



# THE BIMETALLIC QUESTION

P.O. Box 232, Westmount Station  
Westmount, QC, Canada H3Z 2T2

## Minutes of the Meeting of The Bimetallic Question August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2017

**Date of our next meeting:** Thursday, October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017 at 6:30 pm at the Westmount Public Library, Westmount Room, 4574 Sherbrooke Street West, Westmount, QC H3Z 1G1.

**The quiz at the next meeting:** *His Last Bow*, from the volume of adventures *His Last Bow*, prepared and presented by Kathryn Radford.

**Next meeting's toast presenters:** The Master: Elliott Newman; Dr. Watson: Kristin Franseen; *The Woman*: Bruno Paul Stenson; Mrs. Hudson: David Dowse; The Society: Raf Jans.

**Minutes of the meeting of the Bimetallic Question** held on Thursday, August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2017 at the Westmount Public Library.

**Present:** Carol Abramson, Rachel Alkallay, Jack Anderson, Maureen Anderson, Paul Billette, Patrick Campbell, Louise Corda, Wilfrid de Freitas, David Dowse, Susan Fitch, Kristin Franseen, Chris Herten-Greaven, Vivianne Lewis, Anne Millar, Miyako Matsuda-Pelletier, Elliott Newman, Kathryn Radford, Bernard Robaire, Arlene Scher, Bruno Paul Stenson, Melodie Tardieu, and our guests Cynthia Afeich, Chris Redmond and Jim Turner.

**Regrets:** Raf Jans and Nancy Walkling.

**Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order by our acting Sovereign Paul Billette at 6:30 pm.

# ITEMS OF BUSINESS AND GENTLE TRANSACTION

## 1. Introducing Our New Member and Welcome to Our Guests !

A guest at our June meeting and now newly-minted member, Vivianne Lewis introduced herself to the gathering. Originally from Preston-Langston, England and now a proud Canadian she found out about our Society from one of our posters in the Westmount Library. We are most happy to have you with us, Vivianne !

Cynthia Afeich joined us for her very first Bimetallic Question meeting, and Jim Turner returned for his second Society outing. We were delighted to have them with us and very much hope they too will become members of our merry band.

We were also very glad that Sherlockian author, former *Canadian Holmes* editor, and long-time friend of the Bimetallic Question Chris Redmond was able to join us. Since he now resides near Ottawa, we hope that Chris will be able to make it to more of our meetings in the future.

## 2. Toast to the Master by David

In Watson's account of the character, strengths and deficiencies of his new friend and co-lodger we learn that he is superior in chemistry, has extraordinary powers of observation, employs an encyclopedic knowledge of the streets, alleys and mews of London with their corresponding soils, loves to play the violin, is a crack shot and a master of Baritsu. All the important stuff.

But what do we not know about Sherlock Holmes and his world?

For example:

1. The images of Mycroft in the Strand show that he has lost much of his hair. Could Sherlock also be going bald on top?
2. As the two brothers were growing up, did the elder Mycroft ever bully, humiliate or even beat up his younger sibling?
3. Regarding any child labour laws of Victorian England, how closely did Sherlock adhere to them in his interactions with the Baker Street Irregulars?
4. When Watson resided with Holmes at 221B Baker Street, did Watson have his little corner "man cave" where he could retire to recharge his batteries and seek tranquility from the frantic life with Holmes?
5. Where and when did Holmes learn to box, fence, and the art of Baritsu and who were his teachers?
6. The extremely messy habit that Holmes had of after having read and gleaned the necessary information from the several daily newspapers, he would have thrown them into the corners of the room. If not picked up it must have created somewhat of a fire hazard. Did Watson, Mrs. Hudson, Billy have to pick up after him and did they complain?
7. Did Holmes ever ride in a car or plane and did he ever take the Tube?
8. Due to the publication of the adventures in the Strand, did Holmes have a rabid female following fan club, like Holmes's Honeys?
9. As we have seen today with highly organized criminal organizations, when the top man is taken down there is a civil war among the lower-ranking henchmen to succeed. So too it must have been when Moriarty left the scene. Who stepped into his shoes and became the Napoleon II of crime?
10. When Holmes visited the British Library to pick up some reference books, did he ever forget to bring them back?
11. How did Holmes with Watson, Mrs. Hudson, Mycroft, Lestrade, Billy and even Wiggins celebrate his birthday? What does one get Holmes as a present?
12. We know that Mrs. Hudson was an excellent cook. What was Holmes's favourite dish and what foods did he detest?
13. Did Holmes ever read for pleasure and who were those authors?

So many questions, some albeit inconsequential, but if answered could better fill out the Sleuth of Baker Street, The Master.

I give you, Sherlock Holmes.

### 3. Rethinking of an Idea

Some time ago I [David] came up with an idea to create a "Doers Award" for the Society. In the 38 years of our existence we have been blessed with individuals who have come forward, and are still coming forward, to take responsibility for getting things done, for taking good ideas and putting them into action.

Upon consultation with co-founder and good friend Wilfrid I now have come to the conclusion that such an award will not do justice to all our members, both past and present. Any attempt to sift through the hundreds of issues of our Society minutes and other archive material to glean the names of noteworthy contributors would risk missing some of the real gems of our Society. Indeed, who would be able to make a judgment on the value of all the small as well as big tasks that have enriched the quality of life in our organization throughout the years?

Names have been forgotten, events have faded from the memories of Wilfrid and myself, the Society founders.

The testament to longevity of the Bimetallic Question has been the keen enthusiasm exhibited by members young and old, men and women, to connect, to share to listen and to participate in a living, active, growing literary Society. I feel so lucky to belong to this Society of friends. May it continue and flourish long after I am gone. For these reasons I have decided to withdraw this proposal and enjoy the great works of all our great members.



Bimetallic Question members and guests. Photo by Susan Fitch

### **Show and Tell**

#### 4. About Paying At-Tent-ion to Detail

Louise brought us a copy of the *Reader's Digest's* July 2014 edition in which she found a very humorous Sherlock Holmes joke:

Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson arrived at the campgrounds, pitched their tent and fell asleep. Later that night, Watson was awakened by Holmes.

"Watson, look up at the sky," said Holmes. "What do you see?"

"Why, millions of beautiful shining stars", he replied sleepily.

"And what do you deduce from that?"

"That if there are millions of stars, and even a few of them are orbited by planets, there might be intelligent life out there."

"No, you idiot. It means that somebody stole our tent."

### **5. Was Our Former Favourite Haunt Haunted?**

Louise also shared with us a fascinating July 11<sup>th</sup>, 2017 Montreal Gazette article by Claire Loewen, *Does Maude Haunt the Willow Inn?* Local legend has it that a servant girl named Maud was murdered at the Willow Place Inn back in 1837, after overhearing a conversation about a political rebellion. This venerable community landmark was the site of our July 7<sup>th</sup>, 1980 dinner marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and a number of Sherlock Holmes Birthday Dinners. Closed for a time, the inn is now under new management and scheduled to be reopened soon.

<http://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/ghost-hunters-seek-the-truth-at-hudsons-willow-inn>

### **6. Toast to Dr. Watson by Wilfrid**

As our Society is well into its fourth decade, I'm given to reflect on the fact that we have met, without fail, six times a year since 1979. I don't know how many literary societies, Sherlockian or otherwise, can boast such a fine record but I do know that it is only through Dr. Watson's assiduity in chronicling the Master's adventures that we are constantly finding new aspects of them to debate and discuss.

As an aside, perhaps the person to whom we should be truly thankful, is Dr. Watson's orderly Murray, who saved his life after he was wounded at the battle of Maiwand, by throwing him on a packhorse and leading him to safety. Possibly another chronicler may have appeared to recount the Master's adventures; indeed, given Holmes's repute, it's quite probable that someone else would have. But can we imagine a person with just the right combination of discretion, shrewdness, confidant, catalyst and literary skills of the good Doctor? I for one cannot.

It is therefore with great pleasure that I propose the toast to Dr. Watson.

### **7. A Gift with Magnetism**

Wilfrid received a unique gift from his sister-in-law, a set of fridge magnets in the form of a London map. Segments included Westminster Abbey, the Tower Bridge, Big Ben, a red telephone box, and others.

### **8. Indispensable for Your Journey**

Jack, due to his qualifications as an urban planner, and hence a big fan of maps related to this, showed us a set of same recording the London of 1894 with every church, house and pub indicated. He also treated us to *Bradshaw's Railway Map 1907: Great Britain and Ireland* which truly allowed anyone to get to anywhere in these countries from any particular spot. Jack and Maureen had used his next show and tell offering in their travels, which was a *Sherlock Holmes Walking Map of London*.

### **9. Dueling Prohibited and Reichenplaque Installation Recalled**

Our Sovereign Emeritus, Patrick, brought a highly relevant but seldom circulated document, a copy of our Bimetallic Question constitution, delightfully notable for its item forbidding the not-that-long-ago common practice of dueling. Also gleaned from his personal archive of Society documents for our enjoyment this evening were articles concerning our installation, in cooperation with the Swiss Sherlock Holmes society, the Reichenbach Irregulars, of a commemorative plaque at the Reichenbach Falls. Patrick represented our Society at the plaque's installation there in May 1992.

### **10. See You At the Highland Games**

Patrick in his role as the long-serving Clan Campbell chieftain for Eastern Canada, announced that the annual Highland games will be taking place on Saturday, August 5<sup>th</sup> in Maxville, Ontario, and in Montreal on Sunday, August 6<sup>th</sup> on the grounds of the Douglas Hospital, Verdun. He will be participating in both events and invites us to join him for a wee dram there.

### 11. A Meaningful Book and Holmes Finds a Home

We were invited to solve a mystery during the course of our meeting when Patrick passed a book around the table without announcing its title, but noting that it would be a tome of special significance to one of us in attendance this evening. It was finally revealed that the book, *Bauxite, Sugar and Mud: Memories of Living in Colonial Guyana*, by P. Wendy Dathan holds special meaning for Wilfrid, who in fact was born there. Patrick generously offered the book to him as a gift, but perhaps we shouldn't be surprised to hear that Wilfrid, as an antiquarian bookseller, already had a copy of it at home in his own collection, a fitting surprise twist to our mystery.

Wilfrid recently received from a neighbour the complete Sherlock Holmes adventures in two volumes and offered them to anyone not having these already. Kathryn Radford accepted these fine books.

### 12. Thanks from Paul to David and Susan

Paul Billette wanted to take some time to thank David, our Co-founder/Scribe/Recording Secretary, and Susan our Secretary for the excellent work that they do on the minutes. Susan took a moment to explain how her other roles of Webmaster and Tin Box/Archivist are interrelated, as much of her role as archivist involves scanning paper documents and converting them into digital files to post on our website. She thanked members for their patience during this process, and announced that we can soon look forward to new website postings, of "vintage" Society minutes from our paper archive. Susan also thanked her very special cat Esmeralda for all her help and encouragement with these endeavours. After all, who better to assist in cat-alouging an archive?

### 13. Conan Doyle's Former Home

When Wilfrid and his wife Susan Ravdin were in England recently, they had the opportunity to pass by Conan Doyle's former home Undershaw, in Hindhead, Surrey and took some photos of it which they emailed out to us. Undershaw, the Conan Doyle residence from 1897-1907, has now been converted to a school for the disabled.

Miyako discussed the book, *The Mysterious World of Sherlock Holmes*, by Bruce Wexler, who wrote of how the family had moved to Surrey from London after Touie was diagnosed with tuberculosis, in hopes of providing a healthier environment for her. In this era Conan Doyle also met Jean Leckie, whom he would marry years later following Touie's death.



Undershaw, July 2017. Photo courtesy Wilfrid de Freitas and Susan Ravdin.

#### 14. Toast to Irene Adler by Rachel

An impromptu offering can be one of the best kinds of toasts, and such was that saluting *The Woman* this evening from Rachel. We thank her for expressing her sentiments concerning Irene Adler so thoughtfully this evening.

#### 15. A Modern Day Lion's Mane Story

While on a family vacation to Florida some years ago, Chris's nine year old daughter was stung by a jellyfish which left tremendously painful brown marks all over her body. The search was on to find relief and it was curiously from a doctor in Colorado that they found it. He provided an ointment which took the sting away.

#### 16. A New Hypothesis Concerning the Death of Lady Diana

Chris brought to our attention the fact that the car in which Lady Diana was traveling on the tragic night of her death in Paris, 1997 had been in a previous accident. It had been essentially "recycled" and rebuilt and then sold off to the Paris Ritz Hotel as a transport limousine. It may have been that some of the components or even the frame were unsound to the extent that when put to the test of a high speed chase by press paparazzi, the car broke down and significantly contributed to the crash that killed Diana. We don't know for sure, but this is the current new hypothesis.

#### 17. Sherlock Holmes Card

Melodie purchased from the HMV store a *Quotable Sherlock Holmes* greeting card complete with numerous quotes on stickers, such as "Holmes, Sweet Holmes", "This is quite a three pipe problem", "Mediocrity knows nothing higher than itself, but talent instantly recognizes genius", "You know my methods", and "You are my Watson." Quite fun !!!

#### 18. Sherlock Holmes Birthday Dinner 2018

Paul has been in contact with the Atwater Club to hold our annual Sherlock Holmes Birthday Dinner on Saturday, January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2018. At the moment the price is \$50.00 per person but with our request for more hors d'oeuvres during the drinks reception we can anticipate this price could go up. Rachel noted that while the dinner can be expensive for some members, putting aside a dollar or two per week can be a good way to save up for it. It was noted that the Atwater Club has been sold so Chris H.-G. has suggested that we get in touch with the new owners to reconfirm our reservation for the dinner. Paul invited us to contact him with our suggestions for Birthday Dinner speaker.

#### 19. Toast to Mrs. Hudson by Paul

Good evening fellow Sherlockians,

For tonight, I decided to do a little research in Wikipedia and to share with you some interesting information concerning Mrs. Hudson found on the site.

First a review of the portrayals she has been depicted as in the film and video media and then a particularly intriguing imagery from Japan.

In the Canon, she has been identified with the name "**Martha**" in *His Last Bow*;

at one point in *A Scandal in Bohemia* Holmes calls the landlady "**Mrs Turner**";

in the BBC series *Sherlock*, in *His Last Vow* her name is revealed to be **Martha Louise Hudson** (née **Sissons**), a semi-reformed alcoholic and former exotic dancer;

a transgender Miss Hudson appears in the 19th episode of the US series *Elementary* as an expert in Ancient Greek who essentially makes a living as a kept woman and muse for various wealthy men;

in *Sherlock Holmes's War of the Worlds* it is suggested that Holmes and Mrs. Hudson had a long-lasting love relationship, obvious to all but the naive Watson;

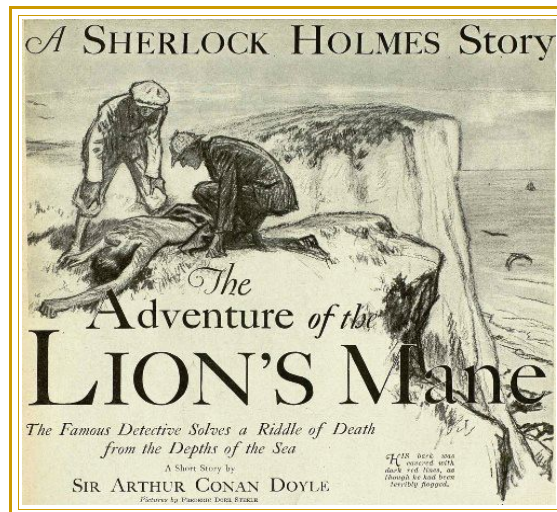


in the anthology *Two Hundred Twenty-One Baker Streets*, Mrs. Hudson is portrayed as a circus dwarf in Jamie Wyman's story *A Scandal in Hobohemia*.

From Japan, produced by the giant of the entertainment industry TMS anime in the series *Sherlock Hound*, Mrs. Hudson is depicted as a younger woman, and a widow of a pilot named Jim. In this incarnation, her full name is revealed to be **Marie Hudson**, and fitting with the theme of the characters being canines, she resembles a Golden Retriever. She normally stays behind at 221B Baker Street, but accompanies Hound and Watson on a few cases, usually any that involve something related to flight, and is shown to be a very skilled driver, pilot, and marksman. She is once kidnapped by Professor Moriarty and his henchmen as a part of a scheme to defeat Hound, though Moriarty vows to never involve her in his schemes after she shows him kindness during the time she's kept as a hostage. Additionally, it's shown that most of the main male cast of the series (namely Hound and especially Watson) are attracted to her.

In whatever her various incarnations she always shows the necessary strength to minister the daily needs of her most famous tenant.

To Mrs. Hudson.



## 20. Quiz on *The Lion's Mane* prepared and presented by Kristin

Results:

1 <sup>st</sup> Kathryn	39/75
2 <sup>nd</sup> Carol	37/75
3 <sup>rd</sup> Vivianne	37/75

Book prizes:

*221B Baker Street*  
*Revenge of Moriarty*  
*Art Is in the Blood*

Discussion on the quiz story:

The general consensus of most members was that this was not a very good story; Carol used the word "dumb". Even Baring-Gould felt that this was one of the worst. The misinterpretation of the "dry towel" by the pool made the solution a little more difficult. Bruno likened Holmes's writing style to suspiciously like Watson's. Wilfrid was surprised to learn that Holmes was a swimmer. Kathryn did not think this was your typical Holmes. It was as if he was in a "nightmare", as she described it.

Miyako noted Conan Doyle's mention of McPherson's "Burberry" overcoat and did some detective work to discover more about this company, finding that it was founded in 1856 by draper's apprentice Thomas Burberry who was only 21 at the time. In the 1870s he introduced fabric made from a naturally water-resistant yarn. Today the luxury fashion house Burberry thrives, and Miyako noted how it has more stores in her native Japan (39) than it does in Britain (23) because of the sophistication the

brand has come to symbolize for the public there and around the world. Do any of our Society members own Burberry products?

Miyako recalled how when she was small, in the southwest of Japan where she is from, her family could enjoy summer swimming in the sea, but only until the end of August, as the Jellyfish were cold-water species and only made their presence (painfully) felt in cooler temperatures.

She also found it significant and surprising in *The Lion's Mane* how Holmes, who always seemed to have no interest in the fairer sex except for Irene Adler, was in this story very much impressed by the beauty of the young Maud Bellamy, asking "...who could have imagined that so rare a flower would grow from such a root and in such an atmosphere?"

Miyako also wonders who is the unnamed housekeeper in the story? Mrs. Hudson?

I [David] took from *The Lion's Mane* a small but significant similarity that I had read in another adventure:

*Where Have I Seen This Before?*

"Sad story this, sir, about Mr. McPherson's dog", said she one evening.

I do not encourage such conversations, but the words arrested my attention.

"What of Mr. McPherson's dog?"

"Dead, sir. Died of grief for its master."

"...found it dead, down on the beach, sir, at the very place where its master met his end." (In actual fact not so as McPherson died on the patch half way up the cliff.)

"...it lay on the very edge of the pool."

"...the body was stiff and rigid [redundant] the eyes projecting and the limbs contracted."

The solution to this case hinged on the discovery of the dead dog and its precise condition and location. A dog and its inaction guided Holmes to the solution in *The Adventure of Silver Blaze*. Both incidents were "curious" and "pivotal".

## 21. Miyako's British Entertainment News Notes

Miyako reports how *Sherlock Holmes* star Robert Downey Jr. is a big hit as the Marvel Comics Iron Man...And the latest venture for *Sherlock Holmes* director Guy Ritchie is *King Arthur: Legend of the Sword*, starring Jude Law who played Watson opposite Downey's Holmes.

Milo Parker who played the little boy in *Mr. Holmes* is continuing in his role as the young Gerald Durrell in the hit TV series *The Durrells*, entering its second season as really fine and much appreciated family entertainment and a big treat for all animal lovers. Miyako quotes our member in England, Joe Marino who said in his toast to the Master at our last Birthday Dinner, "You don't need sex and violence to spin a good tale." In Japan in the 1970s she and her family loved *Little House on the Prairie*.

*Grantchester's* Sidney and Geordie follow in the footsteps of Holmes and Watson as a great detective duo in this series highly recommended by Miyako. The show often explores the challenge of love versus duty in 1950s Britain, as Sidney is an English clergyman who is in love with his childhood sweetheart Amanda, and since she is a divorced woman he is not allowed to marry her. It is a valuable look back at this time in our shared social history.

Miyako feels that the heir apparent to the popularity of *Downton Abbey* is *Poldark*, set in 18<sup>th</sup> century Cornwall and now confirmed to enter a fourth season. We can all enjoy it on PBS. Mark Gatiss, who plays Mycroft Holmes in *Sherlock* is a writer for *Poldark*.

We all know how Conan Doyle included Royalty in his Sherlock Holmes adventures, and this is a big trend in current productions. Miyako and her husband are finding *King Charles III*, new on DVD, to contain fascinating storytelling. It dramatizes a Royal household following the imagined death of Queen Elizabeth II. The late Tim Pigott-Smith plays Charles who wants to get into politics but not as a symbol only. The show's writer Mike Barlett uses other real living Royal characters: Camilla, William and Kate (our Canadian girl from the West Island), and Harry, with many issues for us to consider in all their private lives. Miyako says, "I felt so sorry for Harry who fell in love with an Afro British girl but decided to break off the relationship." Living life under scrutiny from almost the entire world is difficult.





Flower collage by Miyako, 2017

### **22. Toast to the Society by Chris H.-G.**

Our Society is the social umbrella (parasol if you prefer) of the Sherlock Holmes Society BMQ chapter its nucleus, perhaps, to which us like-minded individuals are drawn or invited from all walks of life rather than a group of individuals brought together by chance. I think and feel we are a sort of family, cohesive, whether planning meetings, barbecues, celebrations or the annual dinner.

While members of a society cannot be expected to be clones of one another, an all inclusive feeling has to exist and persist for the good of all.

One has also to be aware of discord within the "happy family", whether because of a chance remark, misunderstood or poorly understood, or an ongoing "attitude" by one or more members against (a) fellow member(s), and be prepared to intervene or mediate, and "pour oil on troubled waters", for the good of our Society.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I ask you to raise your glasses and toast our Society: We all belong to it, so let's look after it !

### **23. One for the Road**

This last chuckle of the evening from Chris H.-G. tickled our funny-bones:

Q: Why shouldn't alcohol be served at a mathematics convention?

A: Because the professors should not "drink and derive".

### **24. Close of the Meeting**

Paul adjourned our meeting at 9:00 pm.



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, October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017, at 6:30 p.m.

Our distinguished Sovereign/President Raf Jans can be contacted at: [raf.jans@hec.ca](mailto:raf.jans@hec.ca)

Have you detected any errors or omissions in these minutes? If so, please do not hesitate to report same to our Co-Founder and Scribe/Recording Secretary David Dowse at: [davidowse@hotmail.com](mailto:davidowse@hotmail.com)

New Bimetallic Question members are always welcome. Why not consider bringing a friend to our next meeting to share a grand evening with us! Membership information details can be obtained from our Florin/Treasurer Paul Billette at: [pabillette@hotmail.fr](mailto:pabillette@hotmail.fr) or at [www.bimetallicquestion.org](http://www.bimetallicquestion.org)

A tip of the deerstalker hat to our Half-Crown/Sergeant-at-Arms Hudson, Chris Herten-Greaven, for making members and guests feel most welcome at all our meetings. [cwhertengreaven@videotron.ca](mailto:cwhertengreaven@videotron.ca)

Our Half-Sovereign/Secretary-Webmaster and Tin Box/Archivist duties are in the delicate but capable hands/paws of Susan Fitch and Esmeralda Fitch. Reach them both at: [susanruthfitch@yahoo.ca](mailto:susanruthfitch@yahoo.ca)

Note from Susan and Esmeralda: Did you notice anything different (re electronic version of minutes only) about our letterhead on page one? This is the first edition of Society minutes to sport our sparkling new change of address:  
PO Box 232, Westmount Station,  
Westmount, QC H3Z 2T2

Bimetallic Question minutes are typeset in Baskerville Old Face and Arial.