

Issue Four  
September 2017

# HOLMES ON THE HUDSON



A publication of the Hudson Valley Scientists,  
scion society of the Baker Street Irregulars.

# ADVANCE NOTICE

The Hudson Valley Scientists will convene on October 29 at Vassar's Alumni House to discuss *The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle*.

And the deadline for Issue Five of this publication is March 1, 2018.  
(Start writing!)

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# HUDSON VALLEY SCIONTISTS: THE FIRST 45 YEARS

**By Julia Rosenblatt**

The Charter meeting of the Hudson Valley Sciontists took place October 13, 1972, at tamont Inn in Millbrook. We chose the restaurant mainly because it was a beautiful venue in a building dating back close to the era of Sherlock Holmes, but it also was not lost on us that “Altamont,” the pseudonym of Sherlock Holmes in “His Last Bow,” has Canonical significance.

A great many things led up to that founding meeting. Al and I had enjoyed discussing our mutual interest in Sherlock Holmes with Glenn Laxton. He was a broadcaster for local radio stations before moving on to an Emmy-winning TV career in Providence, RI. We had heard of an organization called the Baker Street Irregulars (BSI) dedicated to Sherlock Holmes. Glenn was already a member of the Sons of the Desert, an international group that celebrated the career of Laurel and Hardy. We knew the Baker Street Irregulars to be a distinguished group, older than the Sons of the Desert, but perhaps along the same lines. Beyond that it was a mystery. In March 1972, we took action.

We learned somehow that a man named Julian Wolff was the head of the BSI; so it seemed reasonable to contact him about membership. We received mixed news. Membership, he informed us, was by invitation only. Its main event was an annual dinner in January (Holmes’s birthday), and – to my chagrin – was for men only. But Julian gave us some good news. The BSI had a host of “scion societies.” Each society had its own rules as to membership, with the sole requirement that he approve its name.

In mid-June, we informed Julian that we were ready to form a scion society. We identified the nucleus of the scion, in addition to the three of us, as consisting of Joseph and Mary McGowan and Thomas Mahoney and his wife, Caroline Bird. At the



**HVS Founders Al and Julie Rosenblatt**

time, Tom Mahoney was the only member of the BSI living in Dutchess County. Caroline Bird was a feminist author who most certainly objected to the male-only nature of the BSI. They and their son John became active members. John, a precocious 12-year old with an interest in military history, gave a paper on the Bruce Partington submarine at the June 1993 meeting.

Because we admired Mycroft Holmes, we suggested we be called “The House of Mycroft.” Julian thought the name was too close to that of a scion society in Syracuse

named the Mycroft Holmes Society.

It was back to the drawing board. “Hudson” appears prominently in many of the stories: Mrs. Hudson for sure, also Morse Hudson of the Six Napoleons, and Hudson the blackmailer in “The Gloria Scott.” Why not capitalize on our location in the Hudson Valley? And we were to be a “scion” society. So we suggested the “Hudson Valley Scientists.”

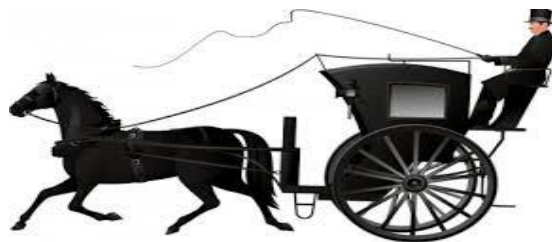
We had a name and a core group. Julian would announce our formation in the September issue of the *Baker Street Journal*. Now all we had to do was identify others who might be kindred spirits and schedule a meeting. I wish we had thought of history and kept better records. We have the menu from the charter meeting and the correspondence with Julian Wolff but do not have a list of those who attended that first meeting.

We suspect that Nancy and John Alden were there. They became active early on, and a few years later, Nancy took a turn at leading the group. Then, about 1980, Lou Lewis took the reins as head of the scion and is still functioning in that capacity today. Over the decades, we have settled into the delightful pattern of meeting two times a year – spring and fall – often at the Vassar College Alumnae House, sometimes at Le Chambord -- to consider one of the adventures of Sherlock Holmes. Members give toasts to the Queen, to Holmes, Watson, and “The Woman,” followed by a series of brief talks – erudite or humorous.

Sherlockians are a diverse lot, but one thing we seem to have in common is appreciation of good food. When we began, we got to dreaming about sharing a meal that would be much like one that Holmes and Watson would have had. The Culinary Institute of America had just moved to Poughkeepsie. We figured if anyone could produce such a meal, the CIA could. Jacob Rosenthal, president of the CIA, recommended Fritz Sonnenschmidt as the chef who could do this; and so Fritz soon became an integral member of our society. We held our first CIA dinner on June 2, 1973.

I would like to remember one other individual who would also probably be listed as a founding member had he not passed beyond the Reichenbach, Chris Steinbrunner. Now, in the days of Netflix and streaming video on demand, it may be hard to remember that 40 years ago, the only way we could see one of the classic Sherlock Holmes films was to stay up late at night for the rare event when one was shown on TV or to know someone who actually owned the reels. Chris, a member of the Baker Street Irregulars and in charge of the film programming at Channel 9 WOR-TV, owned a large collection of film, which he kept in his home in Queens. For most of those early meetings, he would drive up from Queens with a delightful choice and show the film. But even better than the films themselves, would be his introduction to the showing. Were he still alive, some of our meetings would undoubtedly center around a film, with Chris leading the discussion.

Over the past 40 years, the Hudson Valley Scientists has thrived and grown. Then, as now, the only membership requirement has been an appreciation of Sherlock Holmes and a readiness to have fun with it.



# LOCAL BSI CALENDAR

## Charles Blankensteen, BSI

An excellent source for upcoming meeting information and logistics is: [www.sherlockiancalendar.com](http://www.sherlockiancalendar.com). In addition, the following are local meetings, many of which Joan and I have attended

### September

#### **The Epilogues of Sherlock Holmes**

Next Meeting: September 2, 2017

Location: Chatham, NJ

Contact: Peter McIntyre

*The location is a quaint Quaker meeting house where an informal dinner is served before the start of the meeting. The group then moves to the main meeting house where Bob Katz leads a lively discussion usually comparing two stories. Participation is encouraged and everyone is made to feel at home and comfortable. One of the highlights is Peter McIntyre's homemade ice cream which reflects the flavor of the season. If you can get to the Chatham train station, they can pick you up and return you.*

#### **The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes (ASH)**

Next Meeting: September 6, 2017

Location: New York, NY

Contact: Susan Rice

*ASH meets on the first Wednesday of each month in Midtown Manhattan, a short walk from Grand Central Station. The meeting includes a served lunch, cash bar and really unusual guests and presentations. This is a very welcoming and collegial group – well worth a visit.*

#### **The Three Garridebs**

Next Meeting: September 23, 2017

Location: Hastings-on-Hudson, NY

Contact: Sue and Ben Vizoskie

*This is a well-established group of Sherlockians. Their meetings include well organized presentations that have a wonderful range of Holmesian and period related information. They have a voluntary quiz on the story discussed which is fun and challenging. I don't think anyone can beat Ben. They could not have made Joan and me feel more comfortable and part of this great group.*





## October

### **The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes (ASH)**

Next Meeting: October 4, 2017  
Location: New York, NY  
Contact: Susan Rice

### **The Red Headed League of New Jersey**

Next Meeting: October 13, 2017  
Contact: Steve and Linda Morris

### **The Avenging Winters of Albany**

Next Meeting: October 15, 2017  
Contact: Courtney Powers

### **The Priory Scholars**

Next Meeting: October 21, 2017  
Contact: Chris Zordan

### **The Diogenes Club of Washington, DC**

Next Meeting: October 28, 2017  
Contact: Michael J. Quigley

### **The Sons of the Copper Beeches**

Next Meeting: October 27, 2017  
Contact: Ray Betzner

*Male only meeting held in the basement hall at the Philadelphia Racquet Club. The meeting is full of tradition and presentations that span the Sherlockian world. Truly a worthwhile and memorable Friday evening. It is run by Bob Katz, the head Mastiff, and a host of experienced Kennel Masters. Highly recommended*

## November

### **The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes (ASH)**

Next Meeting: November 1, 2017  
Location: New York, NY  
Contact: Susan Rice

### **The Three Garridebs**

Next Meeting: Nov. 11, 2017  
Location: Hastings-on-Hudson, NY  
Contact: Sue and Ben Vizoskie

### **The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes (ASH)**

Next Meeting: November 18, 2017  
Special Fall Luncheon  
Location: New York, NY  
Contact: Evelyn Herzog

## December

### **The Epilogues of Sherlock Holmes**

Next Meeting: December 2, 2017  
Location: Chatham, NJ  
Contact: Peter McIntyre

### **The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes (ASH)**

Next Meeting: December 6, 2017  
Location: New York, NY  
Contact: Susan Rice

# A MEETING OF THE HUDSON VALLEY SCIENTISTS ON MAY 21, 2017

**by Candace J. Lewis**

**MASTER OF CEREMONIES:** Lou Lewis, President

**TOAST:** Don Delaney: To Her Imperial Majesty, Queen Victoria.

**SPEAKERS:**

- 1) Dr. Robert Katz: "Brain Fever---Who Cares?"
- 2) Charles Blanksteen: "Do You Have a Florin or a Rupee in Your Pocket?"
- 3) Jim Donick: "Lucknow or Cawnpore: Genesis of the Crooked Man Incident."
- 4) Candace J. Lewis: "To Savor a Moment."
- 5) Discussion: Comments from members.

**CONCLUSION:** Penelope Jones: Toast to Sherlock Holmes (poem: "*A Long Evening with Holmes*" by William B. Schweickert)

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On Sunday, May 21, 2017, the Hudson Valley Sciontists gathered at Vassar College Alumnae House in Poughkeepsie, New York, to enjoy dinner and consider "The Adventure of the Crooked Man." Our group, which has been meeting twice a year, spring and fall, since 1972, has now grown in size, so that we have 60 at most meetings. Sixty-three were signed up this May. We occupied the entire first floor of the Arts-and-Crafts-style building at the Vassar College campus, a real pleasure as we had the living room for cocktails and the commodious dining room with its excellent acoustics for dinner. A local caterer, Twist-ed Soul, provided the three-course meal.

Lou Lewis, president of our group since about 1986 (no one can really remember back that far), led the program. We generally lead with a toast to the Queen (or King, as the case may be). This time was no exception; Don Delaney, a local businessman did the honors. He was followed by Dr. Robert Katz, visiting us from New Jersey, who opined on the question of brain fever. Well, based upon research produced by another scholar for Bob's book, *Nerve and Knowledge* (BSI Press), he presented the theory that, although the term "brain fever" appeared several times in the Holmes stories, Dr. Watson himself never ascribed to it. Only other, non-medical folks used the term.

Next up were three speakers, Charles Blanksteen, Jim Donick, and me (Candace Lewis), each of whom presented papers on aspects of the story. Charlie spoke about the money that was mentioned in the story; Jim discussed the locations in India in the story; and I discussed an illustration by Sidney Paget.

In the last couple of years, we have discovered that this rather large, sprawling book club devoted to Sherlock Holmes in which everyone reads one story before the meeting has many who like to share their thoughts. So, we have added a discussion section to the program with felicitous results. As we have good acoustics and everyone can hear pretty well, each person can stand and speak and be heard by the entire group. Our discussion was followed by our usual conclusion, the reading of the poem, "Spend a Long Evening with Holmes," this time led by Penelope Jones. What could be more pleasurable than spending an evening with Holmes?

# THE ROYAL MARRIAGE ACT OF 1772

William Walsh ASH. BSI

Asking your prospective father-in-law for his consent to take his daughter's hand in marriage is a tradition fraught with stress and highlighted with the occasional tales of horror. A select few, however, have faced the added tension of first needing to get legally mandated permission from their own mother. Both Edward VII and Prince Charles, the Prince of Wales, among others, faced this added burden.



George III prompted Parliament's passage of the Royal Marriage Act of 1772 after the royal patience with his brothers was exhausted. His brother Prince Henry, Duke of Cumberland, had married a commoner and widow.<sup>[1]</sup> Shortly thereafter, the King discovered that Prince William Henry, Duke of Gloucester, had secretly married the illegitimate daughter of Sir Edward Walpole six years earlier. In the King's eyes, both marriages fell outside of the monarchy's best interest.

The Act sought to control the potential heirs to the throne by requiring the consent of the reigning monarch for all descendants of George II, nullifying any marriage entered into without the sovereign's consent. The Monarch's denial, however, did not provide the final, definitive decision. The law exempted the issue of princesses who married into foreign families. The Act provided that if the descendent was at least 25 years old and posted notice of his or her intent to marry with the Privy Council, then he or she could circumvent the lack of monarch approval and marry one year later if Parliament did not express disapproval of the planned marriage.

The Royal Marriage Act proved a significant hindrance to George III's children. George, Prince of Wales, married Maria Fitzherbert in December 1785, at a private home in London. As his bride was an older woman, twice widowed and Catholic,<sup>[2]</sup> and as the marriage would preclude his ascension to the throne, the Prince of Wales sought to keep the marriage secret. The marriage was confirmed null and void before his 1795 marriage to Princess Caroline of Brunswick. Likewise, George III's sixth son, Augustus, Duke of Sussex, disregarded the Royal Marriage Act when he married Lady Augusta Murray twice in 1793, once in Rome and later that same year in London. The Prerogative Court declared the marriage null and void the following year, but Prince Augustus continued to live with her for the next eight years.<sup>[3]</sup> At the age of 58 in 1831, he married again without the permission of his monarch, his brother William IV.

The Royal Marriage Act directly influenced William's life. As King George III's third son, William spent much of his life with little consideration of the line of succession. With his brother George, George's daughter Princess Charlotte of Wales and his second brother, Prince Frederick, ahead of him, the probability of becoming king seemed low. William, hedging his bets, lived with the Irish actress Dorothea Bland for twenty years, but never sought to marry her. The couple had ten children during their time together, but the Royal Marriage Act rendered each illegitimate and unable to be considered in the line of succession (otherwise, George FitzClarence, 1st Earl of Munster, rather than Victoria, would have followed William IV).



Late in George III's reign, during the Regency, the death of Charlotte created a void in the dynasty's continuation and William sought a bride. He officially married with his older brother's consent, just short of his 53rd birthday. His union with Adelaide [4] of Saxe-Meiningen would produce two daughters, but both died in infancy.

British monarchs have not utilized the Act to closely control the actions of their extended family. The Crown has withheld consent to only one official request for approval under the Royal Marriage Act. The Duke of Brunswick had married a daughter of Kaiser Wilhelm II and, pursuant to the Titles Deprivation Act 1917, lost his title and potential right to the throne. His son, Prince George of Hanover, sought to marry Princess Sophie [5] of Greece and Denmark in 1946, and the Duke of Brunswick petitioned King George VI on March 22, 1946, for the "consent of Your Majesty to the Union ...," pursuant to the Act. As a state of war technically still existed between Germany and Great Britain at the time, and as Prince George was a German citizen, the King withheld consent, and never responded directly. While George VI made it known that "from his personal point of view there is no objection to the marriage," intermediaries clarified that the circumstances prevented a declaration of consent. Some members of the House of Lords, aware of the petition, questioned whether the Act applied as the Duke had married a granddaughter of the Empress Victoria, [6] a Princess who had married into a foreign family.



An academic challenge to the Act shortly thereafter argued that the Royal Marriage Act itself had become, effectively, a nullity under its own operation. Charles Farran argued in 1951 that the law ended with Queen Victoria. See generally C. d'O Farran, *The Royal Marriage Act, 1772*, 14 *The Modern L. Rev.*, 53 (Jan. 1953). Mr. Farran argued that as the then Princess Elizabeth had married into a foreign family, her children were exempt from the Act under its own language. See *id.* at 57. Farran built on this premise to first note that Queen Victoria still enjoyed the title of Princess when she married Albert and, accordingly, she married into a foreign family and her issue would be exempt from the Act. He continued that the central point, however, was that "all the descendants of King Edward VII are as a result of cross-marriages the issue of an undoubted princess who married into an indisputably foreign family. Queen Alexandra was fourth in descent from Princess Louisa (1724-1751), who married King Frederick VII of Denmark. She was George II's youngest daughter." *Id.* at 58-59. Mr. Farran summed up with his view that the Act "has spent its force" as every descendent of George II was now an issue of a princess who married into a foreign family. *Id.* at 63.



Parliament rendered this question academic in 2013, when it amended the Royal Marriage Act. Prime Minister David Cameron coordinated a change in the law throughout the British Commonwealth over a two-year period culminating with the Succession to the Crown Act 2013. The law made three significant changes. It ended the disqualification for marriage to a Catholic, it replaced the male-preference primogeniture and it restricted the need for a sovereign's consent to marry to the first six individuals in line for the throne. As, currently, the fifth in line to the throne, Prince Henry will still need to receive his grandmother's consent before he can marry should

he wish any children to remain in the line of succession.

#### NOTES

- [1] This, potentially, was Prince Henry's second marriage to a commoner. An unhappy husband would later sue the Duke, successfully, for adultery.
- [2] The Act of Settlement 1701 sought to resolve the rules of succession to the British throne after the death of her only child left Anne the only surviving member of the royal line following the Glorious Revolution, James II abdication and the crowning of William III and Mary II. The Act of Settlement barred the coronation of anyone Catholic or married to a Catholic.
- [3] The *Sussex Peerage case*, 11 Cl. & F. 85 (1844), provides the only review of the Act within the courts. The older child of the union sought his father's honors in succession. See Clive Parry, *Further Consideration upon the Prince of Hanover's Case*, 5 The Internat'l and Comparative L. Quarterly 61, 72-78 (Jan. 1956).
- [4] As Queen, Adelaide's name was used for a town founded in Australia in 1837.
- [5] Princess Sophie was an older sister of the future Philip, Duke of Edinburgh.
- [6] Victoria was Queen Victoria's oldest child. She married German Emperor Frederick III in 1841. Victoria did not seek permission under the Royal Marriage Act in advance of her wedding, or, at a minimum, no record exists of the request and consent as required under the Act.

#### House of Hanover

George I 1714-1727  
George II 1727-1760  
*Prince Frederick d 1751*  
George III 1760-1820  
George IV (regent 1811-1820) 1820-1830  
William IV 1830-1837  
*Duke Edward d. 1820*  
Victoria 1837-1901

#### House of Saxe-Coburg (Windsor)

Edward VII 1901-1910  
George V 1910-1936  
Edward VIII 1936  
George VI 1936-1952  
Elizabeth II 1952-

#### Present Line of Succession

- (1) The Prince Charles, Prince of Wales
- (2) Prince William (b. 1982)
- (3) Prince George of Cambridge (b. 2013)
- (4) Princess Charlotte of Cambridge (b. 2015)
- (5) Prince Harry of Wales (b. 1984)
- (6) The Prince Andrew, Duke of York (b. 1960)
- (7) Princess Beatrice of York (b. 1988)
- (8) Princess Eugenie of York (b. 1990)
- (9) The Prince Edward, Earl of Wessex (b. 1964)
- (10) James Mountbatten-Windsor, Viscount Severn (b. 2007)



# BARON MAUPERTUIS AND HIS COLOSSAL SCHEMES

**Harrison Hunt, ASH, BSI**

*Delivered at the May 22, 2016 Meeting of the Hudson Valley Scientists*

Many Sherlock Holmes stories open with a demonstration of the Master's expertise at detection or deduction. "The Reigate Squires" opens with a variation on this ... a mere reference to a stellar case that had kept Holmes busy for two months, and led – after his triumphant solution of a crime that had baffled the police of three countries – to Holmes's complete exhaustion, and the set-up for the Reigate affair. This paper will reflect upon what we know about the case involving Baron Maupertuis, what the nature of his colossal schemes may have been, who he was, and why Holmes was involved.

All that we know for certain about Holmes's Maupertuis adventure is contained in the first pages of "The Reigate Squires". According to Dr. Watson, it occurred over the two months prior to April 14, 1887. During this time, Holmes spent no less than 15 hours a day investigating the nefarious schemes of the Netherland-Sumatra Company and playing a cat and mouse game with its presumed principal, one Baron Maupertuis, who is described as "the most accomplished swindler in Europe." Of his scam, we are only told that it "concerned [both] politics and finance," and had stymied the officials of three nations.

Clearly, whatever Maupertuis was up to was international in scope and well beyond a Bernie Madoff-style Ponzi scheme\* ... something that was, indeed, colossal. But what? We are given a clue in the timing of Holmes's investigation, which began in mid-February, 1887 – a lead that is not financial in nature, but political. In that month, the thirteen-year-old treaty known as the League of the Three Emperors was abruptly ended. This agreement involving Germany, Austria-Hungary and Russia covered several aspects of relations among these nations – including their various interests in the Balkans, a hot issue even then – and served to isolate France from alliance with those powers. The dissolution of this treaty served to isolate Russia to a degree as well.

In the same month that the Three Emperors League was nullified, Germany and Austria-Hungary amended their Triple Alliance with Italy. The new agreement guaranteed that the allies would support Italy if it was attacked without provocation by France; that Italy would assist Germany if it was attacked by France; that Italy would remain neutral if war broke out between Austria-Hungary and Russia; and that Italy and Austria-Hungary would confer on any territorial changes in the Balkans. These provisos went further to diplomatically and militarily isolate France and Russia.

I submit that these acts were carefully precipitated, over time, by the nobleman Baron Maupertuis, who used his real or self-appointed title to worm his way into the upper levels of the Austrian or German government. His purpose was to create a fear of war in France, with an eye to disrupting the economy and the value of the franc, to his own profit. (Whether his goals in unsettling Russia were similar, or aimed at precipitating actions in the Balkans or against the Ottoman Empire are unclear.) It is no wonder that his diplomatic manipulations gained the

attention of the British government, leading Mycroft Holmes to call upon his younger but more energetic brother to handle investigations in the field. It was Sherlock, in a coup of forensic accounting, who linked Maupertuis' plotting with a scheme to enrich his front, the Netherland-Sumatra Company.

We are told nothing further about the Baron ... not even if he himself was caught after his crimes were revealed. Clearly, he was a man of great resources and attention to detail, who was able to design and almost carry out a multi-national swindle requiring finesse and a good deal of seed money. We may have a clue to his identity in his family name, however. The only Maupertuis of note – besides himself – was Pierre Louis Maupertuis, an 18th century France philosopher, mathematician and astronomer. It may be that the Baron and his colossal scheme were the inventions of another mathematician with the initial M, who shared an interest in astronomy – particularly asteroids. And it may be that, in “The Final Problem,” it was not the first time that Professor Moriarty said of Sherlock Holmes, “by the middle of February I was seriously inconvenienced by you, and at the end of March I was absolutely hampered in my plans.”

\*Although, if it had been, it would have anticipated Charles Ponzi's original swindle by 33 years.

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## THE USUAL SUSPECTS

CHARLES BLANKENSTEEN, BSI, is a member of the Hudson Valley Scientists, The Sons of the Copper Beeches, The Three Garridebs and the Epilogues of Sherlock Holmes. He has been obsessed with all things Holmesian since he was 12.

HARRISON “TERRY” HUNT, ASH [A Coffee and Curacao], BSI [The Something Hunt] is an active member of several Sherlockian societies. He has been a member of the Hudson Valley Scientists since moving to Catskill, New York, five years ago.

CANDY LEWIS [“The Woman,” BSI] has been a member of the Hudson Valley Scientists since 1977. She is an art historian with a Ph.D. in the field of early Chinese Art and a secondary area of specialty in Nineteenth-Century Art in Europe and America.

JULIE ROSENBLATT, ASH [Maud Bellamy] and BSI [Mrs. Turner] is one of the founding members of The Hudson Valley Scientists. With Fritz Sonnenschmidt, she wrote *Dining with Sherlock Holmes*. She is married to Albert M. Rosenblatt and the mother of Betsy Rosenblatt.

WILL WALSH, ASH [John Hebron] and BSI [Godfrey Norton] works as an environmental attorney, when he is not discussing Sherlock Holmes, baseball, Richard III, politics, Abraham Lincoln, Liverpool, F.C. or early space flight.