

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

We are proud to present to you the creator of the thrilling tales of the most famous fictional detectives ever known: **Sherlock Holmes**.

After a long journey back in time to the days in which George V ruled over the British Empire, we will step into the room in which one of the greatest author's of British Literature is waiting for us.



The year is 1912; the Titanic has just sunk, Capt. Robert F. Scott wrote his last entry in his diary 'The end cannot be far' a few weeks ago in the South Pole, London with its 6.5 million inhabitants is the centre of the world and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has just published the **Lost World**. This interesting story is about four men who discover a plateau inhabited by dinosaurs and ape-men in the South American jungle. But although the **Lost World** is a classic, and many authors have inspired themselves on this work of art, the author we are about to interview is more known for his stories that deal with the world famous **Sherlock Holmes**.

The room is quite small, there are various dusty books of all colours, shapes and sizes in the Victorian mahogany bookcase that is next to the armchair in which Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is waiting for us. Right next to his armchair there is a good quality wine table and there, right in front of us, with his bushy white moustache and with a friendly looking, is Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

Please to meet you Sir Arthur Conan Doyle



Please to meet you. But please call me Arthur. It is true that I was knighted by King Edward VII in 1902 for having written **The War in South Africa**, in which I defended the conduct of our soldiers fighting against the Boers, I was about to refuse to be knighted, as I felt that I shouldn't have such a special treatment for doing my duty, as any other British citizen. But in the end my mother convinced me to accept it.

Your mother? Would you say that you have maintained a good relationship with you mother?

Yes, indeed, we have always had a very good understanding. You see, I had a very difficult childhood since my birth in 1859, as my father was an alcoholic who we later had to confine to a lunatic asylum. However, my mother took good care of me and my brothers and sisters. She used to read to us tales about knights in shining armour, ladies in despair and honour, and she was a very good storyteller indeed.

Actually, I am named after King Arthur, the legendary medieval ruler of the Britons. It is very possible that these stories late inspired me to become a writer. I wrote my first story when I was only six years old.

And since then you have not stopped writing all sorts of interesting stories, novels and short stories.

Not exactly, I have been many things besides being a writer, and I did not dedicate myself completely to writing until 1891. I have been a soldier, a journalist, a doctor and even a whaler.

Before going into your writing experience, please talk to us about all these different jobs you have had.

I originally studied to be a doctor at Edinburgh University, and even practised medicine for some years. But before I qualified as a doctor, right after completing my third year of medical studies, I worked as a ship's surgeon on a whaler. For two months we hunted seals off the Greenland coast and even headed northward searching whales.

And in what refers to being a soldier, I served in the Boer War as senior physician at a field hospital. As I stated a few minutes ago, two years after I left South Africa. I wrote a pamphlet defending the way in which my compatriots carried out the war.

Now that we know about your non writing work experience, please tell us about your most famous character: Sherlock Holmes. Who is it inspired on?

The character is inspired on one of my university professors: Dr. Joseph Bell, I worked very close with him and hand noticed that he was able to deduce an enormous amount of information from just having a look at a patient.

How did all start? I mean, all those stories concerning the famous detective who lives in London at 221B Baker Street?

I wrote **A Study in Scarlet**, my first Sherlock Holmes story, in 1886, in only three weeks. The year after, it was published in the *Beeton Christmas Annual*. This story introduced Sherlock Holmes and his friend and colleague Dr. Watson to the general public, Dr. Watson is Sherlock Holmes' own 'personal Boswell', and is the narrator of his stories.

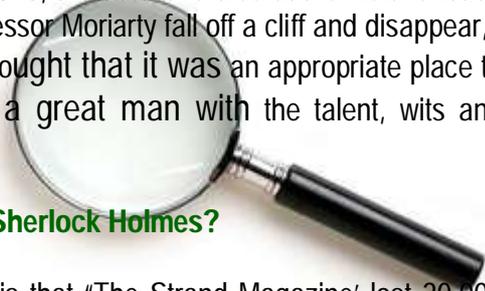
Later on, and during the first half of the eighteen nineties I wrote **The adventures of Sherlock Holmes** and **The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes** for The Strand Magazine: **A scandal in Bohemia, The Boscombe Valley Mystery, The Five Orange Pips, The Adventure of the Speckled Band, The Adventure of the Copper Beeches.**

... but after many stories about Sherlock Holmes, I was starting to get a bit tired of writing mystery stories, and I really wanted to write historic novels.



What did you do then?

Although my stories were very successful, I decided to give Sherlock Holmes a tragic ending. In **The Adventure of the Final Problem**, published in 1893, the detective dies at the Reichenbach falls in Switzerland, Both him and his archenemy Professor Moriarty fall off a cliff and disappear, I had visited Switzerland earlier that same year and thought that it was an appropriate place to put an end to his life. A place fit for the death of a great man with the talent, wits and determination of Sherlock Holmes.



How did the people react to the death and end of Sherlock Holmes?

Maybe I made a mistake. I don't know, but the fact is that "The Strand Magazine" lost 20,000 subscriptions, and people got very angry.

And that was the end of the world's most famous detective, right?

Not exactly, in 1902 I wrote *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, in which I recounted a Sherlock Holmes story, prior to the Reichenbach incident. The story was an enormous success, 'The Strand Magazine' increased its print run in 30,000 copies and I continued writing stories about Sherlock. As a matter of fact, in *The Adventure of the Empty House*, I brought Sherlock Holmes back to life by saying that he was able to elude death by hanging on to a cliff before plunging down below into the wild waters of the Reichenbach Falls. Last year I published *The Red Circle* and *Lady Frances Carfax*.

Arthur, I hope you don't mind if I ask you some more personal questions.

Not at all, my life is an open book for you ha ha, Pardon the pun..

Very well, I wanted to ask you if you have ever fallen in love.

Old chap, I have loved more than you would imagine from a white moustached, serious looking author born in 19th century Scotland.

Back in 1885 I met Jack Hawkins who was ill with cerebral meningitis. And although his days were numbered I was determined to help him and his family in every way I could. Jack passed away, but his sister Louise and I fell in love. We got along together very well, got married and had two children. But life is tough on us sometimes, and in 1893 Louise was diagnosed with tuberculosis.

For this reason we decided to move to Davos, Switzerland, where I thought that her health would improve. It was there that I visited the Reichenbach falls. In Switzerland I learned to ski, a sport which almost nobody in the Alps practises but that I am sure someday will become very popular. Just wait and see, However, it was difficult to live so far away from home in those days. We finally decided to move to Surrey, where the climate was also beneficial for people suffering from tuberculosis.

After her death I suffered a deep depression, but I recovered in due time and married Jean in 1907.

From what you have just said, besides, we have discovered that you like skiing. Do you have any other hobbies?

It might seem a bit strange to you, and I really don't know if you could consider if you could consider it a hobby, but I like helping innocent people who have been unjustly sentenced in court. A few years ago I helped George Edalji, whose father was a Parsee Indian. George had been unjustly accused of maiming farm animals. Doing a bit for detective work myself I gathered information to help George and clear his name.

I am currently helping another man called Oscar Slater, who has been accused of murder, but I am convinced that he is innocent. All the evidence that I have collected clearly indicates that he is not responsible for the death of anyone, and I will continue to fight to get him out of jail (at the moment of the interview Sir Arthur Conan Doyle does not know that in 1927 Oscar Slater is to become a free man).

Well gentlemen, I have spoken to you about my work and even about my private life. I must leave you now, as I need some time in order to answer an article written by George Bernard Shaw in the *Daily News and Leader*. That man has gone completely mad! Can you believe that he has written an essay in which he attacks poor Captain Smith, the valiant seaman who went down with the Titanic only recently? That man was a hero, he sank with his ship and deserves better treatment.

We left the room with a quick and friendly "thank you for your time Arthur", and as we headed for our time machine, we could see that our good friend Arthur was already at it writing the article that was to be published days later.

I couldn't stop thinking about what lay ahead in the life of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, things that at the moment of the interview I already knew but that he would never imagine; the death of one of his sons in World War I, his friendship with American magician Harry Houdini, getting the chance to see "The Lost World" on the silver screen in 1925 and finally his death 1930s. Before dying from heart disease, Arthur Conan Doyle said, "The reader will judge that I have had many adventures. The greatest and most glorious of all awaits me now"

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