

## Sherlock Holmes Klubben 1950-1975

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It did not actually start with us, for as early as December 6th 1946, Sherlock Holmes Selskabet had been founded in Copenhagen. Robert Storm Petersen, the artist, was president and the central figure until his death in 1949, and among its twelve members the society numbered people as Jørgen Cold, attorney, who was secretary-general, Anker Kirkeby, editor, Jens Jensen, district medical officer and son of Johs. V. Jensen, Aage Marcus, librarian, and the professors C.A. Bodelsen and Chr. Elling.

As this exclusive and secluded little society did not want to widen the number of members, it was decided by a circle of interested persons outside the society to found their own club, and this was how Sherlock Holmes Klubben i Danmark, The Danish Baker Street Irregulars - to give the full and formidable title - was started on December 5th, 1950. The event took place at restaurant Buriis, Nørrevold in Copenhagen.

Sherlock Holmes Klubben elected Verner Seemann, librarian, president, Iver Gudme, publisher's reader, vicepresident, and A.D. Henriksen, author and archivist, secretary-general. The other committee members were Aage Jensen, author and librarian, and Eigil Cordtz, who was at that time an assistant.

The credit for getting the club started and for its growth is rightly due to A.D. Henriksen, for he was the driving force of the project. The previous year he had published 221B, Baker Street, he was burning with enthusiasm for the cause, he energetically poured out communications to the members, and when the Sherlockiana magazine was first published in 1956 it was quite natural that he should be its editor.

Both Iver Gudme and Verner Seemann were well-reputed translators of Sherlock Holmes, and Seemann further distinguished himself by being an acknowledged expert on wine. When the rest of us enjoyed a goldlabelled Export-Beer, he would be sipping his brandy, following the conversation with his quiet humorous smile. - Alas, times have changed! Seemann, Gudme and A.D. have now all joined the circle of true Holmes-connoisseurs in Elysium - or wherever it is that we shall assemble . . .

In the statutes of Sherlock Holmes Klubben it was clearly stated from the beginning, "The purpose is to study both the cononical and the apocryphal publications on Sherlock Holmes and to take an active part in the international Holmes-research". And further, "The club will accept as a member anybody, who can produce documentary or convincing evidence of his interest in the purpose".

January 6th is the Master's birthday, and the annual meetings of the club take place on or around this date. That the annual meeting is generally held on Saturdays is out of consideration for the members from the provinces.

The membership card displays the profile of the Master, a drawing by Alex Secher of 221B, Baker Street with a hansom cab in front, and the last lines of Vincent Starrett's famous poem are quoted,

Here, though the world explode, these two survive,

And it is always eighteen ninety-five.

On the first of January, less than one month after the founding, the number of members was sixteen. The new club had aroused a certain interest with the press, as Mr. Holmes provided good, cheerful - and valuable - news, and already in February the club took part in a radio programme in a series called "An Evening in the Club".

In 1951 London was the setting for a huge arrangement, Festival of Britain, and in this connection a Sherlock Holmes exhibition was held in Baker Street, which very nearly stole the main interest in the gigantic arrangement. The apartment at 221B had been correctly recreated to the smallest detail, and tapes had been recorded, which enabled you to hear the clips-clop of the horses trotting by with their hansom cabs, the paper boys shouting the latest news of the Boer War etc. - and when this exhibition later toured the U.S.A. a bottle had been added containing genuine London fog from Baker Street. Some of the exhibits later

ended up in The Sherlock Holmes, a pub in Northumberland Street, where they may still be inspected.

If you should wonder how to fill a bottle with fog, the procedure is to fill the bottle with water and then on a lovely but very foggy evening to proceed to Baker Street, where you pour the water out. During this process the fog will seep into the bottle, and you can cork the bottle. This little problem caused some headaches, until this easy solution was found.

Sherlock Holmes Klubben contributed to the London exhibition with various material, among other things Tage la Cour's publication *Ex Bibliotheca Holmesiana*, which earned a lot of well-deserved praise.

Danish newspapers made frequent comments on Festival of Britain and its Sherlock Holmes show, and they made use of the opportunity to write about the Danish Sherlock Holmes Klub, so we had quite an amount of publicity. Since then the coverage in the press has been more sparing, the interest of novelty dwindled, and the general development forced the papers to be more chary of their columns. But, as Mr. Holmes puts it in *The Six Napoleons*, "The Press, Watson, is a most valuable institution, if only you know how to use it".

From the very start the foreign Sherlock Holmes people had taken the Danish club into their arms, and lasting relations were made, resulting in an enormous correspondence. But many of them did not stop at correspondence, and in course of time we have been visited by an amazingly long row of good names, many of them coming from far away.

Just to mention a selection of the foreign guests one notes from the U.S.A., William S. Hall, Wilmer ("Bill") T. Rabe (who drove his car here in foggy weather straight from the U.S. forces in Germany bringing a bottle of VAT 69 at a time, when Scotch whisky was hard to come by here, for which reason he was immediately made an honorary member), Peter E. Blau, now living in Washington D.C., Felix Morley, Edgar W. Smith, Irving Fenton and professor, dr. Philip S. Hench, who was awarded the Nobel prize in physiology. On the telephone Mr. Hench said to the writer, "I am a professor in" – followed by a long, intricate Latin name, which I did not quite manage to grasp – "but in confidence I can tell you, Mr. Laaarrtzn, that I am much more interested in Sherlock Holmes!"