



The Solar Pons Gazette

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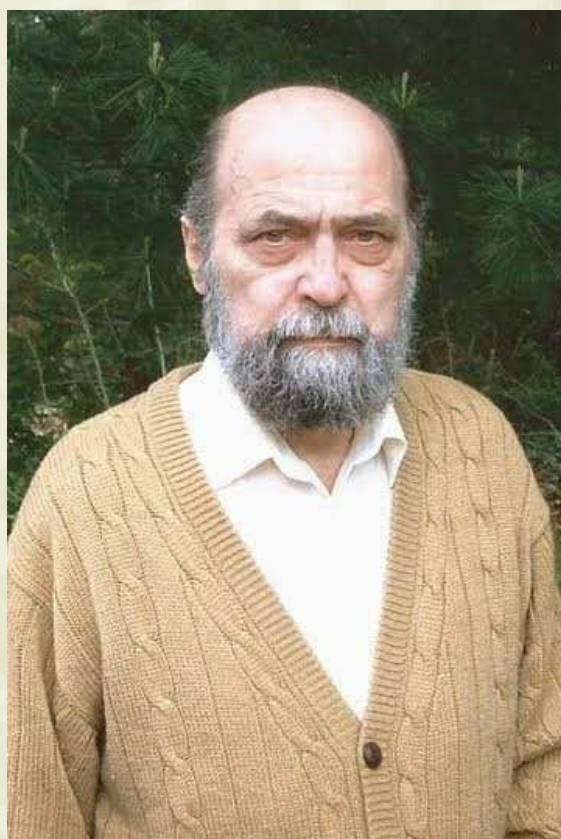
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REMEMBERING PETER RUBER, BSI

BY FRANCINE KITTS

Peter A. Ruber, BSI ("Camden House") died on Long Island on March 6, 2014 at the age of 73. He was born in Vienna and emigrated to the US in 1948. He was an executive with the New York advertising agency Kenyon & Eckhardt in the 1960's and for the past two decades was a consultant and freelance journalist for many leading business information technology magazines.



There was a time that he had thirty - seven different computer systems operating in his office. At one time Peter also owned and operated a catering business, and then operated a business selling bulk food supplies to senior citizens and institutions.

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In the early 60's Peter traveled to Chicago and met both Vincent Starrett and Jay Finley Christ. In 1961 he published *Sherlock's Anniversaries*, a collection of Christ's columns from the *Chicago Tribune* from his Crowborough Private Press and *Finch's Final Fling* in 1963 from his Candlelight Press created the same

Remembering Peter Ruber cont.

year. He edited and published four issues of **The Baker Street Gasogene** (1961-1962).

In 1963 his Candlelight Press reprinted Conan Doyle's *Strange Stories from Life* published by the Sir Arthur Conan Doyle Literary Society. As a young man in his twenties, he became friends with Vincent Starrett and took every chance he could get to visit him in Chicago.

He collected many letters to and from Starrett and, at the age of 28, published a tribute volume ***The Last Bookman***, which is perhaps his best-known publication, edited and published from his Candlelight Press in 1968.

He came to know and publish many books by Arkham House founder August Derleth between 1962-1971, some under his Candlelight Press imprint, and had been researching Derleth's life and time for many years.

Peter published many collectible Solar Pons volumes including Derleth's ***The Praed Street Papers*** and ***The Adventure of the Orient Express*** from his Candlelight Press, and worked with Luther Norris to found **The Praed Street Irregulars** in the mid-1960s.

Peter was appointed as the editor of Arkham House Publishers from 1997 through 2007, worked as an editor with **The Battered Silicon Dispatch Box** from 1994 through 2004, was the initial editor for The Vincent Starrett Memorial Library, and edited, for Ash-Tree Press, a collection of previously unpublished ghost stories ***Reunion at Dawn*** by H. Russell Wakefield (2000) and ***Night Creatures*** by Seabury Quinn (2003).

Peter is survived by his wife Gail, his three boys, and one granddaughter. He was invested into The Baker Street Irregulars in 1964 as "Camden House."

Special thanks to George Vanderburgh for his contribution to this piece.

Long time readers of the Gazette know that I try to find some cool graphic or image to put on page 3. I think I've had something in every issue so far. This time around, I've got a picture of some real, live Ponsians together! And that ain't something you see too often.

The Gazette (me) attended the excellent Gillette to Brett IV conference in Bloomington, IN, the weekend of September 12-13. If you like Holmes (and I doubt you're reading this if you don't), you really, really should make an effort to attend number V (which peer pressure demands they host). It is an absolute blast.

And, from left to right, we've got **Steven Doyle**, **Bob Byrne (PSI)**, **Charles Prepolec**, **David Marcum (PSI)** and **Dan Andriacco**. All Pons fans and purveyors of Holmes. There was also some Pons discussion at my Saturday evening banquet table (initiated by me, of course), which was fun.



GREETINGS FROM PRAED STREET



Hey there fellow Ponsians, we're back with Issue SEVEN of *The Solar Pons Gazette*. How about that? Who saw that coming way back in 2006 when the first issue hit the internet?

In housekeeping news, www.SolarPon.com got a complete facelift shortly after Issue Six came out. It's got a ways to go, but it's much cleaner, has quite a bit more info and is unquestionably the web's leading resource for Solar Pons. And of course, it hosts both *The Solar Pons Gazette* and my other free, online newsletter, *Baker Street Essays*.

Also, my Solar Pons Facebook page is up to 98 members and gets at least weekly updates on Pons and Holmes-related stuff, so that's been a success! <https://www.facebook.com/PraedStreet>

It's not Ponsian, but every Monday morning over at www.BlackGate.com, my column, *The Public Life of Sherlock Holmes*, runs. About three out of every four columns are Holmes related, so you might find something of interest.

And, there's a Solar Pons email list that I try to send something out to every month or two. Addresses are not included on the email. You can drop me an email at Bob@SolarPons.om, or send me a FB message and I'll add you.

What an issue we have for you! Prior Gazettes have been almost entirely written by me, with Roger Johnson and Andrew Norris having contributed new pieces, as well as essays from the old *Pontine Dossier*. But I sent out the call and folks responded with some fine new Ponsiana!

The aforementioned Andrew Norris uses *The Tottenham Werewolf* to show that Derleth's Pons is far more than a carbon copy of Doyle's Holmes. Something I whole-heartedly agree with!

Next up, I speculate on how many stories should make up the official Pontine Canon. If there is such a thing as a modern day Pons controversy these days, this ought to start it. David Marcum posits a different count in reply. It's all good, clean fun.

In *That Idiot Parker*, Jeff Sims looks at the differences between Derlethian and Copperian Pons tales through the character of good old Doctor Parker.

Greetings from Praed Street cont.

Our featured case is *The Penny Magenta*, because James O'Leary shares *Some Thoughts* on it. I've never been good at dating cases: however, he is.

The aforementioned David Marcum does some serious speculating in *Solar Pons was Sherlock Holmes' Nephew*.

Will Thomas takes a little time away from Barker and Lewellyn for a colorful look at Solar Pons.

Dan Andraccio ruminates on Derleth, Starrett and even Dickens in *The Adventure of the Unique Satirists*.

When Basil Copper edited August Derleth's original stories for Mycroft & Moran's *Solar Pons Omnibus*: now THAT was a controversy (I think that was the last great hurrah for Pons fandom. I'm hoping we're all part of a new one). Praed Street (and Baker Street) Irregular Jon Lellenberg wrote an account of that matter, *The Humbugging of Solar Pons*. It's reprinted here.

I'm back again (hey, it's my Newsletter: I can put in as much of my own stuff as I want) with a 'new' essay that I first posted a few months ago on my blog, *Almost Holmes*. I speculate on Pons, Cthulhu and Holmes. I hinted at this connection in Issue Six's *Notebooks* entry.

Finally, I'll let you in on some big news regarding the 2015 Gazette. Issue Eight is going to be entirely pastiches! In hand right now, I've got six brand new Solar Pons pastiches by three authors. This will be the first collection of newly written Pons stories since Basil Copper's 1995 *The Recollections of Solar Pons*. And it will feature a brand new Solar Pons illustration from Phil Cornell! I'll be sharing more details via the previously mentioned Pons Facebook page and email list.

Things are looking up for Pons! Now, if we could just get Derleth's tales in ebook form...

I N R E – P E T E R R U B E R

BY BOB BYRNE

Peter Ruber's legacy within the world of August Derleth is a rich one. Francine Kitts commented on it in the obituary that opened this issue of the Gazette. George Vanderburgh, head of the Praed Street Irregulars, wrote a nice entry about Peter on his blog. You can read it at:

<http://batteredbox.wordpress.com/2014/03/15/r-i-p-peter-ruber-1940-2014/>

Peter's introduction to *The Final Adventures of Solar Pons* is, for me, the foundational piece on Pons history. I can't count how many times I've gone back to it for some tidbit. You can view it at George Vanderburgh's website:

http://www.batteredbox.com/AugustDerlethMycroft_FinalAdventureSolarPond.htm

Go read it. Seriously.

Peter also wrote the introduction to *The Original Text Solar Pons Omnibus*. In taking a look at the Copper Omnibus Controversy, it makes a fine companion piece to Jon Lellenberg's *The Humbugging of Solar Pons*. Unfortunately, it will cost you at least \$200 to get a copy of the *Omnibus* and read it, so that piece of Ponsiana is pretty much inaccessible. Jon graciously gave permission to include his article in this issue of the Gazette.

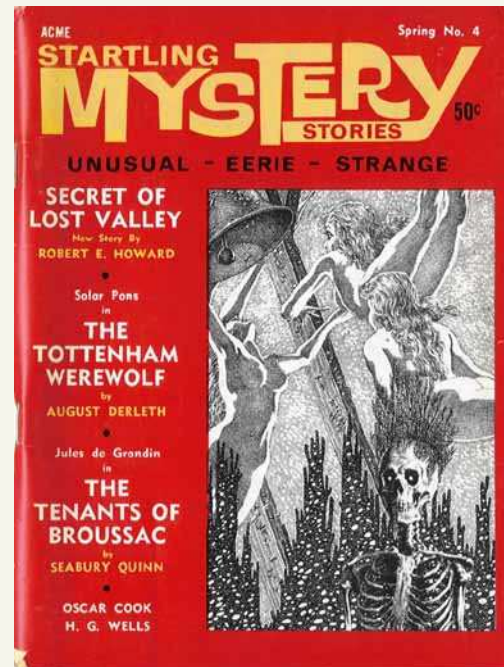
I don't have the knowledge to grasp Peter's impact on Arkham House, but it must have been immense. I do know that he wrote about Pons better than anyone else I have ever read.

I do not know this for a fact, but I'd think Peter had to be a member of the Praed Street Irregulars.

VAMPIRES, WEREWOLVES & DETECTIVES:
A STUDY OF THE TOTTENHAM WEREWOLF
BY ANDREW NORRIS

Whilst some regard Solar Pons as little different from Sherlock Holmes, the works of writer August Derleth are markedly different from those of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Such differences are best illustrated in the Pontine story *The Adventure of the Tottenham Werewolf*, an inspired pastiche of Doyle's *The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire*. This article will contrast both stories to illustrate how Doyle and Derleth took two very different approaches to writing, and how, in turn, Solar Pons proves himself to be a man of his own mind rather than a mere Sherlock Holmes clone as some imply.

The clients that engage Holmes and Pons at the beginning of these two tales reflect two different backgrounds, both reminiscent of the eras in which the detectives lived. In *The Sussex Vampire*, the client is Mr. Robert Ferguson, a “tea-broker” (a form of merchant) from the fictional village of Lamberley, Sussex, who, it is implied, had an education similar to that of Dr. Watson's, as it is mentioned that Ferguson had played rugby for a rival college when Watson himself was also a rugby-player. Ferguson uses this past encounter with Watson as a means of introducing himself to Holmes, and Ferguson himself is recommended to Holmes due to a connection to the elusive case of the Giant Rat of Sumatra, which is not expanded upon in the narrative.



By contrast, Octavius Grayle, who consults Solar Pons and Dr. Parker in the Diogenes Club (which will be discussed later) is a wealthy landowner and diplomat whose family reside in the fictional Yorkshire village of Tottenham, which is said to exist near the real-life town of Northallerton. Grayle has no previous connections with Pons and Parker, but appears to know Pons by reputation, but makes no mention of how he came to learn of Pons and his methods. Furthermore, Grayle's family appears to be an ancient Yorkshire family who, though part of the landed gentry, do not hold any aristocratic titles – much like the Bennet family in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* or the Poldark family in the novels by Winston Graham.

VAMPIRES, WEREWOLVES & DETECTIVES CONT.

However, their wealth appears to be sufficient to allow Octavius to secure a position in Egypt for a full ten years prior to the beginning of the case. All of this contrasts sharply with Ferguson, whose family background is not expanded upon beyond the fact that his family had a position sufficient enough to allow them to send their son to university.

When Holmes and Pons are presented with cases that include elements of the supernatural, their reactions are as different as different can be. Throughout *The Sussex Vampire*, Holmes scoffs at vampirism, and when consulting a reference work on old vampire legends, his first reaction to what he reads is to throw the book to the ground and to declare all he had read to be “Rubbish!”.

By contrast, Pons keeps a clear head throughout *The Tottenham Werewolf*, and never once dismisses the existence of werewolves. Pons’ open-mindedness about the paranormal is not confined to this one story, however, as other stories in the Pontine Canon also refer to this important character trait – including *The Adventure of the Haunted Library* and *The Adventure of the Frightened Baronet*.

When investigations begin, Holmes and Pons meet two very different people who respond very differently to the charges held against them. For Holmes, the suspect is Mrs. Ferguson, the Peruvian second wife of Mr. Ferguson. Mrs. Ferguson is suspected of being a vampire, but never admits or denies this charge at any point in the story, and is only accused of being as much because she exhibited vampire-like behaviour in front of the maid.

By contrast, Septimus Grayle, the brother of Octavius, fully believes himself to be a werewolf, and admits as much to Pons, who observes that Septimus grows his fingernails long so as to resemble claws. This belief is also known in the village, for the local police sergeant relates this fact to Pons and regards this abnormal behaviour as the prime reason for placing Septimus in protective custody when murders are committed on the country roads surrounding the village. For Pons, however, Septimus’ supposed lycanthropy is too obvious to make Septimus a suspect – as well as the fact that Septimus had never attacked anyone previously, which results in Pons catching the real suspect, who had attempted to frame Septimus for such attacks.

The Sussex Vampire concludes with Holmes catching the culprit – Mr. Ferguson’s son, Jack, who

VAMPIRES, WEREWOLVES & DETECTIVES CONT.

loathed Ferguson's second wife for beating him and giving him little love, which Holmes suggests could be remedied by allowing Jack to spend some time at sea. In this instance, the motive was jealousy. In *The Tottenham Werewolf*, however, the motive was quite simply greed. The perpetrator of the crime, Miss Regina Grayle – sister of both Octavius and Septimus – first murdered William Gilton over money owed her, then Miranda Choate (who had witnessed the attack), and then her uncle, Alexander Grayle, in order to collect his fortune – a fortune Regina would collect in full once Octavius and Septimus had been killed.

All of this was done using a strong and heavy back-scratcher which left injuries similar to those sustained from a werewolf attack. This complex plot differs from the simplistic approach taken in *The Sussex Vampire*, where there is only one victim and the incident is confined to the walls of the Ferguson home – thus bringing the case to a close quicker than might be expected.

Beyond the cases themselves, Doyle and Derleth differ in their approach to referring to other stories in these tales. The only reference to another of Holmes' cases in *The Sussex Vampire* is a reference to the Giant Rat of Sumatra, a case Holmes believes the public is not yet prepared for. The Giant Rat of Sumatra remains an interesting talking-point among readers of Sherlock Holmes, and many speculations have been put forward, including a novel by Richard L. Boyer that has been reprinted as part of the *Further Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* book series.

Derleth, however, is much more adventurous in this regard, and includes several references to other Sherlock Holmes stories in *The Tottenham Werewolf* – the most obvious reference being the inclusion of the Diogenes Club. In the original Sherlock Holmes stories, the Diogenes Club was a gentleman's club for the most shy and most misanthropic gentlemen in London – Mycroft Holmes included – where talking was forbidden except in one room, the Stranger's Room, where Sherlock introduced Mycroft to Dr. Watson (all of which is related to in *The Adventure of the Greek Interpreter*).

The fact that Pons, Parker and Octavius Grayle can talk freely whilst dining at the Diogenes Club contradicts Holmes' statement regarding rules on talking given in *The Greek Interpreter*, although it is possible that the club's rules on talking had changed since the First World War, allowing people to talk in the dining hall as well as the Stranger's Room by the time the events of *The Tottenham*

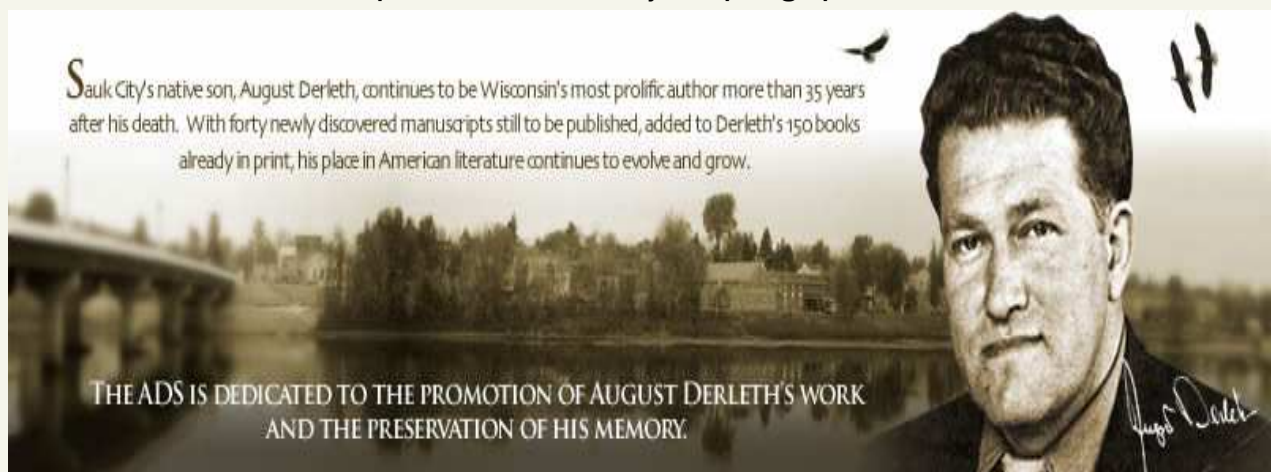
VAMPIRES, WEREWOLVES & DETECTIVES CONT.

Werewolf took place.

Another less obvious reference occurs when Pons and Parker arrive at the Grayle home – a beautiful old house named Grayle Old Place. Besides the obvious reference to *The Adventure of Shoscombe Old Place*, the name of the house hearkens back to Melham Old Place, the setting for the Pontine story *The Adventure of the Limping Man*, which appeared in the very first Solar Pons anthology *In Re: Sherlock Holmes* (released in the United Kingdom as *The Adventures of Solar Pons*) – and this tradition would continue in *The Adventures of Gresham Old Place*. All of these houses are, however, related in name only.

When taken all together, it is clear that Solar Pons, although created as a pastiche of Sherlock Holmes, differs greatly from Sherlock Holmes as a detective. Unlike Holmes, he does not dismiss the supernatural entirely but remains open-minded on the matter, not once dismissing the possibility of Septimus Grayle being a real werewolf.

His adventures, superbly written by Derleth, do not simply copy Holmes' ad verbatim, but are entertaining original stories, of which *The Tottenham Werewolf* is just one example. But, unlike the Holmes story that inspired it, *The Tottenham Werewolf* weaves a thrilling yarn of mystery, suspense and greed in the rolling hills of Yorkshire that is markedly different from Doyle's thriller on the Sussex Downs that rules out the paranormal in the very first paragraph.



Check out the August Derleth Society at: <http://www.derleth.org/>

THE PONTINE CANON: HOW MANY?

BY BOB BYRNE

The Sherlockian Canon stands rock solid at 60 tales: 56 short stories and four novels (novellas, really). All authored by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Now, there is no disputing that Doyle wrote two other short pieces about Holmes: *The Field Bazaar* and *How Watson Learned the Trick*.

But they are not included in the Canon. Notable Sherlockians such as Edgar Smith, Christopher Morley and Peter Haining have asserted, possibly with some part of tongue in cheek, that two other Doyle stories, *The Lost Special* and *The Man With Two Watches*, are also Holmes tales, though the detective is not identified in either.

The argument or inclusion has not been won. So, the Canon stands at 60 and is unlikely to change (there are no more Arthur Whitakers out there...).

The Pontine Canon – Starting Out

The number of tales constituting the Pontine Canon seems to be a more ephemeral issue. While Basil Copper, authorized by the Derleth Estate to continue Pons' adventures, authored 26 short stories (in longer form than the originals), as well as one delayed-release novel, those 27 tales, admirable and worthy of Ponsian respect, were not authored by August Derleth and cannot be considered part of the official Canon.

59 'normal' adventures of Solar Pons were published before August Derleth passed away in 1971: 58 short stories and 1 novel. 2 stories co-authored with science fiction writer Mack Reynolds deserve special mention and aren't included in the discussion just yet. So, the base number for the Pontine Canon is 59, right? Well, not necessarily.

The Chronicles of Solar Pons was published in 1973, two years after Derleth's death. Along with four previously printed stories, six new completed tales were included. Even though posthumous (a characteristic that will come into play later), these are universally acknowledged as Canonical, putting our total at 66: 65 short stories and 1 novel.

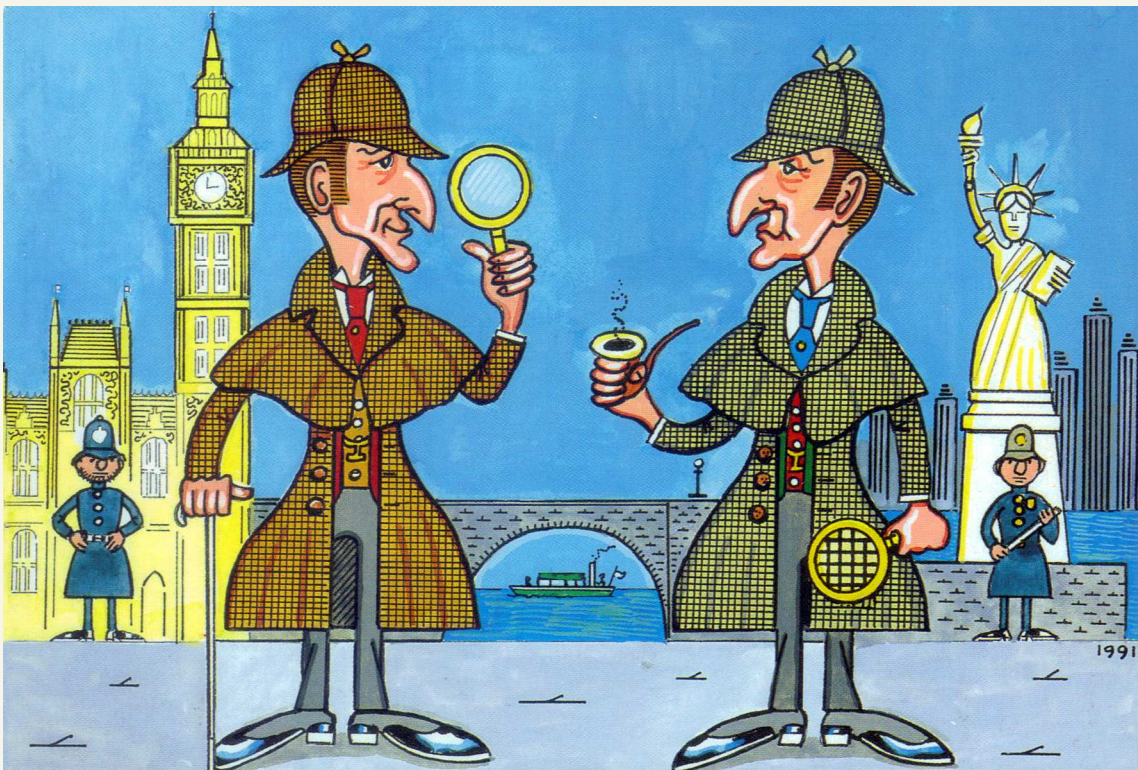
The Mack Reynolds Stories

Elsewhere in this issue of the Solar Pons Gazette (#7, Summer, 2014), is an article titled *Solar Pons*

THE PONTINE CANON: HOW MANY? CONT.

Through Time and Space. It discusses in more depth the four Pons stories written by Derleth and Mack Reynolds. The short version is that Reynolds submitted a science fiction Sherlock Holmes story to *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*. Editors Anthony Boucher (a noted Ponsian) and Frances McComas suggested Derleth revise the story with Reynolds as a Solar Pons tale.

This was done and in July of 1953, that magazine carried *The Adventure of the Snitch in Time*. This is an out-and-out sci-fi story and unlike anything else written about Solar Pons. If someone other than Derleth had written it, I would call it a parody, rather than a pastiche. In July of 1955, *The Adventure of the Ball of Nostradamus* appeared in the same magazine. While still a fantastical tale, it was no more unrealistic than a ghost story would have been.



Pons and Holmes from a postcard by Scottish artist Charles Hall.

Courtesy of Roger Johnson, head of the Solar Pons Society of London

THE PONTINE CANON: HOW MANY? CONT.

Two more stories, *The Adventure of the Nosferatu* and *The Adventure of the Extra-Terrestrial*, were written but not used. The two collaborators likely just lost interest in the project, partly due to its snail's pace for publication. The latter two stories did not appear in print until 1998's *The Final Adventures of Solar Pons*.

Though, Reynolds did extensively rewrite *The Extra Terrestrial* as a Sherlock Holmes pastiche, which can be found in the Isaac Asimov-edited *Sherlock Holmes Through Time and Space* (see where I got that essay's title from?). The original plan was for six stories, and while other titles have been discovered in Derleth's correspondence, the collaboration consisted of only those four tales.

Do we increase the Pontine Canon? *Snitch* and *Ball* were completely polished and published with Derleth's permission during his lifetime. They are full-sized adventures, as opposed to Doyle's two short pieces about Holmes.

While *Snitch* is unbelievable, *Ball* is a viable Pons tale. Derleth himself, in a letter to Boucher (who wrote the foreword to *The Reminiscences of Solar Pons*), when asked if he would include *Snitch* in a future Pons collection, replied in 1953, while it was still fresh in his mind, "[It] is not apt to appear in any [Solar Pons] collection...it is rather more of a spoof than the other stories."

Regarding the third and fourth stories, their having been unreleased doesn't necessarily disqualify them. Six of the *Chronicles* were not published until after Derleth's death and they are included in the Canon. Of course, it's quite possible that Derleth intended the *Chronicles* stories to be included in the next collection; he merely passed away before it was printed.

But it seems likely that he and Reynolds expected *Nosferatu* and *Extra-Terrestrial* to be printed in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* when he and Reynolds completed them. We'll revisit these four stories.

Surely, That's All Then?

Carbons of some unpublished Solar Pons tales written by Derleth were anonymously sent to the August Derleth Society in 1993. In 1995, April Derleth, the author's daughter, provided Peter Ruber

THE PONTINE CANON: HOW MANY? CONT.

with several boxes of her father's papers. Between these two collections, five complete, unpublished tales of Solar Pons were discovered.

There were four short stories: *The Adventure of Gresham Old Place*, *The Adventure of the Burlstone Horror*, *The Adventure of the Viennese Musician* and *The Adventure of the Muttering Man*, as well as an unpublished novel, *Mr. Solar Pons of Praed Street*. All five stories were included in the aforementioned *Final Adventures of Solar Pons*, with the novel retitled *The Terror Over London*.

In a 1952 letter to Pons chronologist Robert Patrick, Derleth mentioned these unreleased tales, saying, "I do eventually intend to revise them, rather than to let them be reprinted as they are, the typical work of a 19-year old, very amateurish."

More?

In 1965, Derleth published *Praed Street Papers*, a collection of Pons miscellanea. An almost identical collection, in a larger print run, was issued in 1968 as *A Praed Street Dossier*. It included *A Snitch in Time* and *Ball of Nostradamus*. Almost half of the book was a piece titled *From the Notebooks of Dr. Parker*.

This excellent example of Ponsiana was a series of entries from a diary that Dr. Parker started keeping shortly after moving into 7B Praed Street and before he began chronicling his friend's cases.

The Adventure of the Bookseller's Clerk is given its own subheading; the only entry in the *Notebooks* treated thus. It is also listed separately in the *Dossier's* table of contents. Such a distinction certainly merits consideration of this case for official Canonical inclusion.

A case in its favor is that Dennis Golders, who figures prominently, reappears in *The Adventure of the Unique Dickensians*. It is most certainly the shortest story under consideration.

And let us not be straitjacketed by our Sherlockian hobby's narrow definition of Canon. The perception is that we are only talking about stories: 60 of them in the case of Holmes. But Canon refers more properly to a list of official or genuine writings. What of the three Notebooks entries, defini-

THE PONTINE CANON: HOW MANY? CONT.

tively written by August Derleth in the same style and the same voice as his Pons tales?

Even though they aren't stories (*Bookseller's Clerk* excepted), should we include the Notebooks? If so, just the first, published by Derleth himself, or should we also include the two included in the official fan newsletter, *The Pontine Dossier*?

Let Me Get This Straight

The most viable possibilities seem to be:

59 – Non science fictional stories published during Derleth's lifetime

66 – The six collections and one novel

68 – 66 plus the two published Mack Reynolds collaborations

70 – 66 plus all four of the Mack Reynolds collaborations

71 – 66 plus the five tales from *The Final Adventures*

73 – 71 plus the two published Mack Reynolds collaborations

75 – 71 plus all four of the Mack Reynolds collaborations

1 can be added to any of these totals by including *The Bookseller's Clerk*. And, because of its unrealistic nature, 1 can be subtracted from 68 and greater by disallowing *The Adventure of The Snitch in Time*.

And do we add a +1 or +3 to represent the Notebooks if we include them as well, or simply include them in the final Canon number?

So the Number Is?

I believe that the base of 66 is a valid starting point. The six tales new to *The Chronicles* don't feel as if they were still drafts. And they were published alongside those four previously released stories. I don't see any dispute in 66.

I would add the five stories from *The Final Adventures*. While Derleth said he planned on revising them, he wrote them and they certainly fit in with the 66 tales. So, we're at 71.

THE PONTINE CANON: HOW MANY? CONT.

I would also include the final three collaborations with Mack Reynolds. They are plausible stories and unlike Sherlock Holmes, Pons was open to matters beyond the explanation of science. Derleth intended them to be published and they are not jarring stories when placed alongside those in the Canon. **The number is 74.**

Though, based on most of the criteria discussed up to now, *Snitch In Time* would qualify, I choose not to include it. It simply isn't realistic. I cannot imagine anyone taking this story seriously. There are a few in-jokes and some humor, so it is not without merit, but it is unlike any other Pons story; whether written by Derleth or Basil Copper. I leave it out.

I also chose to exclude *The Bookseller's Clerk*. While it is a nice story, and it has the basic elements, it is simply too short. Had this been expanded to double its length, I quite possibly would have added it. But it simply isn't a complete Solar Pons tale. It's more like an expanded diary entry; which, actually, it is!



No: not that kind of cannon!

QUANTIFYING THE PONTINE CANON: A COUNTERPOINT BY DAVID MARCUM

When I was asked to write a rebuttal/counterpoint of sorts to Bob Byrne's researches concerning "How Many Stories in the Pontine Canon?", I was initially pleased and honored. After digging into this a little further, I realized that no one is ever going to agree completely on what does and does not constitute an exact count. However, here is the way that I see it, just one guy's opinion . . .

Short Stories:

When determining the number of Pons short stories, one must start with the main collections. A few of the stories were previously collected in smaller volumes, but these books have all the essential and basic short-version Pontine Canon:

In Re: Sherlock Holmes	12
The Memoirs of Solar Pons	11
The Return of Solar Pons	13
The Reminiscences of Solar Pons	8
The Casebook of Solar Pons	12
The Chronicles of Solar Pons	<u>10</u>
	66

In this number, I agree with Bob Byrne's assertion.

Novels:

This is an easy count, as there are only two Pons novels, both completely Canon:

Mr. Fairlie's Final Journey	1
Terror Over London	<u>1</u>
	2

Additional Stories:

Now we enter shakier ground, but we're not yet off into the treacherous Grimpen Mire, to mix in some Sherlockian geography. The four "lost-and-found" stories (not counting the previously-mentioned **Terror Over London**.) have each been published in somewhat different forms in **The Unpublished Solar Pons**, **The Final Adventures of Solar Pons**, and **The Dragnet Solar Pons**. (In fact, there is another unpublished version of "The Gresham Marshes" still out there, waiting for scholarly

QUANTIFYING THE PONTINE CANON CONT.

BY DAVID MARCUM

comparison.) When all of the differing versions of these stories are taken together, they equal something that is completely acceptable, although Parker's different drafts must be examined concurrently to find an acceptable blend of each:

"The Muttering Man"	1
"The Viennese Musician"	1
"Gresham Old Place" / "The Gresham Marshes"	1
"The Burlstone Horror" / "The Sinister House" / "The Yarlpool Horror"	<u>1</u>
	4

The Mack Reynolds Collaborations:

Up to this point, Bob and I are in complete agreement, including everything that has been previously mentioned as legitimate Pontine Canon-fodder. Now we begin to separate slightly. He includes *three* of the stories co-authored by science-fiction writer Mack Reynolds in his count. I only hold with *two*.

At some point, Derleth was willing to relinquish his singular connection with Dr. Parker, and to share Literary Agent responsibilities with Reynolds. Together, they produced four of at least six planned Pons narratives. I reject two of these: "The Snitch in Time", as it is absolutely too fantastic to be acceptable, and "The Nosferatu", which involves, without the blink of an eye, the participation of a 400-year-old vampire. Neither story passes through the eye of my personal needle. The other two stories in this category, however, can slide through – but maybe just barely.

I have read literally thousands of Sherlock Holmes pastiches since the mid-1970's, and I usually reject the ones where there is simply too much that is unbelievable about them. For example, **Sherlock Holmes' War of the Worlds** by Manly Wade Wellman and Wade Wellman? I didn't even bother to read it. I don't want to read about Holmes fighting aliens, or being a Vulcan who is trapped on the earth of the past, or finding out that he's Dracula's cousin, or being Moriarty's clone and back from the future, or anything of that ilk. (Maybe the worst was when Holmes turned into a sentient hive-mind bee swarm, and then Watson turned into one too, in order to follow him as they flew away together.) But occasionally, when Holmes and Watson encounter something that cannot be explained, or they see something that might possibly be beyond their – or our – understanding, I'll

QUANTIFYING THE PONTINE CANON CONT.

BY DAVID MARCUM

accept it. I really love to read “The Death-Fetch” by Darrell Schweitzer, collected in **The Game Is Afoot**. There are half-a-dozen stories in **Shadows Over Baker Street** that I accept – but *not all of them*. I personally take Hamlet’s attitude that “[t]here are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.” I don’t think that we can explain it all, and it’s arrogant to try. But I don’t think that Holmes is interchangeable with Van Helsing – and neither is Pons. However, there is a space for the things that we are too small or ignorant to understand, and that leaves a crack for two for the Reynolds stories to slip through.

“The Extra-Terrestrial” has some of this acceptability, and I don’t just allow it because it is the P.S.I. Investiture Title of my friend Bob Byrne. Pons is simply keeping an *open mind* about the existence of aliens in London, and the person that he saw that *might* be one of the extra-terrestrials in question might also *not* be one. The same acceptability goes for “The Ball of Nostradamus”, in spite of the unexplained powers of the crystal ball. After all, stranger things have happened in heaven and earth. So in this category, I’m going to include two of the Reynolds stories:

“The Extra-Terrestrial”	1
“The Ball of Nostradamus”	<u>1</u>
	2

The Notebooks of Dr. Parker:

I’m going to count these as three separate stories, since they appeared at three different times, although they have since been recombined in different ways when they were republished in different Omnibus Editions. Initially they appeared in *A Praed Street Dossier* (detailing August 17, 1919 to January 27, 1920), *The Pontine Dossier* 1970 Annual (February 1, 1920 to February 11, 1920), and *The Pontine Dossier* 1971 Annual (February 15, 1920 to February 24, 1920). I don’t think that the life of Pons can be examined completely without studying these entries. (I’m reminded of a book that I own where the author only writes about Nero Wolfe novels, ignoring the many novellas. How, I ask you, can you leave out such important chunks and pretend to have done a thorough study?)

Contained in the first notebook entry is the stand-alone story “The Bookseller’s Clerk”, but I don’t choose separate it out of the notebook entry, or to make it a separate story entry. It is an organic part of the first segment from the notebooks, and to carve it out makes the other parts on either side of it seem less than they were. So . . .

QUANTIFYING THE PONTINE CANON CONT.

BY DAVID MARCUM

Notebook Entry I	1
Notebook Entry II	1
Notebook Entry III	<u>1</u>
	3

Something Else:

Finally, I'm going to include a couple of items that haven't been mentioned. First is the introduction to **In Re: Sherlock Holmes**, titled "A Word from Dr. Lyndon Parker". (I was always amazed that Basil Copper chose to leave this out of the omnibus that he edited. It's like chopping off the first couple of chapters of **A Study In Scarlet**.) This is an essential part of the Pons Tapestry, and while it may not be a "story" in the strictest sense, the Pontine Canon would be incomplete without it. (And length – to me – does not decide whether something is or is not a story. Some of the best and most moving Holmes stories that I've ever read are just a few paragraphs long. They may be no more than fragments, but they still convey something that adds to the bigger picture.)

And speaking of fragments, I'm going to include a fragment in my Canon count, "The Adventure of the Green Stars". It may not be more than a beginning, but whenever I re-read Pons, I wouldn't think of ignoring it. And after all, if a similar Watsonian fragment were found, it would be given a great deal of importance, and I refuse to negate any of Dr. Parker's efforts, even the unfinished ones.

"A Word From Dr. Lyndon Parker"	1
"The Green Stars"	<u>1</u>
	2

Summary – The Final Countdown:

I don't count the Copper stories. I'm very happy to have more tales about Pons – and I've even "edited" some of Parker's – and even Watson's – notes to add a few more to the pile, but I don't think that the Copper tales should be included in the original Pontine Canon. That should be reserved for those that were brought to us by Parker's Literary Agent.

Bob's final number was 74. He and I started in the same place, but diverged. We agree on the basic

Q U A N T I F Y I N G T H E P O N T I N E C A N O N C O N T .**B Y D A V I D M A R C U M**

numbers, but divide in terms of some of the Pontine Apocrypha.

My final analysis is:

Short Stories	66
Novels	2
Additional Discovered Stories	4
Reynolds Stories	2
Notebooks	3
<u>Other</u>	<u>2</u>
TOTAL	79

And there you have it. As I said at the beginning, everyone will have their own opinion of how many stories and other items should be counted in the Pontine Canon, and how the various items should be classified or broken-up into smaller pieces. But every true Pons fan should give it some thought – you'll come away appreciating the stories more just by thinking about them as part of a bigger picture. If you're like me, you'll want to jump back in and read them all over again.

Respectfully submitted,

David Marcum

"The Obrisset Snuffbox"

P.S.I.

THAT IDIOT PARKER!

BY JEFF SIMS

Introduction

"I am afraid that I am destined always to fall short of your kind of observation, Pons."

Accept as a given that the association of Solar Pons with Dr. Lyndon Parker proves a cross to bear for both men at times. On occasion, it seems, Pons must tolerate rather than embrace the foibles of his friend, who can be a surprisingly touchy companion, while the good doctor has apparently learned to bend rather than break under the lash of Pons' normally humorous jibes concerning an amateur's logical incompetence. Aspects of this unusual partnership intrigue, especially from the literary standpoint of how Parker is handled—both by Pons and author—throughout this vast collection of tales.

What kind of man is Parker, anyway? Is he a fit companion for Pons? Does Pons treat him fairly? Complicating the answers to such questions is the fact of the stories being composed by two successive writers, August Derleth and Basil Copper, who as I attempt to show, do not always see eye to eye. Indeed, I argue for a kind of disjunction between the two sets of tales which, though minor, becomes quite glaring when one looks for it. In the following sections I deal with the character of Parker, and his treatment by Pons, as delineated by the twin fabricators of his life.

Dr. Parker, According to Derleth

"I confess this is anything but clear to me." "I do not doubt it," said Pons dryly.

In creating his Watson clone August Derleth doesn't fool around, choosing to stick to the straight and narrow of a conventional characterization to which Conan Doyle would surely approve. Parker is a regular Englishman, stout and upstanding, well meaning albeit a little stiff-necked, expecting certainty and order in his world, seldom finding either during his adventures. The mysteries of Pons confound Parker because the latter isn't by nature accustomed to sifting clues toward the reality behind the wall of apparently unrelated observations, at which Pons of course excels. Exception is made for Parker's medical skills, which he has mastered via "textbook examples." So then, he is a by the numbers kind of guy.

Derleth's Parker serves appropriately as foil to Pons, standing in for we dunces of readers: eager to take part in and contribute to the adventures, he asks all the dumb questions—meaning the right

THAT IDIOT PARKER! CONT.

ones— notices the obvious stuff, can be gently led to perceive, along with us, the not so obvious. As a rule, Parker serves Derleth as a means to an end for the advancement of plot. His character seldom imprints itself on a story; there are stretches, during the course of what is presented as Parker's narrative, that he virtually disappears from the scene, with his speaking parts minimized, while conversation goes on around him.

The give and take between Pons and Parker resolves itself into question and answer sessions, and banter. The former almost speaks for itself. With considerable prompting from his mentor, Parker holds his own pretty well, so long as all the big conclusions are left to Pons. For a typical case, think of their discussion of the murdered man's murky memo in *Mr. Fairly's Final Journey*. With plenty of nudging, Parker really does get the point of what it signifies, only fumbling at the end when he can't accompany Pons in his great mental leap.

Parker isn't always that sound— he does have his sluggish moments— but often enough. His inability to make that last jump, though, often leaves him disgruntled, suspecting (despite all previous history) that his detective pal has this time overreached himself. This leads to obstinacy on his part, which must be broken down by further successive revelations.



It is their banter that illustrates the nature of their friendship. They do spar as old buddies will, with subtly malicious humor poking at one another.

Parker relishes his opportunities to one-up Pons in trivial ways, especially over the latter's reputed prejudice against women. On the other hand, the doctor's recurrent admissions of incomprehension along the lines of "I must say, Pons, I failed to follow you," are commonly chased by such rejoinders as "Ah, that is not unusual at this stage," delivered in the same mocking but good-natured spirit. I can't think of a single instance of true meanness connected with that spirit in all of Derleth's oeuvre.

Noteworthy too is the matter of Parker's usefulness to Pons. Beyond his infinite capacity as sounding board, the doctor actually does come in handy in many cases, proving a valuable, occasionally necessary support for his friend. Weak ratiocination aside, Parker isn't prone to failing Pons. To the contrary, in a tight spot Parker invariably shines.

THAT IDIOT PARKER! CONT.

The consistency of Derleth's approach continues to impress me, perhaps even amaze. Consider over how long a span of decades these stories were written, and how many there are, and the number of related exchanges between the two men. It's as if Derleth has the formula down pat in his mind from the first and never, intentionally or otherwise, deviates.

Parker, From the Book of Copper

"I do not follow you, Pons." "It would not be the first time, Parker."

Basil Copper, picking up where Derleth left off, hits the floor running with a series of stimulating mysteries, but the new designer of Pons and Parker is a very different kind of author from his too soon departed colleague. Where Derleth employs lean, sparsely worded prose to advance the intellectual aspects of the detective story, Copper leads with a penchant for atmospheric description and depth of characterization. His fewer stories are longer, replete with detailed incident, making the most of the interplay between brilliant hero and befuddled assistant.

What difference does it make? Well, for current purposes we may observe the development of a somewhat altered Lyndon Parker, with possibly commensurate changes in how Solar Pons treats him. This Parker, though somewhat more laid back than his previous cranky persona, can be more obtuse, more prey to failings surpassing his regular deductive lapses. Sad to admit, in certain distressing instances he isn't always the best man for the job at hand, nor is Pons always slow to point this out. Indeed, from the illustrious detective we may receive, in a few near unique moments, indications of impatience, even callousness, directed against his companion.

Necessarily much remains the same, and random perusal of the tales might not seem to bear out this argument, so let me home in here on those points of narrative in which Parker comes across as – dare I say it– downright foolish. Off hand three come to mind:

In "The Sealed Spire Mystery" Parker has ridiculous trouble remembering Pons' alias. Pons must caution him against mistakes, almost as he would a slow child. Fortunately this awkwardness has no ill effect on a superb story.

THAT IDIOT PARKER! BY CONT.

Parker's contretemps in "The Adventure of the Crawling Horror" and "The Adventure of the Horrified Heiress" do deleteriously impact the otherwise magnificent climaxes of those tales. In each case, Parker's stupidity involving his handling of guns leads to dangerous men acquiring weapons, and it is only by chance or author's fiat that tragedy doesn't result. Shouldn't Pons think twice before allowing his friend to tag along in future?

Then too, this Parker proves untimely in his clumsiness. His fidgety behavior is like to give the game away at critical moments in "The Adventure of Buffington Old Grange" and *Solar Pons versus the Devil's Claw*. As it happens he does no harm, but again solely by whim of Copper. One may imagine Pons admonishing the fellow to keep a grip on himself next time, if there is one.

As to Pons' behavior toward Parker, one might expect some harshness in connection with these occurrences, but there isn't really so much here; no, what I notice most are those other examples in which we see Pons rather thoughtlessly or maliciously abusing Parker. These are especially striking:

In "The Adventure of the Ipi Idol" Pons, in front of a client, pointlessly mocks Parker's casual stab at deduction. When the latter naturally protests against this as unfair, Pons glibly replies, "Life is unfair."

In "The Adventure of the Perplexed Photographer" Pons similarly, before a roomful of suspects, for no good reason detours from his analysis of the mystery to observe, in an aside, that Parker's views on the case are "childish and clumsy." It reads like a deliberate attempt to embarrass.

These cause me to wrinkle my nose briefly in the course of these wonderful tales, but an occasion drawn from Copper's weakest Pons offering, "The Adventure of the Ignored Idols," truly sinks that one. An uninspired case in the "super villain" vein, involving the less than interesting criminal LaFontaine, it reaches a climax when Parker comes upon one man assaulting another. Parker intervenes, decking the assailant, thus allowing the victim to escape, only to discover to his horror that the strange attacker is none other than Pons in disguise. "'You idiot, Parker!' said the voice of Solar Pons. 'You have let him get away!'" Yet Parker's action is entirely appropriate given his knowledge; as Pons does subsequently admit, it is his fault for not warning his assistant. That

THAT IDIOT PARKER! CONT.

doesn't quite balance the books, though, for Pons' brief spit of venom rankles. I expect him, of all men, to keep a cooler head, even in extremis.

Bear in mind that I've been harping about a handful of sentences plucked from roughly a thousand pages of material. The discordant notes in Copper's corpus impress themselves on my mind mainly because such are almost entirely absent in Derleth's.

Having said all that, something I especially enjoy about this Parker is his enhanced capacity for verbally sparring with Pons. Copper's duo are in general a chattier pair, which gives Parker more opportunity to pleasurably illustrate himself. The doctor has discovered the snappy come-back, for which he loses no points from detective or reader:

"I thought you were supposed to be the detective, Pons."

My friend looked at me with eyes in which little flecks of irony were dancing.

"*Touche*, Parker. You are developing a very pretty wit of late. I must confess I am in turn developing a taste for it."

So, despite the occasional jarring moments alluded to above, all is well in the 7B Street household. I don't want to make too much out of this Derleth-Copper divide; it's there, true enough, but usually only stylistic, and both styles have their strong points. The Copper Parker normally convinces as the genuine article for good and ill, as we have grown to know him, with his most glorious moments—such as when he saves his detective friend's life at the climaxes of the two Pons novels—granted to us by both authors. Copper continues the Pons-Parker tradition, in short, its fabric tightly woven, with just a few seams showing here and there when he wanders from the "plan."

The Culprit Behind the Distinction?

"I'm never too tired for an adventure— but at this hour!"

Perhaps the differences in the two Parkers don't require explanation: two writers, two ways of the craft, leave it at that. I wonder, though, if one may deduce an elusive cause underlying this slight

THAT IDIOT PARKER! CONT.

schism. One, probably not amenable to proof (at least nothing that would convince Inspector Jamison), involves the potential sources of the author's characterizations.

For August Derleth, I am tempted to state as fact, the sole source for his Dr. Lyndon Parker is the literary description of Watson as per Conan Doyle. That's it. When Parker springs upon the world in 1929 that's practically all Derleth goes by. He starts with that and, allowing for his own tiny twists, runs with it all the way for the next forty years. The many popular Holmes presentations during that long period do not impinge on Derleth's lovingly studious pastiches.

Basil Copper's pastiches of Derleth's, however, contain fleeting elements that may hint at another source. Various references through the years indicate a fondness for movies; indeed, the second author of the Pons tales is a notable collector. Might not he be a fan of the Universal films starring Basil Rathbone? If so, their influence might sink in, become part of the behind the scenes canon.

Do we find, in the stories of Copper, traces of the humorous Watson persona as created by Nigel Bruce? At times I can see the new Parker in that light, picture him played by that actor, hear his voice as this Parker recites amusing lines. Is it just me (I'm definitely a fan of those movies) or is it Basil Copper too? It could be that tell-tale discoveries await.

F E A T U R E D C A S E
(W W W . S O L A R P O N S . C O M)

The Adventure of the Penny Magenta - Penn
Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine, November, 1954
The Return of Solar Pons, 1958

Date

Copper/Summer, 1926

Patrick/June, 1926

Quotes

It gives me pleasure to discover how handsomely your capacity for observation has grown, Parker.

The Case

Athos Humphreys, owner of an antiques shop, comes to Praed Street. He tells Pons that his shop has been broken into the past three nights but nothing taken. Arthur Benefield had paid Humphreys to keep a manila envelope of stamps for him, but was hit and killed by an auto before reclaiming them. The stamps were not valuable. Pons is intrigued and visits the shop.

Comments

The Penny Magenta was issued in 1856 by the government of British Guiana. The "rich American" owner referred to by Pons was Arthur Hind of Utica, NY. He paid over \$35,000 for the Penny Magenta. The first known purchase price of the stamp is \$1.50. John du Pont bought it in 1980 for \$935,000.

In 1997, du Pont was convicted of the third degree murder of Olympic wrestler David Schultz. He was eventually committed to a mental hospital where he remains today. du Pont is still the current owner of the Penny Magenta.

The case opens with Pons making several deductions about his visitor. Parker silently identifies each of them as Athos Humphreys observes each telling characteristic on his own person. The usual amazement from this scene is totally absent. Humphreys quickly identifies the telltale signs. Parker either noticed them immediately, or identified them upon reflection

F E A T U R E D C A S E
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Pons references the Edgar Allen Poe story, *The Purloined Letter*. This was one of C. Auguste Dupin’s cases, in which the detective found a letter hidden in plain sight.

Pons certainly has a unique way of summoning the police. He instructs Parker to go outside and fire his gun into the air, which would attract the attention of the previously briefed Inspector Taylor. It is unclear why Pons did not station Taylor either in view of the front door or inside the shop itself.

Pons gains possession of the Penny Magenta by telling Athos Humphreys it is counterfeit, even though he is sure it is authentic. He accepts possession of the stamp in lieu of payment and then returns the stamp to its owner in exchange for a sizeable reward. This seems somewhat disingenuous on Pons’ part.

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE PENNY MAGENTA
BY JAMES C. O'LEARY

The dating of "The Adventure of the Penny Magenta" is not as unambiguous as it would first appear.

Pons and his client, Athos Humphreys, discuss the history of the eponymous stamp. Says Pons, "Unless I am very much mistaken, this is the famous one-penny magenta rarity, printed in British Guiana in 1856, discovered by a boy of fifteen here in our country, and originally sold for six shilling. After being in the collection of Ferrari for many years, it was sold to a rich American at auction for the fabulous price of seventy-five hundred pounds."

To which Humphreys replies, "You have no error of fact, Mr. Pons, but one of assumption. There is only one penny magenta known to exist, despite the most intensive search for others. That stamp is still in the collection of the widow of the American millionaire who bought it at the Ferrari auction in 1925."

The "American millionaire", Arthur Hind, was born in Bradford, England on February 4, 1856. He immigrated to the United States around 1898. He was the president of the Johnson Hotel Company, which operated the Hotel Utica in New York State. He was a director of the First Citizens Bank and Trust Company and the Mohawk Valley Investment Company. Lastly, he was the head of the Hind, Harrison Plush Company.

But it was as a stamp collector he was most well-known to the public at large. He was a Fellow of the Royal Philatelic Society of London and also the Collector's Club of New York.

Count Philip La Renitiere Von Ferrari, the most well-know philatelist of the early 20th century, died in 1917. His collection was sold in a series of fourteen auctions between 1921 and 1925. Hind's fame as a collector came in 1922 when he paid almost \$35,000 for the 1856 issue of the one cent British Guiana stamp from the Ferrari collection in Paris.

It was reported at the time that he outbid King George V for it, although in later years Hind denied it. His actual competitor for the Penny Magenta was M. Burrus, a French tobacco merchant. He owned other valuable stamps, notably the rare one and two penny Mauritius "Post Office", but specialized in United States issues. In fact, his collection had been valued between one and two million dollars. Hind died on March 1, 1933 in Miami, Florida.

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE PENNY MAGENTA CONT.

It would seem, then, that the case of the Penny Magenta would have to take place sometime after March 1933. However, in his summing of the case, Parker refers to “a representative of the American collector” and “Pons’ cable sent the collector to the experts” indicating communication to Hind himself and not his estate or widow.

Also, as Parker is living at 7B and there is no mention of a wife, dating this adventure in 1933 or later, would push the dating of Parker’s marriage later into the 1930’s.

As Parker dates “The Adventure of the Dorrington Inheritance” as occurring in the seventh year he shared quarters with Pons at 7B Praed Street”, that is 1926, then his engagement with Constance Dorrington must have been as long as Watson’s engagement with Mary Morstan was short.

If we posit that Parker’s use of “the American collector” to mean “the Hind estate” as an indication that the case took place in the summer of 1933, shortly after Hind’s death, we run into a problem. After his death, the collection was examined as a preliminary to being liquidated and the Penny Ma-

genta was found to be missing! It turned out that the stamp was in the possession of Mrs. Hind, who claimed her husband had given it to her as a gift sometime before his death. Hind’s other heirs sued but the judgment went in her favor.

If the Penny Magenta had been stolen and replaced shortly before Hind’s death, it could be argued by the other heirs that Mrs. Hind never had the real stamp in



SOME THOUGHTS ON THE PENNY MAGENTA CONT.

her possession and thus still belonged in Arthur Hind's estate. Both thieves, Arthur Benefield and Watt Clark "had been in the collector's service".

If the stamp was stolen when it was clearly in Mrs. Hind's possession, then we might have to date the adventure as the summer of 1934 at the earliest, pushing back Parker's nuptials farther into the 1930's.

Perhaps August Derleth's dating of "The Dorrington Inheritance" in his "A Tentative Chronology of Solar Pons" as January 1931 deserves closer consideration. An engagement period of some four years is better than one of more than eight. Otherwise, one would be forced to consider the statement of Hind's death as an error of Parker's that crept in at the time of writing for publication, and place the adventure as occurring during Hind's lifetime.

In *The Romance of Stamp Collecting*, author Ernest A. Kehr presents a few interesting stories about the Penny Magenta that may shed some light on Pons' case.

One story that almost always gets reported in histories of the stamp was related by Kehr in a footnote and merits being quoted in full:

In the October, 1938 issue of the *Stamp and Cover Letter Review*, Colonel August Dietz published a letter which he had received from an anonymous writer who mailed it in New York City on October 1, 1938. The letter stated that it was written by "an old man" who agreed to "Mr. Arthur Hind...that he would keep his secret," and went on to relate a story that he, too, owned a copy of the British Guiana one-cent of 1856—He had had one in his album "for many years," and that, after debating what to do, he had taken his specimen to Mr. Hind in 1928. He had offered the stamp to Mr. Hind for "a big sum." According to the letter, Mr. Hind had said, "If it's worth that much to you, it's worth twice that to me, provided this is never known."

The following morning the writer had returned to Mr. Hind's home, agreed to say nothing more about the transaction, and accepted the money. A few moments later Mr. Hind lit a match and burned the duplicate to ashes. "There still is only one magenta one-cent British Guiana," he said. The entire letter was written in so sincere a manner and so accurately described Mr. Hind, his home, and the incidents that philatelists who have read this report cannot bring themselves to believe that it is entirely fantastic.

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE PENNY MAGENTA CONT.

Despite the letter writer's sincerity, the story smacks of urban legend. Kehr also reports that after Hind purchased the Penny Magenta "he had facsimiles made up in faithful color reproduction which he distributed to intimate friends from time to time." No doubt these copies were made in such a way that they could be easily distinguished from the original. However, such facsimiles could have given unscrupulous employees such as Benefield and Clark the idea to make up a forgery to replace the real stamp.

Ann Leeta Gardinier was born in Constantia, N.Y. When she married Arthur Hind in 1926, he was her second husband. After Hind's death, she married Pascal Costa Scala in November 1933. According to Kehr, "as she benefited little from the Hind will", she attempted to sell the stamp but failed to get a satisfactory offer.

In April 1940 Kehr was the director of the International Stamp Exhibition at the New York World's Fair and arranged to have the Penny Magenta on loan for the exhibition. "We agreed that the New York's World Fair would insure the stamp for \$50,000, publicize it as being worth that much, and use Mrs. Scala's name whenever a story was released concerning it." The fair's publicity campaign started three days before that Fair's opening when Mrs. Scala and the stamp arrived at the Hotel Ambassador with a sirens-blazing police escort. [P]ictures and stories literally flooded the New York newspapers, news reels, and radio."

Two days later another press reception was arranged at the Stamp Exhibition at the British Pavilion at the Fair. While Mrs. Scala was being photographed with various dignitaries, Kehr reports, "I had the stamp in my hands. It was in a black card with a transparent protective covering. I looked at the stamp, and while I could not be absolutely certain without a more careful examination, I thought that it seemed to be a shade different from the one I had seen at the exhibition in 1926."

Concerned, Kehr managed to ride in a car with the fair's attorney as the party went to the Administration Building to obtain the insurance policy. "I suggested that it might be a good idea to have some guarantee from Mrs. Scala that the stamp...was the original specimen. Suppose that this was not the genuine stamp, and that after we returned it...Mrs. Scala could prove that what we gave her was a counterfeit or reproduction? The insurance company would have to pay her \$50,000 and someone would be suspected of having made a substitution."

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE PENNY MAGENTA CONT.

Upon arrival, the attorney suggested that Mrs. Scala personally seal the card and sign her name so that no one could tamper with the stamp without destroying the seal. She refused. The attorney then suggested she sign an affidavit that the stamp was the original Penny Magenta. "Again she refused without consulting her counsel. Accordingly the attorney said that he would wait until the following morning and would transmit the insurance policy as soon as he had the affidavit."

She failed to show up and when telephoning the hotel Fair officials learned she had checked out. After two weeks Kehr managed to finally contact Mrs. Scala. She said she had had an attack of arthritis and had been under a doctor's care since. The stamp was never exhibited.

So ends the story of the Penny Magenta at the World's Fair. Mrs. Scala divorced Pascal in 1942 and reverted to using the name Hind. She died on June 22, 1945.

Did she still retain the forged stamp Benefield and Clark substituted for the real Penny Magenta? Did she then try to use it for her own benefit in 1940? If so, then we must conclude that "The Adventure of the Penny Magenta" took place in the summer of 1934.

Like many other valuable artifacts, the British Guiana one cent has a colorful and checkered history. Pons and Parker's acquaintance with it was only one small and fascinating chapter.

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SOLAR PONS IS SHERLOCK HOLMES' NEPHEW
BY DAVID MARCUM

*or, Some Notes, with Digressions,
on a Meeting in North Riding, Yorkshire
as revealed in
"The Adventure of the Other Brother"*

It was all about the deerstalker. Or at least that's what I thought when I sat down to compose this essay. When I started thinking about what to write, in order to explain how I came to discover and edit Watson's notes of "The Adventure of the Other Brother", which reveals the origins of Solar Pons, I initially believed that I had found my way to Pons because of the deerstalker. Upon reflection, it turned out to be more complicated than that.

I've always remembered when I first discovered Sherlock Holmes, by way of the Whitman edition of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. It was an abridged version, which I did not realize then, and it was thrown in at the last minute by a friend of mine when we were trading some of my old comic books for a few of his Hardy Boys books. It was 1975, I was ten years old, and I desperately coveted those books. At that time, as I was already a mystery fan, although my known mystery universe was very small. However, even then, I recognized Holmes by the deerstalker and Inverness that he was wearing on the cover of the book.

Not long after, I read that Whitman edition, and it struck a chord, leading me to search out the rest of the Holmes Canon, and also to seek more and more Holmes pastiches of all sorts. And somewhere in my early teens, while at the local bookstore, I saw a set of Pinnacle paperbacks featuring another figure in a deerstalker, but with the odd name of *Solar Pons*.

So, right then, it was all about the deerstalker. That was what caught my eye, and after flipping through the books and realizing that the format of the stories was very familiar, I desperately asked for all seven of them for my birthday, and – amazingly – received all seven. Thank goodness my parents were always willing to encourage my desire to read, especially about my favorite characters.

I've read the Pons books a number of times over the years. For instance, I remember when I was fourteen, and being aware that my horrible algebra teacher – during the *first* time that I had to take algebra. She later won a teaching award, but I don't know how – was watching me read Pons one of those Pons paperbacks in class, and *not* making me put it away and think about math like

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CONT.

Uncle Sherlock?

she should have. (Of course, I have to take some of the blame here, too.) Later, with my very first paycheck from my first job, I telephoned the Mysterious Bookshop in New York, not to order a volume about Sherlock Holmes, but rather to see if they still had copies of the *Solar Pons* Omnibus, edited by Basil Copper, which I had seen advertised several years earlier. They did, and it became my first grown-up Pons purchase. My interest in Pons has increased over the years, to the point where I was able to reveal in the story "The Adventure of the Other Brother", to my own satisfaction, that there is a close family relationship between Pons and the Master, Sherlock

Holmes. But more about that in a few moments.

As I said, in my mind, it was always about the deerstalker. I've always attributed finding Pons to first spotting that wonderful headgear on the cover illustrations on those Pinnacle paperbacks. But after thinking about it some more as I prepared for this essay, I realized to my very great surprise that those Pinnacle paperbacks were *not* the first time that I had ever encountered Pons. It turns out that I actually read my first Pons story a year or so *before* I acquired and read my first Holmes book in '75. And I was stunned to figure out that, if I hadn't met Pons when I did, before I discovered Holmes, then I might never have enjoyed the adventures of Holmes and Watson in quite the same way that I have over the years.

Bear with me for a moment while I take a detour. When I was eight, in 1973, I first discovered the actual joy of reading, and what hooked me was a mystery story. One day in third grade, my class was in the library and the teacher told us that we had to check out a book. With no ideas what to choose, and getting a little desperate, I looked around, and finally a title jumped out at me. I grabbed it and checked it out, little realizing that it would change my life.

No, it wasn't a book about Pons. I doubt that his adventures were in many – or any – elementary school libraries in eastern Tennessee in the early 1970's. (They probably still aren't.) What I found

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was *The Mystery of the Green Ghost* by Robert Arthur (1909-1969), the fourth book in a relatively new – at that time – children's mystery series, *The Three Investigators*. It was the first mystery that I'd ever read, and there was no going back.

Reading that series first led directly to Pons, and then indirectly to Holmes. Partially the nature of the books themselves prepared me to enjoy those kinds of stories. The Three Investigators stories had perfectly linear mysteries with real clues. They were well-written, and I can still go back and enjoy them today, which I can't always say about the Hardy Boys books. The website www.thrillingdetective.com acknowledges the quality of The Three Investigators stories, and I highly recommend them, but that's not the purpose of this anecdote.

One of the gimmicks of The Three Investigators books was that the team of boy investigators, the leader of which was very Sherlockian in his manner of thinking, lived near Hollywood, and at the end of each book, they would visit with real-life film director Alfred Hitchcock at his studio and recount their latest case. In return, Hitchcock would then write an introduction to the latest book. In actual fact, Hitchcock didn't write anything at all. Robert Arthur, the author, had a long professional relationship with Hitchcock, and had convinced the famous director to allow his presence to be included as a character the book series, no doubt with some financial remuneration mixed in.

By the time The Three Investigators books first published in 1964, Robert Arthur had been an author for many years, writing short stories, and also scripts for radio and television. He was also a gifted behind-the-scenes editor, putting together the various mystery short story collections with Alfred Hitchcock's name on them. And after creating The Three Investigators, Arthur went on to edit a series of oversized hardback mystery anthologies for children, again with Hitchcock's name on them, as if Hitchcock had edited them himself, but with an acknowledgement on the copyright page stating: *The editor gratefully acknowledges the invaluable assistance of Robert Arthur in the preparation of this volume.*

And now we come to how this off-trail discussion of The Three Investigators and those related Robert Arthur anthologies for children is relevant to Solar Pons. In the children's anthology *Alfred Hitchcock's Daring Detectives* (1969), Arthur included a Pons story, "The Adventure of the Grice-Paterson Curse" (De Waal 5624). Arthur, writing as Hitchcock, stated in the book's introduction:

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And last, but not least, as a special treat I am including a detective who may seem oddly familiar to you, though the name is strange. Who exactly is Solar Pons, of 'The Adventure of the Grice-Paterson Curse,' and his companion, Dr. Parker? Surely they can't be – No, no, they are not the Great Detective and his medical friend in disguise." Arthur goes on to state that, "[t]hey are instead two characters created . . . to carry on a tradition known and loved by every reader of detective stories.

This story, which I read when I was about eight years old, was truly my first introduction to the Holmes-Watson template, although I didn't realize it then. As any Pons enthusiast knows, it's an amazing story, and it's still my favorite Pons story to this day. And it made a deep impression on me.

I'm sure that memories of this story were still percolating in my subconscious when I picked up my first real Holmes book two years later. I had enjoyed everything about "The Grice-Paterson Curse" so much that when I started "The Red-Headed League", the first story in the Whitman abridged edition, I already had a familiarity for the form in my head, and Holmes and Watson found ready acceptance there.

So it turns out that I discovered Pons first, which isn't the way most people find their way to Holmes and Watson and Baker Street. And as I continued to read Pons through the years, I kept wondering *who he really was*. Because surely no one would have named their baby *Solar*. Which brings us back on-trail to the reason behind this essay.

As Robert Arthur wrote in the introduction to *Alfred Hitchcock's Daring Detectives*, "Who exactly is Solar Pons?" It was a question that I continued to ask myself a lot over the years. When I was in college, I managed to get my own copy of De Waal's *The World Bibliography of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson*, and I began to track down various pastiches in greater earnest. In the Solar Pons section of the great reference book, I found an entry referring to an essay by Bruce Dettman, "In the Master's Footsteps", (De Waal 5699), published in the December 1967 issue of the *Pontine Dossier* (Vol.I, No.2).

The *World Bibliography* listing for this work says this about Dettman's essay: "*After the Master had*

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gone to his bee keeping in Sussex, William Pons [Billy the page boy], having long before decided on a career modeled after Holmes . . . set off to make his own name as a consulting detective." It was many years before I obtained my own copies of the *Pontine Dossier* and was able to read Dettman's essay for myself, but I had long ago decided that Billy the Page Boy was definitely *not* Solar Pons. Who, then, could Pons be?

I pondered this conundrum off-and-on for years. For a short time, I theorized that Pons might actually be young Lord Saltire from "The Priory School", who, after being rescued from his half-brother's plot, might have interested himself in learning the methods of his rescuer. Fortunately, I quickly left that idea behind. (Pons and Lord Saltire's ages don't match up. Also, even though I disagree with a great deal of Philip Jose Farmer's *Wold Newton* family tree, I do agree with his correct identification of who Lord Saltire really is, as well the true identities of his illustrious cousin and half-nephew. But I digress . . .)

In the end, I returned to that great work by William S. Baring-Gould, *Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street*. I had first read it when I was ten years old, not long after reading my first stories from the Canon, and it exerted a great deal of influence on how I approached the Holmes Canon. I don't agree with everything that Baring-Gould proposes, but I do accept quite a bit of it, and it's a wonderful jumping-off place.



It's only logical...

Baring-Gould theorized that Mycroft and Sherlock Holmes had a third, older, brother, Sherrinford, who had stayed to run the family estate in North Riding, Yorkshire, allowing Mycroft, as the second son, to go and use his talents for Her Majesty's Government. (Mycroft would not have been able to provide this service if, as the *older* of only two sons of a family of country squires, he had been forced to remain in Yorkshire.) Solar Pons, too, had a brilliant older brother, Bancroft, who also did much of the same type work as Mycroft. What if, like the Holmes brothers, there had to be a third, oldest Pons brother to remain and manage the family estate, thus allowing the middle brother, Bancroft, to go to London.

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Pons's birth date had been given as 1880 in a short biographical précis provided by August Derleth, (Dr. Lyndon Parker's literary agent). Bancroft Pons's birth date was seven years earlier. These dates worked out satisfactorily within the Holmes timeline. From there, the leap to the idea that these three theorized Pons brothers were, in fact, the sons of the eldest Holmes brother, Sherrinford, was inevitable.

Baring-Gould had also explained that the name Sherrinford was derived from a *shearing ford* in a stream, a place in which to shear sheep. If a *ford* was one way to cross a stream, then surely a *pons*, which is the Latin word for *bridge*, was another way to cross it. Suddenly, the pieces started to come together.

As I have related in the introductions to my books *The Papers of Sherlock Holmes* Volumes I & II, I was fortunate enough to discover one of Watson's lost notebooks in 2008, during a period of time that I was laid off from work. (Civil Engineers, like so many others, had it rough during the Great Recession.) I was thrilled to learn that the final and longest story in the notebook confirmed much of what I had theorized. This story, "The Adventure of the Other Brother", relates how, in 1896, Holmes and Watson are called to the Holmes family home in North Riding, in Yorkshire, to defend Sherrinford Holmes, the "other brother" of the story, against the charge of an occult-related murder. (This was hinted-at in the Baring-Gould biography.)

While there, they meet Sherrinford's three children, including the youngest, Siger Holmes, named after his grandfather. He is sixteen years old, and anxious to follow in his Uncle Sherlock's footsteps. After the successful solution of the mystery – was there any doubt that there would be a successful solution? – the final part of Watson's tale relates how young Siger studies his uncle's methods, and following the Great War, eventually assumes the name of *Solar Pons*. (Information regarding why this particular name is chosen, as well as some information about Holmes's son – and Pons's first cousin "Nero Wolfe" – is there as well.)

There are other confirmatory details related to Pons's biography that are revealed in Watson's narrative. The birth date of 1880 is correct, as is the given birth place of Prague, which is explained. Although Derleth's biographical notes had indicated that Pons's father was named *Asenath Pons*,

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a consular official, "The Other Brother" explains how Sherrinford Holmes came to temporarily use that alias. The name of Pons's mother, Roberta McIvor, is also confirmed within the story.

After editing the material in Watson's notebook and seeing it published, initially in 2011, and again by MX Publishing in 2013, I was gratified to hear from several Pons scholars and fans, indicating that they had no difficulties in accepting this origin of Pons's true identity. The answer satisfied me, and I was happy to learn that Pons did *not* turn out to be William Pons, a.k.a. Billy the Page.

I'm glad that Pons has been shown to be the true heir by blood to Sherlock Holmes, his uncle, through the pages of "The Other Brother". Not only because Pons is a master detective as well, but also, for me personally, because I owe him a great deal of gratitude. I realize now that if I hadn't seen how Pons handled matters in "The Grice-Paterson Curse", I might not have ended up accepting and enjoying the adventures of Holmes and Watson quite so quickly.

And I guess in the end, considering how I found my way to the rest of the entire Pontine Canon by spotting the covers of the paperback editions in a bookstore, it really was a little bit about the deerstalker after all.

THE MAN IN THE YELLOW CLOAK

BY WILL THOMAS

Just as Sherlock Holmes will forever be associated with the bent-stemmed pipe and deerstalker hat, thanks to his portrayal by William Gillette, so too, Solar Pons will always appear, in my mind at least, in the yellowish tweed cape and ruddy side whiskers he sported on the covers of the Pinnacle paperback series of the 1970's. I cannot picture him any other way. That jaundiced cape became the reader's way to differentiate between the two nearly identical sleuths.

To be more precise, the cloak was a light brown, leaning toward sallowness. It was neither a French's, nor a Coleman's mustard, but more a Gulden color, a yellow check of an insistent hue. On some covers it is darker, on others lighter, with a pattern picked out in red or brown, a pattern to be noticed, which I'm sure was precisely what the young Pons intended. Years later, when Basil Copper picked up August Derleth's pen to write new adventures, the yellowish cape and matching deerstalker returned to the covers in all their celestial glory.



As I said, on the various covers of Pinnacle Books the cloaks are similar, but not identical. This shows that either the artists are drawing from memory, or else Pons had an entire wardrobe full of specially tailored cloaks and caps in various shades from which to choose. Certainly, a dazzling cape would be a memorable advertisement for his business.

It is perhaps more than coincidence that yellow should be the color associated with Pons. The name Solar means 'sun'. Derleth obviously intended for his creation to illuminate crime and reveal that which was hidden. Also, Solar was to have a warmth and humor that Holmes never possessed.

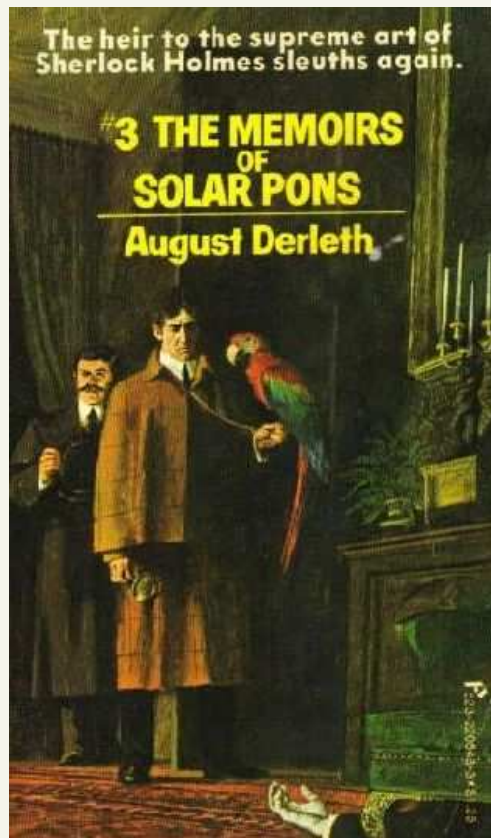
As if to emphasize the color of the cloak, the lettering on most of the paper-backs is a vivid yellow, usually set off by a dark, brooding background. On some covers the lettering is red, shaded with yel-

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low. In either case, the lettering highlights the brightness of the cape, making it the focal point of each painting. I can recall first seeing the books in bookstore, and being drawn to the artwork on the covers. The stories inside did not disappoint.

Red is often a secondary color on each cover, whether it is a narrow stripe in the tween pattern, or the color of Pons's hair. He was definitely a candidate for the Red-Headed League; Doyle would have labeled his hair color as 'brick'. In the illustrations his hair is not pomaded, like most images of Holmes, but is parted in the middle, and swept back on either side of his brow, with long side whiskers. I grant you that nowhere in Derleth's narrative is it revealed that Pons is a ginger, but then nowhere in Doyle's work does it proclaim he smoked a calabash and wore a deerstalker.

I must declare the yellow cape and ginger hair non-canonical, but you cannot convince me that Pons sported neither. It would be unthinkable. To accept it would be to lessen him in my mind. A Pons in gray somehow lacks savor. Give me his flamboyant yellow cape any day. Size 42 long, if you've got it.



THE ADVENTURE OF THE UNIQUE SATIRISTS

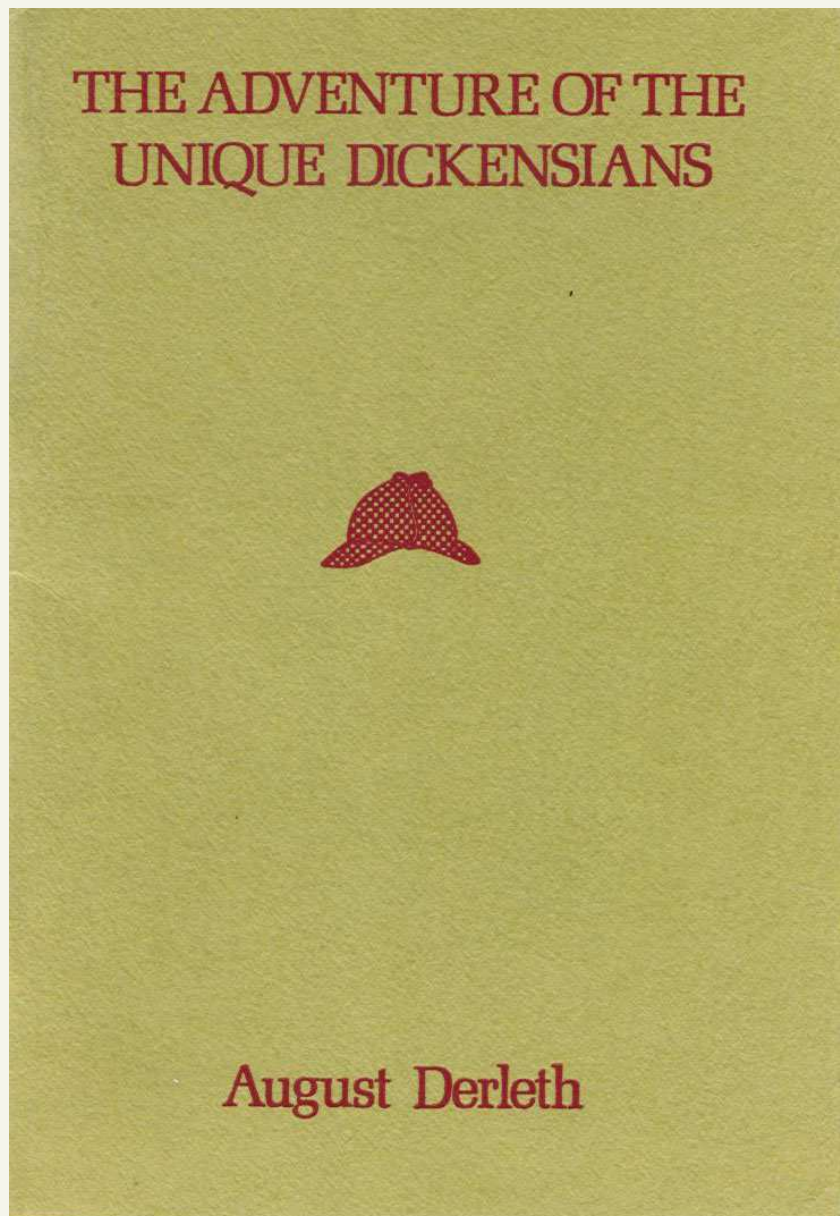
BY DAN ANDRIACCO

"I have never failed to read a Solar Pons adventure with satisfaction and pleasure," the great Vincent Starrett wrote. Clearly, the admiration was mutual. "The Adventure of the Unique Dickensians," from the title on, is a call-back to Starrett's classic Holmes pastiche, "The Adventure of the Unique 'Hamlet.'"

Like the Starrett story, "Dickensians" is "a good-humored satire on book collectors," as my edition of "Hamlet" says. Each story features two bibliophiles and (spoiler) a forged book or manuscript. "You know my opinion of collectors," Pons tells Parker. "They are all a trifle mad, some more so than others." This echoes Holmes's comment near the end of "Hamlet": "They are a strange people, these book collectors." Even more telling is the opening scene, where Watson tells Holmes "surely here comes a madman" in reference to their future client.

Both stories open with a view of the street, with Pons calling Parker to the window in "Dickensians" and the reverse in the Starrett story. And both end with a measure of forgiveness on the part of the client.

"Dickensians," as even a Watson or a Parker could deduce without reading the story, is also a tribute to another great British writer. The client is Ebenezer Snawley, who has more in common with Scrooge than just his first name. This "Christmas Carol" sendoff is an element that is completely lacking in "Hamlet." But "Hamlet" was first published privately for Christmas 1920 – exactly when "Dickensians" takes place. A coincidence? I think not!



THE HUMBUGGING OF SOLAR PONS

BY EBENEZER SNAWLEY

When The Solar Pons Omnibus was first announced by Mycroft & Moran, it seemed cause for celebration: a complete edition of the Pontine Canon, in two slipcased volumes, with a new introduction to the entire work, and as many as forty new illustrations by Frank Utpatel. The Garden City edition of The Complete Sherlock Holmes hadn't had it that good. Or so it seemed.

The first hint that something was amiss came when The Missing Tenants, PSI, noticed its listing in Arkham House's September 1975 catalog: the *Omnibus* would contain sixty-eight tales. Curiosity led to doubts, and doubts to inquiry — what did the publisher consider the Pontine Canon to include? The answer came from James Turner of Collinsville, Illinois, the managing editor. The Derleth Estate wished the tales to be presented in chronological sequence (probably a premature demand, considering that the late Robert Patrick's chronology is little more than a prolegomenon); and the *Omnibus* edition of the Pontine Canon would open with Dr. Parker's Notebooks, making "The Adventure of the Bookseller's Clerk" the first tale. Comprising the remainder would be the sixty-six other short stories in *In Re*, *The Memoirs*, *The Return*, *The Reminiscences*, *The Casebook*, and *The Chronicles*, and Mr. Fairlie's *Final Journey*.

Conspicuous by their absence were the two *Praed Street Dossier* "off-trail" stories written by Derleth and Mack Reynolds, "The Adventure of the Snitch in Time" and "The Adventure of the Ball of Nostradamus." Why were these not to be included? Mr. Turner had his reasons. One was his decision, reinforced by Allen Hubin's introduction to *The Chronicles*, that the Pontine Canon consisted of sixty-eight tales, and no more.¹ A second reason was his assertion that the two collaborations were largely the work of Reynolds and not closely related to the chronological Canon. These two stories, he informed *The Missing Tenants*, were best relegated to non-canonical status and would not be published in the *Omnibus*.

This rather preemptory decision, coming from someone unknown to Pontine circles, disturbed a number of Praed Street Irregulars, and a small campaign began to persuade Mycroft & Moran to include these two stories. Soon it seemed that it was Mr. Turner alone who opposed it, admitting that he disliked the idea of incorporating what he felt to be two unrelated episodes, even as supplementary appendix material. Mycroft & Moran had asked someone else to review the Pontine Canon for this edition, however — an Englishman named Basil Copper, best known in the United States as a writer of neo-Lovecraftian horror stories. Perhaps because of this predilection for fanta-

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sy, Copper too was enthusiastic about the two Reynolds collaborations. This view won out, and in September 1976 Mr. Turner acknowledged to The Broken Chessman, PSI, that the two stories would be included in an appendix.

But other dismaying intelligence had emerged in the meantime. A July 1976 supplement to the earlier Arkham House catalog stated that some delay in publication would be required in order to make "extensive minor revisions as suggested by our British adviser." Revisions? More inquiry was made, and it came to light that the text of the Pontine Canon was being subjected to two kinds of "editing" by Messrs. Turner and Copper. The first kind was stylistic in nature. Such spelling variations as "inquiry/enquiry," "Pons'/Pons's," and "color/colour" were scattered throughout stories written over a thirty-year period, and Mr. Turner had decided to impose the British variant in all cases as being commensurate with Derleth's preferences at the time of his death. This was unsettling enough, but it appeared that the alteration of the text would not stop there. Toward the end of Derleth's life, the editor asserted, he had become increasingly sensitive to stylistic verisimilitude; he had asked his British representative, G. Ken Chapman, for example, to copyedit the entire text of *Mr. Fairlie in terms of British usage*. And now Mr. Turner was proceeding to extend this practice retroactively to the earlier volumes in the Canon.

It was at this point that tempers began to rise. It was one thing for an author to initiate this practice, the Irregulars asserted, and quite another for someone else to impose it retroactively, over the author's dead body. There was a very valuable distinction to be made between editing approved by an author, and editing done posthumously and never authorized or seen by him. This kind of editing tended to efface the development of an author's style and skill, when such development allowed him to be seen whole.

The argument fell on deaf ears. "To my mind," the editor wrote to The Broken Chessman in a convoluted prose possibly intended to overawe, "the sole legitimate criteria for evaluating a literary work are aesthetic in nature, predicated upon the apparent artistic purpose perceived by the author when consecrating his intellectual efforts upon a specified creative endeavor." Consecration is a suggestive word to use, and it seems that an effacement of the early and "less skillful" August Derleth is a deliberate objective of this edition. And in any event, the editor continued, the evolution of Derleth as pasticheur would be wiped out by the presentation of the tales in chronological sequence, since

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he did not intend to indicate the original periodical appearances of the individual stories.

This was appalling enough, but the next made it seem benign by comparison. There was an even more egregious kind of molestation to which the text of the Pontine Canon was being subjected. Certain “factual errors” were being “corrected” where it could be accomplished by changing a few words. Gone, in other words, will be as many as possible of the inaccuracies, inconsistencies, anachronisms, and the like that have been the making and joy of Sherlockian and Pontine scholarship. If this is known as editing at Mycroft & Moran, it is called other names elsewhere. And the very example given, moreover, destroyed any hope that Mycroft & Moran at least had the competence to limit their “corrections” to real errors only. In “The Adventure of the Unique Dickensians,” Mr. Turner pointed out, there is mention of an inscribed copy of *Edwin Drood* — *manifestly impossible, he intoned, for a posthumously published work. Therefore he would delete this title and substitute Martin Chuzzlewit in what he called the Omnibus “recension.” A minor inconsistency, he said; but one that would be corrected by the sharp eye and deft hand of Mycroft & Moran.*

Unfortunately for Mr. Turner, this particular example of his is not an inconsistency at all. Had it occurred to him to examine the original text of this story in its 1968 chapbook first edition, he would have discovered that initially there was no mention of *Edwin Drood* at all: “*They were inscribed copies,*” the reference goes, “*of David Copperfield, Little Dorrit, and The Pickwick Papers.*” *It is in the rather later Chronicles edition of the story that Edwin Drood first appears: “They were inscribed copies of David Copperfield, Edwin Drood, and The Pickwick Papers.” In other words, it was August Derleth himself who deliberately made this alteration in the text of the story. But Mr. Turner intends to change it (and not even back to the original version, at that), on the grounds of its literary impossibility.*

Not surprisingly by now, he is wrong again. An inscribed *Edwin Drood* is not at all impossible. Dickens’ last novel was originally published in parts. Twelve monthly parts had been planned, of which six had been written at the time of Dickens’ death in June 1870. The first three had already been published, reportedly fifty thousand copies in the case of the first part, and the other three were published after his death. Frequently these six parts were gathered later and issued in volume form, and it is not very difficult to imagine one of these volumes with a first part that Dickens had inscribed before his death. An inscribed *Edwin Drood*, in short. Were there ever to be an annotated

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Solar Pons, there would be a note explaining all this and identifying just what this “inscribed copy” was. But unless Mr. Turner gives up literature soon and moves on to smashing statuary or slashing paintings, there will never be such a note. And probably no annotated edition. Ever.

Did August Derleth ask for all this to be done to his writings? Of course not. Then why is it happening? A misguided attempt to enshrine him as the “master pasticheur,” it seems. It isn’t likely to succeed, and it may do serious harm to the excellent reputation his name has now. But the real losers will be the readers, especially the Pontine following of over thirty years that made it possible for an obscure and long-dead little group of stories in long-lost pulp magazines to be resurrected and expanded into what the Pontine Canon is today. The Solar Pons stories have always thrived upon an unusually close relationship with their readers, but that is now in jeopardy. Did Dr. Parker live much of his early life in the United States? Who will know or care when an Americanism like “stoop” — made famous in Pontine scholarship by Michael Harrison’s introduction to *The Casebook* — has been replaced by the British “porch”? What did England’s best Dickens collection contain? Not an inscribed *Edwin Drood*, or even 1968’s inscribed *Little Dorrit*, but Mr. James Turner’s *Martin Chuzzlewit*.

. . . The giant has passed on, and his work has fallen into the hands of vandals.

One suspects that Mr. Turner has been unfortunate enough to read Jacques Barzun’s fatuous essay on parodies and pastiches in *Beyond Baker Street*, and asinine enough to believe it. It’s a pity that he hasn’t taken a moment to imagine whether anyone would be grateful today had the same outrages been inflicted upon the *Garden City Complete Sherlock Holmes* by its editor in 1930. It isn’t likely, to put it mildly. It is worth imagining, in fact, whether *The Baker Street Irregulars* would even exist today. Perhaps not; we have thrived upon a joyous scholarship that may rapidly disappear in the case of *Solar Pons*. When *The Solar Pons Omnibus* is published, it will mark the decline of August Derleth and the rise of the epigones. Derleth’s text will be eviscerated in order to satisfy Mr. Turner’s literary pretensions, and the true *Solar Pons* will exist only in increasingly scarce original editions and in perishable Pinnacle Books paperbacks. It is certainly cause for mourning, reminding us of how right William Gillette was to take nothing for granted and to safeguard his remarkable *Castle* from molestation after his death:

I would consider it more than unfortunate for me should I find myself doomed after death . . . to

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discover the walls and towers and fireplaces of my home . . . in the possession of some blithering saphead who had no conception of where he is or with what surrounded.

1 Mr. Hubin wishes me to state that this was an oversight on his part, and that in his opinion the Pontine Canon properly contains seventy tales.

1a Alan J. Hubin reviewed for *The New York Times Book Review* and his bibliography of crime fiction is beyond the standard in the field. He also wrote the introduction to *The Chronicles of Solar Pons*.

Ebenezer Snawley would like to thank The Missing Tenants, The Broken Chessman, and The Black Cardinal for their assistance in the preparation of this article.

Benezer Snawley is the Praed Street Irregular Investiture of Baker Street Irregular Jon Lellenberg. This essay originally appeared in the 1977 Edition (Volume 3, Number 2) of The Praed Street Dossier.

PONS & CTHULHU: MORE THAN JUST A
HOBBY?
BY BOB BYRNE

Luther Norris was, is and will certainly remain the foremost Ponsian of them all. In his introduction to *The Memoirs of Solar Pons*, he points out that Pons has a wider range of interests than Holmes, using the titles of their published monographs as his foundation. Now, we can certainly take issue with Norris' statement that "Holmes..has little concern for topics not related to his 'little problems.'" I do not believe that the polyphonic motets of Lassus had anything to do with one of Holmes' cases. And it's quite likely that his monograph on the Chaldean roots in the ancient Cornish language was not work-related. However, the majority of his writings were on topics useful to his career as a consulting detective, so we will agree with Norris in principle.

Norris points to two monographs as examples of Pons' more varied interests: *An Inquiry into the Nan-Natal Ruins of Ponapae* (1905) and *An Examination of the Cthulhu Cult and Others* (1931). The context of Norris' discussion implies that these are non work-related topics. It is this point regarding the latter that we are addressing.

Dr. Parker's literary agent, August Derleth, became an expert on the Cthulhu mythos over the course of his lifetime. It is possible that Pons' writings on the topic contributed to Derleth's interest.

Let us ask "Under what circumstances is it possible that Pons' monograph concerning the Cult of Cthulhu could actually be 'work-related,' rather than just a topic of interest?"

A review of the cases that Dr. Parker published regarding his friend and colleague does not seem to reveal any evidence. Adventures such as *The Tottenham Werewolf* and *The Haunted Library* include elements of the supernatural, but down-to-earth solutions are found. *The Blind Clairaudient* does leave one with the uneasy feeling that science alone cannot fully explain events, but there is certainly no sense of a Cthulhu-related involvement. *The Ball of Nostradamus* and *The Snitch in Time* are extraordinary cases that fall outside of any normal categorization. But again, it seems unlikely that there is any connection with the Cthulhu mythos in those two cases: they do not resonate with the tone of dread one would expect if they were.

In *The Silver Spiders*, Pons and Parker do come across a reference in a sales catalogue to *The Necronomicon*. However, the book actually had no bearing on the case but was just mentioned as

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a ruse. We do not find any helpful evidence in this case.

But perhaps we have overlooked an indirect reference. What of a potential clue at the beginning of the affair that Parker presented as *The Adventure of the Triple Kent*? The doctor writes, “We were on the way back from the South Downs, where Pons had paid an almost reverential visit to an old bee-keeper whose retirement concealed the identity of a brilliant genius to whom Pons habitually referred to as “the Master...”



The train stops at Tunbridge Wells and Pons is called upon to help solve a triple murder. There is no further mention of the trip to the Sussex Downs. But this event took place in the summer of 1932. The Cthulhu Cult monograph was published in 1931. We can confidently assume that it was Sherlock Holmes whom Pons and Parker were visiting in 1932. However, the visit would seem to have occurred at too late a date to be of assistance on this occasion. But a bit of speculation may prove useful at this point.

Surely Pons visited Holmes more than once. Anyone remotely familiar with the two detectives would have to acknowledge that Holmes' career had a major influence on Pons' own. Is it not likely that he contacted the esteemed master at least twice? And would not Holmes perhaps have provided advice or compliments to a private enquiry agent who emulated his own methods? Wouldn't Holmes have seen many similarities; perhaps even viewed Pons as a younger version of himself? So let us make the not-too-bold assumption that Pons and Holmes were in contact before the visit referenced in *The Triple Kent*.

Where else can we turn? What of Dr. Parker's unpublished Notebook entries? Might not there be some clue hidden away? Leafing through the unpublished Notebooks, we find an intriguing entry

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from July of 1921, a copy of which can be found in issue Six of the Solar Pons Gazette. Parker references a comment that Pons had made previously, mentioning an adventure solved by Pons and Holmes together.

On the 19th, Parker asks Pons about that prior discussion. The detective replies that the world was not yet ready to learn of the case. In fact, he believes that it may never be ready.

What might this have involved? Surely it was something extraordinary to require the joint skills of Solar Pons and Sherlock Holmes.

What could have been so horrifying that Pons would not relate it to Parker? Or did Pons tell Parker of it at some future date, but required Doctor Parker's silence? Perhaps even the doctor himself felt that the tale should not be told once he became acquainted with its details.

The aforementioned Derleth once made reference to *The Adventure of the Retired Bee Keeper*, which certainly must refer to Sherlock Holmes. We shall posit that Solar Pons jointly solved a case with Holmes at least once. Further, we will assert that the matter was of such a terrifying nature that Pons refused to let the tale be told (the myriad possible reasons that Parker did not publish the case would constitute a whole other article). Based upon the unpublished Notebooks, this event occurred before July of 1921. We might even presume that it happened before Pons and Parker met in 1921, since Parker has no knowledge of it other than Pons' reference.

Perhaps somewhere amidst Dr. Parker's unpublished writings lies an account of that trip to Holmes' cottage, with more details on what was discussed. Just maybe, an untold case will tell of an encounter between the two detectives and some element of the terrifying Cthulhu Cult. Might there be a blood-chilling tale of the Sussex Horror?

Could not that 1931 monograph have been about a subject matter that Pons was professionally concerned with, not a mere hobby? Did his suspicions blossom into certainty on the Sussex Downs? Should we look at *An Examination of the Cthulhu Cult and Others* as a recreational writing, or as a carefully researched monograph upon a subject that concerned Solar Pons professionally?

The Pontine Canon Abbreviations
By Peter A. Ruber and Ronald De Waal

Alum – Aluminum Crutch	MisT – Missing Tenants
Amat – Amateur Philologist	MrFa – Mr. Fairlie's Final Journey
Asco – Ascot Scandal	Mosa – Mosaic Cylinders
Ball – Ball of Nostradamus	MutM – The Muttering Man
Beni – Benin Bronze	Norc – Norcross Riddle
Bish – Bishop's Companion	Orie – Orient Express
BlkC – Black Cardinal	Para – Paralytic Mendicant
BlkN – Black Narcissus	Penn – Penny Magenta
Blin – Blind Clairaudient	Perf – Perfect Husband
Book – Bookseller's Clerk	Prae – Praed Street Irregulars
Brok – Broken Chessman	Prop – Proper Comma
Camb – Camberwell Beauty	Purl – Purloined Periapt
Chin – China Cottage	RedL – Red Leech
Circ – Circular Room	Rema – Remarkable Worm
Clov – Cloverdale Kennels	RetN – Retired Novelist
Crou – Crouching Dog	Rico – Ricoletti of the Club Foot
DevF – Devil's Footprints	Rydb – Rydberg Numbers
DogM – Dog in the Manger	7Pas – Seven Passengers
Dorr – Dorrington Inheritance	7Sis – Seven Sisters
Fata – Fatal Glance	Shap – Shaplow Millions
5Roy – Five Royal Coachmen	SinH – Sinister House
FriB – Frightened Baronet	6Sil – Six Silver Spiders
GolB – Golden Bracelet	Snit – Snitch in Time
Gric – Grice-Paterson Curse	Soth – Sotheby Salesman
Hats – Hats of M. Dulac	Spur – Spurious Tamerlane
Haun – Haunted Library	Star – The Green Stars
Innk – Innkeeper's Clerk	Ston – Stone of Scone
Inta – Intarsia Box	SusA – Sussex Archers
Late – Late Mr. Flaversham	Swed – Swedenborg Signatures
Limp – Limping Man	3Red – Three Red Dwarfs
Litt – Little Hangman	Tott – Tottenham Werewolf
LosD – Lost Dutchman	Trai – Trained Cormorant
LosH – Lost Holiday	Trip – Triple Kent
LosL – Lost Locomotive	Trou – Troubled Magistrate
ManB – Man with the Broken Face	Uniq – Unique Dickensians
MazB – Mazarine Blue	ViMu – The Viennese Musician
MisH – Missing Huntsman	Whis – Whispering Knights

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- Vincent Starrett

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The *Solar Pons Gazette* is intended to bring together fans of the Sherlock Holmes of Praed Street. Contributions are happily accepted from any who wish to add to Ponsian scholarship. Those who do, those whose voices come out of the fog of Pons' Edwardian London, are Friends of the Gazette.

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