



For the Sake of the Trust

The Baker Street Irregulars Trust Newsletter

Fall, 2012

Treasures from the BSI Trust Archives: The Basil Rathbone-Edgar Smith Correspondence

BY GREG DARAK, BSI

Basil Rathbone was one of the greatest portrayers of Sherlock Holmes. Edgar Smith was one of the early leaders of the BSI, and editor of *The Baker Street Journal*. So when I was looking through the listings of the BSI Trust Archives and saw a folder that held their correspondence, I thought it would be interesting to read what two of the most important figures in the world of Sherlock Holmes had to say to each other.

While the correspondence is not extensive, and there are no amazing discoveries to be made, it does give some insight into the two men and glimpses into the world of Sherlock Holmes in the late 1940s. The first item is a letter from Smith to Rathbone, dated September 23rd, 1947, which starts off with Smith explaining why he's writing:

My old friend, Vincent Starrett, was good enough to send me...a copy of your delightful Sherlockian essay, "Day Dream", with the assurance that you would be willing to see it published in the BAKER STREET JOURNAL. The piece reached me just in time for inclusion in the October issue,

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From the Chair

BY THOMAS J. FRANCIS, BSI

During the past year, I have received several inquiries from students. Not students of the Canon, like us, but actual bricks and mortar students; that is kids who are in high school and college. Some of them were soliciting opinions of the Holmes movie and TV show for reviews in their school newspapers. Some were writing papers about Sherlock Holmes. And some were even interested in the societies that are dedicated to Holmes and Watson.

As an aside, many of these students, as well as reporters from the mainstream media, think that I am the person we call "Wiggins". I make it clear that I am not in charge of the Baker Street Irregulars and any opinions I have do not represent the Baker Street Irregulars. This is also true of the inquiries I get asking how the writer can get an invitation to the

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Sherlockian Fanfare in LA

BY RANDALL STOCK, BSI TRUST WEBMASTER

More than 100 Sherlockians took part in “Sherlock Holmes: Behind the Canonical Screen” at UCLA from August 31 to September 2, 2012. A partnership of the BSI and the UCLA School of Theatre, Film and Television, the symposium looked at the films of Sherlock Holmes and the craft of making period films. It also served as a reminder of the many different types of materials archived by the BSI Trust.

The published conference materials included an overall program highlighting the speakers and events, filmographies produced by Michael Kean and Leslie Klinger, a list of participants, and the program from the closing dinner, which culminated in a “Canonical Academy Awards” ceremony in which the results were announced for the best Sherlockian actors and films in a number of categories. The official record of nominees and winners will be deposited in the BSI Trust, and if we are lucky, perhaps the actual ballots from the carefully selected and secret academy will also be archived.

Presentations took place in the state-of-the-art James Bridges Theater, with audio recordings made of all of the talks. Some of the presentations involved unscripted discussions by industry figures, and so the

audio recordings will provide the primary source material documenting their contributions. Given the inherently visual nature of film, many of the presentations included strong video/photographic components, and these too will provide important reference material for the archives. Of course, the manuscripts of traditional papers will also be deposited.

In addition, there was some talk at the symposium of publishing a printed compilation of the proceedings. Replicating the impact of both the visual components of the presentations and the dynamic presence of many of the speakers will present a serious challenge. But if it can be overcome, the result will be a welcome and valuable resource for both for those who were unable to attend and for future researchers.

The BSI Trust seeks to assemble and preserve materials for its archives from all BSI events, including – but hardly limited to – the UCLA symposium and its two predecessors, the expeditions to The Valley of Fear (2004) and the Study in Scarlet (2008). Visit the BSI Trust website at www.bsitrust.org for a detailed Wish List of Materials, and check your collections for items you could donate “for the sake of the trust.”

(For complete details on the UCLA conference, please see the upcoming conference report by Michael Kean and Les Klinger in the Winter 2012 issue of The Baker Street Journal.)

❧ 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.

Monetary donations should be sent to:

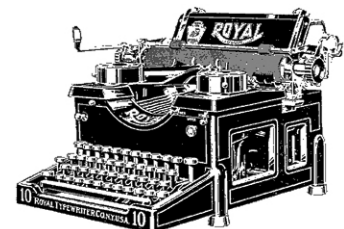
Leslie S. Klinger, BSI
10866 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite # 1500
Los Angeles, CA 90024

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

If you are passing along 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



From the Chair *—continued from page one*

annual dinner. I respond to the latter with a link to the Baker Street Journal. I tell them they should hook up with local Sherlockians and provide them with links to the scion lists, Ron Fish's calendar, the Baker Street Blog, a few other links, and wish them good luck.

Back to the students; surprisingly a few have even been writing papers about *The Baker Street Irregulars*. One of the more interesting came as an e-mail from a young woman in England this past April:

I am an undergraduate studying English Literature at Durham University and I am planning on writing my final year dissertation on the Baker Street Irregulars. I am currently residing in London, and so access to the Harvard Library archives isn't really feasible, but any information and records from around the time the group was created would be invaluable and indescribably helpful for my research. I

was wondering if there was any way of accessing some of the archives online or a means of contacting someone who would be able to point me in the right direction? I would be incredibly grateful for any help you'd be able to give.

A slightly edited version of my response is as follows:

"Here is the link to the finding aid at the Houghton Library: (See last page of this newsletter for the steps to this location.) I do not think there is any online access to the materials.

In the collection you will note a series of books published by the BSI and written by Jon Lellenberg. These contain much of our history and are probably available in the UK. His book on the '30s has a lot of details re the founding. There are members of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London who are also members of the BSI and may have copies if you cannot find them in a general search. The Marylebone Library may have copies.

Peter Blau may know more than anyone as he has been to more scion society meetings than anyone else and is very friendly. You can contact Peter via a link on the BSI Trust website.

There is a large collection regarding Doyle at the Portsmouth Public Library. I don't know how much related to the BSI may exist there, but since it is in England you could do some checking. Good luck."



Tom Francis, BSI

As it turns out, I spoke too soon. In this issue of the BSI Trust Newsletter, there's a wonderful article by Greg Darak explaining how this young woman – and anyone else with access to a computer and a mail box for that matter – may now remotely obtain copies of material from the BSI Trust Archives at the Houghton Library. If I had had this back in April, just imagine how much more helpful my response would have been. When Mike Berdan sent me an advance copy of Greg's "how to" article, I quickly forwarded it to her. And while it probably arrived too late for her needs, hopefully, hers was the last such inquiry with which I will need to conclude "Good luck." The BSI Trust

Archives are now remotely accessible to all such investigators, scholarly or otherwise.

About this Newsletter

You received this copy of *For the Sake of the Trust: The Baker Street Irregulars Trust Newsletter* because you are on the mailing list of *The Baker Street Journal* or are a member of the Baker Street Irregulars. If you are not interested in receiving further issues, or have any comments or suggestions, please contact:



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Or send e-mail to:
editor@bsitrust.org

You can access links, current events, and back-issues of the newsletter any time at our website:
www.bsitrust.org

Rathbone-Smith... —continued from Page 1

and...I shall be very happy to send you a copy when this number comes out.

*I hope we may have a chance some time to have lunch together, and to discuss those matters that are obviously of common interest. At least, you must reserve the night of January 9th next for the annual meeting of the Baker Street Irregulars, who would, I assure you, be happy to do you honor on that occasion for your long and notable services to the Master.**

Rathbone replied with a hand-written note, presumably sometime in early October as the reference to his imminent opening would be to his appearance in *The Heiress*, possibly the greatest success of his post-Holmes period and his entire Broadway career:

Dear Mr. Smith, Please forgive my delay in answering...Rehearsals leading to our opening on the 29th (a success I am happy to say), plus rehearsal for the Theater Guild on the Air next Sunday – plus moving have had me down with a mild but uncomfortable cold! It has been very hectic & tiring.

I should so like to be a subscriber to the Baker St Journal – may I & I would like to give Nigel Bruce a year's subscription as a Christmas present. Can this be arranged?..

I should be honored to be with you on January 9th if that should be a Sunday – if not perhaps I might drop in after the theater.

*Thanking you sincerely,
Basil Rathbone*

Rathbone also gave Smith his telephone number, and they apparently met for lunch. The next letter is from Smith, dated November 18, 1947:

I only heard, quite a while after the fact, of the unfortunate accident you had shortly after our lunch together... I am hastening to express my good wishes for a speedy recovery...

I was much impressed by the suggestion you made, when we were together, that we might be able to induce Chris

Morley to do a play for you that would satisfy our common instincts in the area of the Sherlockian, and I shall certainly discuss the matter with him promptly upon his return to New York....Better still, I think the three of us should get together for lunch to explore the prospect conclusively...

Smith wrote again on December 22nd:



Edgar W. Smith

I told you I would confirm the date of the B.S.I. meeting in January as soon as all arrangements had been made. We have fixed now, at last, upon the evening of Friday, January 9th, and the place will be a private room I have engaged at the Racquet and Tennis Club. So all that remains to make the evening complete is your own attendance, at the earliest hour your obligations at the theatre permit.

Perhaps you can make it by 11:30...I shall say nothing about your arrival so that you (sic) entry can come as a surprise to all. It will, I assure you, be an honor to have you with us as our "unexpected guest", and I know it will be quite the climax to the evening.

I hope your injury has completely healed itself – if there are still any external signs of it on the ninth, I suppose you will explain that you were waylaid by Professor Moriarty.

All good wishes; and I look forward to seeing you again so soon.

Sad to say, Rathbone did not attend the BSI dinner. Despite all the discussion of the date, he appeared at the Racquet and Tennis Club, dressed as Sherlock Holmes, on Friday, January 16th.

The next letter – from Smith to Rathbone – comes seven years later. It is dated January 11, 1954, and was prompted by a situation somewhat parallel to the first series of letters. It also includes Smith's condolences for the premature closing of the play "Sherlock Holmes", which had been written by Rathbone's wife, Ouida.

—continued next page

Rathbone-Smith... —continued from previous page

Dear Basil:

Vincent Starrett has sent me, for publication in *The Baker Street Journal* the most excellent piece you entrusted to him, entitled, "Goodbye, My Friend". I find it beautiful, and I shall, if I may, include it as the leading article in the April issue.

I did not write you about the play, after it closed, because I did not know just how far you and Mrs. Rathbone would want any of us to go in expressing our feelings. It was a brave try, and it deserved far better of the critics than it got. You know what the Baker Street Irregulars thought of it – I tried my own best, in *Cue*, to extend our enthusiasm to a wider field. I guess the answer is, very simply, that there aren't enough Irregulars in the world, or in New York, either among the critics or among the theatre-going yokels. You did give all of us, though, one of the most glorious experiences we have had since we last read one of the *Tales for the first time*.

My very best to you, and my thanks – both for what you did then, and for having written this pensive and touching essay.

Rathbone responds on February 26th, asking if he could see the copy of his essay, "since [I] sent it to Starrett rather impulsively." He hasn't had a chance to look it over since, and the original "might be nice for my daughter's scrapbook."

In a note that impresses one with the speed of mail delivery in those days, since it too is dated February 26th, Smith responds, apologizing for the fact that he published the article without first sending Rathbone the proofs, and that he's just received the printed copies of *The Baker Street Journal* for shipping. Indicating that there was more contact between the two than is seen in the letters, he continues on the subject of Rathbone's essay.

I gave it very careful attention (including the change in the Browning quotation, which I mentioned to you), and

I hope you will find that everything is in order. It is a very beautiful and touching piece, and the *Journal* is, I assure you, proud to print it.

On March 3, Rathbone responds with the last known letter of the correspondence:

I am sorry "Goodbye, My Friend" had to go to press so early. I believe I have improved it considerably, but I suppose it's too late now. Whenever I write anything I like to put it away for a week or so, & come back to it, & I find, inevitably, that there are improvements I can make. If it should not be too late may I send you the revised re-write? I have got "the bug", & turned out 3 more short stories this past month! Brandt & Brandt are going to let me know whether or not I am fooling myself with this hobby or if one should go on & try, try, try again!
Best wishes always,
Basil



Rathbone at home

Also included in the folder is Rathbone's handwritten manuscript of "Goodbye My Friend" – presumably the original, as there are differences between it and the version printed in his autobiography, *In and Out of Character*, in which "Day Dream" can also be found.

There are, as I said, no major discoveries lurking here, but it is interesting to see that Rathbone thought for a time of writing short stories. And what Sherlockian cannot be charmed by his wanting to give Nigel Bruce a subscription to *The Baker Street Journal* as a Christmas present?

*All quotations are from Baker Street Irregulars (Organization: U.S.) Archive, 1923-2007, (MS Am 2717 (174)) Houghton Library, Harvard University

Author's Note: Portions of Smith's letters to Rathbone have already been published in *Irregular Crises of the Late 'Forties*, Volume 5 of Jon Lellenberg's comprehensive BSI History Series. Rathbone's side of the correspondence, however, is apparently appearing in print for the first time. Rathbone's 1953 play was the subject of Susan Dahlinger and Glen Miranker's 2007 BSI Christmas Annual "Rathbone Returns! A Misadventure Called Sherlock Holmes."

Added to the Archives

The following material donations have been received since the publication of the Spring, 2012 newsletter.

- From Vinnie Brosnan, a box of miscellaneous materials - including letters, photos, and albums - from the collection of Don Hardenbrook.
- From Donald E. Curtis, four loose-leaf notebooks (dated 1986-2009), containing BSI and Sherlockian ephemera and correspondence - much of it related to the Illustrious Clients - including a letter from Dame Jean.
- From Michael D. Levin, Sheldon I. Levin, Arlene J. Levin, and Judith B. Levin, 28 folders containing 36 talks/articles presented by their father, Alfred "Fred" Levin.
- From Nicolas Utechin, research materials from his 2010 Christmas Annual on Ronald Knox and his BSJ article regarding the first reading.
- From Sonia Fetherston, a letter from Scott Bond discussing the influence of Disney illustrator Carl Banks on both his career and his work for the BSJ, and a complete set (10 vols.) of *The Hounds Collection*, essays from *The Hounds of the Internet*, signed by editor Bill Barnes.

And from the 2012 BSI Birthday Weekend, Paul Singleton has collected the following items:

- Les Klinger's toast to The Woman.
- Lyndsay Faye's toast to Mrs. Hudson.
- Andy Solberg's toast to Mycroft.
- Jim Saunders' toast to the Second Mrs. Watson.
- Don Novorsky's toast to Sherlock Holmes.
- The text of Burt Wolder's presentation "Sherlock Holmes in Chicago."
- The text of Barbara Rausch's presentation "A Son's Remorse."
- Mike Whelan's podium notes.
- The text of Scott Monty and Paul Singleton's "2,000 Year-old Man" tribute to Peter Blau.
- Henry Boote's "Music for a Final Bow."
- The text of Francine Kitts' annual rendition of "Standing on the Terrace."
- Sonia Fetherston's remarks upon receiving the 2011 Morley-Montgomery Award.
- The text of Lisa Sanders' BSI Distinguished Speaker lecture, "Crazy Like a Fox or Just Crazy?"
- The text of Donny Zaldin's sketch "The Singular Adventure of Carnac the Magnificent," presented at the William Gillette Luncheon.
- The text of Sarah Montague's comedy sketch "The Adventure of Charles Augustus Cameron," presented at the William Gillette Luncheon.
- The text of Betsy and Al Rosenblatt's annual rendition of "The Year in Sherlockian Verse."

Also collected by Paul:

- The text of George McCormack's "A Watsonesque History of the Diogenes Club of Brooklyn."
- Les Klinger's background material for "A Tangled Skein."

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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 Collection 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 owner 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.

A Study In Sharing

There was a very nice incident that occurred during this year’s annual BSI Dinner that was not mentioned in *The Baker Street Journal* account or the Rosenblatts’ annual year in Sherlockian verse. Dick Sveum, representing The Friends of The Sherlock Holmes Collections at the University of Minnesota Library, in a warm gesture of support for - and solidarity with - The Baker Street Irregulars Trust, presented us with a collection of pamphlets and papers primarily related to John Bennett Shaw that they felt would fill some holes in our own collection. The BSI Trust would like to extend our thanks to Dick and the University of Minnesota Library for their consideration and generosity.

Readers will be pleased to know that the BSI Trust believes in reciprocating in kind. A few years ago BSI Trust archivist, Bob Coghill, identified a considerable amount of Sherlockian material that we possessed that was not BSI-specific but still merited preservation. We sent this to The Sherlock Holmes Collections at the University of Minnesota Library. In February of this year we sent them a second shipment, and we will continue to do so whenever the opportunity presents itself.



The BSI Trust exists in order to preserve the history of The Baker Street Irregulars. We fully support the efforts of other institutions that wish to preserve everything related to Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes. Repositories such as The University of Minnesota, The Friends of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection in Toronto, The Marylebone Library in London and The Conan Doyle Collection in Portsmouth do an outstanding job of preserving the memory of the Master and his creator. Our singular place in this collective effort is to capture all that we can specific to The Baker Street Irregulars, its history, and that of our members.



The Cardinal Points

BY MARSHALL S. BERDAN, BSI



Marshall S. Berdan, BSI

To avail myself of a threadbare but still serviceable cliché, “what a difference a year makes!” In our Fall 2011 issue, I authored what I thought was a practical piece outlining the step-by-step process of gaining physical access to items in the BSI Trust Archives at Harvard’s Houghton Library now that the finding aid had been completed. The significant “catch” was that you still had to journey to Cambridge to do so. But now you don’t, thanks to a recently inaugurated document reproduction service at the Houghton Library.

In Part II of his lead article, Greg Darak walks us through the process of how it is done – not in the abstract, but exactly how he did it in composing his own article (Part I) on the Basil Rathbone-Edgar Smith correspondence, whose own lesson could well be “what a difference a week makes”. To the best of my knowledge, Greg’s is the first scholarly work utilizing the BSI Trust Archives ever written via remote access, and it is our distinct pleasure to be publishing it here. So helpful, in fact, do we assume that his “how I did this at home – and how you can too” exegesis will prove to be, that we have given it place of honor on the back page of this issue of *For the Sake of the Trust*.

It is indeed a brave new world for both Sherlockian researchers and the merely curious, one which only leaves us to ponder – rhetorically and otherwise – “Whatever will they think of next?”



How I Investigated Folder 174 of the BSI Trust Archives without Leaving Home – And How You Can Do the Same



BY GREG DARAK, BSI

The Rathbone-Smith correspondence is just one of hundreds of interesting items that can be found in the BSI Trust Archives at Harvard University's Houghton Library. And thanks to the internet and Houghton's new document reproduction service, I didn't have to go to Cambridge to examine it in person. Nor will you for anything you'd care to look at, whether you are doing in-depth scholarly research or are merely curious. In addition, the process is fairly straightforward, as the following step-by-step guide demonstrates.

To see what's in the BSI Trust Archives, search for "Houghton Library Harvard." This will bring you to the library's home page, hcl.harvard.edu/libraries/houghton. Move your cursor to the search box, and you will see a number of options. Click on the OASIS (Online Archival Search Information System) option and type in "Baker Street Irregulars." (By the way, OASIS also shows you what's available in other Harvard Library collections.)

This will bring up a list of items, the first of which will be The Baker Street Irregulars archive. At the left are two boxes, one labeled "Summary" and the other "Full Finding Aid." Click on the latter, and you'll find the most current listing of the archive's contents, split up into 11 component categories:

1. Correspondence
2. Business Files
3. US and Foreign Sherlockian Society files
4. Member Files
5. Events
6. Publications
7. Sherlockian Commentary and Research
8. Sherlockian Catalogs and Bibliographies
9. Media and Music
10. Photographs
11. Realia and Memorabilia

The items themselves cannot be viewed online. But if you fill out a request form, Harvard will create a copy of any specific folder and send it to you. To do this, return to the Houghton Library home page, click on the "General Information" box, and select "Reproduction and Permissions." This will bring you to a page that spells out the rules and regulations about securing copies and that contains a link to the form you will need to fill out.

To tell Harvard what you'd like to see, click on the "Photoduplication Request Form" line in the "Reproduc-

tion" section of the page and complete the accompanying form. The only potentially tricky part here is identifying the call number. The call number for the entire BSI Trust Archive is "MS Am 2717." But to this must be added the particular folder or file you wish to examine. The Rathbone-Smith correspondence that I requested is listed under "Correspondence," (Series 1 in the above list of 11 component parts) as "(174) Rathbone, Basil, 1892-1967. Correspondence with Edgar Wadsworth Smith, 1947-1954. 1 folder." So the complete call number that I submitted was "MS Am 2717 Series 1 (174)." For "Title/Description" which requires any succinct but accurate characterization, I put "The Rathbone – Smith correspondence."

About a week after you submit your request, you will hear back from Harvard, informing you how many pages (from one to several hundred) are in the folder and how much it will cost to reproduce them. Naturally, the cost will vary depending on what the material is, its condition or format, and how you want it copied. Current prices are 60 cents a page for regular paper copies plus \$13 for shipping. If you want publishable quality images, the cost ranges from \$1 per page to \$20 for studio copy levels. And if you'd rather see the file through a limited-time access weblink, it will cost you \$10, but there is no shipping charge. Payment can be made either via check (to be sent in the mail), or online via credit card (Visa or MasterCard). Once you've paid, all you have to do is wait for your copies to arrive.

Addendum for scholarly researchers:

As with any research, Harvard must be properly credited. Bibliographical references and/or footnotes should include the citation credit line "Baker Street Irregulars Archive, MS Am 2717 ([folder number]) Houghton Library, Harvard University". (An optional longer version is used in the endnote to the previous article.)

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