

Dear George

Your email to Lucy Hammerton has been forwarded to me. As you will already know, Arthur Conan Doyle attended Stonyhurst between 1868 and 1875, spending the first two years at the nearby prep school, at Hodder Place and the remaining five at the College.

Unfortunately, he left before the only sustained official journal – *The Stonyhurst Magazine* - was initiated. Before that there were a number of unofficial (i.e. pupil-led) publications. These were handwritten and therefore diminutive in size and limited to one or two copies and very few issues. The only one dating from ACD's time was called *The Wasp*. He actually played a part in its production but unfortunately, to the best of my knowledge, no known copies have survived. I am attaching a piece I have prepared on ACD at Stonyhurst, which includes a little more detail of this. It is perhaps a little curious that ACD should have contributed cartoons when another of the editorial team was Bernard Partridge (later Sir Bernard Partridge), who went on to become a lifelong professional artist, most famous for his cartoons, especially in *Punch*. He became Chief Cartoonist for this periodical in 1910 and continued to produce cartoons for *Punch* until shortly before his death in 1945. The very first Chief Cartoonist for *Punch* had been Richard Doyle, ACD's uncle Dicky, until 1850, when he was replaced by John Tenniel. Both Tenniel and Doyle were later knighted.

You are most welcome to use any of the information in the attached document, as long as it is appropriately accredited, please, in the bibliography.

With best regards

David Knight (archivist)

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## SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE – HIS STONYHURST YEARS

He was sent to Stonyhurst in September 1868, at the age of 9 years and 4 months. His fees were paid by his father's two brothers. The main reason seems to have been to allow him to grow up away from the damaging and distressing problem of a drunkard father; a talented and fairly successful artist with a likeable and gentle personality, but with a worsening drink problem that led to his behaviour becoming increasingly disturbed when under the influence. By the time of Arthur Conan Doyle's arrival at Stonyhurst, the pupils had begun to go home at Christmas time, but he was one of a small number of boys who remained at school over the Christmas holidays, ostensibly because of the distance from home, although the real reason was to keep him away from the family home as much as possible. It is believed that the Jesuit authorities agreed to convey to Arthur that this was *their* ruling to divert any resentment away from his mother, with whom he would always remain close.

## THE STAFF

Arthur spent his first two years at the preparatory school at nearby Hodder Place. He was very happy there, largely because of the charismatic figure of a young scholastic, **Francis Cassidy SJ**, who enchanted the boys at bedtime with his adventure stories and must have instilled in the impressionable young Arthur the power of a good tale well told. After his ordination Fr Cassidy had two spells as Superior at Hodder, the second one lasting from 1884 until his death in December 1915. ACD maintained a lifelong friendship with Fr Cassidy and we have some examples of his letters to him in our archives.

The next four years, which he spent at the College were far less happy. His form master for the whole of this time was **Fr Cyprian Splaine SJ**, a former pupil of the school. Doyle would have been receptive to a teacher who displayed a broad approach to subjects like Latin and Greek (for Classics occupied a substantial proportion of the curriculum), but Fr Splaine was preoccupied with minute details of the text. There was a similar problem with religion; Doyle would have favoured a broad, flexible approach but Splaine focussed on intricate theological detail. There was also a clash of personalities; Doyle was an energetic, masculine youth who loved the rough and tumble of games, whilst Fr Splaine was a gentle, rather delicate aesthete, a tortured figure often on the verge of mental illness, to which he finally succumbed at the age of 45, dying in 1892 at the age of 50.

There was a similar clash of personalities on the discipline front. The First Prefect was **Fr Thomas Kay SJ**, who had a strict, confrontational approach – particularly, it seems, in the case of Fr Splaine’s charges, perhaps because the authorities sensed that the form master was incapable of maintaining discipline – to which Doyle rebelled. In his own words: ‘I had a nature which responded eagerly to affectionate kindness (which I never received) but which rebelled against threats and took a perverted pride in showing that it would not be cowed by violence’. As a result he undertook a series of escapades for which he was regularly punished with the ferula, more so than most of his fellow pupils. In the circumstances, it is not surprising that Doyle came to reject the Catholic faith. Whilst still at school he volunteered to serve at Mass so that his failure to take part in Communion would not be noticed. He did, however, maintain a strong moral code throughout his life.

Another possible reason why his behaviour was less mature than the rest and why he failed to win either the top places or prizes was that he was considerably younger than all the other boys in his year by anything from eighteen months to three years. He was, however, physically big and strong for his age and thus able to get into the Football XXII (although not the XI) and he was later to play soccer for Portsmouth, usually as goalkeeper. He also played a lot of cricket and returned to Stonyhurst in August 1885 to meet up with the other members of the Wanderers (the ‘old boys’) XI and went on a short cricketing tour of Ireland. This suggests that his animosity to his old school – and to his fellow pupils – was rather less than has sometimes been claimed. Also, in a letter to a Fr Hayes SJ in May 1892 he states: ‘I have nothing but kindly feelings towards my old friends and teachers of the Order ...’.

In spite of the behaviour and age disadvantage, he was nevertheless successful in winning a few prizes for his academic work during his five years at the College.

His form master in his final (Rhetoric) year was **Fr Reginald Edward Wellesley Colley SJ** (a distant relative of the Duke of Wellington), who later became Provincial. He had qualities that would have gained ACD's respect but unfortunately only came on the scene after the damage had been done.

Notwithstanding his unenthusiastic final year reports ('lazy –matric doubtful' at Christmas, followed by 'matric less doubtful' at Easter and finally 'matric just possible' in the summer term) he DID manage to matriculate and went on to spend a further year with the Jesuits, this time at Feldkirch in the Austrian alps.

## **FELLOW PUPILS**

During his Syntax year, along with a small number of other clever and high-spirited boys, he played a leading part in producing a hand-written magazine, which ran for five issues. It was called the *Wasp*, an aptly-chosen name as it contained a satirical attack on the authorities and the perceived oppression caused by their tyrannical approach and as such it carried a considerable 'sting in the tail'. But it also satirised and ridiculed certain boys who threatened to demoralise their fellows. As a result, it proved to be more help than hindrance to the Prefects and, as such, received leniency at their hands. Doyle's contributions included cartoons, one of which (in photocopied form) is in our archives. Sadly, no copies of any of the issues of the *Wasp* have survived.

Doyle's involvement in the *Wasp* and in other activities such as games, and his rebelling against authority, should have made him popular with his fellow pupils, but he maintained that he had few friends, indeed only one true friend – **James Ryan**, whose home was in Glasgow and who, like Doyle, was of Irish descent. Ryan was a year below Doyle but they were about the same age. He was to spend his working life as a tea-planter in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) and, after his death in 1920, he bequeathed his extensive collection of books on the Indian subcontinent to the College, where they can still be found in the Bay Library.

There may be several reasons why Doyle had so few close friends including his being considerably younger than the rest of the boys in his class at a time when close relations with boys in other years were actively discouraged. There were also relatively few boys of working or lower middle-class families at Stonyhurst at a time when there was much class-consciousness, and when schoolboy society was dominated by cliques of boys from more affluent households.

## **SHERLOCK HOMES INFLUENCES**

## 1. CHARACTERS

It is highly likely that some of the principal characters will have been based on, or at least influenced by, people he had known at Stonyhurst.

The arch-criminal and master-manipulator Professor James Moriarty, who also had a brother called James (!) is clearly based on the two **Moriarty brothers** – John and Michael – who were his contemporaries at Stonyhurst. They were both good at mathematics, but it was Michael who was outstanding and won the second prize in the whole school whilst aged only 14 and in Grammar. Doyle writes of Moriarty: ‘At the age of twenty-one he wrote a treatise on the binomial theorem’. But it was John who seems to have been of questionable character. He later became Solicitor-General, followed by Attorney General, for Ireland and finally Lord Justice of the Irish Bar. In the Sherlock Holmes stories the character is described by Holmes as having a face which ‘protrudes forwards and is forever oscillating from side-to-side in a curiously reptilian fashion’. And in real life, when John Moriarty rose to examine a witness, the word ‘uncoiled’ has been used to describe his action. There are also other examples of his serpent-like demeanour. He has also been accused of hypocrisy, hiding his opportunism behind a sanctimonious façade.

Some of the names of the other characters may also be traced to his fellow pupils, notably **Patrick Sherlock**, whose arrival at Hodder on 2 October 1868 is recorded on the same page as the arrival of Arthur Doyle. Interestingly, Sherlock was apparently far from being outstandingly brainy. Perhaps Doyle had this in mind when, in his first Holmes story *A Study in Scarlet* Holmes was said to have no knowledge of literature? In later stories, however, Sherlock Holmes’ knowledge of literature was described as considerable.

Others included a **Thurston** (a man with whom Watson played billiards in *The Dancing Men*) – the Stonyhurst one later became a Jesuit priest, a **Garcia** (*Wisteria Lodge*), a **Dunn** (*The Valley of Fear*) and a **Moran** (the name of a family in *The Boscombe Valley Mystery* and a father and son in *The Empty House* and other stories, the son being Professor Moriarty’s chief of staff and ‘the second most dangerous man in England’). At Stonyhurst he was Norbert Louis Moran, who arrived at Hodder two weeks after Doyle but was put in a higher class.

There *was* a Watson at Stonyhurst, but he arrived five years after Doyle and it is a common enough name; there were, for example, several Watsons at Edinburgh during Doyle’s medical training. There was no pupil at Stonyhurst called Holmes!

There was no Ryan in the Holmes canon but it has been suggested that the character Victor Trevor in *The Musgrave Ritual* is based on him – he is described as the only true friend that Holmes made at university and he later became a tea-planter.

## 2. PHYSICAL SETTING

This is most apparent in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Although set in Dartmoor, the description of Baskerville Hall has several important features that are sufficiently similar to those at Stonyhurst to support the notion that Doyle had his old school in mind when setting the scene for his latest Holmes adventure. The Yew Alley, in which Sir Charles Baskerville met his death from a fatal heart-attack whilst fleeing from a phantom hound, has its counterpoint in the Dark Walk in the Stonyhurst gardens. In Victorian Stonyhurst it is reported that boys would run after nightfall along the Dark Walk from ‘imagined terrors’, perhaps the ghostly survivors of Pendle Witchcraft. Half way along the Dark Walk (i.e. that part of it which still survives after much of it was removed early in the nineteenth century to create a playground area close to the school building) there is an opening looking out across the valley towards Pendle. In the story, Sir Charles’ footprints in the sandy floor (which our Dark Walk also has) indicated to Holmes that it was at a similar opening onto the moor part way along the Yew Alley that he encountered the hound. There is also a mention of a summerhouse at one end, which is actually true of two of the garden paths that run parallel with the Dark Walk, each bounded by yew hedges and with a sandy floor. The ‘Yew Alley’ in the story would seem to be an amalgam of these two paths in the College gardens.

There is the long drive along the avenue as the house is approached, which has, just like the West Front at Stonyhurst, mullioned windows, a central block with ‘twin towers, ancient, crenellated’, and ‘to right and left more modern wings’. Inside Baskerville Hall was a long corridor ‘extending the whole length of the building from which all the bedrooms opened’, just as there was on the top floor of the Old South Front at Stonyhurst during Arthur Doyle’s schooldays. And the dining room of Baskerville Hall is described in the following terms: ‘It was a long chamber with a step separating the dais where the family sat from the lower portion reserved for their dependents. At one end a minstrels’ gallery overlooked it’. Substitute ‘staff’ for ‘family’ and ‘boys’ for ‘dependents’ and you have an accurate description of the old refectory at Stonyhurst College after its extension and alterations of the late 1850s.

DNK (Revised January 2012)



THE PASSAGE OF THE RED SEA.

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Like to white daisies in a blooming wood,  
 So round the sea the tents of Israel stood;  
 To east and west, as far as eye could reach,  
 The thronging crowds are seen along the beach.  
 What host is this? Is it some savage band  
 That bears destruction to a distant land?  
 Is it some patriot army come to fight -  
 To save their honor, and their nation's right?  
 No army this. These girls who throng the plain,  
 Would they e'er follow in an army's train?  
 Behold these aged men! are their grey locks  
 Fitted for war? Hark to the bleating flocks!-  
 'Tis but a nomad tribe who seek in flight  
 Relief from bondage, and from Pharaoh's might.  
 But lo! what shouts are these? What horrid sound  
 Which fills the air, and seems to shake the ground?  
 High on the summit of a mountain crest,  
 Hard by, a cloud of dust is seen to rest;  
 And higher still above the dust appears  
 The sheen of armour, and the gleam of spears!  
 And further off are heard the deafening peals  
 Of bugles, and the rush of chariot wheels:  
 In Israel's camp is frenzy and despair;  
 The women rave and tear their flowing hair;  
 The men by grief and disappointment cowed,  
 Around the standard of their leader crowd.  
 Then Moses spake:- "Behold my wondrous rod-  
 Think what its power has wrought, and think on God;  
 And say if He, the mighty God who boasts  
 To be the Lord of lords, and King of Hosts,  
 Cannot, although so mighty and so sage,  
 Free us from Egypt and from Pharaoh's rage."  
 He spake, and by the shore he took his stand,  
 And o'er the waters thrice he shook his wand.  
 Wonder of wonders! lo, the waves divide  
 And stand in dark green walls on either side!  
 Right through the midst the roaring sea is reft,  
 A slippery, dismal, weedy way is left!  
 There was no time for thought, no time for fear,  
 For Egypt's horse already pressed their rear.  
 On, on, they rush right through the sea, and reach,  
 Fatigued and tired, the rough opposing beach.  
 Then back they look, and see their daring foe  
 Still pressing through the yawning gulf below.  
 Once more did Moses shake his awful wand,  
 To his command the foaming waves respond.  
 One horrid shriek!-the tragedy is o'er,  
 And Pharaoh and his army were no more.

A. C. D.

*Conan Doyle*

STONYHURST, November, 1873.



# THE JUDKIN'S TRAGEDY

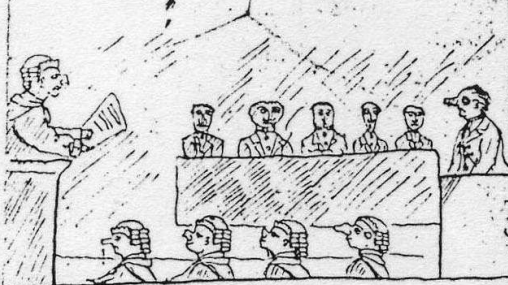


JUDKINS AND A SAILOR

COME TO BLOWS.



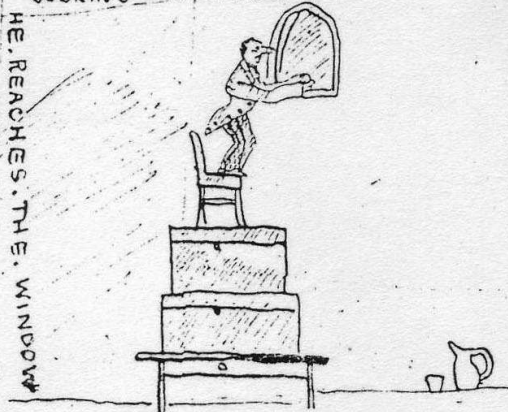
CONSTABLE CATCHES JUDKINS



JUDKINS IS CONDEMNED.



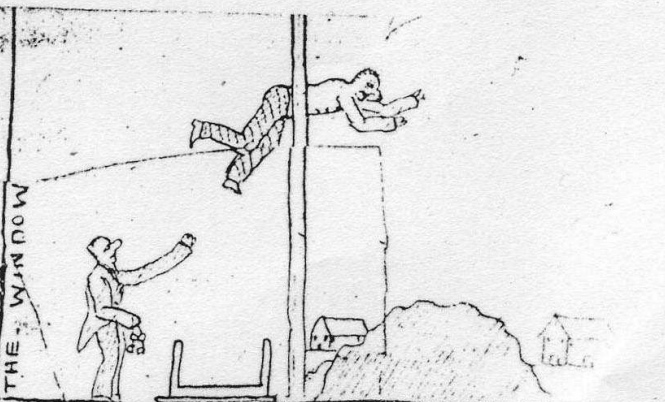
JUDKINS. MEDITATES. ESCAPE



HE REACHES THE WINDOW



JUDKINS. STICKS. IN.



THE WINDOW