

~ Sixty-four Years and counting: Sherlock Holmes Pub in London ~

~ A Visit by Jim Hawkins in 1994 ~

The Sherlock Holmes opened its doors for business on December 12, 1957.



We have the Whitbred & Co. brewers to thank, for it was they who decided to refurbish their decrepit Northumberland Arms Hotel (does that ring any Baskerville bells?) and reopened it as the pub we know today. They just happened to have in their possession the entire Sherlock Holmes exhibit originally put together by the Marylebone Borough Library and the Abbey National Building Society for the 1951 Festival of Britain.

Perhaps the most famous part of the exhibit was the 221B Baker Street sitting-room designed by theatre designer Michael Weight.

Every Sherlockian has a vivid mental picture of the domicile of Holmes and Watson at the top of those now-famous 17 steps. It was so often the beginning place of adventure, and occasionally the scene of heart-rending revelations. On the second floor of the Sherlock Holmes you can dine and look right into the room, pretending that our heroes might return at any moment.

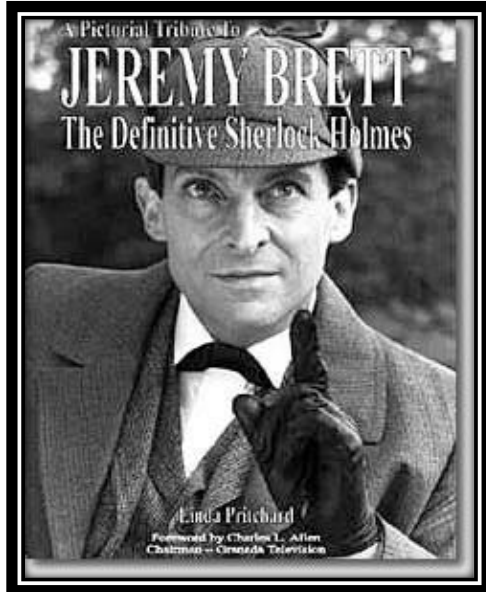
This was my happy experience this summer in June. I had taken the Underground from London Bridge station, after visiting the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, and arrived at Charing Cross station about 2 pm.

The Sherlock Holmes is quite close to Trafalgar Square, one of my favorite places in London, with its proximity to old and rare bookshops, concerts at St. Martin's-in-the-Fields church, and the National Gallery. My mission was to visit the Sherlock Holmes pub, shop for books and old shillings on Charing Cross Road and return to the pub for dinner. It was a Sherlockian dream.

At the pub I was greeted by Michael Phillips (manager) and Peter Mason (assistant manager) who are taking great care to bring the reputation and authenticity of the decorations back to first class quality. There one finds scads of Holmes, Watson, and Doyle memorabilia. Note the stuffed head of The Hound, the wax head of Holmes complete with the hole in the forehead, a misplaced shot from an air gun fired by the evil occupant across the street in "The Empty House." (Remember his name?)

Gaze on the exquisite portrait of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle above the fireplace, unveiled in May of 1994 by his daughter Dame Jean Doyle. One can't really see it all in one day, but it's worth a try.

I ordered a large glass of the Sherlock Holmes ale, and had drunk about a third of it when I suddenly realized, much to my horror, that I had left \$80 worth of old shillings sitting on the Royal Circle Bar in



Wyndhams Theatre! Immediately jumped up, left my ale, and ran out of the Pub. But, I'm getting ahead of myself.

Before arriving at the Pub, I had made my way to Wyndhams Theatre where Jeremy Brett had begun his reincarnation of Sherlock Holmes in the production of "The Secret of Sherlock Holmes". Starring as Watson in that production was none other than Edward Hardwicke, destined to be Brett's second Watson in the renowned Granada "Adventures of Sherlock Holmes" series. ([Related YouTube video: Introduction to Holmes and beginning of Brett/Hardwicke interview](#) | continuation of Brett and Hardwicke interview, posted by PLbrettfan.)

It was in this theatre that The Regulars, a British group of Jeremy Brett admirers had placed a photo and plaque of the actor after the great success of the Wyndhams' production. I

HAD to have a photo of the plaque. I entered the theatre long before the evening performance and was taken to the first floor where the plaque rested on the wall next to the Royal Circle bar.

Earlier in the day I had made purchases on Charing Cross Road: books, posters, and \$80-worth of rare shillings I was taking home with me to Nashville to present to newly-invested members of our Nashville Scholars club.

So, as I was saying, I immediately bounded up from my stool in the pub, leaving my ale and menu, and ran back to the theatre. The game was definitely "afoot" ! I was breathless as I retraced my steps to Wyndhams, due as much to my anxiety as to my being out of shape. To my great surprise, there were my coins neatly wrapped in the plastic, just as I had laid them on the bar when I was fumbling with my camera. These coins were a treasure and worth much more to me than the \$80 I had spent for them. These were coins from that period in history where all Sherlockians live every day, if only in their minds. I could not escape the fact that indeed, Conan Doyle himself might have touched one of these coins! Such is the pitiable state of true Holmesians. The slightest connection with the bygone era is utterly important.

With the coins safely back in my possession, I made my way back to the Sherlock Holmes. Walking back into the pub, I was delighted to see that my brew was still in the same place, at the window bar. In that 15-minute interval of time a gentleman had taken a seat just a couple of stools down from my place. Having no idea that I had been there previously and had already been drinking from that glass of ale, he almost choked when I glanced around the room furtively, then picked up the half-empty glass and downed it with gusto. One never knows what you'll find at the Sherlock Holmes Pub. If you go to London, don't miss it ! (Filed by Jim Hawkins, 1997)

RELATED/UPDATED LINKS: Visit the Sherlock Holmes Pub Online.

Wyndham's Theatre links: 1. Wikipedia 2. Theater website . See Production Highlights for some of the history.

Marylebone Borough Library <http://www.westminsteronline.org/holmes1951/history/began.html>