

The 2020 Baker Street Irregulars Weekend

by CHARLES PREPOLEC

A ROBUST GROUP OF MORE THAN 250 Sherlockians descended on an unseasonably warm New York City between Wednesday, 15 January and Sunday, 19 January 2020 to celebrate the 166th birthday of Sherlock Holmes during the annual Baker Street Irregulars Weekend.

While a number of activities, hosted by groups and individuals, took place during the weekend, the first “official” BSI event was the invitation-only BAKER STREET JOURNAL reception. The reception, featuring cocktails, light refreshments, and laudatory comments from Journal editor Steven Rothman (“*The Valley of Fear*”) and “Wiggins” Michael Whelan (“Vincent Spaulding”), honors the contributors to the **BSJ** for the past year, as well as the presentation of the Morley–Montgomery Memorial Award. The reception was held in the extravagantly large Presidential Suite at the Roosevelt Hotel. This year’s deserving recipient of the Morley–Montgomery Award was Ira B. Matetsky (“The Final Problem”), whose award-winning article “Another Sherlockian Myth Debunked: Time to Turn the Page(t)?” (Summer 2019) soundly demonstrated that Sidney Paget’s selection as illustrator for *The Strand Magazine* was no accident.

The second official event of the weekend, the BSI Distinguished Speaker Lecture, followed hot on the heels of the **BSJ** reception, in the Roosevelt’s Vanderbilt Suite (which doubles as the Merchant’s Room on Saturday mornings). The speaker, deftly introduced by Les Klinger (“The Abbey Grange”), was World Fantasy and Locus Award–winning author Theodora Goss, whose recent Athena Club trilogy—*The Strange Case of the Alchemist’s Daughter* (2017), *European Travel for the Monstrous Gentlewoman* (2018), and *The Sinister Mystery of the Mesmerizing Girl* (2019)—feature Sherlock Holmes in a prominent role amidst the offspring of various Victorian literary monsters and mad scientists. Her talk, a riff on her thesis “The Monster in the Mirror: Late Victorian Gothic and Anthropology,” was well received by a

capacity audience at this sold-out event. [The talk appears in the Summer 2020 issue of the BAKER STREET JOURNAL—ed.]

On Friday evening at 6p.m., Baker Street Irregulars and invited guests gathered in the rooftop dining room on the 22nd floor of the Yale Club for pre-dinner cocktails, where Mike Whelan had Emily Miranker (“Lady Hatty St. Simon”) deliver a toast to her mother, Cathy Miranker, *The Woman for 2020*. With an admonition to charge their glasses, the assemblage, the largest number to gather so far in the 21st century, then headed down two floors to the Grand Ballroom to take their seats for the 2020 Baker Street Irregulars Dinner.

The formal program for the evening opened with greetings and remarks from outgoing “Wiggins” Whelan, before moving on to the presentation of the BSI Press Editors awards by Robert Katz (“Dr. Ainstree”) and John Bergquist (“The King of Scandinavia”). Eddies were presented to Harrison “Terry” Hunt (“The Something Hunt”) and Linda Hunt for writing *The Aborigines*, to Ira B. Matetsky and Candace Lewis (“A Little Art Jargon”) for editing *Upon the Turf: Horse Racing and the Sherlockian Canon*, to Marino Alvarez (“Hilton Soames”) and Tim Greer (“The Ragged Shaw”) for *Education Never Ends*, and to Costa Rossakis (“St. Bartholomews Hospital”) and Dan Stashower (“Thurston”) for *The Worst Man in London*.

Ross Davies (“The Temple”) then delivered the reading of the Constitution and Buy-Laws. The five traditional toasts followed, with Shannon Carlisle (“Beacons of the Future!”) honoring Mrs. Hudson, Les Klinger (“The Abbey Grange”) in his toast to Mycroft cheekily suggesting the smarter brother is actually a smarter sister, Dana S. Richards (“The Priors School”) bringing us back to earth with a toast to Watson’s second wife, Barbara Rusch (“The Mazarin Stone”) managing to work Queen Victoria into her toast to Sherlock Holmes, and Bruce R. Parker (“A Garroter by Trade”) finishing up with a toast to an Old Irregular—Ted Schulz (“The Amateur Mendicant Society”), before Jenn Eaker (“Mary Sutherland”) led the annual reading of the Musgrave Ritual.

Silence was observed for fallen Irregulars as Marsha Pollak (“A Small But Select Library”), taking over from Francine Kitts (“Lady Hilda

Trelawney Hope”) after ten years, invited us to stand upon the terrace and remember the Irregulars who died in the past year: Peter Calamai (“The Leeds Mercury”), Samuel Feinberg (“The Prince of Colonna”), Frederic H. Mende (“Lord Holdhurst”), Susan Z. Diamond (“The Great Mogul”), Frank A. Hoffmann (“Altamont”), Richard M. Caplan (“Dr. Jackson”), William D. Goodrich (“Alexander Holder”), Robert E. Thomalen (“The Three Gar-ridebs”), and Karl E. Meyer (“Fritz von Waldbaum”).

A general theme of centenary or anniversary celebrations carried through the evening’s papers as Candace Lewis took us through slides and an appreciation of French artist Horace Vernet in the year 1820, followed by Rebecca Romney (“That Gap on the Second Shelf”) ruminating on 20/20 vision, the role of books, and the 133rd anniversary of the publication of *Beeton’s Christmas Annual*, with Michael Berdan (“Henri Murger”) closing out the papers with a look at 16 January 1920 and the impact of Prohibition, which began on that day.

A lovely musical interlude, honoring the outgoing Wiggins, was then provided by the BSI’s musical director, Henry Boote (“Meyers, Toronto”), who then provided support for Donny Zaldin’s (“John Hector McFarlane”) take on a somewhat vague Name that Tune quiz.

Whelan then took up the microphone to present his final roster of new BSI investitures as well as a Two-Shilling Award to Andy Fusco (“Athelney Jones”). The 2020 BSI Investitures are:

Mary Alcaro	“Ivy Douglas”
Frank Cho	“The Duke of Balmoral”
Walter Colby	“Neil Gibson”
Carlina de la Cova	“ <i>The Anthropological Journal</i> ”
Nancy Holder	“Beryl Garcia”
Freda Howlett	“The British Government”
Ken Ludwig	“Jack Stapleton”
David Richards	“Colonel Warburton’s Madness”
Jim Webb	“The Curious Incident of Sherlock Holmes in Japan”



(L–R): Jim Webb, Nancy Holder, Catherine Cooke for Freda Howlett, Mary Alcaro, Frank Cho, Ken Ludwig, Carlina de la Cova, David Richards, and Walter Colby.

A touching moment was had with the hand-off of a ceremonial gavel, from Whelan to new Wiggins Michael Kean (“General Charles Gordon”),

who made some closing remarks and bestowed the honorific of “Wiggins Emeritus” on Michael Whelan for 23 years of exemplary service and his continuing role in an advisory capacity, leading to a standing ovation and a rousing chorus of “For He’s a Jolly Good Fellow.” The program formally closed with the traditional recitation of Vincent Starrett’s “221B” led by Dean Clark (“Watson’s Journal”). Attendees then descended to the bar to socialize and congratulate the newly invested Irregulars.

Saturday afternoon saw the final official BSI event of the 2020 weekend—the immensely popular BSI Luncheon Reception—held in the Grand Ballroom of the Yale Club. If you hadn’t yet had a chance to see or catch up with absolutely everyone you wanted to, odds were good you’d catch them in the buffet line-up. Don Novorsky (“The Empty House”) handled emcee duties with his usual style and aplomb. Connie Kean took a moment to recognize all in the room who had been designated as *The Woman* through the years. Michael Kean provided a recap of the previous night’s new Investitures. Al Rosenblatt (“Inspector Bradstreet”) and Betsy Rosenblatt (“Lucy Ferrier”) entertained and amused with their annual year in review set to verse. Steven Rothman invited those who had not already done so to sign a gift book for Michael Whelan—the suitably titled *A Captain of Irregulars* by Herbert Hayens. And finally, Peter Blau (“Black Peter”), veteran auctioneer of the BSI, took to the floor once more to raise a substantial sum for the Dr. John H. Watson Fund.

The next BSI Dinner is set for Friday, 8 January 2021.

“The Woman” Dinner

by JANICE FISHER

How lovely, on 17 January 2020, to welcome the first Woman to be toasted by her BSI offspring! We had watched during the cocktail hour as Emily Miranker (“Lady Hatty St. Simon”) honored her mother, Cathy Miranker. (Rumor has it that Emily’s father/Cathy’s husband, Glen Miranker [*“The Origin of Tree Worship”*], also knows a thing or two about Baker Street.) In the Yale Club’s Council Room, Cathy then dined with veteran Women Nelda Richards (2019), Patricia Izban (2018), Nicole Boote (2017), Nancy Browning (2016), Inez Bergquist (2015), Marilyn Nathan (2014), Elaine Coppola (2013), Constance Kean (2012), Karen Gurian (2010), Deborah Hall (2005), Janice Fisher (2003), Joyce Saunders (2002), Sharon Novorsky (2001), Debbie Fusco (1999), Barbara Herbert (1996), and Beverly Wolov (1997), along with our special guest Ada Salvatori, a resident of Florence who had accompanied her father, Gianluca Salvatori (“The Dacre Hotel”), to the New York festivities. Excellent conversation, admiration of gifts from several generous Women, ritual recitations of poetry, and the pleasure of catching up made for the finest possible testament to the joys of gathering in person.

William Gillette Luncheon 2020

by JENN EAKER

ON FRIDAY, 17 JANUARY 2020, folks from near and far gathered on the third floor of Connolly’s Bar and restaurant for the 75th anniversary of the

William Gillette Memorial Luncheon. Since Clifton Andrew (“Shoscombe Old Place”) organized that first luncheon held at the Murray Hill Hotel on 5 January 1945, much has changed. But not the reason everyone gathered: to see old Sherlockian friends and converse with new ones.

Susan Rice (“Beeswing”) started the event off as always with the traditional toasts to William Gillette, Clifton Andrew, Lisa McGaw (“Mrs. Hudson”), and the favorite guest of all three hosts to date, Edith Meiser (“A Fascinating and Beautiful Woman”). Al Gregory (“The Grimpen Postmaster”) then presented the Jan Whimsey Award for the most whimsical article in the *Serpentine Muse* for 2019. This year’s winner was DeeDee Headings. Al also announced that after 14 years, the Jan Whimsey Award would be concluding. A big thank you to Al for his generosity in honor of his late wife Jan Stauber.

Susan then took a moment to announce that after 31 years of leading and organizing the William Gillette Luncheon, she will be stepping down. The crowd was sad to hear the news, but they toasted her years of service and made sure to honor Mickey Fromkin’s (“The Missing Three-Quarter”) contribution as well. Susan revealed that her successor will be me, Jenn Eaker (“Mary Sutherland”). Thanks to all who have offered to help in continuing the Luncheon for many years to come.

After folks had enjoyed their lunch and were settling in for coffee and dessert, the Friends of Bogie presented another original performance—some newly discovered letters between Sherlock Holmes and Irene Adler. All were entertained, and we look forward to seeing what the group brings for next year’s luncheon. Congratulations and many thanks to Susan and Mickey for another wonderful William Gillette Memorial Luncheon. Until next year!

Gaslight Gala Salutes Canonical Critters

by Dan Andriacco

A lively and enthusiastic crowd of about fifty Sherlockians representing no fewer than six international Sherlockian societies and thirty U.S. scions celebrated animals of the Canon at the sixteenth annual Gaslight Gala on Friday, 17 January 2020.

“Lions and Horses and Hounds, Oh My!” was the unifying theme of a quiz, a skit, a song, the benediction, and most of the toasts for the high-energy event, held for the second year at The Smith Midtown, 956 Second Avenue, New York.

Brian Belanger asked for glasses to be raised to Watson’s “mysterious, missing bull-pup,” about which he explored several theories. Shana Carter toasted the goose with the blue carbuncle in its crop that wasn’t a crop. Steve Mason, on behalf of the speckled band, noted that no canonical story ever ends with the statement, “No animals were harmed during the production of this adventure.” Other tributes went to the trained cormorant (Derrick Belanger), Toby—or, rather, both Tobys (Gretchen Altabef), and the lion of “The Veiled Lodger” as well as the lion’s mane in the story of that name (David McCallister).

The first toast, though, went to that certain gracious lady, Queen Victoria: “Her image we adore as part of our Holmesian lore,” observed toaster Janice Weiner.

Karen Wilson wowed the crowd by singing her hilarious “Talk to the (Sherlockian) Animals,” channeling the original Dr. Dolittle. It began:

If I could talk to the animals in the Canon, well
Think of all the stories they might tell
I’d speak with Pompey and with Toby; maybe they would show me
Some amazing feats of sense of smell.

Oh, I'd exchange neighs with Silver Blaze 'bout his glory days
Find out if he lived up to his hype
And then chat up, if I were able, the guard-dog from the stable
Though I hear he's quite the silent type!

David McCallister and Shana Carter, actors and rare ones, performed Gayle Puhl's skit, "How Much Is that Hound Dog in the Window?" Jack Stapleton's frustrating attempts to buy a vicious hound almost produced sympathy as well as laughs.

A power team of Stu Nelson, David McCallister, and Mel Berger won the 20-question quiz, "A Sherlockian Animal Fair," with 27 points. "How many Sherlock Holmes stories are titled after animals?" was worth four points.

Lucky raffle winners walked away with a splendid array of donated Sherlockian books, journals, and all manner of *tchotchkes* bearing the image of Sherlock Holmes—jewelry, etched glasses and coasters, cutting boards, bears, and the classic Snoopy-in-a-deerstalker ornament from Hallmark.

Mark Jones, who splits his time between York and London, ended the evening in grand style with a delightful British-accented recitation T. S. Eliot's "Macavity, the Mystery Cat."

The Gaslight Gala has been organized by a changing group of volunteers since 2005. This year's committee was Mary Alcaro, Ann Andriacco, Dan Andriacco, Debbie Clark, Carla Coupe, David Harnois, Nick Martorelli, Kristen Pedersen Prepolec, Karen Wilson, and Chris Zordan. The Gala succeeded the Baskerville Bash (1997–2004), the Fortescue Symposium (1994–1996), and an Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes dinner (1975–1993) as an alternative event held on the same evening as the BSI dinner.

BSI Dinner 2020

by Albert M. Rosenblatt and Betsy Rosenblatt

It's 2020 and we hear
Of Sherlock everywhere!
We celebrate with Wiggins and
Our Kean Commissionaire.

We're sure that Moriarty's scheming
Schemes and planning tricks.
But Holmes will never falter: He's
A hundred sixty-six!

He's going strong with Watson and
Their little bulldog pup,
But when it comes to Moriarty,
We say: Lock him up!

We've not resolved the Great Debate
Of where Holmes went to school.
The Oxfords and the Cambridges
Have added to the fuel.

Whichever place he went, we know
He earned what he was taught.
But some have bribed their way in-
side,
And now they're getting caught.

Like Gilchrist with his running shoes
Who stole a big exam,
We bet a school admitted
Moriarty in a scam.

Perhaps his father (also James)
Was courting time in jail
For offering a million pounds
To get him into Yale.

He might have had an Army coach
Employ another trick
And say that Moriarty was
A champ at singlestick.

We say farewell to Gahan Wilson:
Artistry unleashed.
He gave us lots of Sherlock; he
Cartooned and he pastiched.

A star of Scandinavia
Has come upon the scene.
It isn't Norway's Sigerson—
She's Swedish and a teen.

The London gaslights in the fog
Would fail at twenty feet.
But can a Greta Thunberg help us
See down Baker Street?

He may not give a deuce about
The Solar System's role,
But even Holmes might care to see
A photographed black hole.

The border wall with Mexico
Continues in the news.
The president has theorized
Some tactics we can use—

We've heard some strong suggestions
with
Regard to what it takes:
We build a giant moat and then
We fill it up with snakes!

It certainly would send a message.
Subtle it is not—
In charge of our security
Is Grimesby Roy-a-lott.

El Chapo faced a jury and
They sentenced him to jail.
Although he's wriggled loose before,
This year they didn't fail.

His smuggling was clever and
His tactics were renowned:
Like villains in the redhead league
He tunneled underground.

Preparing for a hurricane,
You need to find its path.
We think the Musgrave Ritual
Will help you do the math:

You count by five and ten and two
To find the stormy realm.
Just mark the map in Sharpie; it
Will lead you to the ALABAMA.

Recall Lysander Stark, a man
Who seemed to have an itch
To buy exotic property
And aim to strike it rich.

He really was a crook who mangled
Hatherley's machine hand—
But never did he ever think
To try to purchase Greenland!

The global scene is challenging;
The British news reflects it.
As votes for Boris Johnson
Keep them looking at the Brexit.

But Brexit's not the only exit
Making British news.
They're calling it the Megxit and
The Queen is not amused.

And speaking of amusement, we
Might think of her as dour.
But we don't know Victoria
Like those who really knew 'er.

In May, they found a secret reel
And all is reconciled.
The film reveals her countenance:
She really, really smiled!

For decades, Holmes has carried on
And rarely thought of quittin'.
But most of his detective work
Was carried out in Britain.

But Sherlock Holmes is not con-
strained;
The world is his domain.
So would he find corruption with
The Bidens in Ukraine?

Would Holmes reveal a corporate plot
That nobody admits to?
He is, we know, an expert in
The study of Baritsu.

The Democratic party has
To pick a candidate.
They started with so many that
They couldn't all debate.

There's Bennett, Bernie, Biden,
Bloomberg,
Buttigieg, let's see—
Perhaps they'll go to Sussex and
Commune with other B's.

There's Warren, Steyer, Klobuchar,
And some who've left the race;
We're launching into caucuses
To see who'll take the place—

We nominate a Christmas Goose.
You may think that's absurd.
You're right, as far as governing,
We can't elect a bird.

But hear us out: if we can find
A fowl that's teachable,
At least we'll know a Christmas Goose

Is unimpeachable!

The Baker Street Irregulars
Are also on our mind—
They go, they see, they overhear
Wherever they're assigned.

For Holmes they'd do an errand
And accept a quid or so,
But Wiggins never *ever* would
Demand a *quid pro quo*.

When Moriarty called on Holmes,
Were threats implied at all?
“You claim I incommoded you!”
“It was a perfect call!”

Communications are a bit
Confusing now and then.
Just query Hilton Cubitt, who
Received the Dancing Men.

There's nothing in those images
Suggesting mystery.
It's not high-tech. “Ukraine” crane
your neck . . .
And read the transcript, see?

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We gathered once again last night
To chat and share some grub.
The evening's theme was “twenties”
And the place the Yalies' club.

To toast *The Woman* was the task
Of Emily Miranker.

She gave it to her mother, Cathy,
Everyone will thank her.

So, Cathy really loves her books.
She reads, collects, and binds.
We surely can forgive her, then,
For breaking all their spines.

With Davies, Ross, the Constitution
Really came alive.
We gave him some assistance reading
Buy-Law number five.

The Beacon of the Future, Shannon,
With our glasses lifted
Applauded Mrs. Hudson as
A teacher of the gifted.

When Klinger toasted Mycroft Holmes
He made a novel case.
He marshalled careful evidence
And put it all in place:

That Mycroft, for expedience,
Identified as “mister,”
But Sherlock might have never known
That Mycroft was his *sister*.

The anagrams of Dana Richards
Told us of the life
And matrimonial affairs
Of Watson’s second wife.

And Barbara Rusch arose to honor
Sherlock Holmes in rhyme;
Then Doctor Parker told of Schulz,

The Ted we found sublime.

The Musgraves had a ritual
That every member knew.
The measurement, by Eaker, counted
Ten and five and two.

For years, we’ve stood upon the ter-
race

Led by Francine Kitts.
But this year, Marsha Pollak honored
Friends and their obits.

The country squires Holmes was from
Had ordinary norms.
When art is in the blood, they say,
It takes the strangest forms.

We know that Holmes’s grandma was
Related to Vernet,
But tastes in art may vary and
He’s not well known today.

So Candy Lewis showed us how
He rose to fame and glitz:
The secret to his triumph was
A massive PR blitz!

Rebecca Romney’s thesis was
That hindsight’s 20/20.
She urged us all to spread our scope
Although we’re cognoscenti.

Though snowy drifts have covered up
A complicated past,
The richness of the Internet
Has brought it back at last.

Berdan ascended to the mic
And told us of the fact
That just a hundred years ago
We had the Volstead Act.

The town was down, all wore a frown,
The faces, they were pale;
The only place to get a drink
Was at the club of Yale.

He told us of another fact
That horrified our party:
The tables down at Mory's all
Were named for Moriarty!

From the tables down at Mory's
Came the song we love so well
Cooee, cooee, cooee
But it came from Moriarty
That infernal infidel
Phooey, phooey, phooey

The room dissolved in chaos as
A quiz of sorts was formed,
And Donny Zaldin lip-synced tunes
That Henry Boote performed.

Investitures are always Wiggins'
Fav'rite things to do.
He gave out several shillings and
Awarded Fusco two.

The evening reached a fitting end.
We saved the best for last:
From Michael one to Michael two
We saw the gavel passed.

It's time for us to leave the stage
We've had a lot of fun.
We'll see you all a year from now,
When it's 2-0-2-1.