



# For the Sake of the Trust

The Baker Street Irregulars Trust Newsletter

Spring, 2010

## Symposium Studies Doyle's Contributions to Literature

by Peter Reuell

The following article appeared in the HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY NEWS and is being reprinted here with permission of Harvard College Library.

MAY 11, 2009 — For more than a century, Sherlock Holmes, the most famous creation of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has captivated mystery fans, literary scholars and researchers of virtually every stripe. But as dozens of Doyle scholars and Sherlockians showed during a recent three-day symposium at Harvard, the Holmes stories represent only a small part of Doyle's fuller contribution to literature.

To mark the 150th anniversary of Doyle's birth, dozens of scholars from across the country and overseas gathered at Houghton Library May 7-9 for the symposium, entitled "Sir Arthur Conan Doyle: A Sesquicentennial Assessment," which featured speakers, including Andrew Lycett, Dan Posnansky, Leslie Klinger and Giles Constable, and a series of evenings, including the screening of several Sherlock Holmes films, presented by the Harvard Film Archive.

The three day event was complemented by an exhibition of Doyle material, "Ever Westward": Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and American Culture," which includes rare books,

manuscripts and ephemera from Houghton's collections, including the H.W. Bell/Speckled Band of Boston Collection and the Baker Street Irregulars archive, which was recently given to the library, and private collections. The exhibition will be on display in the Edison and Newman Room in Houghton Library through August 8.

"Many people have tried to answer the question as to why

IT HAS BEEN A WHILE since The Trust has published its newsletter but as we are an "irregular" organization it would seem fitting that things may happen on an irregular basis. During our hiatus we have been quite busy. Many interesting items have been and continue to be donated to the Trust, Bob Coghill's cataloging continues, historians have been provided with material for research and writers the same for articles and essays.

The most exciting thing that occurred during this time was the highly acclaimed and well attended Sir Arthur Conan Doyle Sesquicentennial Symposium presented by Harvard

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## From the Chair

Thomas J. Francis, BSI



University. The Trust was heavily involved with this.

Many of the trustees were part of the planning group which working in conjunction with the staff of The Houghton Library planned the lectures, the exhibit and even the celebratory dinner and musicale held on the last evening of the symposium weekend. Several of the speakers were past and present members of the Trust. Members of the Trust functioned as moderators for each of the sessions. Perhaps the most interesting Trust aspect is that, for the fascinating exhibit which was presented —continued on page 3

Sherlock Holmes has endured,” said Dan Posnansky, a member of the Baker Street Irregulars and co-curator of the Houghton exhibit with Glen Miranker and Houghton Library Coordinator of Programs Peter Accardo. “I think it’s a matter of Holmes, the man, the humanity, and most of all the time he lived in, Victorian England. Someone asked the question, ‘What will happen to Holmes 1,000 years from now?’ Of course, no one knows what will happen to our civilization, but if civilization resembles, even remotely, what we have today, Holmes will be there.”

Though most widely known as the creator of Sherlock Holmes, symposium participants rendered a portrait of an author whose contributions ran far beyond detective fiction, but who shared at least some of the traits of his most famous character. As depicted by symposium participants, Doyle was voraciously curious, a meticulous researcher who often spent months studying history before putting pen to paper, an innovator of genres such as science fiction and fantasy, and an author quick to reap praise on writers he felt inspired his greatest creations.

“Doyle never missed an opportunity to praise Edgar Allen Poe,” said Daniel Stashower, a member of the Baker Street Irregulars, a prominent Sherlockian society, author of *Teller of Tales: The Life of Arthur Conan Doyle*, and five mystery novels. “Doyle referred to him as the ‘supreme short story writer of our time.’”



Daniel Stashower

Doyle’s high praise, Stashower suggested, clearly illustrates the degree to which Doyle believed Poe’s writing inspired his own. With his “Dupin” stories, such as “The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” Poe created an early template for the detective story which Doyle would later build on, including the model of the brilliant detective, the story as narrated by a close friend of the detective and the mystery’s solution being presented in a leap of deductive reasoning. Stashower also suggested Doyle may also have drawn inspiration from Poe’s essay, “Maelzel’s Chess Player,” which employed many of the analytic methods used by Holmes to debunk an automaton chess player known as The Turk, which had become famous throughout Europe and the United States.

“Maelzel’s Chess Player” offers a clear template for the deductive thinking Poe would later employ in the Dupin stories,” Stashower said. “I do think it’s fair to say that without that image in Doyle’s mind, Sherlock Holmes — if he existed at all — would have taken a very different

form. It’s a very short walk from the Rue Morgue to Baker Street.”

While Doyle may have drawn inspiration from Poe in his creation of Holmes, in the century since the detective’s first appearance, many more — including many prominent scholars — have turned to Holmes for inspiration. A medieval history professor emeritus at the Institute for Advanced Study and author of more than 20 books, Giles Constable told attendees echoes of Holmesian deduction can be traced through virtually every academic pursuit, including history, game theory and even psychology and art history.



Giles Constable

“Holmes attention to detail was not his only contribution to the art of historians,” Constable said. “The facts, once known, must be interpreted. I would not suggest to a young historian that they take Holmes’ principles as their primary guide when they conduct their research, but they could do much worse than to keep them in mind.”

But while Holmes is certainly Doyle’s most popular creation, the four Sherlock Holmes novels and 56 short stories represent barely more than 10 percent of Doyle’s total writings, said Thomas J. Francis, a Baker Street Irregulars member who discussed his other writings.

Though they made him rich and famous, the Holmes stories were not among Doyle’s favorites. Instead, he reserved his affection for his historical novel, *The White Company*, which he referred to as his “better things.” Considered by Doyle to be his greatest novel, *The White Company* remains in print today, and was so popular during World War II that, despite a paper shortage, the British government set aside paper to ensure a sufficient supply for the book’s printing, Francis said.

Doyle also wrote extensively on sport, including several well-received novels on boxing, as well as novels and short stories on French history. Though not as popular with modern readers, Doyle also wrote eight books on spiritualism, and several volumes of poetry.

But perhaps Doyle’s greatest influence, aside from detective fiction, Francis suggested, came in the genre of science fiction. Following extensive research on fossils and science, Doyle authored *The Lost World*, a novel detailing an expedition to a plateau in Venezuela where dinosaurs and other extinct creatures still survive.

“The science fiction and fantasy work of Conan Doyle has had a profound impact on the genre, right up

until today,” Francis said, citing the very first film adaptation of the book, in 1925, which introduced the stop-motion animation technique, and modern films, like *Jurassic Park*. “Do yourself a favor, and read something beyond the Sherlock Holmes canon.”

Andrew Lycett, author of *Conan Doyle: The Man Who Created Sherlock Holmes*,



Andrew Lycett

addressed Doyle’s biographers and described a handful of sources he used in researching his acclaimed biography, including Doyle’s personal notebooks.

“Conan Doyle always tried to bring a measure of scientific

inquiry to whatever he was interested in, whether it was the nature of tuberculosis or paranormal phenomena,” Lycett said. “But like his main creation — Sherlock Holmes — Conan Doyle remains a fascinating enigma, that’s why we find him such a fascinating character, so eminently worthy of discussion 150 years after his birth.”

While it’s clear Doyle and Holmes have had a rich history, many symposium participants were also eager to learn what the future may hold — a new Sherlock Holmes film, starring Robert Downey Jr., is slated for release later this year, and the shades of Holmes can be found throughout modern popular culture.

“I think it will be a great awakening of public interest, I think it will be the beginning of another wave of interest, just as we saw in the 70s with *The Seven-Percent Solution*,” said Leslie Klinger, editor of *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes*. “I think this will bring the books back into focus.”

*From the Chair continued*— in conjunction with the lectures, materials from the Trust collection were put on display at the Houghton Library. This was the first time that Trust material had been exhibited for the general public to view.

This exhibit highlights one of the advantages of having the Trust collection at Harvard’s Houghton Library. In addition to our material, the exhibit drew on the resources of the entire University library system. There were materials and books drawn from the Bell Collection owned by The Speckled Band of Boston which is maintained at the Houghton. Other materials shown included several items from the Harvard Theatre Collection, T. S. Eliot’s presentation copy of his “Old Possum’s Book of Practical Cats,” letters from William Gillette and Doyle himself and from the Widener Library, a book Sir Arthur used for research when he visited the campus. Harvard still has the form Sir Arthur filled out to request the book. There were also several rare and first editions drawn from the entire system. The resources of the Harvard Library system are extensive, comprehensive and impressive. To be able to tap into these materials provides a great boon to any group planning a major exhibition. Additionally, The Baker Street Irregulars Trust is now helping to expand and add to these resources which will provide future exhibitors even more materials upon which to draw.

The exhibition resulted in the publication of three books. *So Painful a Scandal* continues the BSI manuscript

series with a reprint of a facsimile of the manuscript of “The Three Students.” The manuscript is from the collections at The Houghton Library. *Papers at an Exhibition* is a



Tom Francis, BSI

volume of all the papers presented at the Doyle symposium. The third volume is the catalogue of the exhibit titled *Ever Westward*. This is a wonderful scholarly look at all the material which had been on display at Harvard for the Doyle Sesquicentennial exhibit. It is thoroughly researched and well written by Peter Accardo who served as curator of the exhibit. There were two versions of this. A soft cover copy was distributed to people who attended the exhibit and symposium. A hard cover version, with an introduction by

BSI Trustee Dan Posnansky, was included in a limited edition three-volume boxed set of the books described above. Unfortunately all the paper-bound copies were distributed, the limited edition has fully sold out, and this marvelous catalogue is no longer available. The other volumes, *So Painful a Scandal* and *Papers at an Exhibition*, however, are still available on the BSI website.

On a personal note, I found two letters from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in the Houghton Library collection. One had his comments on *The White Company* about which he says, “(*The White Company*) is quite my best work, and the one for which there will be the longest demand.” The other had a great description of the Gerard tales that you will see in the following quote: “I have done a series of soldiers’ stories called “The Exploits of Gerard.” They show the Napoleonic era and

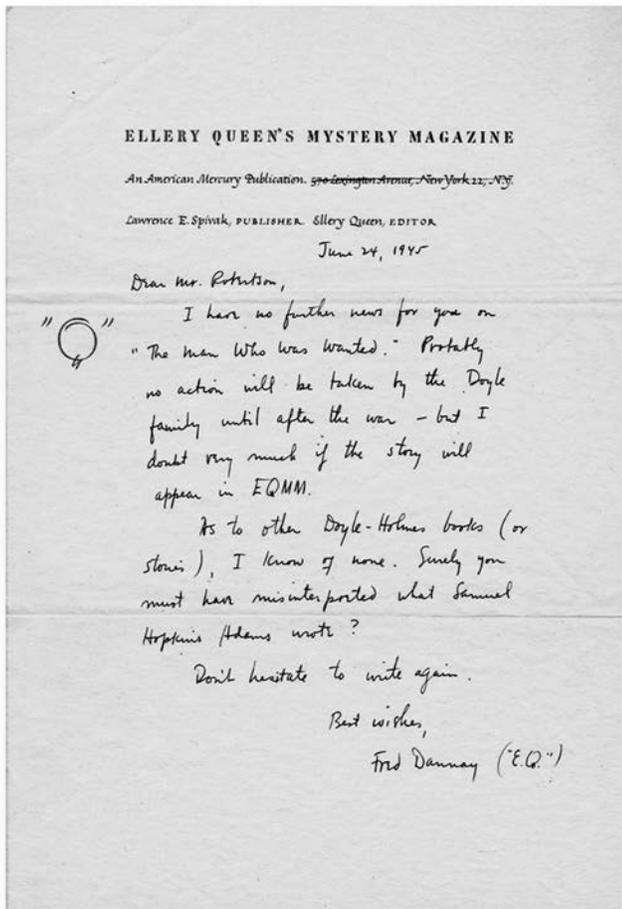
the emperor with his marshals from the point of view of a dashing brainless hussar and try to give some ideas of the extraordinary adventures which these men must really have had." I was able to use both of these letters in my presentation.

It was a pleasure to work with the Houghton staff. Their dedication to scholarship and support of the BSI Trust's goals made the task of planning both light and enjoyable. Even when there were difficulties, there was a strong sense of teamwork between the Harvard people and the Trustees. Additionally the Houghton Library staff received great support from the rest of the University, not only from the other libraries as mentioned above, but in other areas as well. For example, the Harvard Film Archives enthusiastically jumped onboard

by presenting a program of Sherlock Holmes and Doyle films during the symposium weekend and then offered an even richer program later in the summer showing comparative versions of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and a restored print of Conan Doyle's *The Lost World*. It was the original Wallace Beery version with the stop motion animation developed by Willis O'Brien and used later in *King Kong*. The Houghton Library also sponsored a mid-summer night event for local Sherlockians to coincide with part of the film program.

Events like these so early in The Trust's relationship with the Houghton Library bode very well for the future of the Archives and our on-going relationship with Harvard University as we continue to expand the collection in the years ahead.

## From the Archives



This letter from Fred Dannay (one half of Ellery Queen) to Allen Robertson, BSI, founder and Napoleon 1 of the Six Napoleons of Baltimore, was one of many such correspondences Robertson had with illustrious mid 20th-century Sherlockians. They were donated to the BSI Trust by John Pforr, BSI, from the estate of the late Ralph Edwards, BSI, Allan DeGray, executor.



THE BSI TRUST welcomes all monetary gifts as well as material contributions to the archives.

Monetary donations should be sent to:

Leslie S. Klinger, BSI  
10866 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite # 1500  
Los Angeles, California 90024

If the financial donation is in honor of someone, please indicate the appropriate name.

If you are passing on a contribution from a third party, please include the name and address of the donor so that we can acknowledge the donation with a thank you letter from the BSI Trust.

Questions regarding material contributions to the archives should be directed to:

Thomas J. Francis, BSI  
43 Mann Hill Road  
Scituate, MA 02066-2110

# Photos From an Exhibition

Below are some scenes from the “Arthur Conan Doyle: A Sesquicentennial Assessment” symposium in Cambridge, Mass., May 7-9, 2009. All photographs appear courtesy of the Harvard College Library.



# Mondays with Sherlockians

Bob Coghill, BSI

MITCH ALBOM, in his 1997 bestselling “Tuesdays with Morrie” chronicled his weekly visits with Morrie Schwartz, his terminally ill college professor and mentor from nearly twenty years earlier. Every Tuesday, week after week, Mitch went hoping to give something back to Morrie, but ended up receiving more himself than he could ever give. And in doing so, he learned some of life’s greatest lessons.

My story, while certainly not a bestseller, could be called “Mondays with Sherlockians.”

Each Monday, whenever possible, I devote a few hours to tackling some of the wonderful treasures of the Baker Street Irregulars. For much of this past year, the title of my



journey would have to have been “Mondays with Ron.” That is because in 2009 the Baker Street Irregulars Trust received six boxes packed full of red

binders, almost 40 of them altogether—each carefully labeled and in alphabetical order—containing the extensive correspondence of Ronald Burt deWaal.

Not surprisingly, much of Ron’s correspondence dealt with his phenomenal “World Bibliography of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson,” and is thus chock full of information about the Sherlockian world and many members of the Baker Street Irregulars. In fact, there weren’t many leading Sherlockian scholars who didn’t correspond with Ron. Some of the larger files are labeled with the names of the most active and sprightly correspondents: John Bennett Shaw, Peter Blau, and Bliss Austin, just to name a few.

But there is much more than just the big files. The 40 binders have been reduced to three banker boxes full of wonderful letters, letters which give us a window into



the whimsical world of those of us lucky enough to be afflicted with a love of Sherlock Holmes, his world, and the fellowship of the Baker Street Irregulars.

As I work my way through Ron’s letters, I can’t help but feel a bit like Jabez Wilson of the Red-Headed League as he worked his way through the Encyclopedia Britannica. Starting with A, we have Aalbor Stifstidende (a company in Denmark) asking Ron if he knows Henry Lauritzen; Abbey National Building Society (about a brick from 221b); Jerry Abbott from Alabama; Abson Books, from Bristol, England; Academic Industries; Academy Chicago Publishers; Hugh Abramson; Charlie Adams, Donald K. Adams, Alan Addlestone (21 letters); Mary Ake, Ray Albany, Mark Alberstat, Alvin Albright; American Book Collector, American Chemical Society; American Printing House for the Blind; American Radio Heritage Institute; Carl H. Anderson; Poul Anderson; Kiyoshi Arai.....that’s just the first half of the “A”s.

The DeWaal correspondence primarily dates from the late sixties, and throughout the seventies and eighties. And before its eventual departure for Harvard, BSI research historians Cliff Goldfarb and Andy Fusco have been able to access it for use in their decade-by-decade BSI history.

And so, unlike Mitch Albom, my weekly appointments seem destined to continue for many months – perhaps even years – to come. But like Mitch, I feel that I am getting much more than I am giving from my “Mondays with Sherlockians.”

*Editor’s Note:* Thanks, Bob. But you’re hardly the only one getting something from your “Mondays with Sherlockians”. The BSI Trust and all its beneficiaries, both present and future, are getting plenty from them — and you — as well.



# Added to the Archives

THE FOLLOWING PAPERS were presented at the “Arthur Conan Doyle: A Sesquicentennial Assessment” symposium in Cambridge, Mass., May 7-9, 2009. They were also printed in the book, *Papers at an Exhibition*, Peter X. Accardo, editor.

Daniel Stashower’s paper, “I Read it Young When My Mind was Plastic: Arthur Conan Doyle on Edgar Allen Poe.”

Giles Constable’s paper, “Sherlock Holmes and History.”

Thomas Francis’s paper, “There’s More to Conan Doyle Than Sherlock Holmes.”

Andre Lycett’s paper, “Greater Light and Shade: Conan Doyle and His Biographers.”

Eve Mayer’s paper, “Conan Doyle’s Mormons: A Study in Black, White, and Scarlet.”

Glen Miranker’s Power Point presentation, “Sherlock Holmes in American Popular Culture.”

Leslie Klinger’s paper, “Partners in Crime: Arthur Conan Doyle and John H. Watson.”

Charles J. Rzepka’s paper,

“Holmes—Coming for What—Son? Conan Doyle’s Failed Nostos.”

Dan Posnansky’s paper, “America, America, Here I Come.”

John Bergquist’s paper, “The Manuscript of ‘The Adventure of the Three Students’ and Its Publication in Facsimile.”

Randall Stock’s paper, “A Sherlock Holmes Census: What’s Really Out There.”

Steve Rothman’s paper, “Christopher Morley: Reading, Reviewing, and Reichenbach.”

Peter X. Accardo’s paper, “H.W. Bell: A Chronology of His Adventures.”

Richard Olken’s paper, “Children Yet Unborn” (How We Envy Them!): Teaching Conan Doyle.”

In addition to the above papers, additional donations include:

Jerry Margilin’s manuscript for his 1977 *BSJ* article on Hansom cabs.

*Time Magazine*, March 15, 1943 edition with Elmer Davis on the cover, donated by Al Gregory.

*The following statement was included in the June 2010 “Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collection Newsletter.” It is reprinted here with permission of the Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collection. The collection is housed at the University of Minnesota.*

## To Strengthen Our Resources”

(“The Red-Headed League)

COOPERATION IS THE KEY to our future success. Within the Doylean/Sherlockian universe a rich landscape of collections exist, each inviting exploration, and each often looking for ways to strengthen their resource base for future research, publication, and enlightenment into the world of Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes.

We’re extremely thankful to our friends at the Baker Street Irregulars Trust who send us material that fits in with our collecting mission. In the spirit of cooperation, we hope to gather material more appropriate for the BSI Archives and offer it to them in the near future. We would encourage donors who have Baker Street Irregular materials to contact Tom Francis, Chairman of the Trust, for additional information. (E-mail: [chair@bsitrust.org](mailto:chair@bsitrust.org).)

Working together we can add to this rich landscape and keep forever green the memory of the Master.



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## For the Sake of the Trust

THE TRUST is a special part of the Baker Street Irregulars, the literary society dedicated to the study of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson. The Trust is designed to collect, archive and preserve historical documents for the study of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson, the Victorian world and the individuals and organizations like the BSI that have devoted themselves to such studies. The Trust has a special interest in preserving materials related to the history of the BSI, its members and friends.

The Trust archive is located in the Houghton Library at Harvard University, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The archival material may be used by any qualified Sherlockian, subject to the normal rules and regulations of the library.

# The Cardinal Points

Marshall S. Berdan, BSI

“To all to whom these (news)Letters come Greeting.” So begins my undergraduate diploma, and so begins my tenure as editor of the BSI Trust Newsletter. And in both cases, I still can’t completely fathom how these two venerable — and now vulnerable — institutions were foolish enough to so elevate me. But they did, and it is now my mission to prove myself worthy of the honor, and carry on the proud tradition of those who have come and served before.

In the case of the BSI Trust Newsletter, that means most proximately Julie McKuras, to whom I am already beholden for her advice and support. But now I must cast my net for other fish (neither sharks nor great big silly bull-headed gudgeons however) and — to paraphrase Blanche DuBois — rely upon the kindness of strangers and friends, both in the form of written contributions to this newsletter and, more importantly, for contributions — material or otherwise — to The BSI Trust itself.

Not surprisingly, this issue of *The BSI Trust Newsletter* will be dedicated to catching up after our brief hiatus.

And there is nothing more worthy of being caught up on than the *Arthur Conan Doyle: A Sesquicentennial Assessment Symposium* at Harvard last spring, at which BSI Trust members played leading roles and whose marquis exhibit “Ever Westward” at the Houghton Library featured many rare and unusual items from the BSI Trust collection. From there, it will be back to business as usual: increasing our inventory of such items for the sake of scholars, future symposia, and our own ever westward appreciation of our 75 (and counting) year history.



Marshall S. Berdan, BSI

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Glastonbury, CT 06033

Or send e-mail to:  
[editor@bsitrust.org](mailto:editor@bsitrust.org).



## About Donations to the Trust

THE TRUST seeks primary materials about the history of the BSI and the Irregulars. These may consist of correspondence, photographic and audio materials, manuscripts of historical documents, biographical material, newspaper clippings and magazine articles. It can also accept valuable Sherlockian books that can be sold to raise funds for the Trust.

The Trust does not intend to create a collection that duplicates the Sherlock Holmes Collections at the University of Minnesota or the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection of the Toronto Metropolitan Reference Library, and so does not actively seek editions of the Canon or scholarly works unless the material has a direct bearing on the history of the BSI or the Irregulars.

The Trust is a 501(c)(3) organization, and contributions are tax-deductible under Section 170 of the Internal Revenue Service Code.

To deduct a non-cash donation of \$5,000 or more, the donor must arrange and pay for a qualified appraisal. Contributions of \$250 or more will be publicly acknowledged; for non-cash items, however, tax regulations prohibit the Trust from acknowledging the dollar value of the donation in this newsletter or *The Baker Street Journal*.

The initial step in making a donation is to contact one of the trustees. You can find contact information on the Baker Street Irregulars Trust website:

[www.bsitrust.org](http://www.bsitrust.org).