



THE NORWEGIAN EXPLORERS  
OF MINNESOTA, INC.



# EXPLORATIONS

FALL 2024

ISSUE NO. 90

"You may have read of the remarkable explorations of a Norwegian named Sigerson, but I am sure that it never occurred to you that you were receiving news of your friend."

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## Editor's Desk

**T**his year has been another wonderful one for local Sherlockian activities. Our Study Group sessions are popular and enjoyed by many monthly participants. Thanks go out to the Study Group leaders, Mary Loving, Steven Miller, and Steven Schier for the hard work that they do to run the sessions. The Norwegian Explorers co-hosted another of our international conferences, there have been some new book releases with appearances by prominent authors, and a new play by Jeffrey Hatcher that combines Sherlock Holmes and Hercule Poirot had its world premiere. And soon we will be getting together for our Annual Dinner. It continues to be a good time to be a Sherlockian.

Shifting subjects, I am inching toward work retirement and my post-retirement travel plans will make it difficult to continue as *Explorations* editor or Explorers' Treasurer. This issue is the 21st that I have worked on as editor, more than any other of our newsletter editors, surpassing Allen Mackler's notable 17 issues. It has been fun, and a grand feeling of accomplishment, but it does need a new editor with renewed vigor and vision. I am looking for one or several people to take over from me for those two tasks in about 18 months, in the first half of 2026. If you wish for an outlet for your

writing and organizational skills, perhaps skills you only suspected you have (as I did), please contact me or anyone on the Explorers' Board.

Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to the contributors to this issue. As editor, I try to include entertaining content in order to provide members with something for their annual dues. My thanks go out to Mike Eckman, Erica Fair for her description of a trip to England (always a favorite topic of mine), and Paul Reiners with the first in a new series of articles on Sherlockian comics from the 1980s. 

## Conference: Sherlock Holmes @ 50

BY PHILLIP BERGEM

**M**innesota held another of our regional Sherlockian conferences this past summer. The event — jointly hosted by the University of Minnesota Libraries, The Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections, and the Norwegian Explorers — was titled *Sherlock Holmes @ 50: Celebrating the Golden Anniversary of the Sherlock Holmes Collections*. The conference started on Friday, July 26th, and ran through Sunday the 28th, with the first and last days held at the Elmer L. Andersen Library. The event proved incredibly popular and we reached capacity early on. There were 165 conference attendees and speakers and another 19 guests for the Saturday banquet. Out-of-town attendees stayed at the Courtyard by Marriott hotel located just three blocks away.

Events kicked off with a reception on Thursday evening at the hotel with drinks, food, and great conversation as people were reacquainted. On Friday things started in the Andersen Library at

(Continued on page 8)

## *A Pilgrimage to Portsmouth: Coincidence and Community*

BY ERICA FAIR

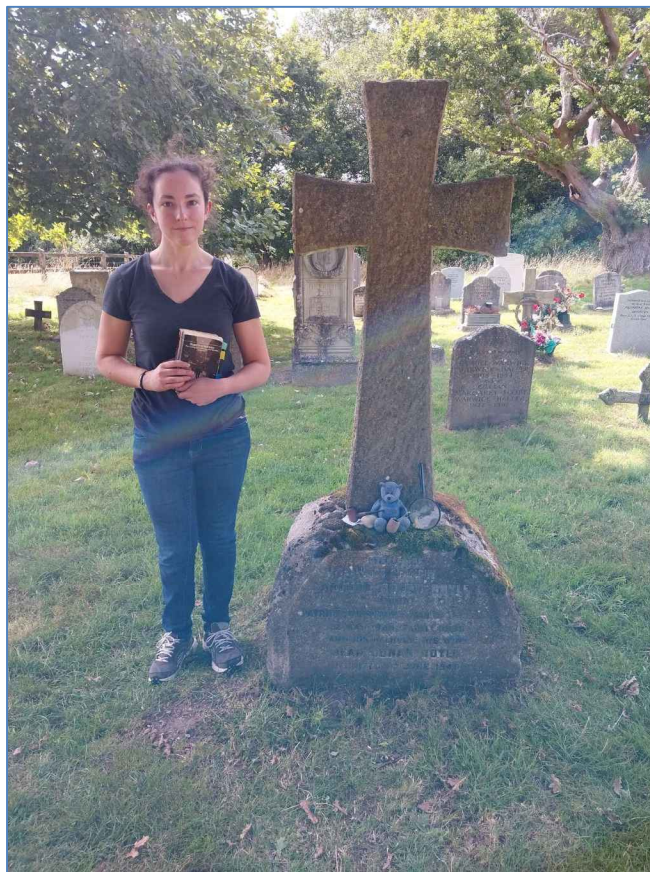
**L** sometimes think that I have an unusually lucky life, with a particular excess of coincidence. Holmes may scoff, but how else can I explain that just six days after my very first triennial conference in Minnesota, I was crossing the Atlantic, bound not just for the motherland, but for the very cradle of Sherlockian civilization, all by merest happenstance?

In 2021, through the Stamfordian tradition of a mutual acquaintance, my husband Jake and I befriended another couple who live in the New Forest town of Hythe, near Southampton. For years we had been trying to coordinate a visit, and finally in June 2024, the first week of August looked promising, with work schedules, finances, and two birthdays all aligning. Despite six prior trips to the U.K. over ten years, I'd never been farther south than Bath, and having lost my grasp on U.K. geography during COVID, it was not until we were day-planning in late July that I realized how close we would be to Portsmouth and a number of Doylean sites. I was ecstatic, but since I was the only Sherlockian of our quad, I took care to balance my requests. Our hosts are the kindest people on Earth and were happy to indulge my quirks, but there's only so much trivia that a non-fan can take, after which point deportation starts to look reasonable. Accordingly, I prioritized and picked my biggest must-sees, saving a few items like archives for a subsequent trip. Despite what I may have missed this time, what I did get to see absolutely dazzled me, and I was not disappointed in the least. Here's what I was blessed to behold.

### **Day One: The New Forest**

Our location in Hythe put us on the edge of the New Forest, and about a 20-minute drive to the Doyle gravesite in Minstead. Despite jetlag and exhaustion, I couldn't wait to visit on the very same day we landed. I was still aglow from the conference, the weather was beautiful, and it was a quiet Sunday afternoon, so off we went to All Saints Church. It took a bit of searching in the cemetery at first; there were no directions or cleared paths, and my only clue came from the Church's somewhat cheeky website: "The oak tree over the grave still bears the scars of being struck by lightning twice — the last time in 1969. Whether this was a sign of approval or displeasure has yet to be revealed to us." I was very fortunate that when I

found it, there was no one else around, and I had a quiet moment with the man who gave us all so much. The gravestone has degraded a bit (the metal B in "Steel True, Blade Straight" has come off) and prior tourists had left behind trinkets such as a Beanie Baby and a magnifying glass, but it was powerful nonetheless. I thanked him, pocketed a small stone that was resting nearby, and went on my way.



Erica at Arthur Conan Doyle's gravesite

The Church on site was pretty but felt extremely small. Granted, I'm used to cathedrals, but it was perhaps thirty paces in each direction, and a single brochure noted the Doylean connection. Afterward, we gazed longingly into the gift shop that had closed just five minutes earlier (hey, not all coincidences are good ones), and had supper at The Trusty Servant Inn down the road. The food was excellent, if a bit light for a Sunday roast, but I was dining with friends on a beautiful day, outdoors in the quiet New Forest, having just accomplished a lifelong travel goal. This was paradise.

### **Day Two: South Downs**

If the New Forest was paradise, then the South Downs didn't belong on this plane of reality. Let me emphasize that I am not an outdoors person.



While I can appreciate natural beauty, I like it best in the form of an on-demand nature documentary, piped into my screened and air-conditioned house, with David Attenborough's soothing narration and unlimited snacks within reach. Anything less than that, and I start to get itchy. Keep that in mind when I tell you that the beauty of the South Downs kept me mesmerized for hours. We went to Weald and Downland, a living museum within the South Downs National Park, where several buildings dating as far back as A.D. 900 have been transported and reconstructed. In this one location, you can visit a Saxon fishing hut, a medieval town square, Tudor houses, and Victorian farm buildings, all the way up to WW II-era structures (and yes, there is an apiary on site, though it's away from visitors). The backdrop is the most staggering beautiful countryside you can imagine, like an Impressionist painting come to life. As you walk a soft forest path between the ancient buildings and look out through the trees to rolling hills and endless skies, there are spots of forest, of white cliffs, and of multicolored fields with dots of sheep, cows, and ponies, untouched by any sign of humans. If anyone was going to retire into the quiet solitude of nature, this is the place to do it. Considering there is also significant history here, perfect for an enthusiast of medieval music and ancient languages, I understand completely why a certain someone never wanted to leave. For once, I didn't either.

### Day Three: Arundel Castle, Abridged

Now, I did warn you that not everything would be Doylean, so here's your chance to skip ahead. Arundel Castle was described to me as a Disney storybook castle with all the trimmings, and that's about right. It has zero Sherlockian connections to my knowledge, but the spectacular gardens were a filming location for Dorne and Highgarden in *Game of Thrones*, and they are magnificent. Go in the summer and enjoy a breath of Spain in the

midst of Britain. The armory and library are impressive too, and as we waited in line for the chapel, I fell into chatting with a volunteer. He advised me that we were standing beside a chest owned by Catherine of Braganza, Charles II's queen who introduced tea to the U.K., and one of my favorite historical figures. Coincidence strikes again!

### Day Four: Portsmouth Part One – The Dockyard

At the halfway point of our trip, our hosts took the day off while Jake and I went to Portsmouth, to see the famous dockyards and maybe perhaps some Doyle stuff at the very end — you know, only if there's time. The dockyards have nine ships for touring, and we saw three: the *Warrior* (a true Victorian flagship), the *Mary Rose* (a Tudor warship that sank and was preserved in mud), and the *Victory* (which needs no introduction... right?). Each

ship had a different presentation style. The *Warrior* had signage and some excellent historical actors, knowledgeable and fun, and we saw and heard a cannon demonstration that makes you greatly appreciate earplugs. The *Mary Rose*'s museum is uniquely and brilliantly designed so that the salvaged hull is propped up on one side, and you walk parallel to its decks, seeing the artifacts that would have been stored on each level. Our last ship was the *Victory*, whose entry kiosk warned that there would be no signage aboard. Uh oh. I knew HMS *Victory* was famous and that every Brit-

ish schoolchild knew about Nelson, but I had no idea why. I confessed this to Jake, and we stood in the noontime sun and Wikipedia'd the Napoleonic Wars for two minutes before deciding that it was hot out and that we probably had the gist. We didn't, so our biggest takeaway was that Admiral Nelson had a particularly nice hat, but at least it was interesting to compare the *Victory*'s architecture to the *Warrior*. And then at last, having seen

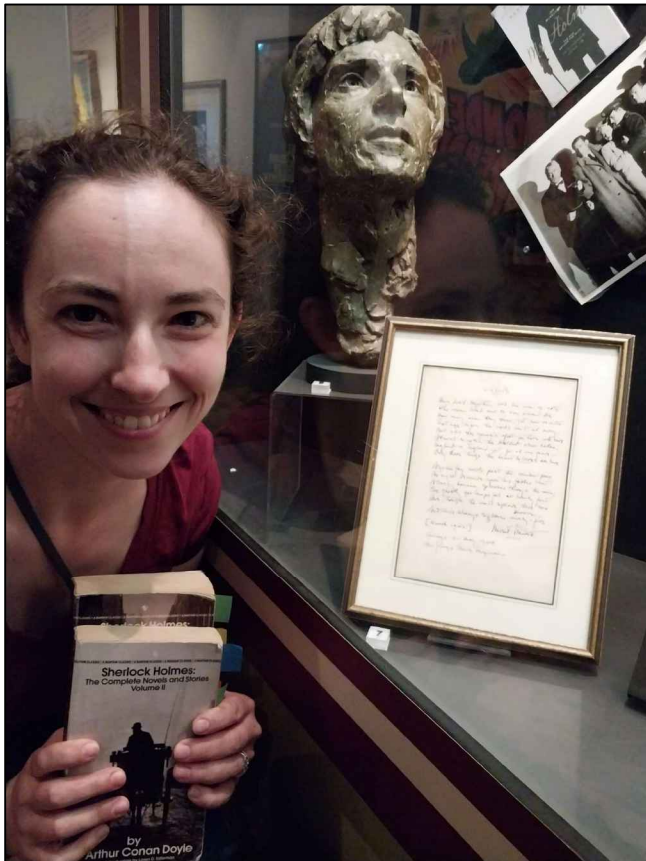


Jake's favorite quote.  
At the Portsmouth City Museum

three ships, it was time to see what I *really* came for.

### Portsmouth Part Two – The Sherlockyard

A 15-minute walk from the dockyards (minus a Tesco's lunch break) brought us to the Portsmouth City Museum, the ground floor of which is a permanent Doyle exhibit, displaying a large bequest of items from Richard Lancelyn Green's collection. I scurried up and down the hallways in complete bliss, photographing every item from every possible angle. There are displays focused on medicine, on movies, on Doyle's other fiction, on mass market products, and so many more. Film posters and screens with rotating photographs line the walls, and famous quotations preface every display. My favorite item was a handwritten Starrett copy of 221B, and when I mistook it for the literal original, the near-heart attack probably knocked three years off my lifespan. I still love it and insisted on having my photo taken besides it. I also liked a detailed but unsigned sketch of Holmes and Moriarty at Reichenbach, dressed in Alpine clothes, one gripping the other in a chokehold and pushing him over the edge. If I ever learn the artist, I'll get a copy. I also picked up a facsimile of the 1887 Beeton's from the museum gift shop, so I can finally read the other stories that were inadvertently preserved for



the ages. [This is the Life is Amazing facsimile which is very good and highly recommended – Ed.]

Beyond Holmes, the rest of the museum focused on Portsmouth city life through history, and is generally pleasant enough, aside from a few very creepy mannequins, but we got through it all in about 30 minutes. There was one last place I wanted to see before our evening plans, and that was of course 1 Bush Villas (now "Bush House 1-17"). It's a short walk from the museum, but you must pay close attention, as the original site was lost to WW II, and the blue commemorative plaque is very high off the ground, affixed to a set of apartments. Just as we finished taking photos, my phone rang. It was time!

### Portsmouth Part Three – The Best Part

Through the Sherlockian network, a few days before my trip, I was advised to contact a local Portsmouth author, Paul Thomas Miller. I was a big fan of his humorous blog "The Shingle of Southsea," and I had in fact just finished one of his books and loved it, so I was initially nervous to reach out. As I'm learning is always the case with Sherlockians (and now Holmesians), my anxiety was baseless. He was, of course, incredibly friendly, and invited me on a private tour of the city plus a visit to his collection. I was thrilled at the opportunity, but braced myself for an awkward conversation with



poor Jake: “Say, while we’re in a foreign country next week, how about we get into the car of a stranger off the Internet, let him take us off the beaten path, and go deep into his house? It’ll be fine!” My husband brings most of the common sense to our marriage, and he had a few questions at first, but once he heard that multiple people had vouched for our guide, he was just as intrigued and excited as I was. After all, we had met our existing hosts through similar circumstances, and you can’t go through life assuming everyone is a cannibal. At the very least, Paul was willing to give us that same benefit of the doubt, arguably the riskier gamble.

Luckily, not only were we *not* abducted and eaten, we were in fact treated to a spectacular tour of Portsmouth by the best guide we could have ever asked for. Paul’s knowledge of Portsmouth’s Doylean connections is fascinating and encyclopedic, and his enthusiasm is irrepressible. Among a dozen other landmarks, we saw the jetty, the jail, and the gravesite of Jack Hawkins, Louisa Hawkins’ brother, whose terminal meningitis brought Doyle and Louisa together. It seemed like every street had some special association; my camera couldn’t keep up, and we could have talked for hours. Paul is as much a gem as the museum, so if you ever go to Portsmouth, please reach out so I can connect you!

We also got to see the famous “Sherloft,” the attic that houses Paul’s collection in all its glory. This was the first time I had toured a private Sherlockian library, and I saw a glimpse of my own future amidst the overflowing shelves and the movie posters and artwork that papered every inch of wall. I couldn’t name a pastiche or adaptation that he didn’t already have, but I had come prepared with diplomatic gifts: my freebies from the triennial conference, plus an August 3 Star Tribune I had found at MSP airport, with the serendipitous headline, “Police Groups Want to Limit Moriarty” (coincidence!). In exchange, I received several duplicates

and special treats, including a literary cinder block, the Otto Penzler pastiche collection. At 900 pages, it weighs 3.5 lbs and didn’t fit in my luggage, but I proudly wrestled it home regardless. I now have a massive book stamped with “Portsmouth City Library” on display in my house, plus a new friend in a fantastic city that I’d love to see again. For the price of a newspaper and a tiny leap of faith, I couldn’t have made a better trade.

### Days Five and Six: Winchester and Southampton

Our hosts rejoined us as we rounded out our vacation with trips to Winchester and Southampton, which have fewer Sherlockian connections, but plenty of other history. Winchester appears in COPP and THOR, and we got to see the Great Hall that served as the Assizes (where Grace Dunbar would have been tried) and the resting place of King Arthur’s Round Table, a colossal wooden wheel that dates back to Edward I and was painted to include all of the knights. My husband is an avid Arthurian, and his patient indulgence of my Holmes obsession was finally being rewarded. He was thrilled beyond belief and even took a moment to kneel before the table. For my part, I tripped on the steps leading up to the Hall and threw out my back at the ripe age of 34. It’s an old injury that I find ways to aggravate a few times each year, so I popped paracetamol as Jake

wandered the Hall with the same reverence I’d shown at my Doyle sites — eyes wide, jaw slightly agape, trying to accept that this is real while also savoring every second. I knew what he was feeling; it’s the best experience in the world, and I loved seeing someone I love have it too.

On our final day, as bright and beautiful as the rest of them, we took the scenic route to Southampton by ferry. In contrast to Winchester’s small village feel, Southampton is metropolitan and modern, with a major cruise terminal, a university, and a major shopping center alongside the historic preserves and castle remnants. The only



Paul Thomas Miller, in shock at having Erica Fair in the Sherloft

Sherlockian item I found was when we took a wrong turn (no, really, I swear) and stumbled upon The Dancing Man Brewery. Other than the name, I didn't see any Holmes regalia, but it was also nine in the morning, so we didn't stay very long. It didn't help that by this point, I'd been talking about Holmes for six days straight, and quite frankly I was starting to get on even my own nerves, so I grabbed a photo and then moved along. Southampton has a number of public monuments to the Titanic's workers, as well as a short but powerful museum exhibit, but we spent most of the day strolling in the university's greens, spending one last wonderful day with our friends. At the end, we bade farewell and headed up to Heathrow to catch an early morning flight the following day, full of promises that we'd be back before we knew it.

And that's the story of coincidence, community, and *carpe diem* that was my trip to the southern U.K., just days after the triennial conference. Thank you to everyone who helped me investigate the local Doylean roots with all due vigor, and for the networking that gave me a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to meet an incredible fellow fan. This community is what made it happen! If you ever get the chance, get out and see the magnificent southern U.K., and drop me a line if you want any advice or want to see my photos: **elmadore@gmail.com**. I promise you'll love it, and you'll get to meet some of the very best people in the world. 🐾

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## Doyle, Holmes, and other Authors and their Creations

BY MICHAEL V. ECKMAN



hen reading, we are used to seeing references to Sherlock Holmes and Arthur Conan Doyle. It is natural for authors or critics to compare other characters to Holmes and other authors to Doyle. In my reading, I have come across several instances where Ian Fleming and James Bond are compared to Doyle and Holmes.

In his introduction to his book *Iceberg*, Clive Cussler states it is his favorite Dirk Pitt book. He adds, "I'd like to think that there is a lot of Dirk Pitt in me. But if the truth were known, there's probably more of me in him. Unlike Ian Fleming

and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who hated their protagonists, James Bond and Sherlock Holmes, and tried to kill them off, Pitt and I are good pals. We've grown so close that I've never thought of writing an adventure without him."

In *Love and Let Die*, John Riggs contrasts the love preached by the Beatles' songs with the death preached by the James Bond movies and books. Riggs sees Bond as "the escapist fantasy of a privileged but damaged soul...." He goes on to write that Bond was a dark icon and "Here Bond differs from other British folk heroes, such as King Arthur, Robin Hood, or Sherlock Holmes. Inside he is damaged and rotten to the core. He only does good because it is his job, and if you took away that job, the character would collapse." Riggs notes that when Sean Connery declined to make any more Bond films, Cubby Broccoli said that Bond could be played by other actors like other classic characters such as "Sherlock Holmes and Tarzan — icons who, like James Bond, lived on beyond individual performances, and who could be endlessly reinvented." Fleming allowed Bond to be adapted to a comic strip and "When work on the script began, Fleming commissioned an artist to draw a portrait of Bond as he saw him — refined and elegant, and not unlike the actor Basil Rathbone." Riggs notes that Christopher Lee, the actor who played Bond villain Scaramanga in "The Man with the Golden Gun," also played both Sherlock and Mycroft Holmes in other movies.

In *Ian Fleming: The Complete Man*, Nicholas Shakespeare writes that Ian Fleming was deeply affected by the disappearance of Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean. As the Russians in Fleming's *From Russia with Love* state, the strength of the British "lies in the myth — the myth of Scotland Yard, of Holmes, of the Secret Service." Burgess and Maclean were eventually revealed as Soviet spies, but "Bond was born out of turmoil at a moment when the end of the Burgess and Maclean story was still unresolved." Fleming's Bond books were considered well written by some. "Umberto Eco rated [Fleming's] novels seriously, as did Kingsley Amis, who ranked them alongside the 'demi-giants' of an earlier age, Verne, Haggard, Conan Doyle. The verdict that most pleased Ian was John Betjeman's comparison of Bond to an international Sherlock Holmes." Fleming was an avid book collector, and in 1965 his collection — including Fleming's manuscripts — was sold to the Lilly Library "for \$150,000, of which \$30,000 was allocated to the collection, and \$120,000 to

the James Bond novels. 'The value of 007's manuscripts is a gamble,' David Randall wrote to Percy Muir. 'As we said, he is no Sherlock Holmes; yet the more I think about it, the more I believe he may outlive his era. He represents senseless violence, technical knowledge, etc., etc., to a degree which may make him a symbol of our time.'"

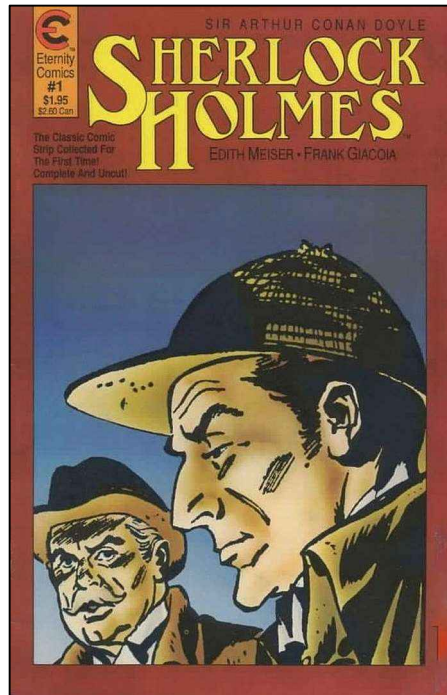
## The Meiser/Giacoaia Comic Strip Adaptations

BY PAUL REINERS



dith Meiser (writer) and Frank Giacoia (artist) crafted a Sherlock Holmes comic strip in the 1950s that the *N.Y. Herald Tribune* syndicated. There were six daily installments of three or four panels each and a Sunday installment, the length of 3 daily strips. These were serial episodes of the equivalent of short stories. Anyone growing up in the 60s and 70s who is familiar with the comic strips "Rex Morgan, M.D." or "Judge Parker" would recognize the format. These strips were collected in the late 1980s by Eternity Comics.

The late 1980s was a renaissance for comics, or "graphic novels." Frank Miller's *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* is a prime example from that era. Graphic novelists revised and darkened the origin stories of superheroes to be more like the antiheroes of young film directors in the 70s. This revisionism also happened with Sherlock Holmes with the book *The Seven-Percent Solution* (1974) by Nicholas Meyer and the 1985 film *Young Sherlock Holmes*, a film directed by Chris Columbus and directed by Barry Levinson. The Sherlock Holmes canon didn't describe his early life, so "revisionism" might not be the right word. It was more a filling in of the blanks in the Canon but often in a dark or at least radically rethought manner. First published in the 1950s, the Sherlock Holmes comic strip did not result from this revisionism. As described by Eternity Comics:



In co-operation with the estate of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the classic comic strip from the 50s is collected in comic book form, complete and uncut with daily and Sunday strips. Written by Edith Meiser (who used to write for the *Sherlock Holmes* radio show), the strips are illustrated by Marvel veteran Frank Giacoia. The series begins with the first day's original adventure strip. Later episodes — in response to letters from readers — featured adaptations of the Holmes stories by Doyle.

Edith Meiser's writing style is consistent with that of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle — the estate of A. Conan Doyle approved them. Meiser tells the comics' stories more visually than in Doyle's short stories. For example, there is less exposition at 221B at the beginning and end of each comic. Holmes is somewhat insulting to Watson, sometimes calling him an "idiot." This treatment of Watson is markedly unlike the original Doyle stories in which Holmes is respectful of, if sometimes short with, Watson.

I have mixed feelings about Frank Giacoia's artwork. The success of a Holmes adaptation can largely succeed or fail, depending on the appearance of Holmes. Giacoia's Holmes is too blandly handsome for my taste. He looks like Clark Kent or Bruce Wayne as much as Holmes. Watson is fine. Except for my quibble about the appearance of Holmes, the artwork is quite good.

Issue: *Sherlock Holmes* Eternity Comics #1

Release Date: June 1988

Story:

- "The Problem of Thor Bridge" (Part 1 of 2)

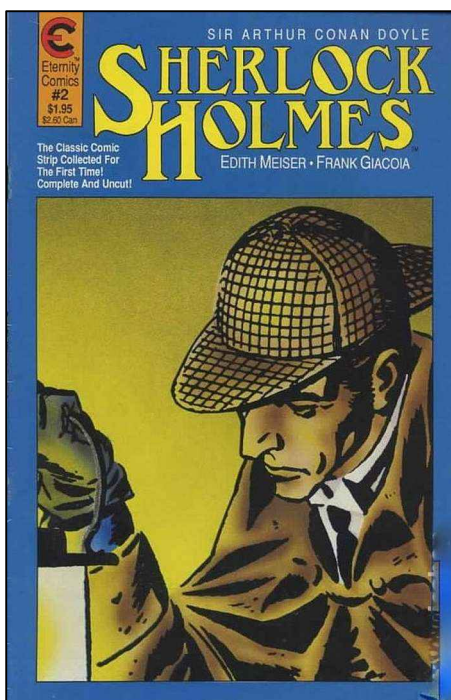
Comic strip dates: March 1, 1954 – April 11, 1954

This is a straight adaptation of the Arthur Conan Doyle story. The plot is simplified to fit the comic book format, which makes it more exciting. I don't read *The Casebook* often and had forgotten how good this story is.

Issue: *Sherlock Holmes* Eternity Comics #2

Release Date: July 1988





Stories:

- "The Problem of Thor Bridge" (Part 2 of 2)  
April 14, 1954 – April 18, 1954
- "The Cask of Jamaica Rum" (Part 1 of 2)  
April 18, 1954 – May 23, 1954

"The Cask of Jamaica Rum" is a pastiche written by Edith Meiser. It's an atmospheric tale set on the London docks and involves murder, the attempted murder of Holmes and Watson, voodoo, and gun-running to Jamaica. I don't know why more Holmes stories weren't set on the London docks. It's reminiscent of Sax Rohmer's *The Mystery of Dr. Fu-Manchu*.

Note that with issue 2 they started printing part 2 of an earlier story, and part 1 of the next, in order to encourage people to buy the next issue.

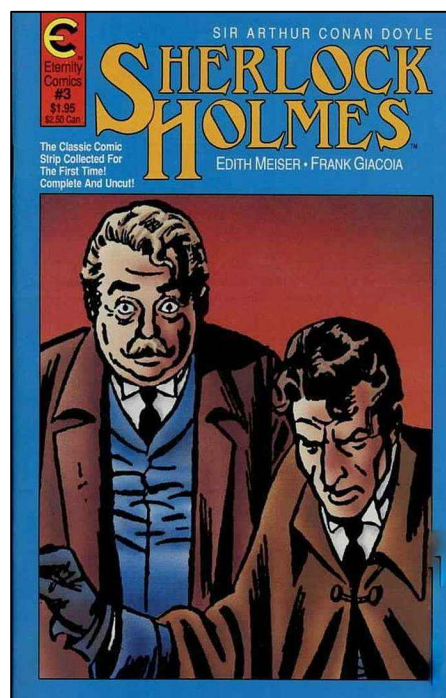
Issue: *Sherlock Holmes Eternity Comics #3*

Release Date: August 1988

Stories:

- "The Cask of Jamaica Rum." (Part 2 of 2)  
May 5, 1954 – June 13, 1954
- "The Disappearance of the Canadian Heiress" (part 1 of 2)  
June 14, 1954 – July 1, 1954

"The Disappearance of the Canadian Heiress" is an original pastiche written by Edith Meiser. It concerns the abduction, possibly by the Black Hand, of the daughter of a Canadian oil baron. She is about to be given a debutante coming out ball in England and is abducted from her coach in the courtyard of Buckingham Palace. Watson, for once, does not fall in love with the young heroine,



nor does he think she would be appropriate for Holmes.

Later comics will be covered in upcoming issues of *Explorations*. 🐾

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(*Sherlock Holmes @ 50 – continued from page 1*)

12:45 P.M. with a PowerPoint display compiled by Julie McKuras that included photos from past Minnesota conferences. Particularly poignant for much of the assembled group were images of people who have passed during the ensuing years.

The main program started at 1:00 with a welcoming address by conference chairman Dick Sveum. Rebecca Romney gave the first talk on "Sherlockian Collecting Today," a wonderful presentation that set the mood for the weekend, followed by Jim Hawkins talking about a subject near-and-dear to his heart, "John Bennett Shaw: The Blotter/The Collector." This included two videos of Shaw at his home and several anecdotes and memories of the man. The final conference presentation of the day was by Emily Miranker, who gave an entertaining talk on being the daughter of a Sherlockian and becoming a Sherlockian herself.

After the first day's presentations there were refreshments, courtesy of the University Libraries. Following the break and conversation it was time for the annual meeting of the Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections, which included remarks





*The reception in the Andersen Library atrium*

by President of the Friends' board, Gary Thaden, University Librarian and Dean of Libraries Lisa German, and Tim Johnson, who gave an update on the Collections and a report on the fund balances. Tim also announced that he would be retiring within a few years.

Tim introduced the guest speaker, Ira Brad Matetsky, who always gives a great speech. He talked about the value of library collections and the treasures that can be found in them, some of which are still waiting to be discovered.

Saturday found the attendees gathered in the main hall of the hotel. Eric Scace gave a riveting presentation on telegrams in the Canon, featuring an incredibly detailed account of how a telegram telling of Jack Douglas's death, from the epilogue in *The Valley of Fear*, would have been sent from South Africa to London. Following that, Matt Hall gave an informative talk inspired by *The Hound of the Baskervilles* about how phosphorous was actually sometimes used to illuminate bodies in order to frighten people during the Victorian era. The final presentation of the morning was Stephen Lee, who spoke as an experienced prosecutor and explained why Watson was less than forthright in some of his writings about Moriarty.

The group paused for a buffet lunch, returning to hear Burt Wolder give a marvelous summary of the life of Frederic Dorr Steele. After that, Will Walsh treated us to an edifying talk titled "Treason – British Law, Holmes and Doyle." Next came a

joint presentation by Jo-Ann and Mark Alberstat. They spoke about Simon Newcomb, a mathematics and astronomy genius from Nova Scotia, who may have been an inspiration for the character of Moriarty. The title of their talk was "Written in the Stars: Moriarty's Canadian Connection."

Saturday evening found us back in the main hall for the conference Banquet Dinner. The evening consisted of excellent toasts, including a significant one by Erica Fair, an auction of items by the admirable

Peter Blau, with proceeds going to support the Collections, and a great speech by Les Klinger.

The final day began with Max Magee presenting us with details about the 1887 Beeton's *Christmas Annual* and the former owners of the four copies that are in the Collections. Next, Denny Dobry gave us an in-depth look at his re-creation of the 221B Baker Street sitting room, how it was constructed, and many of the items that he has in it. He also informed the group that he was donating his materials to the Collections to be added to those currently on display on the second floor of Andersen Library, previously donated by Allen Mackler.



*Eric Scace, Jessica Schilling, and Alan Rettig looking at the exhibit.*

*Photo by Adria Carpenter.*

The Minnesota conferences traditionally end with a presentation by the Red Throated League. This year had the added bonus of the group performing a play written for the conference by the renowned playwright Jeffrey Hatcher, from an idea by Don Shelby, both of whom participated in an introductory discussion and acted in the play. The title was *221A: A Recently Discovered Episode of the Long Running Radio Series: The New Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, and it was enthusiastically enjoyed by the audience.



*Steve Doyle posing a question.  
Photo by Adria Carpenter.*

There is much more to reflect on from the three-day event. There was a fantastic exhibit, *A Festive Fifty*, compiled by Tim Johnson and Darren Terpstra, an exhibit designer with the University. The exhibit consisted of fifty items or groupings of items that covered the growth of the Sherlock Holmes Collections over the past five decades and the many people who have contributed items to it.

The conference packets were filled with a number of treasures, including the conference program, a 118-page book that is the exhibition catalog, complete with color photos and essays of the items on display, and the book *Sherlock Holmes: The Detective & the Collector, essays on the John Bennett Shaw Library*, edited by Lucy M. Brusic. (This book was given to attendees of the 1995 conference when the Shaw Collection was dedicated, and a number of remainder copies were found in a library storage room.) Other items in the generous packet included some lovely prints by John Romita, Jr., and Joe Rubinstein

(prominent comic book artists), provided courtesy of Dan Friedman, a copy of *Sherlock Holmes and the Silent Contest* by the conference presenter Stephen Chahn Lee, and a copy of Andrew Malec's article *Frederic Dorr Steele and The Metropolitan Magazine* completed for the Frederic Dorr Steele Memorial, Inc. There was also a selection of books and pamphlets by the late Jon Lellenberg that were provided by his wife, Susan Jewell.

One of the most delightful experiences of the conference was the time for socialization with good friends between the sessions and in the evenings while gathering for meals and drinks.

I would like to extend my thanks to the attendees, presenters, the Red Throated League troupe, the dozen vendors with their interesting wares, volunteers, and hotel staff. Particular thanks go out to my fellow conference committee members, especially this year's chairperson, Dick Sveum. 🐾



## *Holmes/Poirot at Park Square Theatre*

BY PHILLIP BERGEM



Twenty-eight Explorers gathered on Sunday, November 3rd, along with many other members of the general public, at the Park Square Theatre to watch the final, sold-out performance of *Holmes/Poirot*. The play was written by local luminaires of the theater, Jeffrey Hatcher (BSI 2018, "The Five Orange Pips")



*The cast of Holmes/Poirot.  
Photo by Dick Sveum.*





*Explorers listening to Steve Hendrickson and Jeffrey Hatcher.  
Photo by Gary Thaden.*

and Steve Hendrickson. Tom Gottwalt had spread the word about the show, and that the 3rd would be a special gathering for interested Explorers.

There was the normal convivial conversation among Explorer friends in the lobby before the performance. Steve DiMenna, the Executive Artistic Director for the theatre, spoke with several of us before the performance. He pointed out that Hatcher is the third most performed living playwright in the United States. It's quite an honor to have Jeffrey Hatcher within our midst. Steve went on to tell us that they wanted to have *Holmes/Poirot* be the first performance after their financial difficulties and cancelation of shows in 2023 and the first part of 2024. The show is a welcome return and has had a successful run. Steve also told us that they have commissioned five plays from Hatcher over the next five seasons. Given his success in the past with Sherlockian plays (including *Sherlock Holmes and the Suicide Club* (2011), *Sherlock Holmes and the Ice Palace Murders* (2015), and *Holmes and Watson* (2018)), we are sure that several of them will involve Holmes and Watson.

*Holmes/Poirot* is based on Agatha Christie's novel *The Murder on the Links*. There are nine performers who play different roles in the first and second acts. The first act had Hendrickson as Holmes, a role he's played often, and Bob Davis as Watson. They investigate a murder, and Holmes is prevented from revealing the true killer in order to

protect Watson. In the second act, set several decades after the first act, Bob did an admirable job as Hercule Poirot and Hendrickson portrayed Captain Hastings. They also investigate a murder which they eventually solve, clearing up the murder which Holmes and Watson had dealt with earlier.

After the performance Hendrickson and Hatcher spoke to the group to tell some background about the play and to answer questions. Steve told of how he had a dream about performing in two plays

with the actor, Bob Davis. In the dream, Steve played Holmes and Hastings and Bob played Watson and Poirot. Steve told Jeffrey about the dream and Jeffrey suggested that they write the play. They went on to talk about how they worked together to come up with a script and to answer questions.

Following all of that a number of the people from the group went to the nearby Loon Cafe for food and drinks.

The play was thoroughly enjoyable, people had a fun time, and the kindness extended to the Explorers by Hatcher, Hendrickson, and DiMenna was truly appreciated. 🐾

## *Parting Words and Trifles*

There were several recent releases of Sherlockian books.

- On September 18th an event was held at the Andersen Library with Nicholas Meyer talking about his latest book, *Sherlock Holmes and the telegram from Hell*. He answered questions from the audience and signed books that were available for purchase.
- Local author Larry Millett was at a book release gathering for *Mysterious Tales of Old St. Paul*, with three cases involving Shadwell Rafferty from his days before he met Sherlock Holmes. The event was hosted by Subtext Books and was held at Saint City Catering.

- Both books are available from Subtext Books (6 West 5th Street, St. Paul), Once Upon A Crime (604 W 25th Street, Minneapolis), and elsewhere.
- Jeff Falkingham has the second edition of his collections of essays *Focusing the Lens on Doyle and Holmes*. The cover artwork is by fellow Explorer Amanda Downs. The book is available from **Amazon.com**, or you can contact Jeff for signed copies on his website **cccaper.com**.
- The Norwegian Explorers Annual Dinner will be held on Thursday, December 5th, at the Minneapolis Golf Club (2001 Flag Avenue S, St. Louis Park, starting at 6:30). The dinner cost is \$50 per person and you can sign up on

our webpage **[www.norwegianexplorers.org/2024\\_dinner.html](http://www.norwegianexplorers.org/2024_dinner.html)**. The guest speaker will be Larry Millett.

- The 2024 Christmas Annual will be distributed to attendees of the Dinner in December, and in New York in January. Please contact me (**[pgbergem@gmail.com](mailto:pgbergem@gmail.com)**) if you wish to order a copy.
- Our Baker Street West dinner will be held on Sunday, February 2nd, at 5:00 P.M. The location is still to be determined. This gathering is to hear details of the Sherlock Holmes festivities in New York by some of the Explorers who attended.
- Please observe the enclosed note regarding dues payments. It is appreciated if people can pay at the beginning of the calendar year. 🐼



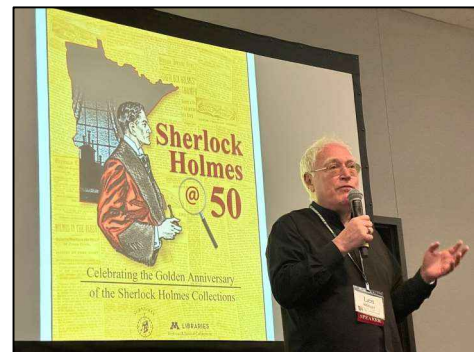
*At the registration table.  
Photo by Adria Carpenter.*



*At the registration table.  
Photo by Gary Thaden.*



*Dan & Ann Andriacco, Evelyn  
Herzog – Photo by Adria Carpenter.*



*Les Klinger.  
Photo by Gary Thaden.*

### The Norwegian Explorers

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