

The Bilge Pump

Vol. 14, No. 03 March, 2026
*The Irregular Publication of the Crew of the
Barque Lone Star
founded November, 1970*



PLEASE NOTE: **April 05, 2026 Meeting** NOTICE

We will be conducting our next monthly meeting virtually on **March 05** at 1:00 pm central. I will send out the link for the meeting the week before the meeting. The story for the month is "**The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle**".

Bob Katz, BSI, ASH, will lead the discussion on the story.

Our special guest speaker will be our own **Barbara Rusch**, ASH, BSI, MBt.

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For more information concerning our society, visit: <http://www.dfw-sherlock.org/>

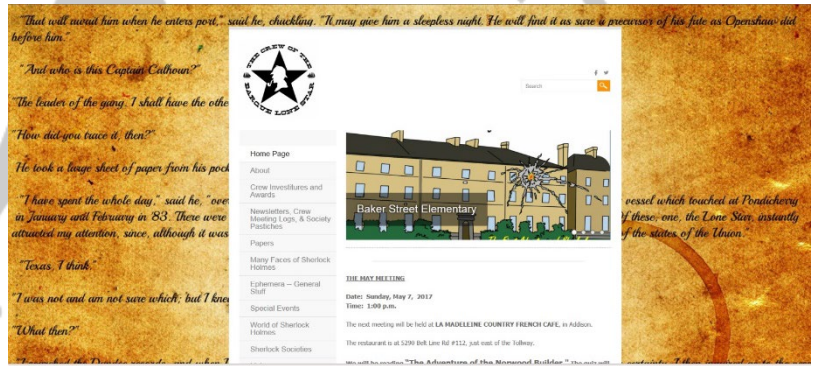
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<p>Who dunnit:</p> 	<p>Third Mate Helmsman Spiritual Advisors</p> <p>Secretary Historian Webmaster</p>	<p>Steve Mason, BSI Walter Pieper Don Hobbs, BSI Dr. Jim Webb, BSI Cindy Brown, BSI Pam Mason Rusty Mason, BSI</p>	<p>mason.steve8080@gmail.com waltpieper@att.net 221b@verizon.net jimrwebb@ix.netcom.com myrkrid08@yahoo.com</p>

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<https://www.facebook.com/BarqueLoneStar/>

MARCH 01 SUMMARY

There were **80** in attendance at this ZOOM meeting.

The MARCH 2026 meeting of the Crew of the Barque Lone Star began with a toast by Ira Matetsky, BSI. He toasted the two main characters of this month's story, Mr. and Mrs. Neville St Clair.

Next, we had the quiz on this month's story, "The Adventure of the Man with the Twisted Lip".

Bob Katz, BSI then entertained us with a lively discussion on Sidney Paget being superfluous to this story? Apparently, many people thought Conan Doyle wrote with such detail in this story that Paget's work of art isn't really necessary. There was also discussion about how this is similar to the movie *The Usual Suspects*.

We then moved on to announcements. The Crew of the Barque Lone Star will have a two-volume set to be published later this year. It will be for kids and by kids. The first volume will be written by children and be a Sherlock Holmes mystery and the second volume will be stories for children written by adults. The deadline for submission is October 1, 2026.

Steve Mason, BSI noted that we have 14 years of newsletters for the Crew of the Barque Lone Star, and he would like people to send in articles if they would like to be included in the Bilge Pump.

Holmes Hysteria, inspired by March Madness, is currently up and running in the Stranger's Room on Facebook, voting for the best Sherlock Holmes films.

Kyndall Potts announced the Holmes, Doyle, and Friends conference will be in Dayton, OH again this year. It will start the weekend of March 20th and go to the 22nd.

Rob Nunn, BSI, wanted everyone to know Holmes and the Heartland Conference will also be this year and the block of rooms is very nearly sold out. That conference will be held in St Louis July 24-26.

Madeline Quinones, BSI noted that the John H. Watson Society meeting will be one Sunday later this month. This month only. Registration is still open for 221B con also.

Scott Monty, BSI noted that **Bob Katz** is the interview subject for IHOSE.

Sandra Halter from Indianapolis, noted that the upcoming program from the Medical History Museum will be a hybrid having both live and zoom-in callers. David Zanher, from Indianapolis and the Illustrious Clients will be the speaker. David is a retired forensic scientist. He will be talking on the history of forensic science in Sherlock Holmes and this will be April 1, 2026.

Edith Pouden noted that the Legion of ZOOM conference will be held March 15th and this will be a virtual conference.

Kristin Mertz read one of **Sandy Kozinn's** wonderful limericks for the story.

Rich Krisciunas, BSI then gave us the canonical Law 101. He discussed the difference between a gin shop, a slop shop, and the legality of opium dens in Victorian England.

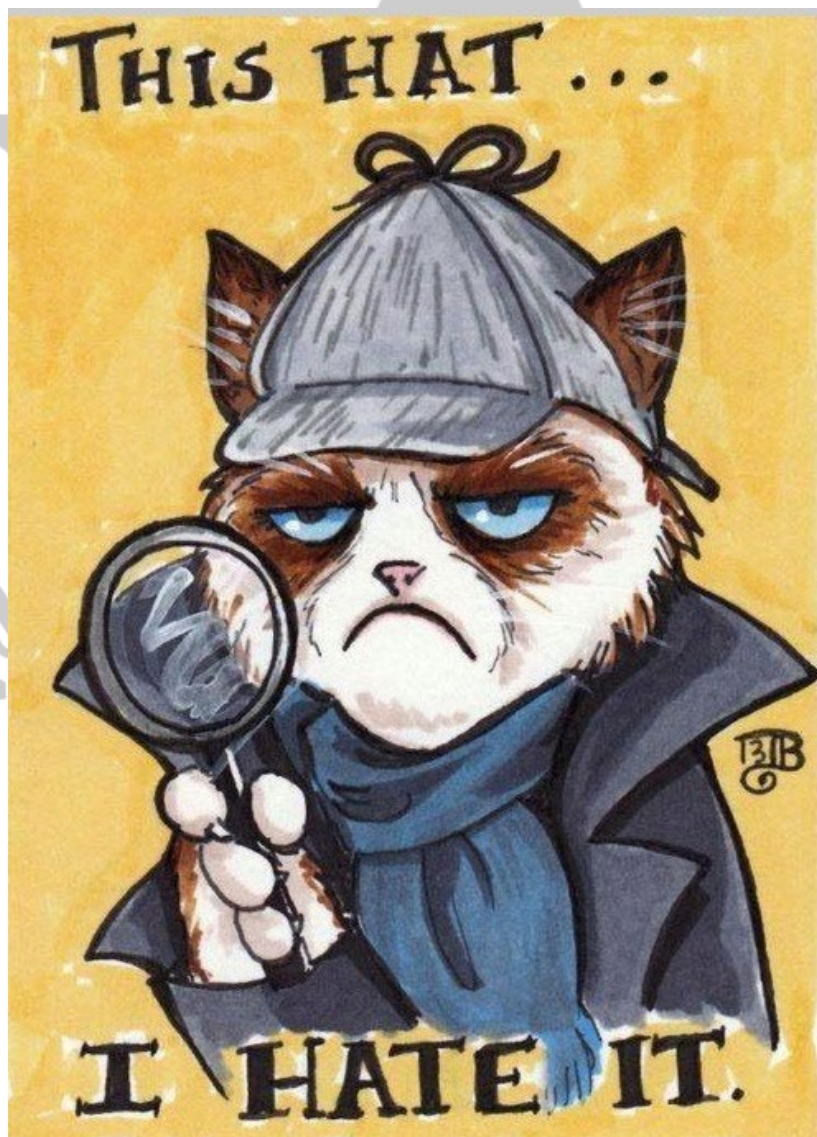
Scott Monty, BSI was our featured presenter this month. His presentation was "I'm begging you: a History of Mendicancy." Scott Monty ended his presentation by asking us when did poverty become less spiritual and more of a police matter?

We then had the Canonical Top 10 presented by **Brad Keefauer**, BSI. His question was, who was Mrs. Watson referring to when she called someone James. And the number one winner was James Winter, alias Killer Evans, alias Morcroft.

Shana Carter, BSI then did a reading from the Baker Street Journal Volume 6 #2. April 1958, "Art in the Blood".

We closed the meeting with a toast by **Rich Krisciunas**, BSI to the Crew of the Barque Lone Star.

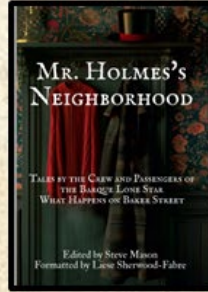
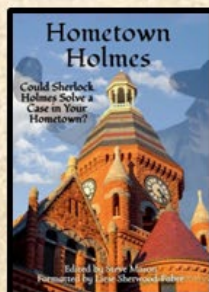
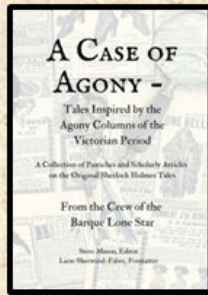
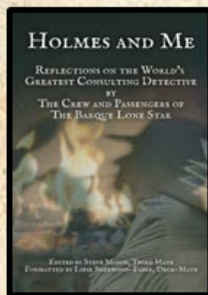
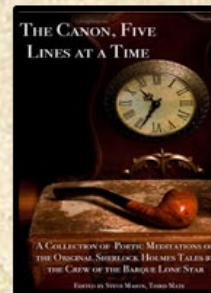
[Thanks to Cindy for taking the minutes as always.](#)



The Crew of the Barque Lone Star Society has published 10 wonderful books. Each book is chocked full of wonderful essays and pastiches by our own Society members. You may download a free copy of the books (as .pdf, Nook, or Kindle files) on our website...

<https://www.dfw-sherlock.org/society--crew-member-anthologies-pastiches.html>

Or you may purchase a soft-back version of any of our books (at cost) at...
<https://www.barnesandnoble.com/s/the%20crew%20of%20the%20barque%20lone%20star>



The Crew of the Barque Lone Star Society is producing our 11th book in our 56th year of existence, in partnership with The Beacon Society!



The average Sherlockian was first exposed to Sherlock Holmes at the age of 11 years old. The Crew and Beacon Society is producing a two-volume book set to help young readers enjoy Sherlock Holmes.

The 1st volume will be stories, illustrations, poems, etc. authored by younger Sherlockians. The 2nd volume will be authored by adult Sherlockians.

1. Stories should be 3,000 – 5,000 words, which is the average length for a short story. Shorter stories are also welcome.
2. **This is a family book, with minors participating. The target audience is 8-13 year olds, so entries should be age-appropriate.**
3. Your story will be proofread by volunteer editors for grammar, mechanics, and punctuation. No edits will be made to the content of your story.
4. This project is not limited to Crew or Beacon Society members. Any Sherlockian is welcome to participate.
5. The anthology will be finalized by the end of the calendar year, so we ask for entries to be submitted by October 1 to mason.steve8080@gmail.com.
6. All participants will receive a complimentary book as our thanks.

The final product will be published in book form and posted on our websites and shared with all society members as a .pdf, Kindle, and Nook file for free. Physical copies of the books will be sold on the Barnes & Noble along with our other books at cost.

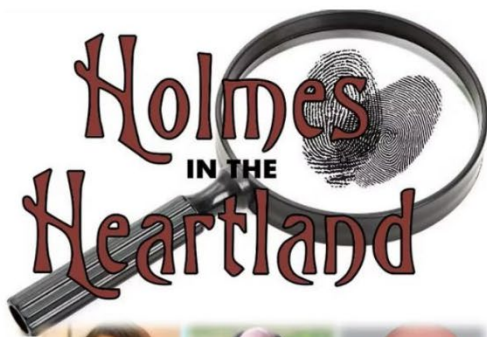


THE 2026 HOLMES IN THE HEARTLAND WEEKEND

Meet us in St. Louis July 24-26 for a weekend featuring a Friday night welcome reception, Saturday full of speakers, lunch, vendors, banquet, after-dinner entertainment, and a Sunday tour of the Missouri History Museum.



parallelcasestl.wixsite.com/home/holmes-in-the-heartland



Speakers Lineup

Michael Dirda
Johanna Draper Carlson
Randy Getz
Jay Ganguly
Bob Katz
Ira Matetsky
Marisa Mercurio & Sarah Kolb
Scott Monty



Save the Date

TORISTS INTERNATIONAL S.S.

WHICH IS THE TRUE CAPED CRUSADER?



OR



MARCH 28, 2026

Our speaker will be Johanna Draper Carlson - whose topic is *Superhero Sherlock Holmes - He has met various super heroes but is he one?*

The event will be at The Great Escape Restaurant, 9540 Irving Park Road, Schiller Park, Illinois 60176, starting with social time at 6:30. The cost is \$40 per person. First time attendees are only \$35 each.

Registration is done by sending a check payable to Torists International S.S. to 9003 Lincolnwood Drive Evanston IL 60203, or paying by paypal (friends and family) to toristintss@gmail.com. The cost goes up to \$45 on March 20th.

Jonathan Shimberg
toristintss@gmail.com
Co-Chief Stewards

Linda Crohn
Evportial121@aol.com

The Torists International S.S. presents

And it is always
1895

*An exploration of the life and work of
Vincent Starrett*



Vincent Starrett, poet, mystery author, journalist, and bibliophile, is best known for his deep passion for detective fiction, especially the adventures of Sherlock Holmes. Starrett played a foundational role in the development of Sherlockian scholarship with his 1933 book *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*, a cornerstone of Holmesian literature, blending biography, literary criticism, and imaginative speculation about the Great Detective's world. A founding member of The Baker Street Irregulars and a towering figure in the Chicago Sherlockian scene, Starrett's lifelong devotion to Sherlock Holmes continues to influence generations of fans and scholars alike. *And it is Always 1895* will celebrate Starrett's life and work.

Where: Chicago, Illinois | **When:** October 23–24, 2026

Scan the QR code, or visit www.anditalways1895.org to see the list of speakers. Questions? Please email starrett1895@gmail.com.



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IF INCONVENIENT, COME ALL THE SAME.”



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FOR ALL THINGS SHERLOCK HOLMES

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HOLMES, DOYLE, & FRIENDS: *xi*



March 21, 2026
Fairborn DOUBLETREE INN
Formerly THE HOLIDAY INN
DAYTON, OHIO



New Hotel, NEW Banquet in the hotel Ballroom with Guest Speaker, Erica Dowell, Curator of the BSI Archive, Lilly Library

Go to AgraTreasurers.net for more information...
but a few tidbits...

Great Speakers

George Skornickel, Bob Katz, Mary Alcaro/Ed Pratt, Erica Fair,
Mark Curtis, Ann Lewis, Bob Bernier, & Kyndall Potts

Great Vendors!

Friday Night socializing in the Hotel Bar, Saturday Banquet

Registration \$85 (If registered after 1/31/2026, \$90)

Come join the fun!

ART IN THE BLOOD

Shana Carter, BSI

The Baker Street Journal, (Editor: Edgar W. Smith)
Vol. 8, Num 2 – April, 1958

"Art in the blood," said Mr. Sherlock Holmes, "is liable to take the strangest forms."

The forms the Master's own art took, in practice and proclivity, were not, it is pleasant to note, so very strange after all. He loved good music, and his tastes were usually simple: the solid fare of Mendelssohn, Meyerbeer, Offenbach and Wagner for his routine wants, or, when an academic mood was upon him, the recondite motets of Orlando di Lasso.

In painting, he admired if he did not actually covet at least two works by Jean Baptiste Greuze, and he was partial, surely, to the delicate creations of his own great-uncle and his first-cousin-once-removed.

And in the field of literature, he showed a cultivated and discriminating taste: the writings of Shakespeare, whom he paraphrased tellingly on at least two occasions; the Bible, in which he was rusty but resourceful; Thomas Carlyle, whom he denied and then quoted, and, across the borders of language, such stalwarts as Goethe, Flaubert, Hafiz and Horace. These are not strange bents, and Holmes's blood, like his brother Mycroft's, maintained its artistic normality in all but the course it took toward endowing him with a peculiar faculty for observation and deduction.

But think what a painful situation might confront us if the great detective had not, in fact, kept his artistic blood under control and his artistic feet on the ground! It is inconceivable, of course, but let us

just assume that he had been exposed to some of the influences that are prevalent in the field of the arts today, and that he had yielded to their blandishments.

We would see him, in this phantasmagoria, sitting in the stalls, wrapped in the most perfect happiness, gently waving his long, thin fingers as he listened with languid, dreamy eyes to the frightful cacophony of Bartok, and murmuring "His dissonances and atonality are splendid, Watson!"

Or we would hear him expatiating to his friend, as he looked at the catalogue of the latest Portalis sale: "Modern criticism has more than endorsed the high opinion formed of Klee by his contemporaries. His rendering of 'Slaughter in Limehouse, No. 87,' reveals the very depths of this great man's mood, and his cosmic perception is all the more devastating because it was discovered later that the painting was hung upside-down."

Or, as he philosophized on the ways of a woman at the conclusion of Mary Sutherland's little case: 'Snatch whoso snatches delusion from woman-deluded also snatching angebite of inwit oh dangerous snatch, for a tiger cub is a tiger cub is a tiger cub.' There is as much sense in James Joyce as there is in Gertrude Stein, and as much knowledge of the world."

... No. This is Sherlock Holmes we are thinking of, after all, and the art in his blood has not, thank goodness, been spilled upon the floor of our nightmares.

To subscribe to the Baker Street Journal, go to <https://bakerstreetirregulars.com/the-baker-street-journal/>

THE MONOGRAPH ON THE MOUNT (MAYBE)

Brenda Rossini

Sherlock Holmes did come down from the mountain Reichenbach.

And he spoke to the people--those in the lowest and vilest alleys of London and its cesspools, and to the credulous peasants in the smiling and beautiful countryside.

And thus, he said:

I bring to you an Eight-Point Monograph.

FIRST, thou shalt limit membership in scion societies to the phrenologically flawless, and whosoever presents with bumps in the skull and with gleaming, beady eyes shall be sent packing to the distant shores of Australia.

SECOND, thou shalt no more raise the prices for dinners in my honor, not with gold, nor calves, nor metallic, nor paper, and if you transgress, so shall the attending horde pinion your digits to a thumb-slicing machine.

THIRD, thou shalt not hurl smoke bombs into the rooms of believers in fairies, ectoplasm, seances, spirits, or the Piltdown man. Thou shalt bestow upon them a BSI investiture.

FOURTH, thou shalt discern the characteristics of horse's hooves, cow tracks, and the footsteps of a giant hound, and submit therewith even a trifling monograph to Keep the Memory Green.

FIFTH, Whosoever pedals upon a British penny farthing with Dunlop tires, thou shalt honor him or her, and charge no fee for whatever patchwork is required.

SIXTH, thou shalt drive no extravagant brougham, nor be uncourteous with verbs, wear no astrakhan, nor drink a wine other than the Magyar's Tokaji.

SEVENTH, thou shalt enjoy 2026 if you remember and keep holy the words I spake in 1895: Take to living by your wits. Be as brave as a bulldog, as tenacious as a lobster, and keep your brain-attic stocked with furniture.

EIGHTH, thou shalt appoint Dr. John Watson to a Council of your Elders to consider what to do for an encore.

WISDOM FROM A FOUNDER

Read, every day, something no one else is reading.

Think, every day, something no one else is thinking.

Do, every day, something no one else would be silly enough to do.

It is bad for the mind to be always part of a unanimity.

Christopher Morley
November 6, 1948

IN PRAISE OF THE PASTICHE

David Marcum

[NOTE: My apologies to the one or two people who pause to read these reviews for my missing a couple of months. The days fly by, and we have been deeply disrupted of late by the purchase of a new house, and then scheduling the estimates and renovations that have followed. We still have miles to go before we sleep – but I'll try to be better at meeting obligations.]

discovered Sherlock Holmes at age ten in 1975, and quickly realized that the original sixty Canonical stories were not enough. Sadly in those days, the many threads that fill in between the main Canonical fibers in The Great Holmes Tapestry were just beginning to be discovered, and it took a while for post-Canonical adventures to really gain the level of importance that we find today.

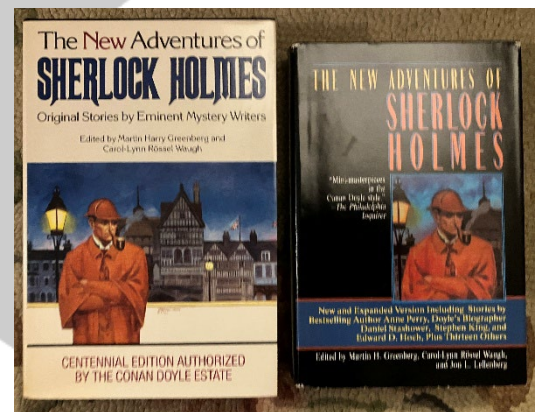
1987 was the 100th Anniversary of the publication of *A Study in Scarlet*, and publishers Carroll & Graf commemorated it with the earth-shaking publication of *The New Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, edited by Martin H. Greenberg and Carol-Lynn R. Waugh, a brand-new volume of newly discovered Holmes tales, many of them presented in the correct and traditional form by different modern-day literary agents. (A revised and expanded version was published in 1999, with extra stories by Daniel Stashower, Bill Crider, and Anne Perry, and the addition of Jon C. Lellenberg as editor.)

I believe that the 1987 edition was the first Holmes anthology of this type. In 1944, Ellery Queen had edited *The Misadventures of Sherlock Holmes* – quickly suppressed by the litigious Doyle heirs – but all of those stories had been previously printed, and the majority were not actually Holmes stories at all. Instead, they were parodies, or about Holmes-like protagonists. (Solar Pons had his first wide-spread appearance there.) There is actually just a small percentage of that book that's about the True Holmes.

The original edition of *The New Adventures* contained fifteen stories, and a number of the authors were regular contributors to *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*. There was a poem by Mollie Hardwick to kick things off – rather like the poems that came to open every one of the 52 volumes of the later series *The MX Book of New Sherlock Holmes Stories*.

John Gardner wrote an essay about Moriarty, and the “story” entry by renowned Sherlockian Michael Harrison felt more like an essay narrated by Watson as he elaborated on Harrison's theories from his prior publications about the “true” story of “A Scandal in Bohemia”. Loren Estleman's offering was a parody, and about as close to the True Holmes as his crossover Dracula and Mr. Hyde efforts – that is to say, not close at all. There were a few Canonical sequels – like entries from Gary Alan Ruse and Edward D. Hoch. Some contributors tried hard and did well, except for showing their ignorance – sadly unfixed by the editors – like when Michael Gilbert's story where he (and the editors) didn't seem to know (or care) that Watson was saved by *Murray* at Maiwand, and *not* some other unknown guy named *Sam Pearce*.

Another of these where the main plot point was based on ignorance of the Canon was the most famous of all the entries: Stephen King's “The Doctor's Case”, which is really great in all aspects . . . except that King gives Holmes a violent allergy to cats as if it's a well-established thing, which he had to do to make the rest of the story possible.



But while this story sucks up all the air in the room, so to speak, and gets all the attention, the story that has stuck with me for nearly forty years is one that is often mentioned by other reviewers: “The Shadows on the Lawn” by Barry Jones.

This Barry Jones is not to be confused with the British actor of the same name (1893-1981) who played the Duke of Shires in *A Study in Terror* (1965) and Charles Augustus Milverton in the *Sherlock Holmes* television show of the same year. This authorial Barry Jones is described at the back of the book as “an Englishman and is here making his writing debut to what promises to be a productive career.” From what I could find, this was his only Holmes pastiche, and he’s listed nowhere else in the late Phil Jones’ exhaustively complete database. (If anyone knows more about Mr. Jones, please let me know.)

This is a version of the Untold Case where Holmes is dramatically introduced to Dr. Moore Agar, as mentioned in “The Devil’s Foot”. (There have been many of those over the years.) Here, the doctor, having arrived at 221b, is concerned about a bed-ridden patient – a ten-year-old-boy named Peter, who is wasting away and is terrified because of the titular shadows on the lawn, seen from his window and watching his room. There is a man in a stovepipe hat, and a woman and two children.

As mentioned, this story sticks with you with its simple terror. Just now, as I type this – and this is the truth – I am literally having a chill and my thinning hair is standing on end with the recollection of this narrative. It regularly pops into my head at different times. Every year, for instance, at some point I think of it while sitting on my screened back porch and seeing similar shadows on my own lawn. Another semi-regular occasion is when I roll my garbage can to the end of our driveway and look south, to the end of the block, where the neighbors trimmed their trees, making weird shadows from the nearby streetlight – and it looks like people standing down there watching me. I know what it is – just trees – but I still hurry back inside and lock the door, away from their gaze. I understand young Peter’s fear.

I was fortunate to acquire *The New Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* when it was published, when I was twenty-two years old, and to have since integrated this story into my own experiences. I’ve re-read it numerous times since then, and experienced the feeling it inspired much more often. Even if it was published nearly forty years ago, and you only get to read it now for the first time, I urge you to track it down and start experiencing it for yourself.

SHERLOCK HOLMES & THE SPIES IN THE CANON & IN WWI

Franklin Saksena, M.D, BSI

Published in *The Cri-Bar Crier*
March, 2026

There are several instances of spies being mentioned in the Canon (SECO, BRUC, LAST). Several of the spies were known to the British government (Mycroft), such as Eduardo Lucas and Oberstein. The most detailed story of spies has SH working as a double agent for 2 years in Chicago, getting into von Bork's confidence, and gradually destroying his ring of spies. He also provided false information about the Royal Navy as regards explosives, ships in production, and new weapons.

Although Von Bork is said to be a competent agent, he makes a number of errors. He keeps original and copies of papers stolen in a safe. He tells the combination number of his safe to a subordinate, and his meeting with Von Bulow is likely to be detected when his large car partially blocks the lane. In addition, von Bork has his wife take some important documents with her when she leaves the country. At that time (August 1914) she would likely be searched before leaving the country (2,3). Von Bork lived in Harwich, a port city in Essex. It had a ferry link to the Continent and was a naval base in WW1.

History of Secret Service

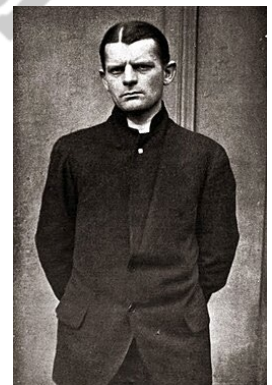
The Germans did send in spies prior to and during WW1 to learn about the Royal Navy. By 1909 the British secret service was born under Kell (1909-1941), as head of the newly created MI5, to combat German espionage. MI5 was responsible for overall direction and the identification of foreign agents, but arrests and interrogations were carried out by Special Branch of the Metropolitan Police. Churchill was involved in getting the Official Secrets and the Alien Restriction Acts passed in 1909-10 (3). The newspapers adhered to the D notices not to publish information harmful to the country. At the start of WW1 most of the alien agents were arrested, chiefly in important military and naval centers (Scapa Flow, Harwich). This crippled German intelligence operations in the UK at a crucial moment in the war (4).

Examples of German Naval Spies

Carl Hans Lody (1877-1914) (1,4)

Lody was a reserve officer of the Imperial German Navy. He was sent to Scotland as a spy to monitor British naval movements and to report any damage to their ships should a sea battle take place. He had no training in espionage, and the letters he sent abroad were not encoded. His messages were picked up by MI5. He was arrested in October 1914. He was carrying £14 in German gold and a notebook of British ships sunk in in the North Sea, as well as names and addresses of German agents. He had a jacket that contained a tailor's ticket with a Berlin address. He was tried in open court and executed in November 1914 in the Tower of London.

Later honored by the Nazi's as a hero, he had a ship (a Leberect Maass class destroyer) named after him. At least 10 spies were executed during WW1.



Jules C Silber (1885-1939) (1,4)

Silber was believed to be the only German agent who was never caught. He wrote his memoirs (The Invisible Weapons) in 1932 when he got back to Germany. A detailed account was also written by Ronald Seth (The Spy Who Was Never Caught). He secured his post as Postal censor, as he was fluent in English, having worked as a translator for the British in the Boer War (1899-1902). Thus he could read various letters written by soldiers and add some microdot data for the Germans. This was probably of local tactical use, as he did inform the Germans that the British were using Q ships. These were warships disguised as merchant ships, designed to hunt down submarines.

In conclusion, to be an effective spy one must keep most of his information in his head and not carry around incriminating documents, as was the case with Von Bork and Carl Hans Lody.

References

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2. Speck GR, as quoted by Klinger LS. Sherlock Holmes New Annotations Norton Press NY 2005 p1439
3. Stafford D. Churchill and Secret Service Overlook Press, Woodstock and NY. 1997 pp23-39
4. Wikipedia "Carl Lody" [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Carl Hans Lody & oldid=1330064270](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Carl_Hans_Lody&oldid=1330064270)

THE BUSINESS OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

Klaus Anderson, Copenhagen

I have worked with bookkeeping, accounting, auditing, and controlling throughout my professional life. The following is an accountants' explanation of how the business structure of Sherlock Holmes (SH) might fit together. It is neither the whole nor half the truth, but merely observations from the sidelines.

In 1874-1875 SH is encouraged by Trevor Sr. (GLOR) to pursue the exceptional ability he has for observation and deduction. SH



establishes himself as a consulting detective in Montague St. around 1878-1880, where he follows the dream of becoming an entrepreneur. As the eager entrepreneur he is, he does not distinguish between cases based on whether there is money in them as long as they are exciting and represent something new and different.

As an entrepreneur, one often has brought 'money from home' in the form of personal funds (from savings, inheritance, or loans) and loans from family and friends. You try to create a market for the product you sell and often receive a helping hand from friends (MUSG) and family in the beginning to get the business off the ground. Many entrepreneurs also have the habit of knocking on the doors of potential sources of work, as when SH, for example, spends a great deal of time at crime scenes where he has no formal reason to be. But you must have some results to talk about if the business is to move beyond the start-up phase and become a real enterprise you can live off.

Often money is uninteresting to the creative entrepreneur (con amore) as it is the product that matters (SIGN). However, SH knows the value of money and the cost of things. He buys his Stradivarius for 55 shillings from a pawnbroker in

Tottenham Court Road knowing it is worth at least 500 guineas and in SCAN he states: 'there is money in this case, Watson, if there is nothing else.'

Are things going poorly for SH? Well, he decides to move away from Montague Street and establishes himself in a shared office in Baker Street in 1881 (STUD) to split the cost of the premises. He gets the idea to invite his new office mate, the unemployed doctor John Watson (JW), along on a case. When the doctor turns out not only to know something about medicine but also to possess a communication talent, SH realizes it is a scoop, later referring to JW as his chronicler. Today, we would call him a marketing manager.

With JW's accounts, even more people become aware of the consulting detective's business. Cases now come from the general public and not only from the police or referrals from previous clients. If you can also choose to report only on the cases that go well, you create positive energy around the enterprise. As the business gradually proves its worth, assignments begin to come from abroad and eventually also state contracts (SECO in 1888, BRUC in 1895, and LAST in 1914), where the fees can be substantial.

Today many people experience stress up close. SH was no exception. In 1887 (REIG) and 1897 (DEVI), SH has to accept that his senses and brain need a break. In addition, there is the 'Great Hiatus,' during which he is away from 1891-1894.

So how does SH keep track of everything? When the creative entrepreneur rushes around solving cases, spending money on transport, telegrams, books, 'tips,' etc., and the rent—including for locations outside Baker Street—needs to be paid, and the landlord reassured from time to time. A good administrator is required. Someone who can see through and understand the business and who is

almost as good as oneself—or better. SH has Mycroft Holmes (MH).

MH, who in BRUC is described almost as an early form of AI, is the capable administrator who understands how to create structure around the business. He has the necessary patience with the creative person and establishes sensible business processes, such as ensuring that case-related expenses are settled and invoices issued for completed work.

The creative person rarely finds administrative types interesting and therefore devotes little time to them. JW, for example, does not hear of MH until 1888 in GREE, despite living together with SH since 1881. The creative adapts to administrative frameworks (sometimes reluctantly) when he sees the logic of them. In SPEC in 1883, SH mentions that he has a 'fixed rate' for his fee unless he chooses (to the administrator's dismay) not to charge it. The fee structure is, however, reasonably flexible depending on what the assignment requires and who is involved (PRIO).

MH cannot risk his integrity by being accused of nepotism by recommending to ministers or civil servants that they use SH. Officials and ministers must come to him based on the publicity and results that SH produces and that JW conveys or promotes.

About the author

The first time I read about Sherlock Holmes was in my English class in 4th grade in 1978. The story was 'The Speckled Band,' and I was stunned and fascinated at the same time. I was already an avid reader and managed to get through a good portion of the stories in the two large collected volumes from Chancellor Press.

In the years since, I have returned to the stories several times, and my interest in SH was reignited with the Sherlock series starring Benedict Cumberbatch and Martin Freeman. That got me into podcasting, and I discovered, among others, 'I Hear of Sherlock Everywhere,' 'Trifles,' 'The Jeremy Brett Sherlock Holmes Podcast,' and most recently the English 'Sherlock & Co.' In recent years, I have had more time to pursue the interest, spending many hours searching for books, films, podcasts, and today I have a fine collection. My latest idea is to buy books with Sherlock Holmes stories in the local language whenever we travel.

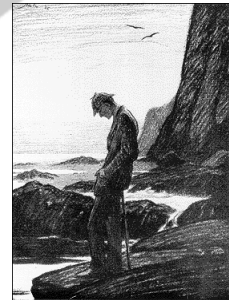
The above essay was originally written in connection with my admission to 'Sherlock Holmes Klubben' in Denmark in December 2025.

When JW meets MH for the first time in 1888 in GREE, he says: 'I hear of SH everywhere since you began writing about him.'

Does the 'SH business' make money? Yes, it appears so. We hear of specific sums occasionally (SCAN and PRIO), and although the business lies dormant during the 'Great Hiatus,' it is able to pay for the Baker Street lodgings, where the rent is 'princely' (DYIN), as well as SH's travel expenses during the period.

The money may also come from the sale or patenting of the new blood test mentioned in STUD. Perhaps the invention was sold or patented through MH's many contacts. In any case, there would be potential for a solid ongoing income or a significant one-time payment—money that could provide a financial foundation for the business.

The business is also later able to finance part of the price for which JW's practice is sold to a young (unknown) doctor when JW (again) becomes alone. The sale allows JW to return to Baker Street (ILLU) in 1902. Finally, there is money to purchase a house in Sussex Downs in 1903, where SH lives until his death.



A MORE COMPREHENSIVE LOOK AT “THE ADVENTURE OF THE BLUE CARBUNCLE”

1. Summary (The Diogenes Club)

Watson is married. He stops in to see Holmes two days after Christmas and finds him examining a felt hat which was given to him by Peterson.

Late Christmas eve, Peterson was walking home. He saw Baker approaching from the opposite direction carrying a goose. Baker was assaulted by a band of ruffians and in defending himself with his walking stick, broke a large shop window. This frightened both Baker and the thugs who fled. Peterson retrieved Baker's goose and hat and brought them to Holmes. Holmes kept the hat to examine it and Peterson took the goose home to cook it.

When Peterson's wife was dressing the goose, she found the blue carbuncle in its crop. Peterson brought the stone to Holmes. Holmes traced the stone from Baker to Windigate to Breckenridge to Oakshot and discovered the following plot.

Cusack told Ryder about the stone. Ryder arranged to have Homer come and fix a minor problem in the Countess' room. After he left, Ryder took the stone and went to visit his sister. Ryder was sure that Homer would be charged with the theft because of his past record. He forced the stone down a goose to avoid being discovered in possession of it, but then retrieved the wrong goose from the flock and so the stone and goose went to market.

After confessing, Ryder was allowed to go free by Holmes and the stone was returned to the countess. Holmes forgave Ryder in the spirit of the season and because he was convinced Ryder would not go wrong again.

2. Story Info Sheet (McMurdo's Camp)

- First published in:
The Strand Magazine, January 1892
- Time frame of story (known/surmised):
December 27 given. Reference to other cases makes the likely year 1889.
- Holmes & Watson living arrangements:
Holmes at 221B. Watson was living separately; no mention of wife.
- Opening scene:
Classic. Watson called on Holmes upon the second day after Christmas to wish him the compliments of the season. Holmes was analyzing a hat left by Peterson the Commissionaire. Significant deductions were made from examination of the hat. Peterson rushed back with a valuable jewel his wife found in the crop of a goose.
- Client:
No client. Case of stolen gem fell to Holmes pretty much by accident. Peterson's wife recovered the gem from the crop of a goose found by Peterson on the street after the goose and the hat were dropped by a stranger.
- Crime, suspicion, concern:
Theft of gem (the Blue Carbuncle) from the hotel room of the Countess of Morcar and attempt to pin the blame on innocent plumber, John Horner.
- Villain:
James Ryder, upper-attendant at the hotel Cosmopolitan.
- Motive:
Money to be made fencing the stolen gem.

- Logic / clues used to solve:
Holmes used the hat and goose to trace owner, traces the goose to poultry market, encounters Ryder there, who was also trying to trace the origin of the goose that swallowed the gem. Got Ryder to confess.
- Policemen:
None
- Holmes' fees:
None. It is likely Holmes received a big reward for returning the Blue Carbuncle to the Countess, although that is not stated in the story. Holmes may have shared the reward with Peterson the commissioner. (In our view, he should have.)
- Transport:
Holmes & Watson walked from Baker St. through the doctors' quarter, Wimpole Street, Harley Street, and so through Wigmore Street into Oxford Street. In a quarter of an hour they were in Bloomsbury. From there they made a quick march South, passing across Holborn, down Endell Street, and so through a zigzag of slums to Covent Garden Market.
Holmes hailed a four-wheeler, and in it Holmes & Watson took Ryder back to 221B.
- Food:
For the evening in which Henry Baker was to claim his hat, Holmes invited Watson to dinner. "I dine at seven. There is a woodcock, I believe." That meal was postponed to investigate the case, but after releasing Ryder, Holmes & Watson began another investigation, in which, also a bird was to be the chief feature.
- Drink:
Holmes & Watson had a beer at the Alpha Inn at Bloomsbury.
Holmes gave Ryder a dash of brandy at 221B.
- Vices:
Ryder smoked a pipe in his sister's back yard while pondering what to do.
Holmes reached up his hand for his clay pipe after letting Ryder go free.
- Other cases mentioned:
Reference to the last six cases, three of which were entirely free of any legal crime. They were Holmes' attempt to recover the Irene Adler papers, the singular case of Miss Mary Sutherland, and to the adventure of the man with the twisted lip. (SCAN, IDEN and TWIS).
- Notable Quotables:
". . . he never got tallow-stains from a gasjet."
"Eh? What of it, then? Has it returned to life and flapped off through the kitchen window?"
"What a shrimp it is, to be sure!"
"I am not retained by the police to supply their deficiencies."
"My name is Sherlock Holmes. It is my business to know what other people don't know."
- Other interesting:
We don't think there is another story in which Holmes did not have a client. (This assumes he had an arrangement to serve Scotland Yard when called upon by the detective force.) Readers are asked if they can think of one.
(Sometime later: No astute readers replied, but we thought of a few. No client in LION. Nor in either of the Reichenbach bookends FINA and EMPT Any more, anybody?)

3. Selected Chronologies

a.	The Original Story by Arthur Conan Doyle	December 27
b.	William Baring-Gould	Friday, December 27, 1889
c.	H.W. Bell	Friday, December 27, 1889
d.	Roger Butters	Friday, December 27, 1889
e.	Jay Finley Christ	Saturday, December 27, 1890
f.	Jean-Pierre Crauser	Thursday, December 27, 1888
g.	D. Martin Dakin	Friday, December 27, 1889
h.	Bill Dorn	Friday, December 27, 1889
i.	Henry Folsom	Saturday, December 27, 1890
j.	John Hall	Friday, December 27, 1889
k.	Craig Janasek	Tuesday, December 27, 1887
l.	Brad Keefauver	Friday, December 27, 1889
m.	Toshio Suzuki	Friday, December 27, 1889
n.	June Thomson	Friday, December 27, 1889
o.	Ernest Bloomfield Zeisler	Friday, December 27, 1889

4. Canonical Queeries (Ralph Edwards, BSI)

- Did Holmes and Watson exchange Christmas cards?
- Why didn't Mary accompany her husband to wish Holmes the compliments of the season?
- Is "every possible combination" significant?
- What was done about the broken window?
- If a "small jollification" ends at 4 A.M., when would a large jollification end?
- Why "Mrs." on the tag?
- Was there an inner leather hat band?
- What kind of grate was it?
- What is the significance of Horner fainting?
- What happened to Henry Baker's stick?
- How old was Mildred Sammons?
- Did Henry Baker offer to pay for the advertisements?
- Why the private room at the Alpha Inn?
- Would the evidence have convicted Horner?
- How do town and country bred geese differ?
- Was it pure luck for Holmes to say the bird was country-bred?
- Why did the ledger show sales details?
- Would it take half an hour to get from Baker Street to Covent Garden?
- Can we deduce that Ryder was not married?
- Was Catherine Cusack fired?
- Was there no goose for Ryder's parents?

- Does Holmes call Watson “Doctor” in any other story?
- What finally happened to the carbuncle? If returned to the Countess, who received the reward?
- Did John Horner ever get out of jail?

17 Steps (Brad Keefauver, BSI)

1. The Watsonian Christmas Celebration

Perhaps it’s an all-too basic question that we all pondered on before, but it needs to be asked whenever this story comes up: Why was Watson visiting the man we think of as his best friend on the *second* day after Christmas to wish him a happy holiday? Did Watson have no time to spare in the three or four days prior? Had he invited Holmes to the Watson’s Christmas feast? Were he and Mrs. Watson out of town, spending Christmas at her mother’s? Or was this at a time when Mrs. Watson wished her husband to have nothing to do with Holmes, and this was the first occasion the doctor could sneak off? Is Watson’s tentative “You are engaged, perhaps I interrupt you” a sign that he and Holmes have not been on the best of terms?

2. The Connotations Of Hand Gestures

We are told Holmes “jerked his thumb in the direction of the old hat.” Try that gesture out yourself and see how you feel about it. Does it seem particularly “Sherlock” to you? It’s hard to point with your thumb without closing your fingers in the traditional “hitchhiker” mode. Doesn’t that seem a bit yokelish for Holmes, as compared to the standard forefinger point? Or is the Smash reading far too much into a casual gesture?

3. The Population Density Of London

This case, Holmes says, is “Only one of those whimsical little incidents which will happen when you have four million human beings all jostling each other within the space of a few square miles.”

A rough calculation of Holmes’s statement shows roughly sixty-three square feet of space per person (3 time 5280 feet, squared and divided by 4,000,000). If all of Holmes’s people had sixty-three square feet surrounding them, it doesn’t seem like they would jostle very much, does it? While this is an all-too literal interpretation of Holmes’s words, just how close was he? And are urban areas of today better or worse, and thus generating more or less whimsical little incidents?

4. We All Know Peterson!

“You know Peterson, the commissioner?” Holmes asks Watson. Not “Do you remember Peterson?” as though Holmes knew Watson had met him during his time at Baker Street. While we’ve learned in an earlier tale that such folk as bankers were much more celebrated in those days, commissioners were still probably only known to you if you lived near one or had dealings with him. So how did Holmes expect that Watson knew Peterson? Of course, a few sentences later, Holmes expects that Watson even knows Peterson is “a very honest fellow.” Was the question purely rhetorical?

5. One Heck Of A Jollification!

Peterson, we are told, is returning from “some small jollification” at four in the morning. So is Henry Baker. What kind of parties were these fellows at that lasted until four a.m. Christmas morning? Were the bars open that late on a major holiday? Henry Baker is obviously showing signs of having been drinking all that time, but what of Peterson? Would a commissioner have been working late on Christmas Eve prior to said jollification, or is his seemingly less-intoxicated state due to some other distraction, perhaps of the feminine variety? Don’t even a “little knot of roughs” have somewhere to be at that hour on Christmas morning?

6. Time To Eat The Goose

Holmes’s brilliant powers of observation even extend to food, we find this time out, as he says, “there were signs that, in spite of the slight frost, it would be well that it should be eaten without unnecessary delay.” What exactly are those signs? Presented with a nice bar-tailed goose road-kill on the second day after Christmas, how might the diehard Sherlockian gourmand tell if it’s time to eat it without being too late to eat it?

7. Watson Hides His Light Under A Bushel

Here’s what Watson sees:

“It was a very ordinary black hat of the usual round shape, hard and much the worse for wear. The lining had been of red silk, but was a good deal discoloured. There was no maker’s name; but, as Holmes had remarked, the initials “H. B.” were scrawled upon one side. It was pierced in the brim for a hat-securer, but the elastic was missing. For the rest, it was cracked, exceedingly dusty, and spotted in several places, although there seemed to have been some attempt to hide the discoloured patches by

smearing them with ink.”

Here’s what Watson says:

“I can see nothing.”

If ever we wanted evidence that Watson was holding back to glorify Holmes, here it is. Watson sees everything and then acts like he even missed the man’s initials . . . a real “gimme.” Did Watson actually miss these details the first time, then fill them in for the reader when writing it up? Or did he see them and just play dumb for Holmes’s benefit? (Or, a third option: he was just so happy to be reconciled with his friend after their squabble that he was overcome with emotion and didn’t care about a silly hat.)

8. Greasy Kid’s Stuff Now Comes In Flavors!

Henry Baker anoints his grizzled hair with lime cream. Having been kept in a buzz cut until he could use a blow dryer, the Smash is of a generation completely unfamiliar with the oils and creams of yesteryear.

What was “lime cream” made of? Did the lime smell come from real limes? Sure sounds tasty, but this particular cream has to be more of the “hand cream” variety than the “cream pie” sort. How long had such hair products been in use at the time?

9. Less Frontal Development Than Henry Baker

“For answer Holmes clapped the hat upon his head. It came right over the forehead and settled upon the bridge of his nose. “It is a question of cubic capacity,” said he; “a man with so large a brain must have something in it.”

The size of a man’s head is related to the size of a man’s intellect more than once in the Canon of Holmes. Sherlock Holmes’s own head is criticized by Professor Moriarty and admired by Dr. Mortimer for it’s frontal development, so you have to wonder if it wasn’t all just in their overlarge heads. Did Holmes really think Baker was smarter than him, just because he had a bigger head? Has any scientific relationship between big skulls and big intellects ever been recorded? Why were otherwise intelligent men like Moriarty, Mortimer, and Holmes so fixated on it in those days?

10. Hat-Brushing Equals Love

Holmes deduces that Henry Baker’s wife has ceased to love him because she allows him to go out with dust on his hat. But how many other deductions could one make from that same evidence? His wife is nearsighted. His wife is a poor housekeeper. His wife is very short. Looking at the other details of the hat as told by Watson a few questions back, can we come up with totally different and equally unprovable stories about Baker’s life and being?

11. Dr. Watson’s Accent

“It was lost, if I remember aright, at the Hotel Cosmopolitan,” Watson says in this tale, and his “aright” seems slightly off his normal pattern of speaking. Could this have been an indication of an accent that he largely kept out of the stories? What region would “aright” place him in? Or was it just a common phrase for the time?

12. The Countess’s Casket

“The small Morocco casket in which, as it afterwards transpired, the Countess was accustomed to keep her jewel, was lying empty upon the dressing-table.”

Morocco, my dictionary tells me, is goatskin or sheepskin treated with sumac. While that description is all well and good, why is it such a lovely thing to keep a priceless gem in? Was this a temporary holding place for the gem, until the Countess could get it mounted on some piece of jewelry, or did jewel owners just walk around with their jewels in leather cases in those days, pulling them out to show off as the mood struck them?

13. Sure, It’s A Nice Jewel, But Suicide?

“There have been two murders, a vitriol-throwing, a suicide, and several robberies brought about for the sake of this forty-grain weight of crystallized charcoal.” (Not to mention a goose-killing!)

Murder during the course of a robbery, or to accelerate an inheritance, one can understand, but how could the blue carbuncle be responsible for a vitriol-throwing and a suicide? Would vitriol damage the stone if splashed upon it?

14. Guess Who’s Coming To Dinner?

Holmes closes Watson’s post-Christmas visit with: “Very glad to see you. I dine at seven. There is a woodcock, I believe.” Is the first sentence more evidence of a recent rift between them? Is “I dine at seven” an actual dinner invitation, or more of a “come by when I’m done eating”? How often did Holmes know in the morning what Mrs. Hudson would be serving for dinner, and why would he?

15. The Occupations Of A Baker

Henry Baker tells us, "There are a few of us who frequent the Alpha Inn, near the Museum--we are to be found in the Museum itself during the day, you understand." Was this an alcoholic's excuse for wasted days? Why else should he be so concerned that Holmes knows he spends his days at the museum and not the pub? Was he actually doing research there with his big-brained head, and if so, regarding what? Do we have any sense of where Baker's income comes from in this tale, or is he just another retired gentleman spending his days reading and evenings drinking?

16. Cruising The Bad Side Of Town

Watson reports: "We passed across Holborn, down Endell Street, and so through a zigzag of slums to Covent Garden Market." Just how bad were the neighborhoods between Holborn and Covent Garden? Was Watson doing them justice in calling them slums? Were he and Holmes in any danger passing through them on foot if they were?

17. Five Hundred Bodies Of Geese On The Slab, 500 Bodies . . .

Breckinridge the goose salesman tells Holmes he can let him have 500 geese in the morning. Was he serious? Where would he get 500 geese, and could he hope to move them all that quickly a few days after Christmas? (Mrs. Oakshott only sold him twenty-four during the Christmas rush, as it was, though she was hardly his only supplier.)

YOUR CHRISTMAS BONUS: MORE QUESTIONS!

18. A Dangerous Game

While James Ryder was a nervous little man, even nervous little men have been known to carry guns. Was Holmes being foolish in inviting him into 221B and then producing the blue carbuncle? What if Ryder had been armed and demanded the gem? Or worse yet, tried shooting them both outright and taking the gem? (Two murders have already been committed for it, remember!) Could Holmes and Watson have handled the gun-toting shrimp? Would the story ended have happily?

19. A New Recipe For Goose

Holmes refers to the carbuncle-carrier as "a most unimpeachable Christmas goose." Would goose be at all impeachable -- in other words, might there be a recipe for that sizeable fowl that involved peaches in the cooking, much like duck ala orange involves oranges? Sure, it's a horrible twist of the phrase, but entire cookbooks have been based on worse recipes than "peachable Christmas goose." While this runs dangerously close to being off-topic, this is the season of forgiveness AND feasting after all . . . any more suggestions for holiday dining based on this tale? What-a-shrimp-it-is cocktail, perhaps?

5. View Halloas (Rosemary Michaud)

The story opens with one of the longest sitting room scenes in the Canon, and one of the most enjoyable. What fun it is to see Holmes and Watson relaxing together in the holiday season, chatting about Henry Baker's hat and how it came to Baker Street. Holmes seems to be in a particularly light-hearted mood (perhaps the friends may have shared some liquid holiday cheer as well?) carrying his brilliant deductions into the stratosphere of logical supposition, and going so far as to illustrate one of his more outrageous points by the comic device of clapping the oversized hat onto his own head. Is this the cold, precise reasoning machine we've been led to expect? No, and heavens bless Watson for showing us this jollier side of Holmes!

A nucleus and focus of crime: Watson called upon Holmes on the second morning after Christmas. Holmes said that Peterson brought the hat and the goose to him on Christmas morning, and we can understand why there was no effort made to locate Henry Baker on that day. But what about the day after Christmas? If Holmes understood that "to a poor man, the loss was a heavy one," then why didn't he advertise the discovery of goose and the hat sooner than he did?

When confronted by Holmes, James Ryder was quick to bring up Catherine Cusack's name, as if to share the guilt. However, it is worth noting that Ryder only said, "It was Catherine Cusack who told me of it." It was Holmes who made the leap to calling her a "confederate." Was Cusack truly involved in the crime, or was she merely guilty of talking too freely about her mistress's jewels? As a practical matter, wouldn't an "upper attendant" at a hotel have reasonably free access to a guest's room if he chose to exercise it? Did Holmes jump to conclusions too rapidly?

In other stories where Holmes let the perpetrator of a crime go free, he generally decided to do so because of his sympathy with the criminal's motives. In "The Blue Carbuncle," Holmes granted a pardon to a man whose motives and personality he despised, citing the tragedy of making the pathetic Ryder a "jail-bird for life," especially during the Christmas season. Is the "season of

forgiveness” sufficient explanation of Holmes’s actions? Or may there have been some other reason for Holmes to let Ryder go unpunished? Any ideas?

Watson ended the story before Holmes returned the jewel to the Countess, and also before John Horner got out of jail. Did Peterson get his reward as the one who really found the gem? Did Holmes tell the police what really happened? Did Horner have to stand trial? And if Holmes was so sure that Cusack had been involved in the crime, what did he do about her?

By the way, I recommend the “Best of Hounds” archives for “The Blue Carbuncle” to all those who find themselves perplexed by the “crop versus crap” question of the Christmas goose. The reader will also be rewarded with some delightful holiday poetry from years past!

6. Delicate Questions (Chris Redmond, BSI)

If Sherlock Holmes is sufficiently cold-blooded to refer to a mugging as a “whimsical little incident” at the beginning of this story, can one accept as heartfelt his emotional remark at the end of it about “the season of forgiveness”?

7. Additional Thoughts (Steve Clarkson)

On the 27th of December, Watson stopped by to wish Holmes the Compliments of the Season. He found the Master Detective studying a very disreputable hat, which had belonged to an unknown gentleman who lost it while defending himself from a gang of toughs in the Tottenham Road. The unfortunate man had also lost a goose which he had intended for his Christmas supper. Holmes had given the goose to Peterson, a commissionaire who found the hat and bird, and had kept the hat to try to learn more about its owner.

Holmes was about to say something to Watson, in the course of giving his findings about the hat’s owner, when Peterson burst in at the door, wild with excitement. In his hand, he held a brilliant blue jewel, which his wife had found in the crop of the goose. Holmes immediately identified it as the Blue Carbuncle, stolen from the Countess of Morcar, who had offered a £1,000 reward for its return.

In a few minutes, the Maître de Chasse will rally the Hounds to the scent of a beautiful diamond that somehow found its way into the innards of an unimpeachable Christmas goose. The trail will take them through deceit and treachery to a most improbable villain...a shrimp, in fact.

The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle has the distinction of being one of the most analyzed and written-about stories in the Canon. Indeed, only two other stories have had more written on them, according to De Waal. This makes BLUE a particularly difficult adventure from which to draw questions that have not already been investigated in previous examinations by the Hounds.

Nevertheless, I have pored over the story and derived a few questions; not too many, for I know that today must hold other investigations for our List Members. But I note that Holmes refers to two other adventures that were ostensibly crime-free: the “Irene Adler papers” and “the singular case of Miss Mary Sutherland.” What “papers” were there connected with Irene Adler, and what was so singular about the case of Miss Mary Sutherland to which Holmes compared two “parallel cases” in IDEN?

Holmes infers that Henry Baker probably had not had gas laid at his home from the presence of five tallow-stains upon Mr. Baker’s battered billycock. Yet Holmes says that Baker “walks upstairs at night probably with his hat in one hand and a guttering candle in the other.” Under those conditions, how did the tallow-stains get on the hat?

Although Holmes describes the Blue Carbuncle as a “forty-grain weight of crystallized charcoal,” he does not come right out and call it a “diamond.” Peterson’s question, “A diamond, sir?” goes unanswered, and his observation that the stone cut into glass is similarly disregarded. I note also that Holmes states that the normal color of carbuncles is “ruby red.” Are there red gemstones of sufficient hardness to cut into glass? Could our resident gemologists advise whether there is such a thing as a “ruby red” diamond?

Watson tells us that when he and Holmes visited the Alpha Inn, “Holmes pushed open the door of the private bar...” Would some person better acquainted with such matters kindly explain why the Alpha Inn was alluded to as a “private bar?”

Lastly, why would Breckenridge keep separate lists of his “country” and “town” suppliers, and what would be the geographic distinction between them?

8. Questions & Comments (Sonia Fetherston, BSI)

There seems to be a consensus that we lock the door to Wisteria Lodge, climb into our four-wheeler and move along to the next story — this being *The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle* (BLUE), taken out of order so that we may exchange the compliments of the season with one another. Therefore, one day early, here are my questions and comments to get us going:

Catherine Cusack is thought to be Ryder's "confederate." But is anybody out there willing to be a Devil's advocate and make a case for her innocence?

The carbuncle would appear to be a loose stone. How is it that the Countess kept it loose rather than set and worn?

I'd like to hear from Hounds who believe the Petersons may have been fellow lodgers at Mrs. Hudson's house. What reasoning inclines you to accept the 221 address for the commissionaire and his family?

Why did Holmes let Ryder go?

When Henry Baker appeared at Sherlock Holmes' door he was wearing a Scotch bunnet, Anglicized by Watson (and most English-speakers) to the word "bonnet." There are only two sorts of hats which could correctly be called by this term, and Lord knows the Scots are correct about their attire!

The first is the Glengarry, a military-style hat worn tilted to the right, most often seen on overseas duty. Glengarries are creased from front to back, with a small red toorie (pom-pom) at the crown and two jaunty ribbons dangling down the neck. They're normally "diced," or banded with a checkerboard pattern. Glengarries are often seen on bandsmen and others required to wear fancy-dress.

The other kind of bonnet is the Balmoral. It's a beret-style hat worn forward on the head, with the top pulled gently to the right. Balmorals are both diced and undiced. The ribbons at the back must be tied in a neat bow. Picture Ronald Coleman c. 1931: that's the dashing Balmoral he's got on his head! Alas, neither Glengarries nor Balmorals are quite right for this story. The Oxford edition's choice of a Tam O'Shanter for Henry Baker's bonnet, though not technically correct, is the ideal alternative. Tams are round, flat, soft woolen caps, sometimes knit in one's tartan colors, often with a large toorie on top.

One source likens a Tam to wearing a tea cosy on one's head, and that's not a bad comparison. Tam O'Shanters is named for the hero of a Bobby Burns poem, a fellow who coped with the "ills 'o life" just as our Henry did, by frequenting taverns.

9. 56 Stories in 56 Days (Charlotte Anne Walters)

This is another of the short stories which features in my own novel. And gosh was it hard work to adapt it to what I wanted, writes Charlotte Anne Walters.

I spent many a stressful hour going over every detail of the original and trying to keep things largely the same but add my own protagonist into the plot.

In the story, the upper attendant at the Cosmopolitan Hotel steals a precious stone called the blue carbuncle from the countess of Morcar who is staying there. He causes a little damage in the room and sends for a plumber – John Horner – who has a previous conviction for robbery, and then blames him for the theft. Throw in the complication of how he then escapes with the stone and hides it by forcing a Christmas goose to swallow it and you have a very jolly, neat, tale.

All I had to do was make my central character, Red, the one who steals the stone while trying to keep everything else the same. Sounds simple? Well, it took days. But I have to say that the end result is one of my favourite parts of the novel and has kept some of the humour of the original too. And boy, did the original make me laugh at times.

The Blue Carbuncle contains what I believe to be one of the funnies lines in all the Holmes stories, not least because it wasn't intentional. When Holmes finally apprehends Ryder, he brings him back to 221B and must surely by simply dying to hear his story but takes an unexpected pause – 'You look cold, Mr Ryder. Pray take the basket chair. I will just put on my slippers before we settle this little matter of yours.' Maybe it's just my singular sense of humour but I read that and laughed so hard tears rolled down my cheeks. "I'll just go and put my slippers on," is like something my Nan would have said, not the world's greatest consulting detective.

Holmes concludes the adventure by saying to Watson – "If you have the goodness to touch the bell, Doctor, we will begin another investigation, in which also a bird will be the chief feature." Doyle put much humour into his writing and I do think this is often, sadly, overlooked.

The Blue Carbuncle also contains a perfect example of the science of deduction at its best. Holmes examines an old hat and deduces from it that the wearer is of high intelligence, was once rather well-to-do but has since fallen on hard times, his wife no longer loves him and he has gas laid on in his house. It's simply brilliant and at first the reader is as baffled as Watson but once the reasoning is explained it is so simple. Such as with the pocket Watch analysis in the Sign of Four, so much is gained from so little. It is this 'science' which makes Holmes so different to other fictional detectives and makes him such a fascinating character.

Holmes' social isolation is further reinforced in this story. Except for Watson's visit he is alone at Christmas. Peterson the commissioner does visit on Christmas Day but only because he needs Holmes' help.

The story is another example of how Holmes exercises his own unique sense of justice. He listens to Ryder's story (once he has put his slippers on) and decides to let him go. To have that level of assurance in your own judgement shows a high level of self-confidence. It also demonstrates just how separately Holmes operates from the official police. This combines to give the overall impression of someone independent, a touch eccentric and very much their own man. These are the very attributes that have always drawn me to Holmes as a character.

A great little story with brilliant deduction and humour – 8 out of 10.

10. Observance of Trifles (Brian Keith Snell)

The Adventure Of The Blue Carbuncle (the *first* of many, many stories to be titled "**The Adventure Of...**") is a delightful little story, a holiday season hunt along an unlikely chain from a homely goose to a stolen gem. **Holmes** is in fine form, witty and clever, and yet an avenging angel dispensing appropriate justice.

Or *is* it appropriate justice? This isn't the first time that Sherlock has taken upon himself to let a villain go unpunished, or at least unrevealed. The question we must face is this: was Holmes' allowing **Ryder** to flee true justice? For *everyone* involved?

It turns out that this story, and two television adaptations (**BBC 1968**, and **Granada**) all take subtly different approaches to this story, and those differences can make some large variances in how just we think the resolution is.

Let's look at four questions: A) Who ends up with the jewel? B) What about the unfairly accused **John Horner**? C) Who gets the reward? D) What about **Catherine Cusack**, the maid?

A) **Who ends up with the jewel?**

You'd think was a no-brainer, but **Arthur Conan Doyle's** impatience and Granada's nuttiness introduce all sorts of questions.

In the original story, Holmes keeps the stone while they continue the investigation, but he "*lock[s] it up in [his] strong box now and drop[s] a line to the Countess to say that we have it.*" Like many of the Holmes stories, though, Doyle has no patience to give us a true *dénouement*--he ends the story abruptly after the climax, leaving the final details of the plot's true resolution to our imaginations (See, for example, **The Man With The Twisted Lip**). So we never actually see Holmes return the stone to the **Countess of Morcar**, even though we know he does.

In the BBC 1968 version, though, we actually *witness* Holmes return it to the Countess personally. It is a fun scene, and **Peter Cushing** has great fun annoying the Countess, who is portrayed her as a fairly mean and cruel person.

By the Granada version? Well, here's where things get *odd*. Holmes does *not* send a note to the Countess explaining that he has recovered the gem. He tells **Watson** that he shall keep the jewel "*in his museum.*" At the end, he locks the carbuncle in a drawer, along with his picture of **Irene Adler** and his cocaine needle. The clear implication is that *he keeps the gem for himself!!*

What the heck? Aside from the fact that Holmes has never been portrayed as greedy before, keeping the jewel threatens to keep commissioner **Peterson** from collecting his reward, and could jeopardize the freedom of the falsely accused John Horner. We will discuss these problems below...

The Granada version *does* start with a dumb show illustrating the history of the carbuncle and the killings committed to possess it. (Interestingly, while Holmes says there have been *two* murders in the gem's brief life, we're shown *three*). Perhaps the production wished to emphasize the corrupting influence of the jewel, and then imply that Holmes himself was corrupted by it. Still, it is hardly an *ennobling* view of our hero, as he goes directly from an act of mercy to one of *avarice*.

Holmes also mentions in the original story that he has "*reason to know that there are sentimental considerations in the background which would induce the Countess to part with half her fortune if she could but recover the gem.*" Perhaps Granada has taken this to imply that Holmes is merely keeping the carbuncle to leverage a greater reward from the Countess (The "*reason to know*" also suggests that Sherlock has had previous dealing with the Countess, so perhaps there is some measure of repayment for past wrongs?) Again, such *extortion* is hardly *ennobling*.

And even if you wish to make a point that the Countess didn't deserve to have the gem, the production itself does nothing to illustrate this point; and Holmes himself certainly has no greater claim to it. It's not as if he's putting it in an actual museum, or returning it to some prior and theoretically more-legitimate owner.

No, Granada (and screenwriter **Paul Finney**) just went way off the reservation on this point, and for the life of me I can't figure out what they were thinking.

B) *What about the unfairly accused John Horner?*

The original story has the thieves do a fairly good job of framing Horner, ransacking the bureau and the leaving the jewel box open and empty, ensuring prompt discovery. (Neither TV adaptation has such an obvious burglary awaiting the Countess--she just opens her jewel box to find it empty) Multiple witnesses placed Horner there around the time of the theft, and he had had a prior conviction for robbery. A pretty solid circumstantial case.

The Doyle story's resolution is therefore somewhat *unconvincing*. Both Ryder and Holmes assert that when Ryder vanishes, the case against Horner will "*collapse*," and he will be freed.

Perhaps. But there was *another* witness (the maid--does she flee, too? See below.), and the rest of the circumstantial case stands--Horner was in the suite, he did have a record of robbery. There are any number of reasons why Ryder might have left London, so it's hardly conclusive that this proves he was lying about Horner. The jewel is recovered and returned, but essentially there is *only* the word of Sherlock Holmes (and Watson, of course) that Horner is innocent. Perhaps that would be enough...if only Doyle would give us one or two more paragraphs at the end of the story!!

The BBC '68 version deals with it the best--Holmes makes Ryder *sign a confession* before he's allowed to flee! Granted. this makes for a slightly less dramatic moment when Holmes declares "Get out!" But along with the returned jewel, it certainly means the police have more than sufficient evidence to free Horner.

Granada is again more troublesome. To their credit, Watson refuses to just wait and let the case fall apart. He *insists* that they cannot in good conscience let an innocent man spend another moment in jail. So he and Holmes head off--after midnight--to demand **Bradstreet** release Horner. And he does, as we see his reunion with his family on Christmas morning!!

But remember--in *this* version, *Holmes has not returned the carbuncle!!* And this version does *not* have Ryder leave a confession. So Inspector Bradstreet apparently releases Horner just because Holmes says so. And since the production had earlier made clear that Bradstreet was under heavy pressure from the Countess to secure the gem and get a conviction, it is questionable whether he would just capitulate to Holmes under these circumstances.

C) *Who gets the reward?*

Obviously there are a number of ways to look at this. The "*very honest*" commissionaire Peterson found the goose, and his wife found the jewel in the goose's crop. He brought the problem to Holmes' initially, and immediately brought the lovely gem to him, as well. So he seems to have the best claim, and is probably the most deserving.

Of course, it was **Henry Baker's** goose to begin with, so he might lodge a protest, even though Holmes left him in the dark about what was actually contained in the fowl's *disjecta membra*. Still, he did leave the goose, so finders' keepers, I suppose. Yet, much is made of the hard financial times he's experiencing...

And Holmes himself spent no little time and money on tracking down the true thief--he has to place ads in all the papers (something Baker was too poor to do), buy a replacement goose, buy a round of drinks at the Alpha House, lose a sovereign in a "wager" with Breckenridge, *etc*.

The Doyle story, in its haste to conclude, leaves us *unclear* who gets the reward, or what any division might be.

BBC '68 shows the detective bringing Peterson the Countess' suite, to ensure that he gets the reward.

In the Granada edition, both Holmes and Watson promise Peterson that he will get the reward. But they never show that actually happening; and if Holmes keeps the carbuncle in his "*museum*," there is no reason for the Countess to ever pay up!! So Holmes has robbed Peterson of £1,000! Of course, if we believe that Holmes is keeping the gem only to squeeze more money from the Countess, perhaps ultimately everyone got paid. But that requires us to assume an awful lot...

D) **What about Catherine Cusack, the maid?**

If Ryder's confession is to be believed. Cusack was in on the theft from the beginning. She told Ryder of the carbuncle's existence, and she backed up his account of finding the room burgled after Horner left. So there should be some measure of justice (or mercy) awaiting her, as well.

But not in Doyle's story. She's *not* mentioned again. So we have no idea whether she flees, or is arrested, or never has her part in this revealed and remains in the Countess' employ. We simply haven't a clue from the text.

BBC '68 makes it clear that Cusack and Ryder are *lovers*. During his confession, he mentions leaving the country with her. And at the end, we find that she *did* indeed flee with Ryder--the Countess tries to hire Holmes to find her!

Granada also indicates that they are lovers, and in his confession, Ryder says "*She put me up to it!*" But, as with the Doyle story, there is absolutely *no* indication of what Cusack's fate is.

All 3 versions, of course, have Holmes allow Ryder to flee. You can debate whether sending such a pathetic wretch to live abroad, with no means of support, will actually "*save his soul*," or make him more likely to return to a life of crime. But it was the season of forgiveness, and it's not as if Ryder was a murderer (ahem, **Boscombe Valley Mystery**...). Debate amongst yourselves whether this is justice.

Taken as a whole, though, it's the BBC '68 version that *best* completes the story and gives the audience proper assurances that justice was done. We see the jewel returned, and the proper person rewarded. We see strong enough evidence left to assure that Horner will be freed, not just a haphazard "oh, it will all work out." And we find out the maid's fate, instead of just forgetting all about her.

And of course, in the BBC '68 version, Holmes isn't a thief. So there's that. Seriously, Granada, *what* were you on that week?

MORE TRIFLES AND OBSERVATIONS:

** Both TV versions change the time from two days after Christmas to Christmas Eve. All the better for a tale of mercy, I suppose. But would pubs and goose-sellers be open so late that night?

**As I mentioned, Holmes is at his *poetic* and *puckish* best in this tale, particularly when it comes to the carbuncle: "*Of course it is a nucleus and focus of crime. Every good stone is. They are the devil's pet baits. In the larger and older jewels every facet may stand for a bloody deed.*" and "*this forty-grain weight of crystallised charcoal. Who would think that so pretty a toy would be a purveyor to the gallows and the prison?*" Wonderful stuff.

Sherlock also makes me laugh several times during the story, particularly when Peterson comes in yelling about the goose: "*Eh? What of it, then? Has it returned to life and flapped off through the kitchen window?*" And his "*It is always awkward doing business with an alias*" tickled my funny bone, too. "*Battered billycock?*" "*Some small jollification?*" "*The ultimate destiny of a goose?*" This story gives us Holmes at his most playful.

But it's not just his rhetoric that's at the top of his game--Holmes' various (successful) tactics to wheedle information without giving away the goal of his search to Baker, to the landlord of the **Alpha**, and especially the hostile **Breckenridge** the goose seller are top-notch. This story is Holmes at his best.

** This story featured some of **Sidney Paget's** best illustrations. He and Doyle were very much in sync here.

** Much can be made over Holmes' deductions regarding the owner of the hat, and many commentators have raised objections to their accuracy, especially when other interpretations might be available.

BBC '68 manages to defuse that a bit, by having Watson raise those objections *as his own* during Holmes' lecture, and having Holmes answer them. Best of all, Watson derives much amusement when it turns out the goose was not for Henry Baker's wife, but sister-in-law. **Nigel Stock's** finest moment.

** Both TV adaptations raise the stakes in making us care about Horner in more than an abstract way. Doyle doesn't give us much beside his fainting at his arraignment.

BBC '68 has his fiancé leave him as a result, and he tries to hang himself in his cell. Dr. Watson is summoned to see to him (is he always on call for the police?), and become convinced of his innocence. As a result, Watson keeps prodding Holmes at slow points in the investigation.

Granada has Horner married. He and his wife are buying Christmas gifts for their children when he is arrested. He vowed to give up crime when he wed, and now his wife doubts him, and is prepared to leave. But we get a tearful

Christmas morning family reunion at the end.

** Holmes is *not* at his best when you wake him up early:

** I must confess, as a youth I always confused the word "*carbuncle*" for "*barnacle*." I could never figure out why the story wasn't about a boat...

** No allusions to untold cases this time out.

** Ah, the glory days of newspapers. According to the ads Holmes wants placed, London had (at least) the following evening papers: **Globe, Star, Pall Mall, St. James's, Evening News, Standard, Echo**. Yes, London was a major metropolis, but to support 7 (or more) evening papers?

It seems foreign to us, in the age of "*dying*" physical newspapers. But pre-**Craig's List**, pre-widespread telephone, this is how you communicated with a lot of people at once. We've seen in several stories that it is *assumed* that people watch the papers for ads of interest to them--there's no "*But what if he doesn't read the papers, Holmes?*" There was no other means of mass communication, and given the era of (generally) mass literacy and (relatively) inexpensive papers, the press thrived. I'd imagine that the sheer number of ads that Holmes alone took out kept several publications in the black...

** The full list of crimes the carbuncle has caused? "*Two murders, a vitriol-throwing, a suicide, and several robberies.*" Which is why I shy away from the bling, thank you.

** A fairly good mission statement:

"My name is Sherlock Holmes. It is my business to know what other people don't know."

