter written by Conan Doyle to his publisher, H. Greenhough Smith (1855-1935), editor of *The Strand*, with his usual salutation, "My dear Smith." In the letter, Conan Doyle defends his position (as he contended in 'The Solitary Cyclist') that one can discern from bicycle tracks whether a bicycle is going forward or in reverse, against "cranks" who have written him to the contrary.

At the break, **Dayna Nuhn** and **Barbara Rusch** serve refreshments, including sandwiches, bagels, lox and cream cheese, and light Chanukah candles,

prompting **Peggy Perdue** to observe that Mrs. Hudson is “in the hands of the Jews.”

Outgoing quizmaster **Chris Redmond** challenges our knowledge of the evening’s story and its connection to other stories in the Canon, especially about royalty. Prize winners are **Karen Campbell**, **Bruce Aikin** and **Garry Marnoch**.

Songstress **Karen Campbell**, the society’s Lassa (female form of Lassus), entertains us with a Sherlockian parody about Sir Robert Norberton, sung to the tune of the Beatles’ 1964 hit ballad, ‘Yesterday,’ written by Paul McCartney.

Cliff Goldfarb and **Hartley Nathan** present “In the Hands of the Jews,” Part VI of their series on Jewish connections in the Sherlockian Canon, which contains at least five derogatory Jewish remarks: two in SHOS, and one each in STUD, CARD, CARD and STOC. Their review of Victorian authors canvasses Jewish characters and commentary in prose and poetry, some supportive (eg. Dickens) but more derisive (eg. H.G. Wells, Lord Alfred Douglas, G.K. Chesterton). The authors conclude that based on his life (as a proponent of social justice and supporter of Oscar Slater), Conan Doyle was not racist or anti-Semitic but rather a product of his times who used xenophobic and racial stereotypes of minor characters, albeit derogatory, without rancour or disrespect. In the Q and A session and discussion which follows, several Bootmakers take serious issue with this conclusion, contending instead that Conan Doyle was (regrettably) a racist by virtue of his use of negative stereotypes of foreigners, blacks and Jews.

Wednesday, January 9 to Sunday, January 13, 2013: BSI Weekend in N.Y.

A contingent of Bootmakers [**Mark Alberstat** (for his first time), **Peter and Mary Calamai**, **Bob Coghill**, **Cliff** and **Doris Goldfarb**, **Kate Karlson**, **Dayna Nuhn**, **Hartley** and **Marilyn Nathan**, **Peggy Perdue**, **Trevor Raymond**, **Barbara Rusch**, **David Sanders**, **George Vanderburgh**, **Ed Van der Flaes** and **Donny Zaldin**] attends The Big Apple for the 79th annual Sherlock Homes birthday celebrations weekend of The Baker Street Irregulars, the oldest literary society dedicated to Sherlock Holmes. Organized by the BSI’s Wiggins, **Mike Whelan** and **Mary Ann Bradley**, the five-day weekend is filled with formal and informal opportunities to gather for the common purpose of celebrating the Master’s 159th birthday with Sherlockian camaraderie and entertainment over food and drink.

On (Ash) Wednesday, The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes (ASH) formally kick off the weekend with a dinner at O’Casey’s. On Thursday, at the annual cocktail reception of “authors” published in the preceding year’s four-volume issue of *The Baker Street Journal*, edited by **Steve Rothman**, Bootmaker **Peter Calamai** is awarded the prestigious Morley-Montgomery Award for the best *BSJ* article of 2012 (“Why He Isn’t ‘Sir Sherlock’ Today,” Vol 62, No. 3, Autumn 2012, pp. 13-17). The Christopher Morley Walk, which always ends at McSorley’s pub, is followed by the evening’s BSI Distinguished

Speaker Lecture at the Midtown Executive Club, to hear and laugh at the musings of British journalist and film critic **Kim Newman**. Bootmakers scatter into different groups to attend the now traditional Canadian dinner at Virgil's Real Barbeque or the inaugural The Daintiest Thing Under a Bonnet Charity Ball and dinner organized by The Baker Street Babes. On Friday, bibliophiles attend and vie for bound and unbound Sherlockian treasures at Otto Penzler's Mysterious Bookshop, followed by The William Gillette Memorial Luncheon at Moran's Chelsea Seafood Restaurant. That evening, the seventh annual Gaslight Gala takes place at the Manhattan Club, and the Yale Club is host to The Bakers Street Irregulars Dinner, at which Bootmaker **Peggy Perdue** makes a toast to the birthday boy himself. Attendees of both dinners celebrate until 2:21 a.m. at O'Lunney's Irish Pub. On Saturday morning, Sherlockian books and collectibles are snapped up at the Merchants' Room, the Beacon Society holds its annual meeting and the official events conclude with the BSI Annual Reception and cocktail party, although those at loose ends meet up at Pete's Tavern at an event titled Lost in New York with a Bunch of Sherlockians. On Sunday, the weekend concludes with the ASH Brunch, held at the Irish Rogue Pub.

Saturday, January 26, 2013: The Blue Carbuncle Dinner and Awards Banquet

About 35 Bootmakers and guests, some adorned in Victorian finery and fascinators, attend The Badminton & Racquet Club of Toronto for the Bootmakers' 10th Annual Blue Carbuncle Dinner and Awards Banquet.

For the occasion, banquet organizer Meyers 2013 **Philip Elliott** produces an eight-page Programme/Menu of the evening's events, with witty Canonical quotes describing the evening's fare: bread, soup, entrée (beef, salmon or vegetarian ravioli), vegetables, potatoes, dessert, coffee and tea.

Doug Wrigglesworth leads us in saying Grace, reprising an inspiring blessing of former Bootmaker, the late Rev. Brant Loper.

Five toasts follow, interspersed throughout the meal: **Edwin Van der Flaes** toasts "a certain gracious lady" (Queen Victoria); **David Sanders** toasts Sherlock Holmes; **Karen Campbell** toasts Dr. John H. Watson; **Marilyn Penner** toasts "the literary agent, Arthur Conan Doyle; and, **Philip Elliott** toasts Mrs. Hudson.

Following, **Donny Zaldin** entertains us with an illustrated presentation, tracing the history and development of the game of chess, including the founding in 1828 of London's historic landmark dining establishment, Simpson's-in-the-Strand, as a chess and coffee club. Chess is cited as a thinking man's game, involving logic and deduction, in three Canonical stories (BLAN, MAZA and RETI) and in many 19th- and 20th-century literary works, especially in the genre of detective fiction. Following, the audience participates in a challenge to deduce the most appropriate Canonical characters for the six different pieces (King, Queen, Bishop, Knight or Horse, Rook or Castle, and

Pawn) of the game's two opposing teams, white (i.e. good) versus black (i.e. evil).

Finally, the Bootmaker Awards for 2012 are announced. **Christopher Redmond** is the recipient of the 2012 True Davidson Award (for the best formal presentation at a Bootmaker meeting) for his paper, titled, "Sherlockian Thoughts on the Danforth," delivered at the September 15, 2012, story meeting. **Elizabeth Carbone** receives the 2012 Warren Carleton Award (for the best non-formal presentation at a Bootmaker meeting) for her contribution to the society's website. Co-authors **Cliff Goldfarb** and **Hartley Nathan** are the winners of the 2012 Derrick Murdoch Award (for the best article published in *Canadian Holmes*) for their latest installment of their six-part series on the Jewish Connections in the Canon. There are no Master Bootmakers Awards (for sustained, varied and lasting contributions to the Bootmakers of Toronto Canadian Sherlockian movement) for 2012.

The society's Lassa, diva **Karen Campbell**, leads us in an enthusiastic song parody titled "We Always Mention Our Sherlock," written by **David Sanders**, sung to the well-known Sherlockian tune "We Never Mention Aunt Clara."

To conclude the programme, **Barbara Rusch** reads (Canadian) Vincent Starrett's immortal 1942 poem, "221B," about two men of note for whom it is always 1895; and **Donny Zaldin** recites his 2001 poem, 221 MB, about the world's greatest consulting detective and his friend, roommate and biographer, who still solve crime with only the mind in the computer age of the new millennium.

Sunday, January 27, 2013: The 17th Annual Marlene Aig Memorial Brunch

Nine enthusiastic and early rising Bootmakers (**Suzanne Adams, Bruce Aikin, Kathy Burns, Dave Drennan, Philip Elliott, Barbara Rusch, Dave Sanders, Edwin Van der Flaes** and **Donny Zaldin**) gather at Spirits Bar and Grill for brunch to remember and reminisce about the late **Marlene Aig** (of New York City), a long-distance member and participant in The Bootmakers of Toronto, including the Annual Banquet and Awards Dinner. The Sunday Brunch was renamed in the memory of the award-winning journalist, renowned Sherlockian, and good friend, who passed away in 1996 at age 43.

Saturday, February 23, 2013: First Story Meeting, 'The Blanched Soldier'

About 35 Bootmakers and guests are greeted by **Marilyn Penner** at the Beeton Auditorium of the Toronto Public Library for the year's first story meeting, "The Adventure of The Blanched Soldier" (BLAN), organized by Meyers 2013 **Philip Elliott**.

Philip introduces the story, which took place in January 1903, prior to Holmes' retirement in 1903 or 1904. It was first published in *Liberty* magazine on October 16, 1926, in *The Strand* the following month and in 1927 as the

second of the 12 stories in *The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes*. The narrative was the first of only two tales authored by Holmes, who chided Watson from time to time for romanticizing an educational exercise. The medical theme of leprosy revealed how the disease was regarded by late-Victorian and early Edwardian society. The adventure touched on the recent Boer War (1899-1901), in which Conan Doyle served as a field surgeon and wrote and published a pamphlet and book, for which it is said he earned a knighthood from King Edward VII in 1902. BLAN was previously taken up by the Bootmakers on March 5, 1985, and April 4, 1995. Philip traces the history of the 26-page manuscript, which was sold at auction in 1944 for \$310 and presently resides in the New York Public Library.

On September 15, 2012, ACD Collection Curator **Peggy Perdue** shared with the Bootmakers the Toronto Reference Library's newly acquired treasure of an early 20th-century child's autograph album, signed by Conan Doyle in May 1903 at Happisburgh, Norfolk, U.K. The book also contained a rudimentary stick-figure alphabet drawn by 11-year-old Gilbert John Cubitt and dated 1902 – earning it recognition in the Sherlockian world as a possible source of Conan Doyle's 'The Dancing Men,' published six months later in the third entry of twelve in *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*.

An intrigued **Thelma Beam** follows up her interest in the charming album and delivers a well-researched and well-written illustrated presentation about this significant piece of ephemera of the Cubitt family of Norfolk. Based on careful examination and extensive family histories and genealogies, collective recollections and interviews of Gilbert's 81-year-old son, Mike (Cubitt), and great-niece, Alison (Melville), Thelma proves that the album provides incontrovertible evidence that Gilbert's 1902 stick-men alphabet provided inspiration for Conan Doyle's 1903 story of dancing men.

Diva **Karen Campbell**, the society's Lassa, leads us in a group rendition of a Sherlockian parody of "The Blanched Soldier," written by **David Sanders**, titled "A Song of James M. Dodd," sung to the tune of "Streets of Laredo," an earlier 20th-century western and folk ballad, also known as the "Cowboy's Lament."

Wearing the hat of Mrs. Hudson, Meyers provides us with a delicatessen-style repast, augmented by triangular-shaped filled pastry called hamantashen to celebrate the Jewish festival of Purim.

ACD Collection curator **Peggy Perdue** conducts a guided tour of the Toronto Reference Library's Exhibit titled "Adventures with Sherlock Holmes," which celebrates 125 years of the iconic consulting detective. The exhibit showcases Special Collections material from the library's exceptional holdings, including rare and unusual books, manuscripts, artwork and artifacts, and Sherlockian ephemera in literature and popular culture, covering the spectrum of William Gillette, Basil Rathbone, Jeremy Brett, Robert Downey Jr., Benedict Cumberbatch and Jonny Lee Miller.

Incoming Quizmaster **Bruce Aikin** tests our knowledge of the with a challenging quiz on the evening's story and its relationship to other adventures,

...continued on page 3