



Plugs & Dottles

Official Newsletter of the Nashville Scholars
of the Three-Pipe Problem
Second Quarter April - June 2021
Jim Hawkins & Dean Richardson, Co-Editors

- Established 1979
- Meetings on third Saturday of every month (except Dec.)
- Website:
nashvillescholars.net
- [Facebook page](#)
- Send comments:
seniorhawk@gmail.com or to
dean.h.richardson@gmail.com

First In-Person Meeting since January 2020.

Annual Picnic at the Stahl's
June 19 @ Noon



Here is what we are reading and discussing the rest of the year.

July — *The Veiled Lodger*
Jim Hawkins

August — *The Musgrave Ritual*
David Hayes

September — *The Hound of the Baskervilles* Derek Martin

October — *The New Catacomb*
(1898) A Conan Doyle "Horror" Story
Dean Richardson

November — *The Three Garridebs*
Cory Howell

December — *Special Event Movie Night* at Derek Martin's home

Beyond the Pandemic of 2020-2021

It was a time we hope is gone for good. The Scholars were very creative and inventive in continuing our canonical discussions via Zoom. We owe a great deal of thanks to **Jeff Steward**, our IT guy, for making it seem easy. **Billy Fields** guided us through our meetings on his cell phone from Wilder, TN. **Jerome Boynton** was again able to "meet" with us from Lawrenceburg, TN. And we had virtual visitors from all over the USA. Quite a time, but enough is enough!



There were several memorable presentations. **Marino and Vicki Alvarez** did a great job with PowerPoint on "Black Peter" from their home in Florida. **Shannon Carlisle** wowed us with a quiz on **Kahoot!**, a software she uses at her Franklin elementary school. **Chris Schweizer** recreated "The Blue Carbuncle" for us in December 2020.

One incredibly sad note: we lost Charlie Williams in 2021, not to COVID, but to other complications. He is remembered in an article by Tom and Anita Feller in this issue.

Now we prepare to rebuild and restore our in-person meetings with a Potluck Lunch (June 17) at the home of Gael and SuSan Stahl. On July 17 we hope to begin meeting again at Corky's BBQ in Brentwood, but we will begin the meetings at noon rather than at 11:00.

We have reached out to our Sherlockian/Doylean friends in England, since "our hero"—be it Holmes or Doyle—hails from there. In May, the [Sherlock Holmes Society of London](#) celebrated their 70th Anniversary. We could think of no better friends to interview than **Roger Johnson** and **Jean Upton**, editors of the Society's journal and newsletter for many years, among other duties important to "keeping the memory green" of Sherlock Holmes. You will find our interview with them of great interest.

Shinwell Before Using

by Dean Richardson

June 2021

Of the making of Sherlockian pastiches there is no end. I will not attempt to cover all the current ones here, but I would like to mention a few recent efforts.

Hot on the heels (so to speak) of *Enola Holmes* comes *The Irregulars*, an eight-part miniseries on Netflix that reimagines Holmes's street-urchin assistants as teenagers struggling with poverty and the supernatural while reluctantly doing the bidding of a strangely sinister Watson and Holmes, accompanied by flashy CGI and 21st-century pop music that completely destroys any sense of Victorian London established by the visuals. I have to admit I gave up after the first episode, but I suspect many others did as well, since Netflix has already cancelled plans for a follow-up second set.

Those aware of the excellent 1980s Russian TV series *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson* starring Vasily Livanov may not know about a much more recent series produced there, simply titled *Sherlock Holmes* (2013) and also an eight-parter. You can find it on Amazon here ([Amazon.com: Sherlock Holmes / Sherlok Holmes / Шерлок Холмс Russian TV Series Detective \[Language: Russian; Subtitles: English\] 2DVD NTSC ALL REGIONS](#)).

Just released in May by a first-time novelist, *One Must Tell the Bees: Abraham Lincoln and the Final Education of Sherlock Holmes* by J. Lawrence Matthews is getting a lot of favorable attention, including a rave on the *I Hear of Sherlock Everywhere* site ([Book Review: One Must Tell the Bees - I Hear of Sherlock Everywhere](#)). It involves his first case (finding John Wilkes Booth!) and his last, including (not a spoiler) his death.

Nicholas Meyer has written a fifth pastiche. *The Return of the Pharaoh: From the Reminiscences of John H. Watson, M.D.* will be published November 9, 2021. ACD wrote two supernatural tales featuring Egyptian elements ("The Ring of Thoth" and "Lot No. 429"), but of course he avoided the supernatural in the Canon, and I expect Meyer to do the same. More along the lines of NM's modus operandi, the cast of characters includes a young Howard Carter (this is set in 1910), and the plot involves disappearing Egyptologists, lost tombs, and sinister schemes.

The following month will see release of a second collection of pastiches by Lindsay Faye, *Observations by Gaslight: Stories from the World of Sherlock Holmes* (December 7). These stories, described as "entirely epistolary, told through diaries, telegrams, even grocery lists," present different points of view (Mrs. Hudson, Irene Adler, Stanley Hopkins, et al.) to provide a more rounded portrait of the Great Detective.

In the 1890s, in the wake of Holmes's success in *The Strand*, many detectives, both professional and amateur, appeared in magazines on both sides of the Atlantic. While some imitations were a bit too close to be excused as flattery, others took elements of ACD's originals (e.g., deduction, a pair of investigators, etc.) and tried a different approach. Rodrigues Ottolengui created two rival protagonists, a professional detective and a wealthy amateur, who engaged in friendly competition to solve crimes and other kinds of mysteries in New York City. They first appeared in four novels, beginning in 1893, and then in a series of short stories, many of which appeared in the British magazine *The Idler*, a rival of *The Strand*. Most of those stories were collected in *Final Proof* (1898), which has just been reprinted in a new series, Library of Congress Crime Classics, edited and annotated by Leslie S. Klinger. While a bit stiff and mannered (the two leads address each other as Mr. Barnes and Mr. Mitchell), the stories are well plotted and well told, with sometimes ingenious bits of ratiocination. (*continued on next page*)

Straying a bit further afield, one of ACD's contemporaries, Maurice Leblanc, wrote a series of stories and novels about a master gentleman thief, Arsene Lupin (the French counterpart of Raffles, created by ACD's brother-in-law E. W. Hornung). In one novel, Lupin matched wits with the Great Detective (*Arsene Lupin Versus Sherlock Holmes*), although after objections by Conan Doyle, Leblanc changed the name to Herlock Sholmes. Now a new, French-made TV series, *Lupin*, inspired by Leblanc's stories, is running on Netflix. The protagonist, struggling to clear his late father's name, models his efforts on some of Lupin's escapades, outsmarting the police and the real guilty party in the process. Five episodes became available in January and five more are released June 11. What I have seen are lavishly produced, clever, and gripping.

Although we believe our group was most fortunate in that none of our members died due to COVID19 during this pandemic, we were quite sad to lose **Charlie Williams** to other complications. **Tom and Anita Feller** offered this remembrance of Charlie, our scion society's *Lestrade* and husband of **Patsy King Williams**.

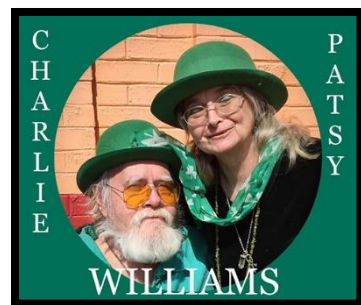


Charles "Charlie" Stephen Williams (1947–2021) was a lifelong resident of Nashville, except for getting a degree in mechanical engineering from Tennessee Tech in Cookeville. Except for the last few years of his life, he always lived in East Nashville and graduated from East High School. His parents were James Ira and Helen Marie Starkey Williams. He is survived by his wife Patricia "Patsy" Williams, sister Jennifer McCormack, her husband Cliff, and their daughter Tabitha McCormack.

He played the guitar and sang, loved model airplanes as a boy, and was a fan of science fiction, fantasy, television, movies in general, and Sherlock Holmes. He was also a member of the Society for Creative Anachronism, which is a medieval re-enactment group. Charlie had a brief career as a professional short story writer under the name of C. S. Williams, for which the high point was the story "A Sticky Business," which appeared in *Thieves' World II: Uneasy Alliances*. Charlie was also known for his extraordinary memory. He was an employee at Quimet for many years and then worked at Measurement incorporated.

He joined the Scholars of the Three Pipe Problem when he and Patsy walked into one of our meetings at the East Nashville branch of the Nashville Public Library. In 2018, Charlie married Patsy in the same room at the library where the Scholars met.

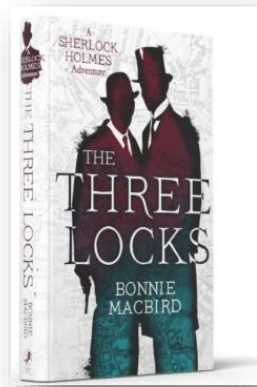
There were several stories told about Charlie at his funeral, such as how various people first met him, but there was one story that has never been told. He was driving home from the library one day, and a car passed in front of him going very, very fast. It swerved and hit a telephone pole with enough force to set the car on fire. Charlie pulled his car off onto the grass beside the highway and ran over to the burning car. The window was down and there was a woman in the car



who was screaming that her foot was stuck under the pedal and she could not get out. Charlie got the car door open, and while he was pulling the woman out she screamed that there was a baby in the back seat. He laid the woman on the ground and then went back to the burning car and got the baby out unharmed. By this time, an ambulance had arrived, so Charlie decided to leave. A large crowd had gathered. As he was getting in the car, a man came up to him and said, “Don’t just drive off. You’re a hero. You saved two people’s lives. They’ll want to read about you in the newspaper.” Charlie went ahead and got in the car and replied, “You don’t do a good deed just to get a lot of attention. You do it because it’s the right thing to do,” and drove off. We will all miss him.



THE THREE LOCKS – a report by Jim Hawkins



Bonnie MacBird, author, screenwriter and dramatist, is a phenomenal writer with accolades from her peers and readers alike. She is the original writer of the movie TRON, author of Sherlock Holmes thrillers, a multiple Emmy-winning writer/producer, and a classically trained actor. In the past several years MacBird has grabbed the attention of fans of Sherlock Holmes with her Sherlock Holmes Adventure series, beginning with **Art in the Blood** (2015), followed by **Unquiet Spirits** (2018), **The Devil’s Due** (2020), and now, **The Three Locks** (2021).

Some of the rave reviews from prominent Sherlockian writers include the following.

“MacBird’s artistry will keep readers eagerly turning the pages just to see how she orchestrates the big reveal. All in all, *The Devil’s Due* strikes me as one of the best Sherlock Holmes novels of recent memory, at least as entertaining as Anthony Horowitz’s *The House of Silk*.”

—Michael Dirda, *Washington Post*

“Bonnie MacBird’s *The Three Locks* satisfies a hunger for more adventures of Holmes and Watson on so many levels. Not only does she perfectly capture their voices; she captures that most critical element—their humanity. Brava!”

—Leslie S. Klinger, editor, *New Annotated Sherlock Holmes*

“Bonnie MacBird’s sly plot and admirable sense of pacing keeps the story twisting and turning in a way that would have kept Doyle himself turning the pages.”

—Michael Sims, author of *Arthur and Sherlock: Conan Doyle and the Creation of Holmes*

“Though stage magic features in *The Three Locks*, the real magician is author Bonnie MacBird, who once again brings humour, action, rigorous period detail, and the characters we love to her latest Holmes adventure.”

—Dennis Palumbo, author of the Daniel Rinaldi series, *Writing from the Inside Out*

“Bonnie MacBird has conjured up a captivating three-card monte of murder, mystery, and magic. *The Three Locks* may be her best yet.”

—Dan Stashower, author of *Teller of Tales: The Life of Arthur Conan Doyle*

[From the Bonnie MacBird blog, here is a synopsis of the new book.](#)

The Three Locks

1887, Indian Summer. London and Cambridge. A mysterious, impenetrable locked box arrives for Watson containing a secret from his past. A famous escape artist and stage conjurer burns to a crisp onstage in his "Cauldron of Death" illusion, and the beautiful daughter of a Cambridge don vanishes after her lookalike doll is found floating and dismembered in the Jesus Lock on the River Cam. Holmes and Watson risk life and limb to solve the murders, tangling with prestidigitators and priests, scientists and scheming sisters, and a heat wave that melts the countryside.

I highly recommend the entire series of four novels by Bonnie MacBird. If you are a fan of Holmes and Watson and their world, make this your summer reading, beginning with ***The Three Locks***.



The Fresh Rashers of Nashville Celebrate 20th Anniversary



Pictured at the June 8 meeting: Bill Mason, Dave Price, Dean Richardson, Sam House, Drew Thomas, and David Hayes.

On June 1, The Fresh Rashers gathered to celebrate two events: the first meal together since the beginning of the pandemic, and the 20th anniversary of its establishment as a scion society. Attending were Bill Mason, David Hayes, Drew Thomas, Dave Price, and Dean Richardson. The location was the current meeting place, Wendell Smith's off Charlotte Avenue in West Nashville. Consistent with their modus operandi, there were no speeches, just good food and conversation and the sharing of Sherlockian and other treasures.

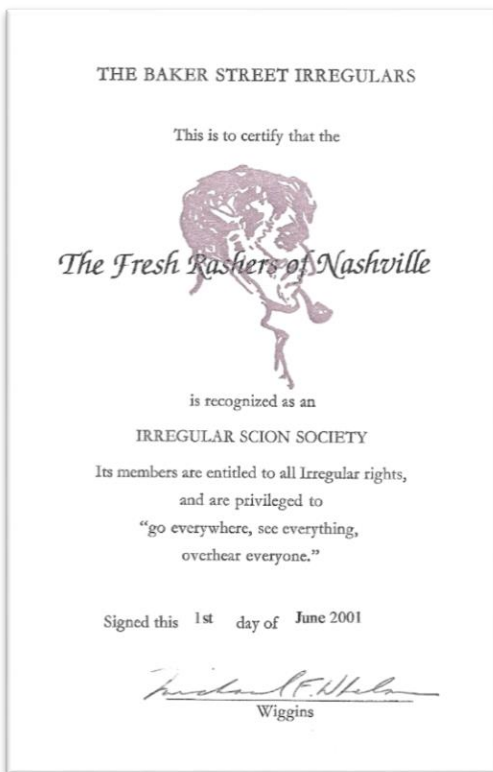
While veiled by the mists of time, legend has it that sometime in the late '90s, several Nashville Scholars, feeling the need for more frequent fellowship with other Sherlockians than the (at that time) bimonthly meeting of the Scholars, began a breakfast group on a weekly basis

with David Bradley as convenor. Eventually, on March 23, 2001, a Friday, the group held a “charter” meeting at Dan’s Café on Lafayette and assigned officers: Bill Mason (the Breakfast Ringer); Billy Fields (the Ravenous Cover); Marino Alvarez (the Curious Cover); David Bradley (the Dazed Cover); Jim Hawkins (the Fourth Egg); and Gael Stahl (the 30-Miler of Surrey). On April 11 they submitted a petition to Michael Whelan, then “Wiggins” (president) of the BSI, to become an official scion of the society. Their stated purposes were twofold: “a) discussing and perpetuating the history and legend of Sherlock Holmes, and b) eating a good breakfast.” They received their charter on June 1.

Over the years the group has met in different eateries (Shoney's on Music Row, Cracker Barrel in Goodlettsville, Noshville on Broadway, The Pie Wagon on Demonbreun Avenue) and on different days (first Fridays, then Mondays, then Tuesdays). They have lost some members (through death or out-of-town moves) and gained others. According to Bill, “Anyone who has ever been a member remains so, and any interested Sherlockian or guest is always welcome.”

Bill also mentions that “the primary project of the Fresh Rashers of Nashville for several years now has been our annual visit to the 221B Classroom of Shannon Carlisle at Moore Elementary School in Franklin. Rasher members join teams of her students in a competitive quiz about ‘The Red-Headed League,’ and we are regularly put to shame by their knowledge of the story. In the spring of 2021, due to Covid, the classroom meeting was replaced by a performance on Zoom of an original play based on ‘The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle’ by one of Shannon's students.”

Space is limited at Wendell Smith’s, so if you would like to attend on any Tuesday, please contact David Hayes or Bill Mason to be sure there is a place for you at the table(s).



**The Fresh Rashers
of Nashville**



**10th Anniversary
June 6, 2011**

Bill Mason
*The Breakfast Ringer
of the Fresh Rashers of Nashville*

A Baker Street Dozen Questions* for Roger Johnson and Jean Upton

by Jim Hawkins and Dean Richardson, 2 June 2021



This photograph with Steven Moffat (center) was taken at the Annual Dinner of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London in January 2016.

When and how did each of you discover the Canon? Is there is an ideal age at which to do that?

(Roger) The first Holmes story I remember reading was *The Hound of the Baskervilles*; I'm sure I must have read some of the short stories before then, but at what age . . . no, I can't remember. I was reading fluently at the age of four, and I seem always to have been aware of Sherlock Holmes, though in 1950s England there were no children's editions of the stories. We didn't get the Rathbone films on television until much later, and the Ronald Howard films have only recently been shown on British TV, so I didn't see a serious dramatised version until "The Speckled Band," with Douglas Wilmer and Nigel Stock, in 1964, by which time I was seriously hooked on the stories. And throughout the fifties and sixties we did have the classic BBC radio series with Carleton Hobbs and Norman Shelley. (Hobbs's, to me, remains *the* voice of Sherlock Holmes.)

An ideal age to discover the Holmes stories? That must surely depend upon the individual.

(Jean) Like Roger, I was reading at an advanced level by the age of four and devoured books borrowed from the library or those on our shelves at home. The Rathbone/Bruce films were being shown on television and many animated cartoons featured Holmes, so I certainly had an awareness of the character. Around the age of five or six I progressed through a rapid sequence

of measles, mumps and rubella, which meant being confined to my bedroom for what seemed an eternity. To ease the boredom I ferreted around and discovered the Everyman Edition of *The Adventures and Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*. Probably influenced by the Hammer Horror films that were in cinemas at the time, the first story I read was “The Engineer’s Thumb,” because it sounded like it would be good and gory. If one considers that I had been weaned on Little Golden Books and Dr. Seuss, it’s a testament to Conan Doyle’s writing style that I stuck to reading the entire book despite its lack of illustrations. You can imagine my delight when the local librarian told me there were even more stories available. I was eight when I read *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, and my enduring memory was the description of finding the remains of Dr. Mortimer’s spaniel in the hound’s hiding place. Pretty shocking for a young animal lover!

As for an ideal time to discover Holmes, there’s a Buddhist saying: “When the pupil is ready, the teacher appears.”

(P&D) *The Sherlock Holmes Miscellany* covers quite a bit of territory. I (Jim) plan to gift this book to every new person I know discovering Sherlock Holmes. For me it was the Baring-Gould *Annotated Sherlock Holmes* in which I discovered “The Grand Game” and all the associated social background to the Canon. What was your motivation for putting the *Miscellany* together? Was the popularity of the BBC *Sherlock* a factor?

(R) When I took over in 2007 as editor of *The Sherlock Holmes Journal* from Nicholas Utechin—one of the few people who have stepped down from a job to make way for someone *older*—I also agreed to take over as the Sherlock Holmes Society of London’s Press and Publicity Officer, a post which our co-editor, Heather Owen, had filled for several years. It’s an impressive title, but all it really means is that the contact details on the website and in various directories are mine. Consequently, correspondence for the Society, if it isn’t aimed at a specific person, usually comes to me.

In 2011, I received an e-mail that said, in part: “I am a commissioning editor at The History Press, the UK’s leading historical publisher, and next year we’re publishing a series of literary miscellanies. Our hope is to include a Sherlock Holmes Miscellany among these, and I’ve been charged with finding someone to write the book.” What they wanted was “a 30–40,000 [word] manuscript that details all of the facts, trivia, and quotes that remind us why Sherlock Holmes remains such an important literary creation.”

Jean said something like, “We can do that!” And so we did, dividing the topics between us. We deliberately avoided summarising the stories, because so many have already done that; instead we concentrated on the Holmes phenomenon, which is how we interpreted our brief. (I should mention that, despite my name coming first on the cover and the title page, about two thirds of the book is Jean’s work—though each of us contributed to the other’s chapters.)

Guy Ritchie’s *Sherlock Holmes* had been released in 2009, and the first series of *Sherlock* was broadcast in 2010. Their success almost certainly helped motivate The History Press to commission the book, but it wasn’t an essential factor in our decision to write it.

(J) I wanted to write the sort of book that I would have found useful when first entering the world of Sherlockians. There is an enduring myth that when one attends one's first scion/society meeting, it will be something akin to the Spanish Inquisition. The assumption is that if you don't pass muster, you will be humiliated in front of the entire assembly, pelted with bread rolls, made to wear a dunce-cap, and must write "Norbury" a thousand times on a blackboard. I think the *Miscellany* is the first book to go into any sort of detail about Sherlockian interest groups and hopefully makes prospective members a bit more relaxed about mingling with the rest of the herd. In practical terms, the book should serve as a glorified crib sheet for newly hatched Sherlockians, as well as a handy reference source for anyone who simply wants a quick reminder of a date or detail. We purposely gave the essential information on a number of topics along with a recommended bibliography, so that the reader could find sources of more information on their favourite aspect.

(P&D) Do you have a favorite SH film or radio or TV series?

(R) I don't have one favourite. On film, I particularly love the Rathbone-Bruce *Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (very slightly superior to *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, I think); *A Study in Terror*; *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*; *They Might Be Giants*; and *Murder by Decree*.

On radio: the American series from the late 1930s and early 1940s with Rathbone & Bruce, and then Tom Conway & Bruce; the BBC series from the 1950s and 1960s with Carleton Hobbs & Norman Shelley; the BBC complete Canon with Clive Merrison and Michael Williams; and the Imagination Theatre *Classic Adventures* with John Patrick Lowrie and Larry Albert, and written by our friend M. J. Elliott.

On TV: the 1964–65 BBC series with Douglas Wilmer and Nigel Stock; *The Blue Carbuncle* and *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (which I'm not alone in thinking is the best screen version of *The Hound*) from the uneven 1968 BBC series with Peter Cushing and Nigel Stock; the Soviet series of the 1980s with Vasily Livanov and Vitaly Solomin; most of the Granada TV series with Jeremy Brett and David Burke/Edward Hardwicke (there were a few regrettable lapses, not all attributable to Brett's health problems, but *The Sign of Four* remains the best screen version of any of the long stories); and the BBC's *Sherlock*, with Benedict Cumberbatch and Martin Freeman—even the occasionally dubious fourth season.

(J) I grew up with the Rathbone/Bruce films, and although they are not necessarily *great* films, there is a satisfying nostalgia about them. In the 1970s there was a revival of old films being shown in cinemas. One near me was presenting a restored version of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, which I attended with a group of friends. To my eternal shame, when Nigel Bruce spoke the line, "Put it all together and what have you got?," I automatically responded, "Bibbidi-Bobbidi-Boo!" The entire audience collapsed in a fit of uncontrollable giggles. My cinema-buff friend was mortified.

(P&D) To what do you attribute the recent resurgence of interest in the character of SH?

(R) A major factor must surely be the commercial success of *Sherlock* and *Elementary* on television, and Guy Richie's two blockbuster movies starring Robert Downey Jr and Jude Law.

There's also the fact that all of Conan Doyle's stories are now out of copyright pretty much everywhere in the world, with the notable exception of the USA, where just a handful remain protected for a few years longer. And for better or worse, modern technology has made it possible for almost anyone to publish almost anything, without going through the tedious business of getting a manuscript accepted, edited, proofread, printed, distributed, and all the rest of it. Even thirty years ago, the number of Holmes pastiches available was not unmanageable; today there are probably more than it's possible to count.

(J) Well, from a very cynical point of view, everyone knows that Sherlock Holmes is a money-maker. However, we've seen that interest in a number of characters seems to run in cycles. Consider the glut of Robin Hood films that sprang up in recent years and the (not always satisfactory) reinterpretations of Hercule Poirot. Somebody will always come along who thinks they can do it better than their predecessors.

(P&D) Do you plan another ACD-related book?

(R) I'd like to compile a book of my better Holmesian essays and articles. I think there are enough good ones, but I need to make the time to select and edit. We shall see. Or, as Holmes remarked to Lestrade in "The Boscombe Valley Mystery," *Nous verrons*. (I'm not sure whether he was being pretentious or subtly indicating that he knew Lestrade understood French—which was, presumably, the language of his ancestors.)

(J) I have an idea for a book about Dr. Watson but need some time to develop it a bit further before I can elaborate on details.

* Only five of our thirteen questions posed to Roger and Jean are presented here. Due to space considerations, this is a *severely* abridged version of the interview. For the complete version, with all the questions and more wonderful anecdotes and observations, see the Scholars website here:

https://www.nashvillescholars.net/documents/Plugs-Dottles/ROGERJ_JEANU01.pdf

LINKS to the publication for which Roger and Jean have been editors since 1982: Newsletter of The Sherlock Holmes Society of London (click on image)

