

REMINDER!

The Bimetallic Barbecue at
Wilfrid and Susan's home
369 Kitchener Avenue
Westmount
Saturday, July 25 from 4 p.m.
(rain date July 26)
R.S.V.P. by July 23
phone: (514) 935-9581
email: wilfrid@defreitasbooks.com

Minutes
of the meeting
of
The Bimetallic Question
June 4th, 2009

Date of next meeting

The next meeting will take place on
Thursday, August 6th, at 6:30 p.m. at:
The Westmount Public Library
(Westmount Room)
4574 Sherbrooke Street West
Westmount, Quebec

The Quiz at the next meeting

"The Adventure of the Abbey Grange"
prepared by Carol Abramson

Minutes of the MEETING of the BIMETALLIC QUESTION held on Thursday, June 4th, 2009 at the Westmount Library (Westmount Room), 4574 Sherbrooke Street West, Westmount, Quebec.

Present: Carol Abramson, Albert Aikman, Jack Anderson, Maureen Anderson, Stanley Baker, Paul Billette, Marie Burrows, Roger Burrows, Patrick Campbell, Wilfrid de Freitas, David Dowse, Reynold Gold, Chris Herten-Greaven, David Kellett, Roy Mercado, Elliott Newman, Mietek Padowicz, Naomi Padowicz, Erica Penner, Carole Rocklin, Arlene Scher, Ron Zilman

Regrets: Rachel Alkallay

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called promptly to order at 6:30 by Wilfrid de Freitas.

ITEMS OF BUSINESS AND GENTLE TRANSACTION

(Incorporating Toast and Jam, Bangers and Mash, Cakes and Ale [L.S. is on a diet])

1. New and Experienced Faces around the Table

It's always more than gratifying to connect with people from our past, as well as to meet new faces. We were very pleased at this meeting to welcome back Carole Rocklin as a member, and to greet new members Reynold Gold and Roy Mercado. Reynold is a retired professor of medicine from the University of Toronto, and Roy is a salesman. But that's just Roy's day job; he's an unpublished writer who had been hearing vague whisperings about a Sherlockian club in Montreal, but could never quite find us. Perhaps we haven't been making enough noise in the reading room of the Westmount Public Library. Welcome all!

2. That's Show Biz

Wilfrid de Freitas and Carol Abramson role-played through a fund-raising phone call to show us how they participated as volunteers at the May 30 event on behalf of Vermont PBS. Carol was so sold on the process that she donated \$125 (she wanted the Eric Clapton concert CD).

On the following page is a picture from the PBS event. Our society was represented by Wilfrid, Carol, Paul Billette, and his charming wife Rajpattie Persaud as their way of thanking the television station for its many years of broadcasting the stunning Granada series of Sherlock Holmes programs starring Jeremy Brett. It might be a safe assumption that this series has been responsible for rekindling interest in SH in a great many present-day Sherlockians.



Clockwise from top left: Wilfrid de Freitas, Rajpattie Persaud, Carol Abramson and Paul Billette.

3. First Toast – To the Master

by Albert Aikman

We raised our glasses to Albert's fond testimonial to Sherlock Holmes who "always got his man."

4. A Montreal Personality

Remi Mariano was (and quite possibly still is) a strongly unique individual. A former assistant registrar of McGill University, an inveterate pipe smoker, and a jack-of-all trades and master of several, he appeared to your L.S. through the purple haze of a long-ago meeting of *le Club de Fumeurs de Pipe du Québec* where we were both doing our best to alter our genetic composition by forcing in large concentrations of consciousness-bending pipe smoke and steel-dissolving tobacco juices. Remi was as you would imagine Mycroft Holmes to be: supremely intelligent with a high-domed forehead, overweight verging on comfortable rotundity, and irrepressibly analytical in his approach to just about everything. Remi recounted to me the story of how he – with no experience in auto mechanics whatsoever – performed an engine overhaul on his beloved Ford Pinto on a street in N.D.G. The motor had been banging away louder than the gong on Big Ben, and Remi had had enough. He rented three very long and sturdy beams that had once had something to do with a railroad. He set them up like the frame of a teepee, straddling the hood of the car. He rented a block-and-tackle, and he had a book (probably a Chilton) on how to replace the piston rings

on his car. He got hold of the required tools. He had some kind of pan on his walkway, filled with gasoline. He did what the big guys do, and lifted the engine out from under that whatchamacallit – oh, yeah, the hood! He began taking things apart, washing and identifying every single piece in the gasoline bath, and carefully laying it out on sheets on his lawn. Just like in the pictures in the book. He changed the rings on the pistons. Now, you and I know that when you perform this kind of operation, you always must grind the cylinders smooth. This is called “boring.” These sleeves need to be returned to factory-level smoothness or else they will score, chip, ding, and break the new pistons rings. We are not certain if Remi sent the engine block away for this to be done, or if he had a local kid rub chewing gum inside the cylinder walls to simulate a smooth effect. This would not have worked, and things would have exploded at the first ignition. In the end, Remi reassembled the engine, reinstalled it without any parts left over, and resumed driving the car without incident. All this is to introduce a very interesting, nice man who has glanced up against our society in the past, and has donated to us a collection of Bootmakers’ pins, books, and mugs. Wilfrid brought them to our meeting and devised a nifty game in which we had the opportunity to win one of these items. We each wrote our name and a word describing a story from the canon cryptically. Someone read the clue, and we had to guess the story. If we guessed, we got a prize. If we didn’t guess, the clue’s author won. The winner picked another scrap of paper which had the prize written on it. There were thirteen prizes in all, including Bootmakers’ pins, mugs, and some publications.

5. Second Toast – To Dr. Watson

by David Kellett

(Pinch-hitting for Rachel Alkallay who had to work late up in Laval.)

David reasoned that Watson is the alter ego of SACD.

Both are writers.

Both use the persona of narrator.

Watson is also Holmes’s Boswell.

(James Boswell’s *Life of Samuel Johnson* is according to Walter Jackson Bate, a literary historian, “the most famous single work of biographical art in the whole of literature.” [1977] This was a case of one genius’ providing insight into another genius; through a mirror carefully. It’s amazing what they did before text messaging. See Patrick Campbell’s illuminating piece in #23 below.)

6. Surviving Our Fathers

Carole Rocklin shared with us a book, *The Strange and Curious Case of Charles Altamont Doyle*, the father of SACD. It was written by Michael Baker.

7. Stamp of Approval

Marie Burrows showed us Royal Mail stamps to celebrate the 100th anniversary of *The Final Problem*. One of the stamps is *The Six Napoleons*, tonight’s story, part of a series of five Royal Mail stamps in a horizontal strip. The stories illustrated are: *The Reigate Squire*, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, *The Six Napoleons*, *The Greek Interpreter*, and *The Final Problem*.

8. Non-nautical Galleys and the Authentication of Drafts

Wilfrid described how copies of the early Sherlock Holmes stories were sent from England to be printed in the US (which was not at that time a signatory to the International Copyright Convention). Subsequently actual pages from the original manuscript of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* were sent from England for display in booksellers' windows in the US.

Today, it is often not possible to keep a record of the evolution of the order of a printing copy, from the first through subsequent versions.

Mietek and Naomi Padowicz are professional script writers. They keep records of their drafts.

Patrick Campbell told us that under patent law, one would go to a commissioner of oaths to establish a record of a particular draft.

Along these lines, Roy Mercado asked if what we are reading now is the same as what SACD wrote.

Patrick Campbell and Stanley Baker said there were only some slight variations, with a few changes in spelling.

SACD was largely silent on this point. L.S. heard him chuckling.

9. Royal Invitation

Patrick mentioned that he'd received a letter from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II to view part of her Royal stamp collection at the Museum of Civilization in Hull. Now's a good time to get rid of your traders.

10. Watson à la carte

Patrick also noted that there is a plaque outside the Criterion restaurant in London, commemorating the place where the world was introduced to Dr. John Watson. We refrain from hypothesizing as to how he was served.

11. Another Good Read

Jack Anderson pointed us to a recently minted book of SH pastiches, entitled *A Mammoth Book of Sherlock Holmes Adventures*. At \$16, this means that each story costs less than 62¢, about 1/3 the price of a mediocre coffee in a downscale/non-trendy restaurant.

12. The Shock of Recognition

Paul Billette showed pictures he had taken at the dinner with his new camera. We were invited to keep the prints in which we found ourselves (if we ever really, truly found ourselves).

13. Klinger's Back

Paul also showed us a book he'd purchased at The Strand in New York. It is *The Annotated Dracula*, by Leslie S. Klinger, who wrote the giant, three-volume set of *The Annotated Sherlock Holmes*. At \$25, it's half the regular price. Yes, there is a Dracula society. Do they toast with real blood? Of course, there must be a Woman.

14. First Edition

Chris Herten-Greaven showed us his first edition of *The Life of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle* by John Dickson Carr, published in 1949. We refer you to the Wikipedia biography of Carr. It's fascinating, as are his accomplishments. Let's not forget his collaboration with Adrian Conan Doyle on *The New Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. Chris brought in the paperback a few months ago. It's a landmark classic in SH pastiche-writing.

15. Third Toast – to the Woman

by Stanley Baker

Irene Adler (1858 – ?)

It is a pity that Sherlock Holmes is no longer engaged in active detective work. He would certainly make use of our computer age in his mystery solving. For instance, if you Google "The Woman," there are over 94 million hits, and for Mr. Holmes over 8 million. It is overwhelming for us Westmount Sherlockians. However, I must confess, I did glean some info. Holmes said, "the motives of women ... so inscrutable. How can you build on such quicksand?" "I would not tell them too much. Women are never to be entirely trusted - not the best of them.." Watson did note that while he generally disliked and distrusted them, he was nevertheless a "chivalrous opponent." Neither can Holmes be said to be misogynistic, given the number of women he helped in his work. Also, Irene Adler was the icon of feminine independence, style, and resourcefulness, as well as being most beautiful and depicted as an adventuress. Holmes described her as "the daintiest thing under a bonnet on this planet." She was the only woman in whom Holmes showed any interest that verged on the romantic, possibly because she is thought to be the only woman who had ever "beaten" or outwitted him in a mystery. She was reputed to have been born into a Jewish family in New Jersey, in 1858. She has been portrayed in movies by another of that faith – Lauren Bacall. She became an opera star, appearing in various European countries. She was the prima donna of the Imperial Opera in Warsaw. While there, she became involved with the King of Bohemia. She then moved to London. Part of the time she lived in St. John's Wood which is close to where I grew up. She married the Freemason Godfrey Norton, lawyer, and member of the Inner Temple.

As her death has not been officially reported in the London Times, she can, presumably, also still be alive. There are rumours of her being seen cavorting last winter with Elvis Presley in Tahiti. If this be true, good for her.

So let us toast – The Woman.

16. Baker Street Irregulars

Patrick Campbell showed us Baker Street pictures of his friend Ian Jamieson with whom he went to England recently.

17. All Aboard!

Wilfrid de Freitas showed us a copy of *The Passenger's Log*, the journal of the Sydney Passengers, the Sherlock Holmes society of Sydney, Australia.

18. Busted!

Mietek Padowicz showed us an inexpensive bust, dated 1970, of Napoleon which resembles Marlon Brando.

Actually, it was modeled by Giuseppi Fiorentino, a.k.a. The Butcher of Flatbush, who had a butcher shop on the corner of East 18th and Avenue U in Brooklyn, and was famous for his prime ribs.

There is no known connection between Brando and Fiorentino, although they've both been to Vegas.

19. Quiz – Results

“The Adventure of the Six Napoleons” prepared by Roger Burrows.

Possible total: 60

Winners were:

Rank	Name	Score	Prize
1.	Carol Abramson	51	<i>The Chronicles of SH</i> by Dennis O. Smith
2.	Wilfrid de Freitas	41½	<i>Tales of Mystery and Imagination</i> by Poe
3.	David Kellett	36½	<i>The Private Life of SH</i> by Vincent Starrett

The next quiz, based on “The Adventure of the Abbey Grange”, will be prepared by Carol Abramson.

Memorable Quote:

“I guess it helps if you actually read the story.”

- Jack Anderson

20. Various and Sundry

Typically, in our group, the moments after a quiz have been a winding-down time of emotional release from our collective manic phase of assigning marks to our answers. At these times there have rolled and dribbled across our table certain observations and little-known facts, non-sequitural, of closet relevance and occasionally cute – so little that they might not be facts at all. Your L.S. often doesn't know what to do with them, but they seem too precious to flush into the round and downwardly spiralling file of anonymity and posterity. So, here goes:

- Patrick showed and blew (softly) a Metropolitan London City Police whistle.
- Ronnie Zilman said that in elementary school, the principal would use a whistle.
- There was an issue over inaccuracy in the story. Wilfrid said that the canonical distance of 10 miles from Kensington to Kennington Road is a gross exaggeration – it's no more than two miles [editorial note: Wilfrid has since checked out his hasty estimate and wishes to revise it to around 4 or 5 miles, still nowhere near the 10 miles mentioned in the story]. For his part, L.S. believes the author might have been thinking in Biblical terms when people could live hundreds of years. Everything was bigger in the past. Maybe it's because we were smaller.

- There were six mail deliveries each weekday in London, and two on Saturday. To qualify to receive a letter, somebody needed to send you one.
- Saffron Hill, in London's east end, was a disreputable area, also known as the Italian district. It was so-named because of the saffron that was grown on the Bishop's property. We do not know why it wasn't called "Bishop's Descent." Possibly because "descent" is almost homonymic with "decent" which the bishop might not have been. In any case, the hill namers didn't want to open up the discussion. They may have considered "Bishop's Ascent" because of the curious way hills have of going up as well as down. But the Anglicans already had the Ascension pretty well tied up and with the troubles brewing in Ireland, they may not have wanted to irk the papists. Since we are into the "recovery" segment of our bi-monthly meetings and we can become speculative, isn't it amazing how SACD, although obviously a deeply spiritual man, stayed away from religious issues in the canon? This further adds to his stature as a writer, in the humble opinion of your L.S.
- From Paul Billette:
 Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson are at home at 221B Baker Street.
 SH: Watson, I perceive you haven't put on your underwear today.
 W: Egad, Holmes. How can you possibly tell?
 SH: Because you haven't put your pants on either.
 (This is the kind of humour that can be extended indefinitely. Shall we?
 W: And your point is, Holmes?
 SH: No, yours, Watson.
 W: What? Oh. Ho-Ho. I say, Holmes.
 Etc.)

21. How to Identify a Printing

Wilfrid de Freitas explained the countdown system to identify which printing of a book we are holding in our hand. On the printing/identification page, the numbers typically go like this:

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

The publisher would remove the 1 and the 2 if it were the third printing. Sometimes the numbers might be scrambled. But always look for the lowest number in the group. This will tell you which printing it is. The system began about 20 years ago.

22. The Downey Holmes

Arlene Scher proposed we all go to see the upcoming SH movie starring Robert Downey Jr. We should go in costume and get a TV crew out to film us going.

Mietek said we shouldn't bother seeing *The Lost World*.

He also stated that if a movie begins promoting itself six months ahead of its release date, as in the case of the Downey film, it probably isn't very good.

23. Fourth Toast – to Mrs. Hudson

by Carole Rocklin

from "A Week Without Mrs. Hudson, a Sherlock Holmes fanfic"

www.fanfiction.net

Day 1: Holmes fessed up to a vague culinary skill he'd come about by accident whilst investigating which pallets (sic) covered the taste of various poisons. He's making such a concoction, hopefully minus the arsenic, now. In return, I tackle the laundry – Holmes' room is a pit and he knows that the trade is an unfair one.

Day 2: Holmes' papers are everywhere. He says he can date both of our files better by the layer of dust. After work I brought home some meat, potatoes, onions, and garlic from the grocers (sic). Mr. Miller asked where Mrs. Hudson was and laughed. He's added salt to the pile I accumulated at the counter. He said Holmes might need it. I didn't know salt went in the cooking process as well as afterwards.

Day 3: We're down to the last few plates. Somebody will have to do the washing up soon. There is an unwritten law that this is the man who can't stand it any longer (sic?). Holmes has used playing cards as spoons and I'm now lurching at (sic) left-over potato salad with nothing but a single knife.

Day 4: Holmes is indignant at my using surgical tools to cheat at the Washing Up Game. This afternoon I stood in a puddle in the kitchen, summoned by a growl to dry the dishes. The pile was enormous and Holmes at first rolled up his sleeves, then became so wet that he had to remove the shirt entirely. He says he can still feel grime up his arms and the soap has made him come up in a rash. I'm glad to be back in my department sorting it (sic) but I'm sure that the skin condition is somehow self-inflicted.

Day 5: This evening Holmes smoked six pipes before I got up and I thought the house was on fire. At the end he muttered something about a fantastic idea. I suddenly have great faith in the man. I'm sure desperation caused this. (sic)

Day 6: Why Holmes or I didn't think of a hotel before I don't know. Comfortably bedded, hygienically clothed and tastefully fed.

Day 7: Mad dash as we try to pretend we've been cleaning up after ourselves all week before Mrs. H. gets home ... Holmes is calling must dash. (sic)

24. Fifth Toast – to the Society

by Patrick Campbell

At this time where nearly everyone sits before a small screen, oblivious to the world around them, I would like to refer you back to an earlier day before computers were installed in a majority of households.

A recent copy of a local newspaper quoted Pablo Picasso as saying, "I have no use for computers; they only give you answers."

Although amusing, that is a profound statement. What we all need is more than a simple answer, we want to have the reasoning that led to the answer, to know

who did the reasoning, and what facts were available to the reasoner at the time he postulated his or her answer.

In a way this is what our society is all about. We have, set before us, a series of situations which require answers. We are given the facts, and we have an intimate knowledge, and a sincere respect for the reasoner. With this knowledge we can judge the worth of his answer and act accordingly.

To the Society!

25. Future Toasts

To The Master	-	Chris Herten-Greaven
To Dr. Watson	-	Mietek Padowicz
To The Woman	-	Roger Burrows
To Mrs. Hudson	-	Carole Rocklin
To The Society	-	Paul Billette

Our dear friends, you would confer a great favour upon us by joining us at the next meeting of "THE BIMETALLIC QUESTION" which is being held on Thursday, August 6th, 2009, at 6:30 p.m. Bring a friend.

For the latest society news or updates on our history, please go to:

<http://www.bimetallicquestion.org>