

The Arthur Conan Doyle Collection Lancelyn Green Bequest

Summer 2005 Newsletter

Portsmouth, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and the Legacy of Sherlock Holmes

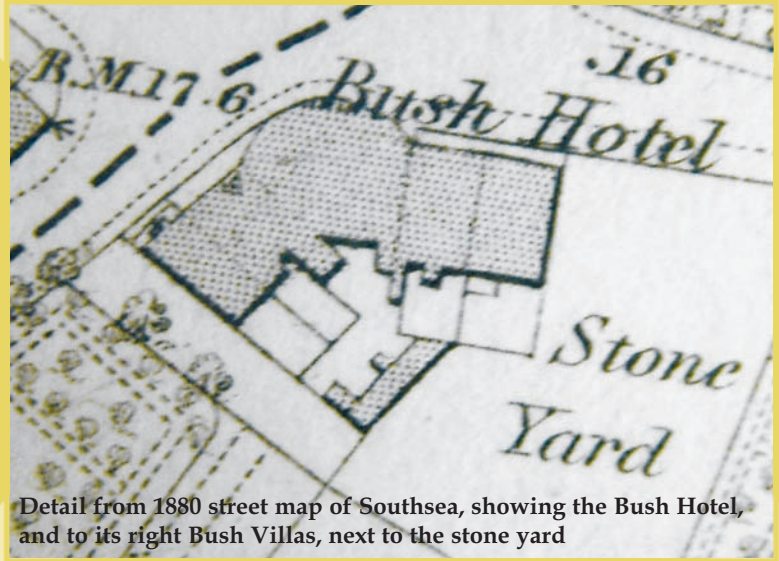
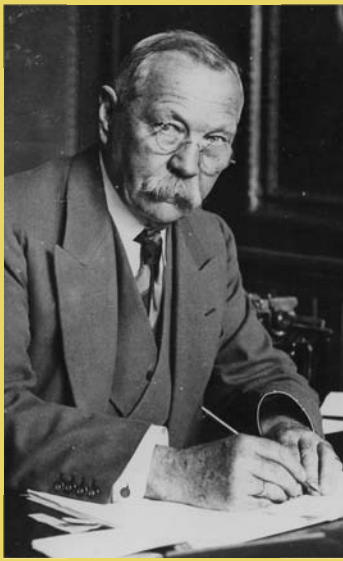
Portsmouth is proud, delighted and honoured to have been chosen by Richard Lancelyn Green as the home for his extraordinary collection of Conan Doyle-related books, papers, artefacts and assorted memorabilia. His bequest will mean that not only academics and specialists, but also the general public, will be able to access Richard's life's work, once it has been catalogued and made available. It is anticipated that Portsmouth will host an introductory exhibition in 2006, and a more substantial display in 2007. Until then there is much work to be done. This quarterly newsletter, along with the accompanying webpage, will keep interested parties up-to-date with progress. There is an e-mail address for any enquiries about the project:

LancelynGreenCollection@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

Introduction to the Collection

The popular and academic interest in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and in particular in his late Victorian detective-colossus Sherlock Holmes, crosses national and cultural boundaries. It is not just a British fascination, but one that is held across the world. There are Sherlock Holmes societies in many countries, including the United States and Japan. The interest in Conan Doyle and Holmes has been fed, over recent decades, by popular television adaptations of the Holmes stories (such as those featuring Jeremy Brett).

Within this popular and academic context, Richard Lancelyn Green was one of the foremost Conan Doyle experts, as well as one of the leading international collectors of Conan Doyle memorabilia. Thus his bequest, containing in excess of 16,000 items, will provoke enormous national and international interest. His legacy is sure to become the most important Conan Doyle collection to be made freely available to the public.



Detail from 1880 street map of Southsea, showing the Bush Hotel, and to its right Bush Villas, next to the stone yard

The Portsmouth Connection

As the city in which Arthur Conan Doyle lived and worked for almost a decade, Portsmouth is the natural home for the Lancelyn Green Bequest. Conan Doyle not only started his first medical practice in Southsea, but also conceived of Sherlock Holmes here, writing the first two Holmes novels. He was also the first ever goalkeeper of Portsmouth Football Club, and featured regularly in the local cricket team, bowls club, and literary and debating society. Consequently Portsmouth City Council will do all it can to do full justice both to the material and its collector. It will deploy its resources to develop, support, house, and display the collection in a way that is sensitive to the wishes of the late Richard Lancelyn Green and his surviving family.

A word from the Bequest's patron, Stephen Fry

Conan Doyle remains one of those writers so intensely stitched into our culture that it is easy not to notice him. The immense energy, talent, passion and literary brilliance he brought to his work gives him a unique place in English letters. His Holmes stories introduced the wider reading public to more than just the principles of observation and deduction, close reasoning and cunning detective work for which they are celebrated. It was through their (blazingly well written) pages that the wider reading public became aware of the details of the mafia, the Ku Klux Klan, corrupt unions, the bloody history of Mormonism, cocaine and opium use and much else from the more macabre and bloody underside of Empire and Victorian grandeur. He is unique in simultaneously bringing down the curtain on an era and raising one on another, ushering in a genre of writing that, while imitated and expanded, has never been surpassed. His own life, as footballer, cricketer, eye surgeon, champion of injustice and investigator into the paranormal, is the stuff of legend. Personally, I would walk a mile in tight boots to read his letters to the milkman. The Lancelyn Green Bequest is without question the most remarkable and extraordinary Sherlockian and Conan Doyle resource in the world. It is more priceless than the Mazarin Stone, the Blue Carbuncle, the fabulous black pearl of the Borgias, the Naval Treaty, the Bruce-Partington Plans, the Duke of Holderness's cheque and the Beryl Coronet all combined.



Mid-1880s photograph showing the Bush Hotel at right, with Bush Villas and new Baptist Chapel

Palmer Geo. G. (Woodmancot)
Palmer George Augustus
(Woodmancot)
SOUTH SIDE.
The Bush hotel, Edwd. Hill
BUSH VILLAS :
1 Doyle Arthur C.M.B. surgn
2 Twynan Mrs. Harriet,
lodging house
BAPTIST CHAPEL
Burt Thos. (Richmond vil)

Conan Doyle's entry in the 1886 edition of Kelly's Directory of Portsmouth streets

A word from Portsmouth City Council's Head of Culture, Stephen Baily:

Not only is the Lancelyn Green Bequest of great significance in its own right: it has real potential for the city of Portsmouth. It was Richard Lancelyn Green's own stipulation that his Collection be open and publicly accessible, so that as many people should have the good fortune of experiencing it as possible. I can see opportunities to put the Collection at the heart of our community learning, both for children and young people and older learners; for it to be part of the regeneration of the City, attracting outside interest and stimulating tourism; and for it to be one of the cultural landmarks of the region as a whole. I am truly excited about this collection's potential.

Portsmouth City Council will do all it can to develop the Collection fully; but that does not mean that we would not accept support from others as we do so. In particular, I would be interested to hear from anyone who may be able to assist us with our work on the collection, especially from prospective sponsors/donors. It seems to me to be a great opportunity for any individual, company, or group to be associated

with such a remarkable cultural monument, one that will only increase our city's profile, both nationally and internationally.

Please feel free to contact me to discuss your interest in sponsorship and funding opportunities. I can be reached at:

Stephen.Baily@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

or

**Stephen Baily,
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Portsmouth City Council,
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Guildhall Walk,
Portsmouth,
PO1 2AD.**

A word from Dr Neil McCaw, Collection Director (University College Winchester)

In contrast to many other devotees, I came to Sherlock Holmes fairly late in the day. And perhaps because of that I remember the moment well; it was when, as a second-year undergraduate, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* was listed as one of the set texts on a course in nineteenth-century literature. The tutor, who has been a valued friend ever since, opened my eyes to the genius of Irene Adler in 'A Scandal in Bohemia,' the sinister flamboyance of the German spy-come-criminals in 'The Engineer's Thumb,' and the extraordinary gullibility of the human soul in 'The Red-Headed League.' Since then I have been hooked. And in being hooked I have had the enormous good fortune of being able to make a personal fascination a professional devotion, through wider research and writing.

This is why I am so excited by the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection Lancelyn Green Bequest. It's scope and scale is simply awe-inspiring. There is so much more that could be said on the subject but which would still not get close to doing it justice. All I can say is that everyone working on the development of the Collection is devoted to making it all that Richard Lancelyn Green wished it to be. And with the help and support of others that is what we shall do.

For all enquiries about the Lancelyn Green Bequest, please email:
LancelynGreenCollection@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

