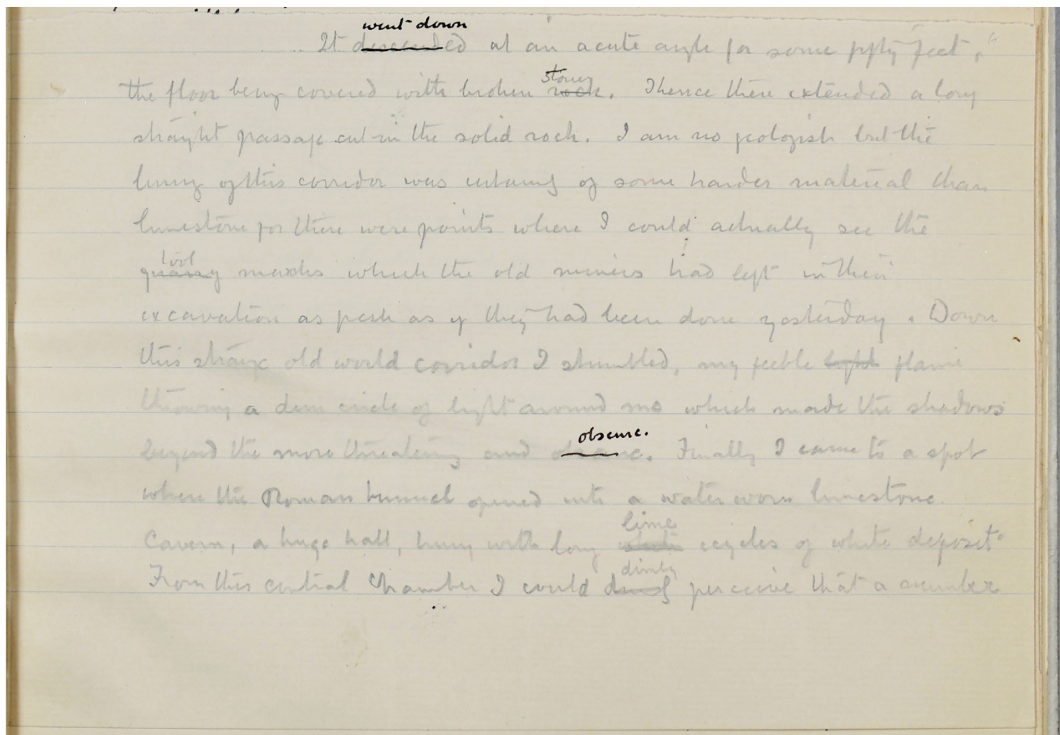




Courtesy of Dartmouth College Library.

CAVES AND CAVERNS

There are several plausible sources of inspiration for *The Terror of Blue John Gap* but one of the most specific is offered by Crichton Porteous in his Derbyshire guidebook, *Caves and Caverns of Peakland* (1951). Porteous writes:

Within a hundred yards of the Blue John entrance cabin is a biggish natural hole in the hillside, partly shaded by trees. This is believed to be almost exactly over the deepest part of the cavern, though no direct way down is known. It was this hole that suggested to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in 1908 the plot of his short story, "The Terror of Blue John Gap" ... and the idea for his monster is said to have come from a description given by an army officer of representations of animals scratched on cavern walls in Gibraltar. (p.46)

Although Porteous does not name his source, it is conceivable he was told this story by a local. Leslie Crichton Porteous (1901–1991) was a writer of fiction and non-fiction who became assistant editor of the *Northern Daily Mail*. Born in Leeds, he grew up in Manchester and spent time in the Derbyshire Peaks during his childhood. In later life, he moved to

Derbyshire, first to Combs, some seven miles west of the Blue John Cavern, and then Two Dales near Matlock. Three of his novels, *Broken River* (1956), *Lucky Columbel* (1959), and *Toad Hole* (1960), and are set in the Derwent Valley, a short distance east from the "Blue John Gap" locale.

As to the veracity of Porteous's story, a cavern matching the description certainly existed. The site in question is Gorham's Cave, located at Governor's Beach on the southeastern face of the Rock of Gibraltar by Captain A. Gorham of the 2nd Battalion Royal Munster Fusiliers in 1907. Gorham inscribed his name and the date of discovery at the back of the cavern. ...

— Mark Jones

Mark Jones's "Caves and Caverns" continues on page 6 of the Blue John Gap Project website (acdsociety.com/bjg/6/bjg6.html), where it is accompanied by our look at "The Hero's Journey." New Zealand's writing and publishing powerhouse Lee Murray joins the Project on page 1 (acdsociety.com/bjg/1/bjg1.html) with a fictional backstory about the mysterious Seaton in her "Māoriland Blue" — a fantastic way to end our second year of mining the gap.

— Margie Deck and Nancy Holder

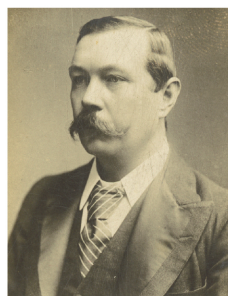
IS IT TIME TO RENEW YOUR ACD SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP?

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"I suppose most people would subscribe to that."

A COMMON NEWSLETTER

— with a nod to Micah Clarke —

BRINGING TIDINGS FROM THE ACD SOCIETY

— a community dedicated to studying and enjoying the works of Arthur Conan Doyle —

via Ross Davies (editor pro tem, and publisher)

VOLUME 3, NUMBER 3, NOVEMBER 2023

EDITOR'S NOTES

Our big news is an exciting sequel: at 11:15 a.m. on January 11, we will be back at Otto Penzler's The Mysterious Bookshop in NYC for the 3rd annual Doylean Honors ceremony and the 2nd annual Wessex Cup races. To learn more, visit our website (acdsociety.com). If you cannot join us in person, you can still see and hear it all courtesy of *Doings of Doyle* (to attend online, register here: forms.gle/QaG7oDBouF66NTEf6).

THE PAST

Every Doylean should take the lovely educational tour that is Laurence Pernet's stunning new web project, *An Alpine Walk: Arthur Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes in Switzerland*. It is based on



AN ALPINE WALK

Arthur Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes in Switzerland

At the end of the 19th century, the British author Arthur Conan Doyle creates the character of Sherlock Holmes, who will become the archetype of the detective. And both the creator and the creation have a connection with Switzerland.

Version française



research Pernet conducted in archives held by the Fonds Conan Doyle at the Bibliothèque cantonale et universitaire in Lausanne. Surely today is a good day for a nice Alpine walk (in French or English) at fondation-sir-acd-expo.ch/en/home/.

Condé Nast Traveller says there is a place in London where you might see ACD. In an October 31 article, Connor Sturges reports that “Arthur Conan Doyle has been spotted on occasion” at the College of Psychic Studies, 16 Queensberry Place.

Our Doylean Honors awards are in the big leagues. Scott Monty gave them a generous mention during the October 15 episode (#274) of *I Hear of Sherlock Everywhere*. We are grateful, and honored. While every episode of *IHOSE* is of interest to Doyleans, #274 qualifies for extra, because Monty asks guest Andrew Lycett about the changing ties between ACD and Sherlock:

Over the last century, nearly century-and-a-half, there's been this, I think appropriate, focus on the character, Sherlock Holmes. He's been discovered, and written about, and brought to life in every medium that we have in which to communicate. And of late, there seems to be more focus on Conan Doyle. We're moving away from this simply fanciful notion that Conan Doyle was the Literary Agent. And I know Conan Doyle's sons were not too, they were never happy about that. But talk to us a little bit about why you think there's more focus on the creator, Conan Doyle, and discovering more about his life, these days.

Lycett — on the show to talk about his fine new book, *The Worlds of Sherlock Holmes* — answers eloquently. Go listen (ihearofsherlock.com).

THE FUTURE

The BBC agrees with Scott Monty. It has two ACD-themed shows in the works: *Killing Sherlock*



Doylean field research: The front gate of magnificent Possingworth Manor, the model (we think) for Walcot Old Place, site of the final scene in ACD's auto-juridical story, “One Crowded Hour” (1911) (annotated MS in 2025).

(a biographical series by historian Lucy Worsley) and *Lot 249* (an ACD story adapted by *Sherlock* co-creator Mark Gatiss). Prep for the latter by re-hearing the fascinating (and weirdly amusing) analysis of *Lot 249* by Paul Chapman and Mark Jones in *Doings of Doyle* episode #41 (doingsof-doyle.com).

The Genius of the Place is a scary new collection of ACD-inspired gothic tales by Margie Deck of *Blue John Gap* fame, coming soon from Belanger Books. Highly recommended.

