



# Pink 'Un



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## I Find Nothing Recorded in My Notebook . . .

. . . about the April meeting, because we did not meet in April on account of the lousy rotten stinking coronavirus pandemic. Therefore, because I am a lazy bugger, instead of coming up with something new to put in this space, I will fall back on a fictional report I made up after we skipped the June 2006 meeting:

The Inner Circle of the Hansom Wheels decided to have a gathering that did not include the “riff-raff” who usually show up, so a bogus announcement was sent out claiming that the June meeting was being canceled because too few people had made reservations to attend. I won't reveal the names of those who belong to the Inner Circle, because it would cause resentment on the part of those who were excluded. I won't even tell you whether I myself was at the meeting or whether I heard about it through an informant who was there.

The esoteric meeting was held at a secret location. A sumptuous ten-course meal was served, with single-malt Scotch before, vintage red and white wines between courses, and brandy afterward. A hypodermic syringe was passed around, and the members injected themselves with a 7 percent solution of cocaine.

It was announced that game was afoot, and the group toasted *the* woman – but *not* Irene Adler. Instead, a poster of the actress Jodie Foster, in her hooker outfit from the movie *Taxi Driver*, was displayed at the front of the room, and the members raised their glasses to it. They then recited an obscene version of the Musgrave Ritual in which the only line from the original to remain intact, “He who will come,” took on an entirely different meaning.

Copies of the Happy Hour Posers were distributed and set on fire. As the group held the flaming pages cupped in their palms, they took the solemn oath of *omerta* (silence): “May I burn like this piece of paper if I ever reveal the secrets of ‘this thing of ours’ to an outsider.” Jackknives were produced, and the members cut

their thumbs and mingled their blood with that of the others. At the conclusion of this ceremony they were “made,” which means that they are authorized to kill any member of the Hansom Wheels who is not part of the Inner Circle.

Copies of some old quizzes were passed around, and the members spat on them.

Under the heading of “Any and All Other Scionic Business,” it was decided that the price of dinner at the regular meetings would be raised from \$19.00 to \$50.00. That way each member of the Inner Circle would be able to pocket \$45.00 from each admission paid by the clueless “riff-raff” instead of the \$14.00 they had been skimming for the last several years.

The Featured Presentation was a paper titled “What Is This Sherlock Holmes Nonsense?” The speaker maintained that people who waste their time on implausible stories that are riddled with inconsistencies and outright contradictions, and were written by a failed doctor purely to make a quick buck, are a bunch of pathetic losers. The audience called out, “Hear! Hear!” and “What a gang of boobs!” and similar comments as they had a great big laugh at the expense of rank-and-file Sherlockians.

At the conclusion of the paper the group tore off their clothes and engaged in a frenzied sex orgy. The fact that no women were present did not deter them. (In case you think that on the basis of that information you can narrow down the membership of the Inner Circle by eliminating female Hansom Wheelers, I must warn you that not all of those in the club who present themselves as women are, in fact, female.)

The meeting concluded with one of the members reciting the Sacred Poem, “221B,” in a Donald Duck voice, which occasioned much guffawing, chortling, and belly laughing. Everyone was arrested for DUI on the way home.

## For August: Come Zoom with Me (as Frank Sinatra Might Say)!

Thanks to the lousy rotten stinking coronavirus (see above), **The Hansom Wheels** will not meet in person in August, because whatever else can be said about us, we are *not* crazy and do not want to get sick and die! Instead, we will meet “virtually” via the Zoom teleconferencing app at **8:00 p.m., Thursday, August 20**, in the comfort of our own homes (or wherever else we might happen to be at that time). The price will be **zero**. If you did not already reply to the email I sent out on July 26 asking who would be inclined to attend such a meeting, please do so now at [hansomwheels@aol.com](mailto:hansomwheels@aol.com) or click “Reply” on the message to which this newsletter is attached. As I said in that email, if you don't already have the **free** Zoom app, you will need to download it to your desktop PC, laptop, or smartphone. It will ask you to sign up and create a

password. I've discovered that the procedure for joining the meeting is much less complicated than I said in the earlier email: there is no need to register ahead of time or receive a confirmation. Around 8:00 on the 20th I will email you an invitation; all you need to do is click on the link in the message and wait for me to admit you to the meeting, which I will (I promise!). Since this is something of an experiment, we'll dispense with the Assigned Story and Happy Hour Posers. The presentation will be an illustrated look back at the International Exhibition of Sherlock Holmes at the State Museum, which will be a revelation for those of you who did not have a chance to go to it and a nostalgia trip for those who did. We'll also reveal the answer to the mystery that the guests at the exhibition were challenged to solve. See you there!

Since the presentation at the meeting will deal with an event at the State Museum:

### When a Museum Is More than a Museum



by Liese Sherwood-Fabre

Five different stories in the canon reference the British Museum: three times to serve as location markers, and twice as the source of information to help solve a crime. In “The Musgrave Ritual” Holmes identifies his first London lodgings as “around the corner from the British Museum.”<sup>1</sup> The institution’s role as a repository for a wide array of artifacts and knowledge, however, suggests that Holmes’s selection of this address might have been more than just a coincidence. In two other narratives he consults the museum’s collections and experts to learn that the man known as Jack Stapleton in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* had been a well-known authority on entomology under another name<sup>2</sup> and that the odd remains found in the Wisteria Lodge kitchen came from a voodoo ritual.<sup>3</sup>

Merriam-Webster’s definition of a museum is “an institution devoted to the procurement, care, study, and display of objects of lasting interest or value.”<sup>4</sup> While the common concept of the “objects” in a museum involve paintings, sculptures, or items of historical or scientific interest, the origins of the British Museum involves books and manuscripts as well as antiquities and natural history specimens, making it a “universal museum.”<sup>5</sup>

Three private collections (bequeathed by Sir Hans Sloane; Robert Harley, 1st Earl of Oxford; and Sir Robert Cotton) formed the original catalogue. They willed them to the king, and through him, the British nation. In 1753, Parliament established the British Museum from these estates, adding to them the British monarchs’ Royal Library in 1757. When the institution opened at Montagu House in 1759, it created the first national museum, open to the public and belonging to all.<sup>6</sup>

The collection continued to grow, adding objects from James Cook’s travels to the South Seas, antiquities from Egypt, Rome, and Greece, and the excavations from Asia Minor.<sup>7</sup> The institution quickly outgrew its original building, and it was replaced by Greek Revival style construction on the same site in the early 1800s. Despite the additional space, the facility was continually short of room, and several wings were added to relieve pressure. One of the most famous adjustments was the cast-iron circular Reading Room built in an originally empty quadrangle.

The room opened on May 2, 1857, and for one week (May 8–17), the public was allowed to inspect the structure. Sixty-two thousand visitors passed through during that time. Those actually interested in using the room to consult the written materials had to apply to the Principal Librarian for a reader’s ticket. Among those requesting the privilege were Karl Marx, Vladimir Lenin, Bram Stoker, and, of course, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.<sup>8</sup> Edward Ellis compiled a listing of all the references to the British Museum in fiction, and published 179-page tome of such citations—which includes Doyle’s canon pieces and one more noncanonical piece, “The Leather Funnel” from *Round the Fire Stories*.

The constantly growing holdings forced the museum to move its natural history collection to a new building in South Kensington in 1881, forming the Natural History Museum. In 1973, the library collection was moved to help create the British Library.<sup>9</sup>

In 2000, the original Reading Room reopened to the general public after undergoing reconstruction and restoration. More than 25,000 books and other written materials, primarily about the cultures on display at the museum, are available for review.<sup>10</sup> It is still the most visited attraction in the United Kingdom with more than 6.5 million visitors each year.<sup>11</sup>

Given his proximity to the museum and the breadth of its collection, it can be certain Sherlock Holmes had his own reader’s ticket and made much more use of the information stored there than mentioned in the canon. What better means to fill his brain attic than through the ever-mounting holdings that make the British Museum the attraction it continues to be.

1. Doyle, Arthur Conan; Ryan, Robert. *The Complete Sherlock Holmes* (Kindle Locations 16696-16697).

2. Doyle, Arthur Conan; Ryan, Robert. *The Complete Sherlock Holmes* (Kindle Locations 7035-7037).

3. Doyle, Arthur Conan; Ryan, Robert. *The Complete Sherlock Holmes* (Kindle Locations 25615-25617).

4. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/museum>

5. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British\\_Museum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Museum)

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*

8. [https://www.britishmuseum.org/about\\_us/the\\_museums\\_story/architecture/reading\\_room.aspx](https://www.britishmuseum.org/about_us/the_museums_story/architecture/reading_room.aspx)

9. [https://www.britishmuseum.org/about\\_us/the\\_museums\\_story/general\\_history.aspx](https://www.britishmuseum.org/about_us/the_museums_story/general_history.aspx)

10. *Ibid.*

11. <http://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-31877819>

*Liese Sherwood-Fabre has launched her new Young Sherlock series, “The Early Case Files of Sherlock Holmes,” this summer with the introduction of Case One, The Adventure of the Murdered Midwife, at the end of June. Case Two, The Adventure of the Murdered Gypsy, will appear at the end of August. These can be purchased through all major online bookstores. Links are provided on her Website, [www.liesesherwoodfabre.com](http://www.liesesherwoodfabre.com). Case Three, The Adventure of the Deceased Scholar, will be following shortly.*