



THE GREEN SETTEE

Two Decades of Friends and Family

The Friends of the ACD Collection celebrated their twenty year anniversary in 2017

DOUG WRIGGLESWORTH & CLIFF GOLDFARB

In 1997, the Bootmakers of Toronto celebrated a quarter century of Sherlockian scholarship and fellowship with an international conference entitled, appropriately enough, “Lasting Impressions.” The resulting gathering of Sherlockians, Holmesians and Doyleans from the four corners of the world focused attention on that literary treasure trove, the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection at the Toronto Reference Library.

The Bootmakers are indeed offspring of the Collection, having been formed as a result of its opening in 1972. The first Curator, Cameron Hollyer, together with some prominent local Sherlockians and with the strong encouragement of the great collector and gadfly John Bennett Shaw, were instrumental in the birth of the Bootmakers.

After “the tumult and the shouting died, and the Captains and the Kings departed” [apologies to Tennyson], several locals turned their thoughts to the ACD Collection, and how to help it to flourish over the next 25 years. Maureen Green and Cliff Goldfarb had been appointed by the Bootmaker Executive to look into ways to support the Collection, knowing that the Bootmakers themselves would not be an appropriate organization for such a purpose. Doug Wrigglesworth, Chair of the Conference, suggested the formation of a “Friends” organization, a concept with which he had some experience.

A small group of enthusiasts gathered at Cliff’s office on November 18, 1997, to formulate a plan.¹ Initial suggestions included the publication of a newsletter and the creation of a mailing list, beginning with the Conference attendees and the wide range of personal contacts that was available. Doug and Cliff found themselves appointed as Chair and Vice-Chair *pro tem*.² By the spring of 1998 the first mailing went out, and within a year the Friends had grown to over 100 members.

We were soon aware of the need to connect with senior Library

staff, and of the advantages of working with the Toronto Public Library Foundation, a registered Canadian charity. Cliff established a strong and helpful relationship with its President, Jennifer Blunt, which has continued with her successors, first Heather Rumball and now Jennifer Jones. The Foundation has been our host since day one, which gave us immediate charitable status. An important result of this relationship was the forming of an American Foundation for the TPL,³ which allowed our American Friends to receive U.S. charitable tax treatment for their donations.

Doug had several meetings with David Kotin, then Head of Special Collections, concerning the exact nature of the Friends’ role. Once David was assured that we were interested in supporting the Collection and not interfering with Library operations, he gave us his complete support. His successor, Mary Rae Shantz, continued to provide advice and assistance.

As to the Collection itself, the ACD Friends have been blessed with wonderful support from the Curators as well as many other TPL staff. Cameron Hollyer continued working with us following his retirement, until his untimely death. Victoria Gill, who followed Cameron, was always cooperative. Peggy Perdue succeeded Victoria and immersed herself into our world of Sherlock Holmes and Arthur Conan Doyle. Peggy has earned an international reputation and awards for her enthusiastic and learned outreach activities and her writing. Since Peggy’s recent promotion to Department Head of Special Collections, Jessie Amaolo has become the latest Curator and joined our family.

So, what have we accomplished over the past 20 years? Here are a few of our major achievements.

1. Promoted the Collection’s international profile:

- One of the ‘go to’ places for research and as a source of primary documents on ACD and the Sherlockian Canon
- A family of supporters, gained through our newsletter, *The Magic Door*, and personal contacts made by many, not the least of whom Peggy Perdue, whose travels have added to the fold

2. Conferences:

- While the 1997 conference “Lasting Impressions” was really a Bootmaker event, it introduced the Collection to visiting Sherlockians, many of whom became Friends
- “Footprints of the Hound” in 2001 celebrated the centenary of the publication *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and brought together a quite remarkable group of international experts,⁴ as well as a large audience from as far away as Japan and Denmark
- “ACD@35” in 2006 was also successful in providing a hospitable welcome and entertainment to another international group
- “Study in Scandal” [SinS] in 2011 was an attempt to debunk some of the silly rumours and myths that plague all great public figures

3. Cameron Hollyer Memorial Lectures:

In 2002 we established an annual lecture by prominent ACD and Sherlockian scholars to honour Cameron and celebrate his life and work. Since 2008, the lectures have been published in booklet form and are included in the Friends annual membership. Some of our lecturers:

- 2002 **Isaac Gewirtz**, Curator of the Berg Collection, New York Public Library
- 2004 **Maureen Jennings**, crime writer, creator of *Murdoch Mysteries* TV series



- 2008 **Steven Rothman**, Editor of *The Baker Street Journal*
- 2009 **Michael Dirda**, Pulitzer Prize winning journalist and critic
- 2016 **Russell Merritt**, cinema scholar at UC Berkeley

4. New ‘Digs’ for the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection:

When the Toronto Reference Library opened in 1977, the ACD Collection was happily ensconced in a comfortable Victorian room on the fifth floor. The only drawbacks were lack of space, and access which was limited to only a few hours per week. As a part of a major renovation completed in 2014, a wonderful new space was created in the new Marilyn and Charles Baillie Special Collections Centre. Many Friends generously donated to the completion of the new Room. Happily, the welcoming environment of the earlier Room has been maintained—and the Collection is now accessible during Library hours.

5. Additions to the Collection:

Over the years the Friends have helped the Collection to purchase important additions. Just a few examples include:

- An autograph manuscript explaining Arthur Conan Doyle’s views on religion—our first major acquisition
- A selection of books from ACD’s personal library, found in a bookshop in Switzerland
- Journals of ACD and wife Jean from their 1914 travels across Canada
- Manuscript drafts of the 1914 poem “Athabasca Trail”
- A lot from the 2004 Christie’s sale: “Canada and the Empire”
- “The Nelson Notebook” —manuscript research notes gathered by ACD
- Manuscripts of ACD’s short stories “The Marriage of the Brigadier” and “The Parish Magazine”

6. Publications:

- Issues of *The Magic Door* have been published, mostly tri-annually, since 1998. Early editors included Chris Redmond and Peter Wood. Doug Wrigglesworth acted as ‘managing editor’ for the first 17 volumes. Since then, a stalwart group led by editor Dayna Nuhn, now joined by co-editor Donny Zaldin, continue to produce quality issues
- The annual Hollyer Lecture booklets
- A limited edition of *The Four Pillars*, the story of the founding of the Collection,⁵ as well as several occasional papers
- Assisting Georgina Doyle in publishing her account of ACD’s first family, *Out of the Shadows*
- Not a print publication, but our website, www.acdfriends.org, created and maintained by Doug Elliott, tells of our history and keeps our Friends up-to-date

Executive:

Special thanks must go to all of the members of our Executive over the years.⁶ Doug stepped down as Chair in 2008 (but continued as an active member of the Board). Cliff became Chair and Barbara Rusch Vice-Chair, and served as Chair of our SinS Conference. Dayna Nuhn took over as our Publications Director. Philip Elliott has doubled as our meeting secretary and merchandise co-ordinator.

Friends and Family:

The title of this article spoke of Friends and Family. Family indeed! We cannot thank enough the many, many people who have been involved

in the Friends’ successes, both within and beyond the Library. It would be a most hazardous and foolish enterprise to name all who have helped out—and unfair to leave out any, but special mentions must go to: The TPL Foundation and its staff, particularly Liza Fernandes, have been a constant presence throughout our history; the TPL Graphics Department; the whole Special Collections Team; the Bootmakers; our American Friends led by Glen Miranker; and our many European, Australian and Japanese Friends.

The Future:

We intend to continue with our publications, Hollyer Lectures, and special events. Another conference is not out of the picture and we are planning exciting additions to our website.

Endnotes:

1. The initial meeting took place, strangely enough, on the very day that Dame Jean Conan Doyle, ACD’s daughter, passed away. In attendance, besides Goldfarb and Wrigglesworth were: Victoria Gill, then Curator, Cameron Hollyer, Curator Emeritus, David Kotin, Barbara Rusch, and David Skene-Melvin.
2. “*Pro Tem*” seems to have lasted for a long time.
3. Cliff had become the Foundation’s lawyer by this time and was asked to set up an American 501(c)(3) organization to help the Friends of the TPL’s special collections, the ACD, Merrill, and Osborne, to receive charitable gifts from their American supporters.
4. Two prime examples were Richard Lancelyn Green, the pre-eminent Doylean collector and bibliographer of his age, and Sir Christopher Frayling, Rector of the Royal College of Art.
5. Available on the Library website at <http://tinyurl.com/ydc6fxav>.
6. Our current executive is listed on our website, www.acdfriends.org.



Arthur Conan Doyle Room in the Toronto Reference Library

