

# In the footsteps of Sherlock Holmes

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## IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

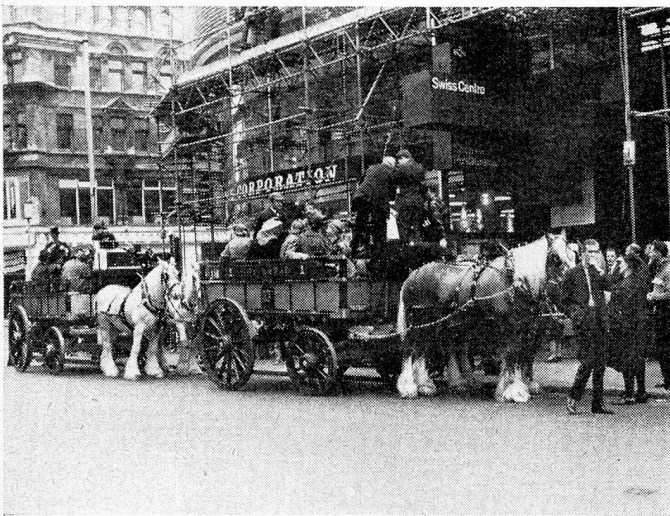
For several years it had been the intention of the Sherlock Holmes Society to make a pilgrimage to the home of the Conan Doyle Foundation at the Château de Lucens (Vaud). In that august castle built by the Bernese during the sixteenth century, which was later the residence of the Bishops of Lausanne, is the reconstructed consulting room of 221b Baker Street, world-renowned home of the first real detective of literature, Sherlock Holmes. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930) was his creator and the inventor of the modern detective novel.

The interest in Sherlock Holmes has been worldwide, and the Canon (official title of the Conan Doyle Sherlock Holmes volumes running to 56 short and four long stories) has been translated into nearly fifty languages. There are Sherlock Holmes Societies literally all over the globe. In fact, the U.S.A. group, the "Baker Street Irregulars", is even bigger than the sizable British body numbering 350.



London Airport

Photo by courtesy of Swissair



Swiss Centre, London — Departure

Originally, the trip had been fixed for last year, but was postponed. Preparations went on regardless, and on the morning of Saturday, 27th April, a group of some forty ladies and gentlemen in Victorian attire assembled at the Swiss Centre Restaurants in London's Leicester Square. The party was superbly costumed, the ladies in boned bodices, voluminous skirts and grand hair styles, the gentlemen complete with Inverness capes, deerstalker hats, stiff collars, sideburns and spats. Attention to detail went as far as jewellery and make-up, and that applied not only to the Holmesian fiction characters, but also to the vast fleet of pressmen who had got right into the spirit of the game and dressed in perfect keeping with the period. It made such a "nice" change from violence, students' demonstrations and race riots!

At one time there were 278 members of the Press in the wake of the actors, we are told by "Inspector Lestrade" who, in real life, is Mr. Kenneth Westcott Jones, well-known journalist. Mr. Philip Howard, representing "The Times", figured as a "Gentleman of the Press" carrying a copy of "The Times" of 1891.

Not only the Holmes Friends, though, but also the breakfast at the Swiss Centre at 8 a.m. on departure day was in Victorian spirit. The waiters wore white shirt blouses, brocade waistcoats and coloured silk armllets. Outsize *Zöpfe* (5 feet long) and yeast rings (3 feet and more in diameter) had been prepared according to recipes

from the nineteenth century by the Swiss Centre bakers. Huge junks were served with Swiss cherry jam and steaming hot coffee.

Mr. A. Kunz, admirably portraying the Meiringen innkeeper Peter Steiler ("The Final Problem"), who was one of the chief organisers of the tour and himself a S.H.S. member, welcomed the party of actors and publicity people, in particular Sir Paul Gore-Booth, G.C.M.G., Head of the British Diplomatic Service and President of the Sherlock Holmes Society, who played the master detective. He was accompanied by his wife, Lady Patricia, *alias* the beautiful Irene Adler ("A Scandal in Bohemia"), the only woman ever to charm the misogynic detective. They were, however, incognito for urgent business prevented Sir Paul from being of the party at the beginning of the tour. He was replaced by another distinguished Holmesian, Mr. Anthony Howlett, barrister-at-law, founder member and past chairman of the S.H.S., expert and author on Sherlock Holmes, incidentally also the man who, in 1948, discovered the precise spot of the epic struggle at the Reichenbach Falls.

Dr. Maurice Campbell, a cardiologist of repute, founder member and past chairman, played the part of Dr. Watson. The Marquis of Donegall (a keen skier who lives in Switzerland), Editor of the S.H. Journal, played the part of Colonel Sebastian Horan ("London's Villain No. Two" — see "The Empty House"). The sleuth's arch-enemy, Prof. Moriarty ("The Final Problem") was portrayed by Mr. Charles E. Scholefield, Q.C.

The departure from London was carried out in grand style: Two Whitbread horse-drawn drays conveyed the party on the first leg of their trip. A Swissair Caravelle jet plane flew them to Geneva. Even the flight had its special Holmesian mark — a chocolate speciality from the Swissair catering department at Klotten was served, adorned with the detective's famous pipe.

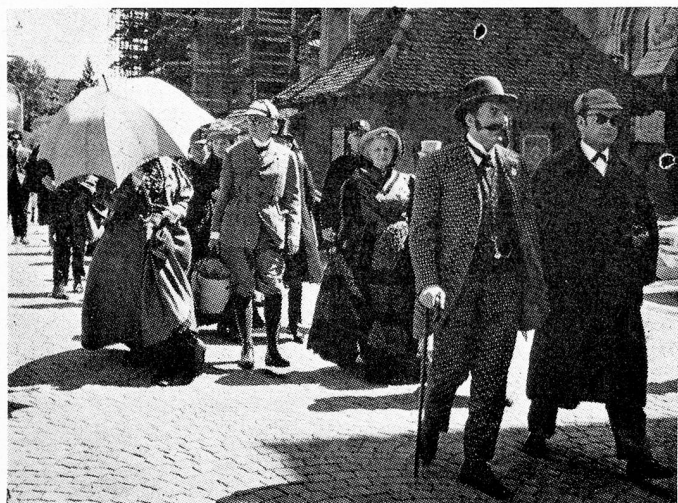
A vast crowd headed by a colourful and humorous fire brigade band (bands formed part of the welcoming contingent everywhere) received the party in Geneva, where Friends of Sherlock Holmes's from many countries joined in the pilgrimage. At the banquet that evening, the Deputy Manager of the Swiss National Tourist Office in Switzerland greeted the illustrious visitors, in particular Mr. Adrian Conan Doyle, son of the author. During a brief power cut, the diamond necklace of Miss "Irene

Adler" was stolen. Sherlock Holmes — who else? — solved the case.

On Sunday, the party sailed to Lausanne in a hydro-foil. After an English church service, the journey went on by coach to Lucens Castle — three modern PTT coaches and one asthmatic Saurer beer lorry on solid rubber tyres. The Swiss travel summer had been started in earnest!

At Lucens, an official welcome and *Ehrentrunk* were offered by the Vaudois authorities. The British Ambassador, Monsieur H. A. Frederick, was present, and during some folkloristic entertainment, the party also had a chance of meeting "Golden Rose of Montreux" participants.

The next day, the 1968 Sherlock Holmes defended the spiritual heritage of his idol at a symposium at the Ecole Polytechnique of Lausanne University. Prof. Dr. J. Mathyer, Director of the Institute of Forensic Medicine and Criminology and adviser of Interpol, addressed the party to which students had been invited, on modern scientific methods of criminal investigation.



Led by Peter Steiler (Mr. A. Kunz, S.N.T.O. London) the party enjoys a walk in spring sunshine.

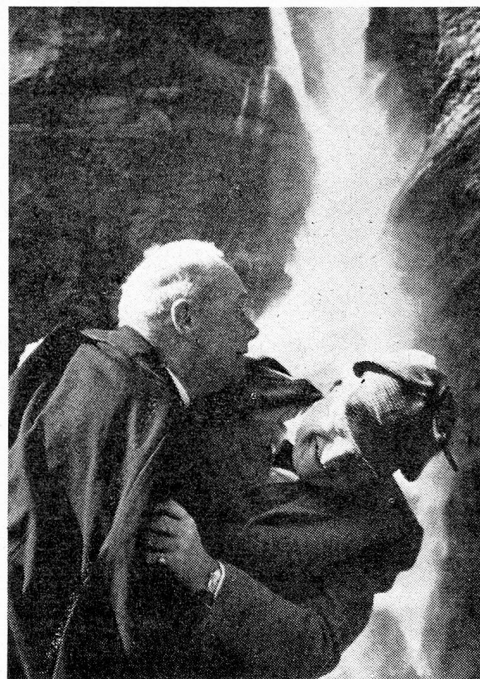
By train, the trip continued to Sion, and in the evening a jolly party took place in the vaults of the Château de Majorie, known as "Tous Vents". Under the direction of Sherlock himself, various wines were tasted by way of a competition. It also included "Devil's Foot", a spirit prohibited on the market by the Federal Constitution. It has "strange toxic effects" causing the hair to rise in "freezing horror" and resulting in "temporary or permanent lunacy". Guess what? A *Raclette* completed the evening's event.

On May Day, the party proceeded to Meiringen, this time via the Loetschberg — 77 years ago, Holmes and Watson had travelled via Leuk over the Gemmi into the Kandertal. A vintage paddle steamer, the only one left on the Lake of Brienz, took the detective and his retinue to Brienz. The next port of call was Meiringen, made on time in three old narrow-gauge railway carriages.

The Commune Council there had decided to award honorary citizenship to Sherlock Holmes. There it is, black on white, on the registers: father — Sherringford Vernet Holmes; mother — Jane Adelaide Altamont; place of origin — Ilkley (Yorkshire); occupation — private detective.

In the early morning hours, in landaus and four postal motor coaches, the Holmesians and their entourage left the Hotel Englischer Hof and travelled to the historic site above the Reichenbachfällen. After an open-air

repast, the last struggle between Sherlock Holmes and Prof. Moriarty was re-enacted most realistically, partly by two mountain guides and with the help of dummies which fell "600 feet to the bottom of the Reichenbach Falls". Above all, it was the Permanent Under-Secretary of State and the leading member of the Middle Temple, who fought for dear life with unflinching earnestness.



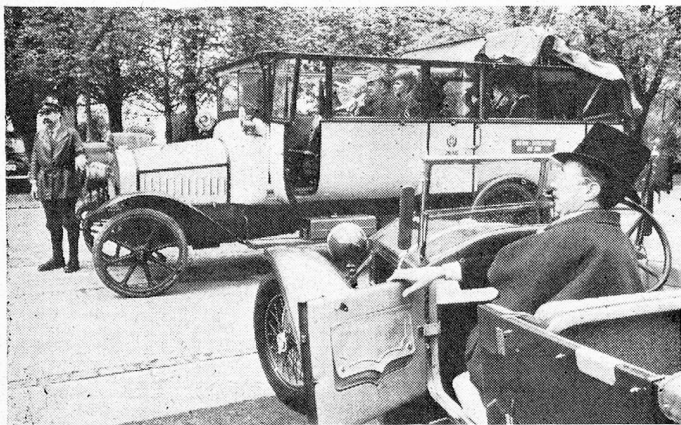
The final struggle.

A visit to the Rosenlauri Mountaineering School and a folkloristic evening brought to a close the memorable day in the Haslital. But the *Tour de Suisse* had not yet finished: three old railway coaches moved the detective and the famous and infamous characters over the Brünig to Lucerne where a dozen four-wheeled veterans had been let out of the Swiss Transport Museum. A visit to the Gütsch followed, where Queen Victoria had spent five full weeks exactly one hundred years ago. Among those entertaining the group, was a Corean in Bernese costume, who had taught himself genuine Swiss yodelling in the far East.



Sherlock Holmes beside the monument erected to his memory by the Norwegian Explorers of Minnesota and the Sherlock Holmes Society of London on 25th June 1957. Re-erected in May 1968 on the occasion of an international gathering of Friends of Sherlock Holmes.

From the Reuss into the Landwassertal, *via* Thalwil and Landquart to Davos. The visit to the Grisons was made in memory of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle who, together with his two Swiss friends, the Branger brothers, had, on 23rd March 1894, crossed the Maienfelder Furka on the strange "Norwegian boards" in seven hours. A plaque was unveiled in the *Kurpark* at Davos, in honour of the first British skier. The 1968 party did the same journey in an antique steam train to Chur and in a modern rail-car to Arosa.



*The Sherlock Holmes Friends in Lucerne.*

"Ski-ing then and now" was the attraction on the Hörnli where modern experts competed somewhat unevenly with the Victorians who performed on ancient skis out of the local *Heimatismuseum*. In the 'nineties, Sir Arthur had predicted in "An Alpine Pass on Skis" that hundreds of British visitors would come to Switzerland to do ski-ing. Today, the British spend over half a million nights in Switzerland in a normal winter season.

Monday, 6th May, the last day of the tour, ended with a visit to the "Gnomes of Zurich". Let "Inspector Lestrade" himself report: "*The final effort was an unbelievable party in the Union Bank of Switzerland. I have tried to imagine the Bank of England being opened at such a time to let in a hundred-piece band, a foreign costumed party and TV cameras, with every counter occupied by maidens pouring wine while the gold reserves are thrown open for viewing. That's what happened in Zurich — and to crown it all, the "Gnomes of Zurich" came along and gave us presents of gold-covered chocolate coins (except that two of them were the REAL THING to help our own Reserves as a kindly gesture).*"

Thus this "remarkable — most remarkable" pilgrimage drew to an end; the curtain came down on the great charade when the party landed back in Britain "... and once again, Mr. Sherlock Holmes is free to devote his life to examining those interesting little problems which the complex life of London so plentifully presents".

MM.

*(Compiled from information received by courtesy of Agence Télégraphique Suisse and Swiss National Tourist Office to whom we are also indebted for photos and blocks.)*

#### "SWISS OBSERVER" PUBLICATION DATES

The "Swiss Observer" is published every second and fourth Friday of the month. Our next issue will appear on 14th June. We shall be glad to receive all articles and reports not later than Tuesday, 4th June. Short news items only can be accepted later.

Our next issue but one will be published on Friday, 28th June. Contributions for that number should be to hand by Tuesday, 18th June.

## SWISS IN GREAT BRITAIN IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

by

Béat de Fischer

*(Former Ambassador to the Court of St. James's.)*  
*(Continued)*

A second and powerful factor which helped the Swiss to blossom out in England in the eighteenth century was the interest that Protestant England, her sovereigns and the Whigs on the one hand, and the Reformed Cantons and Geneva on the other hand, took in each other.<sup>6</sup>

The accession of William of Orange to the English Throne was warmly welcomed by Geneva and the Protestant Cantons. His policy towards them remained that of his successors throughout the century: its aim was to check French influence in Switzerland, to rally to the Allied cause at least the Protestant Cantons, and to obtain soldiers from them. English and Swiss interests were not always fully in harmony, for each side acted upon very different motives. But on the whole the Swiss neutrality served singularly well the policy for European balance pursued by England. Apart from that, England saw in Switzerland — placed in the centre of the Continent and where so many foreign interests overlapped — a first-rate observation post. All this worked very much in favour of England's friendly policy towards Switzerland and Geneva, and it also motivated the despatch to our land of successive diplomatic missions.

But there also were very special reasons for the kindly dispositions towards Switzerland of the different sovereigns. William III came from a country long linked by a close friendship with Reformed Switzerland, and, already in the Netherlands, he himself had had in his service numerous officers from our country. It is natural that in England, too, he should have maintained his friendly feelings for them and continued to rely on their loyalty. In its turn the Hanoverian dynasty liked to surround itself with Protestant Swiss, Genevans and Neuchâtelais. Of German origin, slow to learn the English tongue and get used to the English way of life, these sovereigns and their equally Germanic wives were quite glad to welcome Swiss people who spoke or at least understood their own language, adhered to the same faith, belonged to the same culture or were familiar with it, and willingly served a court which was not always popular and sometimes struggled with financial difficulties. Moreover, after the founding in 1735 of Göttingen University, where many Swiss taught and studied, new links were forged between the royal family and Swiss circles. Was not A. de Haller a professor at that illustrious centre of learning? Did not King George III refuse to allow Haller to accept a Bernese diplomatic mission in London in order to keep him in Göttingen?<sup>7</sup> And was it not typical that Ph. A. Stapfer, for instance, should spend a period there before completing his studies in England?

All this helps to explain the favourable welcome extended to some of the Swiss in England, a welcome which was all the more cordial because the Confederation kept no diplomatic agents in London, and it was precisely these Swiss who ensured regular contacts between their country and the English Court and Government. Our diplomatists and officers in the service of the Crown played a substantial part in Anglo-Swiss relations, notably where the Prussian succession to the Throne of Neuchâtel and the enrolment of Swiss troops were concerned.