

THE INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION OF

TM

# SHERLOCK HOLMES

Background  
Information

Prepared by Damian McDonald, curator.

Arthur Conan Doyle loved stories. His fondest memories as a child in Scotland are of his mother, an ardent booklover, telling him about the tales she had read. Doyle went on to become a doctor in England, but good stories were never far from his mind. It was while he was studying medicine at the University of Edinburgh that he met his mentor, Professor Joseph Bell, who introduced Doyle to the concept of observational analysis. Practicing medicine after graduating, Doyle was always writing stories, and his most revered character was created: Sherlock Holmes. Holmes was always in the midst of a great story, and it was always his uncanny observational skills which unravelled the mystery.

Sherlock Holmes is an eminently famous character. According to the movie database IMDb, Holmes is the most filmed human fiction character. Dracula is actually most filmed character; however, his lifestyle, though envied by some, excludes him from being human. Sherlock Holmes has also been part of the zeitgeist for generations. The character popularised skiing in Switzerland, introduced deductive reasoning based on subtle observation as a literary device, used drugs to help him both think clearly and quickly, and to relax and think deeply, was lauded by literati such as TS Elliot, and added phrases to the lexicon (though 'Elementary', and 'my dear Watson' were never spoken as one sentence in a Sherlock story). Sherlock Holmes has also been reinvented many, many times. From literature, to stage, to cinema, to high-quality television series – Holmes is in our homes. The deer-stalker hat – which Holmes only wears in the county side in Doyle's literature, but which was popularised by illustrator Sidney Paget, and stage actor William Gillette – characterised the Holmes brand throughout the late nineteenth and all of the twentieth

century. This image has been replaced recently by Benedict Cumberbatch's unique mannerisms and appealing looks and in the UK (Sherlock), and Johnny Lee Miller's edgy presence in the US (Elementary); and on the big screen by Robert Downey Junior's eccentric wittiness. From the tweedy Victorian pipe-smoker to tortured intellectualist, audiences will see all examples of Sherlocks from across the three centuries in The International Exhibition of Sherlock Holmes.

But first, we are immersed in 19th century London.

Visitors enter the exhibition and are in the London Underground, much as it was in the Victorian era. The innovations in science of the time – which Sherlock Holmes was uniquely familiar with – are presented to guests. Cosmetics, ballistics, photography, optics and lenses, and the Victorian media: all knowledge visiting sleuths will need on their way through the exhibition.

A recreation of Arthur Conan Doyle's study shows audiences the author's interests and inspirations. Furnished with all that fascinated Doyle, young visitors are invited to spot objects and record them on the free Sherlock Holmes Jr Detective booklet.

221b Barker Street London – Sherlock Holmes's abode – is reinvented, and anyone who has read a Sherlock story will recognise the chemical corner, the acid stained deal-topped table, the row of formidable scrap-books and books of reference the diagrams, the violin-case, and the pipe-rack – even the Persian slipper which contained the tobacco.

And then: the crime scene. The International Exhibition of Sherlock Holmes is not only a treasure of Sherlockian culture, it is a Sherlock Holmes mystery to solve. In the 19th century London sitting room, we find partially burned books in the fireplace, a plaster bust of Napoleon has been smashed and, strangest of all, a matchbox, apparently half burnt can be seen the desk. Scotland Yard has concluded that Persano, the tenant of the address, is a madman who murdered his wife and daughter and disposed of their bodies in the nearby River Thames. An examination of the scene uncovered a set of track marks leading down to the banks of the river. The police believe that Persano then returned to the house and attempted suicide, but lost his nerve and succeeded only in inflicting a minor head wound. Persano now refuses to speak apart from a few mutterings about a 'worm'. Something doesn't seem right...

Now detectives can set about solving what actually has happened to Mr Persano. With trusty notebook at hand, the observation of evidence begins. With the clues found at the crime scene, people can now visit sites which will prove, or disprove theories. The Penny Arcade, where bullet trajectory can be studied; The Slaughter House, where blood-splatter patterns can be examined; down to the banks of the Thames, where some odd marks can be scrutinized; and the Conservatory, where maybe this 'worm' can be explored more.

Notebooks will now be full of clues, and if they can be de-coded – the mystery may be solved!

Detective work is trial-and-error though, so is it first you don't succeed! Plenty of chances to solve again.

With the satisfaction of a mystery cracked, detectives can reward themselves with an in-depth look at Sherlock Holmes in popular culture. Objects including Arthur Conan Doyle's original manuscripts, first edition publications, all manner of things relating to Sherlock, and props from the Sherlock and Elementary television series, and the Warner Brothers movies Sherlock Holmes. Modern forensics are also on display, and guest can learn how crime scene investigation really works.

The investigations do not end with The International Exhibition of Sherlock Holmes. The Museum will be one giant detective HQ, with the Maze of Mysteries, where the Turbine Hall will be transformed into a large-scale and immersive crime scene; Sherlock Inspiration Tours, which will take visitors through the Museum to see objects which would likely have inspired Sir Arthur Conan Doyle when he wrote Sherlock Holmes stories; Indigenous Cultural Development Residency with Uncle Jack Charles, and An intimate encounter with the Koori Kat Burglar, as well as a Space Detective at the Sydney Observatory, and Forensic Science Lab at the Museum's Discover Centre at Castle Hill. There will be many more programs, but we will leave it to your detective skills to discover them all!

