

ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE IN 2019

*Alexis Barquin**

The year 2019 saw Arthur Conan Doyle's 160th birthday and was rich in events, adaptations, finds and new features added to *The Arthur Conan Doyle Encyclopedia*. The following will focus on non-SH activities, as Sherlock Holmes is already covered in this Almanac.

EVENTS

The interest in Arthur Conan Doyle's works beyond Sherlock Holmes increased incredibly in 2019. It's not easy to explain why it happened this year. Some say it may be due to many years of unlikely Sherlock Holmes adaptations, not faithful to the original stories (Sherlock BBC, Elementary, Miss Sherlock, Holmes & Watson), and the audience may have had a need for true Conan Doyle stories and not ersatz. Or maybe it's just a coincidence.

Anyway, in 2019, a new street with ACD's name was inaugurated, along with the first episodes of a new podcast, three conferences, the announcement of a new magazine and a new edition of ACD's works, plus the creation of a new society dedicated to ACD's life and works. Here are the details:

"Conan Doyle Gasse" (Conan Doyle Alley) is a street sign that was unveiled in Feldkirch, Austria, on 25 May 2019, by the German Sherlock Holmes Society ("Deutsche Sherlock-Holmes-Gesellschaft"). This is related to Arthur Conan Doyle attending the Jesuit school "Stella Matutina" in Feldkirch in the years 1875-1876.¹

The Film Archive of Sweden discovered, on 29 May 2019, a 40-second newsreel movie showing Sir Arthur Conan Doyle at his arrival in Stockholm on 27 October 1929, together with his wife Jean and his friend Ashton Johnson.²

"Doings of Doyle" is a podcast created in October 2019 by Dr. Mark Jones and Paul M. Chapman and dedicated to "explore the works of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the creator of Professor Challenger, Brigadier Gerard and Sherlock Holmes." They record one podcast per month. So far, they have discussed the following ACD fictions: "The Doings of Raffles Haw" (November 2019), "The Winning Shot" (December 2019) and "The Captain of

* Alexis Barquin is curator of *The Arthur Conan Doyle Encyclopedia*. Copyright 2020 Alexis Barquin.

¹ <https://www.arthur-conan-doyle.com/index.php/Plaques#Feldkirch>.

² Stunning video: [https://www.arthur-conan-doyle.com/index.php/Sir_Arthur_Conan_Doyle_arrival_in_Stockholm_\(movie_27_october_1929\)](https://www.arthur-conan-doyle.com/index.php/Sir_Arthur_Conan_Doyle_arrival_in_Stockholm_(movie_27_october_1929)).

the Pole-Star” (January 2020). Subscribe for free to this very interesting, must-hear show.³

“Arthur Conan Doyle — The Spiritualist” was presented five times at the Arthur Conan Doyle Centre during the Edinburgh Fringe festival (13-26 August 2019) by Eleanor Docherty, resident detective at the ACD Centre (Edinburgh). She revealed the curious history of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and his links to the world of spiritualism — followed by a tour of the Centre.

“A Tribute to Arthur Conan Doyle, the Man Behind and Beyond Sherlock Holmes” was a conference held on 26 August 2019 at the Arthur Conan Doyle Centre during the Edinburgh Fringe festival. It took the form of a discussion between Elizabeth Crowens, an American author, and Tania Henzell, a relation of the Doyle family who has created an official Sherlock Holmes tartan. Crowens discussed her books and her interest in the paranormal and spiritualism, and Henzell exhibited her tartans.

A new “Arthur Conan Doyle Society”: In September 2019, an open letter by Clifford Goldfarb (Chairman of The Friends of The Arthur Conan Doyle Collection at the Toronto Public Library) expressed the idea that there was room for a new society dedicated to ACD. The idea spread at the speed of light around the world and soon a committee of several devotees started discussing it during the “Conan Doyle and London” conference on 15 November 2019. Following that conference, a manifesto by Dr. Mark Jones was circulated on 28 November 2019 to present the new society goals, activities, and publications, and an initial meeting of advocates was held in New York City on 17 January 2020. The committee is looking for volunteers to help establish the new Conan Doyle Society. Stay tuned and prepare your subscription!

“Conan Doyle and London” was a symposium held on 15 November 2019 at the Senate House, London, organised by the Institute of English Studies at the School of Advanced Study, University of London. Conference topics included: “Conan Doyle: Man of Letters, Man about Town,” by Douglas Kerr; “Of Time and the City: Conan Doyle and London Print Culture,” by Jonathan Cranfield; “A great traffic was going on, as usual, in Whitehall: Public Places and Secret Spaces in Sherlock Holmes’s London,” by Andrew Glazzard; “I have my eye on a suite in Baker Street,” by Catherine Cooke; “Conan Doyle and Medical London,” by Roger Luckhurst; “Cosmopolitan Spiritualism and Doyle’s The Land of Mist,” by Christine Ferguson; and finally a presentation of “The Edinburgh Edition of the Works of Arthur Conan Doyle,” a 22-volume collected works to be published in 2020. Their next symposium will be in June 2020 on “Conan Doyle in Edinburgh.”

³ <https://www.doingsofdoyle.com>.

“The Conan Doyle Review” was announced in December 2019 by editor Dr. Ashley D. Polasek as an “interdisciplinary journal for scholarship on the life, works, creative afterlives, and cultural legacies of Arthur Conan Doyle.” The review will begin accepting submissions for peer review in the summer of 2020 and will publish Vol. 1 #1 in Spring 2021. However, a special issue was released in January 2020 for the BSI festivities but with only Sherlockian content. Let’s hope that Vol. 1 #1 will be focused on ACD.⁴

BOOKS

Three noteworthy books were published in 2019:

“Sherlock Holmes and Conan Doyle in the Newspapers, vol. 4,” by Mattias Boström, Mark Alberstat, Leah Guinn & Matt Laffey (Gasogene Books, 29 April 2019, 202 p.): The 4th volume includes hundreds of press articles published between January and June 1894, the period after the death of Sherlock Holmes. Lots of reviews, interviews, articles on ACD’s life and writings. Next volume will cover July–September 1894.⁵

“Arthur Conan Doyle,” by Eduardo Caamaño (Editorial Almuzara, 30 April 2019, 636 p.): This big biography, in Spanish, is modestly subtitled “The Definitive Biography of the creator of Sherlock Holmes.” Eduardo Caamaño is a Spanish biographer, author of biographies of The Red Baron and Harry Houdini.⁶

“Conan Doyle for the Defence,” by Margalit Fox (Profile Books, 6 June 2019, 368 p.): The book recounts Arthur Conan Doyle’s application of Sherlock Holmes’s deduction skills to the real case of Oscar Slater, wrongly accused of the murder of an old lady, Miss Marion Gilchrist, in 1908.⁷

ADAPTATIONS

There were many adaptations of non-Sherlock Holmes stories in 2019 — three times more than the previous year, confirming the enthusiasm for Conan Doyle — one novel adapted in comic, three short stories and one essay adapted in short movies, and two plays with Arthur Conan Doyle as a character:

“Sir Nigel” (Vol. 1: 6 March; Vol. 2: 21 August 2019, Glénat editions, France): The French publisher “Glenat” has published two volumes of the

⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/ACDreview>.

⁵ <https://www.wessexpress.com/html/newspaper4.html>.

⁶ <https://www.amazon.com/dp/841755808X>.

⁷ <https://www.amazon.com/dp/1781253579>.

ACD's historical novel "Sir Nigel." This comic was adapted by Roger Seiter and drawn by Christian Gine. This is the first Sir Nigel comic in color (second if you count the illustrated novel by Patrick Nicolle in the 1960s).⁸

"Ether: The Strange Afterlife of Harry Houdini and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle" (12 April 2019; 50 minutes) is a stage reading of the first act of an unproduced play of the same name, written by Susan I. Weinstein and directed by Sara Minisquero, performed at the Dixon Place (New York, NY, USA), starring Owen Hayden as Arthur Conan Doyle and Geoff Moonen as Harry Houdini. Harry Houdini & Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's rivalry continues in the afterlife, where they and their wives are stuck in their versions of life after death. The play is based on letters they exchanged after Houdini asked Conan Doyle to find him a genuine medium. They explore the space between life and death together. They end at opposite ends of a spectrum that here must find a resolution.⁹

"Professor Challenger and The Disintegration Machine" (29 April 2019; 17 minutes) is an American short movie, adapted, produced and directed by Ross K. Foad, released on YouTube, starring Martin W. Payne as Professor George Edward Challenger, Fergus Foster as Edward Malone and Wesley Lloyd as Theodore Nemur. The movie is an adaptation of Arthur Conan Doyle's short story, "The Disintegration Machine" (1929).¹⁰

"Mysterious Circumstances" (June-July 2019) is an American play, written by Michael Mitnick and directed by Matt Shakman, performed by the Geffen Playhouse Theater at the Gil Cates Theater (Los Angeles, CA, USA) from 11 June to 21 July 2019, starring Austin Durant as Arthur Conan Doyle, Alan Tudyk as Sherlock Holmes and Ramiz Monsef as Dr. Watson. Inspired by the *New Yorker* article "Mysterious Circumstances: The Strange Death of a Sherlock Holmes Fanatic," by David Grann, the play centers around the story of the mysterious death of Richard Lancelyn Green, the world's foremost scholar of Sherlock Holmes. After spending two decades searching for the missing papers of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Green came close to unlocking the secrets behind Holmes' creator when he tracked down an elusive box which was said to be cursed.¹¹

⁸ <https://www.amazon.com/dp/2344023399>.

⁹ [https://www.arthur-conan-doyle.com/index.php/Ether:_The_Strange_Afterlife_of_Harry_Houdini_and_Sir_Arthur_Conan_Doyle_\(reading\)](https://www.arthur-conan-doyle.com/index.php/Ether:_The_Strange_Afterlife_of_Harry_Houdini_and_Sir_Arthur_Conan_Doyle_(reading)).

¹⁰ https://www.arthur-conan-doyle.com/index.php/Professor_Challenger_and_The_Disintegration_Machine.

¹¹ [https://www.arthur-conan-doyle.com/index.php/Mysterious_Circumstances_\(play_2019\)](https://www.arthur-conan-doyle.com/index.php/Mysterious_Circumstances_(play_2019)).

“The Terror at Blue John Gap” (16 July 2019; 30 minutes) is an American short movie, adapted, produced and directed by Ross K. Foad, released on YouTube, starring Phil Kay as Dr. James Hardcastle. The movie is based upon Arthur Conan Doyle’s short story of the same name (1910) and upon the works of H. P. Lovecraft.¹²

“The Truth Lies Within” (26 October 2019; 17 minutes) is an American short movie, adapted, produced and directed by Ross K. Foad, released on YouTube, starring John Rittey as Dr. Benjamin Kennedy and Louis Mackenzie as Dr. Julius Burger. The movie is an adaptation of Arthur Conan Doyle’s short story, “The New Catacomb” (1898).¹³

“The History of Spirituality” is a series of documentary videos produced by Ross K. Foad, adapting Arthur Conan Doyle’s essay “The History of Spiritualism” (1926). In 2019, three episodes were released:

- Episode 5: “The Mediumship of Eusapia Palladino” (19 August 2019)¹⁴
- Episode 6: “The Fall of The Fox Sisters” (2 November 2019)¹⁵
- Special episode 4+6: “Foxing a Nation” (20 November 2019)¹⁶

THE ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE ENCYCLOPEDIA IN 2019

<https://www.arthur-conan-doyle.com>

In 2019, *The Arthur Conan Doyle Encyclopedia* continued its growth in pages and images. In March, we reached 20,000 images! These include original publications of articles and fictions, manuscripts, photos, illustrations, covers, posters, comics, etc. This is the biggest online resource for illustrations of ACD’s works between 1870 and 1930, with more than 250 illustrators and more than 3,600 illustrations.

This threshold reminded me of the costs associated with this huge work of data gathering (mainly subscriptions to many newspaper archives and purchases of original books or magazines). As the *Encyclopedia* is a free non-profit website with no ads, I had the idea to launch a support campaign. Every sponsor and contributor received a nice ACD lapel pin of the silhouette designed by E.O. Hoppé in *The Bookman* (November 1912). This lapel pin can still be obtained for any donors as support never ends.¹⁷

¹² https://www.arthur-conan-doyle.com/index.php/The_Terror_at_Blue_John_Gap.

¹³ https://www.arthur-conan-doyle.com/index.php/The_Truth_Lies_Within.

¹⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SFbtYwME8Pk>.

¹⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9V1wyQ09hj0>.

¹⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sj5ygDgeHHL>.

¹⁷ https://www.arthur-conan-doyle.com/index.php/Support_Us.

On 7 July 2019, the anniversary of ACD's death, I created an "Obituaries" page referencing not only articles about ACD's death, but also obituaries of family members (wives, sons, uncles, . . .) and other closely connected people (Joseph Bell, George T. Budd, Alfred H. Wood, . . .). In an interview for the *Daily Mail* on 1 July 1930, ACD said: "I am tired of hearing myself described as the author of Sherlock Holmes. One would think I had written nothing but detective stories." One week later almost all obituaries were titled "Death of the creator of Sherlock Holmes."¹⁸

By the end of the year, I had extended the Sherlock Holmes search engine from the 62 Sherlock stories, to include all Conan Doyle fictions: 253 fictions (213 short stories, 24 novels and 16 plays). "Angels of Darkness" will be included soon.¹⁹

Some of the many rare/odd findings in 2019:

26 February: Cheque signed by Arthur Conan Doyle — If Arthur Conan Doyle had given you a cheque, would you have cashed it or kept it as a souvenir? This one from Lloyds Bank Ltd. was for L.S.A. (London Spiritualist Alliance), he paid £1 4s. 9d. on 9 August 1924.²⁰

2 March: Arthur Conan Doyle and W.G. Grace — A rare photo showing Arthur Conan Doyle and W.G. Grace on 23-25 August 1900 during the "London Club" vs "M.C.C. & Ground" first-class cricket match was auctioned at Knights Sporting auction house (lot 386). Hammer price not communicated.²¹

9 April: His Interest — A fine joke titled "His Interest" published on 10 May 1913 in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*:

- "Does your son show any special aptitude?"
- "I think he wants to be a doctor."
- "Fine. Shows an interest in doctors, does he?"
- "Yes. He reads everything that's been written by Dr. Conan Doyle."²²

¹⁸ <https://arthur-conan-doyle.com/index.php/Obituaries>.

¹⁹ <https://www.arthur-conan-doyle.com/search-fictions>.

²⁰ <https://www.arthur-conan-doyle.com/images/6/6c/1924-08-09-sacd-cheque-to-london-spiritualist-alliance.jpg>.

²¹ <https://www.arthur-conan-doyle.com/images/5/5d/1900-08-23-25-crystal-palace-london-county-vs-mcc-ground.jpg>.

²² https://www.arthur-conan-doyle.com/index.php/His_Interest.

- 20 April: ACD Marriage** — In this photo from 18 September 1907, Jean and Arthur Conan Doyle are just married. They leave St. Margaret's, Westminster after the ceremony. Discover in the article "Sherlock Holmes Married" the detailed description of Jean's gown and all the wedding gifts.²³
- 24 April: The Xema Expedition** — Arthur Conan Doyle involved in "The Mysterious Voyage of the Xema," a real story of a treasure hunt on a desert island. But also a total fiasco.²⁴
- 5 May: ACD Portrait** — A very nice portrait of ACD by illustrator E.R.H. published in *The Berkshire Evening Eagle* on 6 March 1925.²⁵
- 13 May: ACD or not ACD?** — According to Clark & Simpson Auctions, in this photo (lot 74) is Arthur Conan Doyle in templar frock or masonic symbolic posture. Most Doylean experts think it's not him.²⁶
- 15 May: Conan Doyle says . . .** — A collection of ironic jokes published in American newspapers between 1921-1923, when Arthur Conan Doyle did his lecture tours about spiritualism around the world. Some funny examples:
- *Conan Doyle says they stay married forever in heaven. Some people wouldn't call that heaven.*
 - *Conan Doyle says it is a funny feeling when you die, but then he never tried it.*
 - *Conan Doyle says a man can take his horse to heaven. There is no reason why he couldn't take his car, too.*
 - *Conan Doyle says he wishes he hadn't written Sherlock Holmes, but nobody does.*
- 11 July: Letter about Sherlock Holmes, Joseph Bell and A Study in Scarlet** — Forum Auctions sold a short letter (Lot 417) written by ACD on the influence of his mentor Joseph Bell at Edinburgh University medical school and the creation of Sherlock Holmes. Hammer price: £14,000!²⁷

²³ https://www.arthur-conan-doyle.com/index.php/Sherlock_Holmes_Married.

²⁴ https://www.arthur-conan-doyle.com/index.php/The_Xema_Expedition.

²⁵ https://www.arthur-conan-doyle.com/index.php/Conan_Doyle_Says:_Spiritualism_Is_Only_Hope_of_World_Salvation!.

²⁶ <https://www.the-saleroom.com/en-gb/auction-catalogues/clarke-and-simpson/catalogue-id-ibcla10340/lot-c13e8fd1-a7ca-4dfb-b039-aa4800ff9636>.

²⁷ https://www.arthur-conan-doyle.com/index.php/Notecard_about_Sherlock_Holmes,_Dr._Bell_and_A_Study_in_Scarlet.

- 16 August: Cool story, bro!** — “Bro. Dr. Conan Doyle” in *The Masonic Illustrated* (October 1901).²⁸ See also links between Conan Doyle and Freemasonry.²⁹
- 23 September: Another ACD Portrait** — This original drawing by Oscar Cesare, an American caricaturist, was published on 7 May 1922 in *The New York Times* to illustrate an article by Horace Green: “An Open Letter to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.”³⁰
- 20 October: A Hunting Morning** — Want to sing a poem written by Arthur Conan Doyle? You can hear “A Hunting Morning” (1901) performed by Peter Savidge in 2000 from music written in 1908 by Alfred J. Silver.³¹
- 11 November: The most prolific illustrator** — Leo Edward O’Mealia (1884-1960) was an American cartoonist. Between 1930 and 1931, he did 816 illustrations for nine Sherlock Holmes short stories written by Arthur Conan Doyle (from *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*). This is a lot more than Sidney Paget and his 594 illustrations (including his SH and non-SH illustrations.).³²
- 15 December: Jean and sons** — Bought on auction, nice and new photos from a 1920s press agency of Jean Conan Doyle and her two sons Adrian and Denis at Bignell Woods (undated, 1925-1930s).³³

²⁸ https://www.arthur-conan-doyle.com/index.php/Bro._Dr._Conan_Doyle.

²⁹ <https://www.arthur-conan-doyle.com/index.php/Freemasonry>.

³⁰ https://www.arthur-conan-doyle.com/index.php/An_Open_Letter_to_Sir_Arthur_Conan_Doyle.

³¹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s_K0o18NsxY.

³² https://www.arthur-conan-doyle.com/index.php/Leo_O%27Mealia.

³³ <https://www.arthur-conan-doyle.com/images/b/b7/1925-1930s-jean-conan-doyle-with-denis-and-adrian-at-bignell-woods-01.jpg>; <https://www.arthur-conan-doyle.com/images/a/ab/1925-1930s-jean-conan-doyle-with-denis-and-adrian-at-bignell-woods-02.jpg>.