

gigantic. The combat between my reason which told me that such things could not be, and my senses which told me that they were, raged within me as I lay. Finally, I was almost ready to persuade myself that this experience had been part of some evil dream, and that my abnormal condition might have conjured up a hallucination. But before I won my way out of the cavern I had a final experience which removed the last possibility of doubt from my mind.

I had taken my matches from my armpit and felt them. They seemed perfectly hard and dry. Stooping down into a crevice of the rocks I tried one of them. To my delight it took fire at once. I lit the candle, and with a terrified backward glance into the obscure depths of the cavern I hurried in the direction of the Roman passage. As I did so I passed the patch of mud on which I had seen the huge imprint. Now I stood astonished before it, for there were three similar imprints upon its surface, enormous in size, irregular in outline, of a depth which indicated the ponderous weight which had left them. Then a great terror came suddenly upon me. Stooping and shading my candle with my hand I rushed in a frenzy of fear to the rocky archway, hastened down it, and never stopped until with weary feet and panting lungs I rushed up the final slope of stones, broke through the tangle of briars, and flung myself exhausted upon the soft grass under the peaceful light of the stars. It was three in the morning when I reached the farmhouse, and today I am all unstrung and quivering after my terrific ^{adventure} experience. As yet I have told no one. I must move warily in the matter. What would the poor lonely women or the uneducated ghouls here think of it, if I were to tell them my experience. Let me go to some one who can understand or advise.

Apr 23rd. I was laid up in the bed for two days after

A VESTA VIRGIN — DRYING OUT MATCHES ... IS THE PITS.

"I had taken my matches from my armpit and felt them. They seemed perfectly hard and dry. Stooping down into a crevice of the rocks, I tried one of them. To my delight it took fire at once. I lit the candle, and, with a terrified backward glance into the obscure depths of the cavern, I hurried in the direction of the Roman passage."

When I first read these sentences from page 11 of "The Terror of Blue John Gap," I scoffed (literally, out loud); as an Eagle Scout myself, I couldn't believe my eyes. Didn't Doctor Hardcastle know better, didn't Doctor Doyle know better, than to deposit matches in his armpit to dry them?! But as I reflected on the conditions of caves — ... (continued on other side)

A COMMON NEWSLETTER

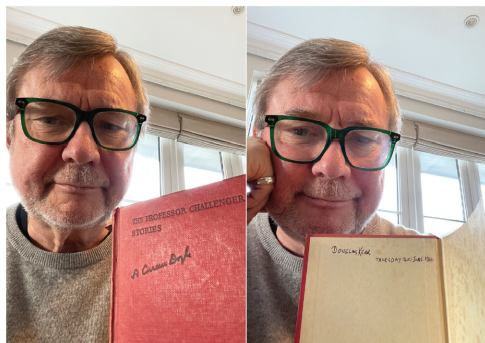
— with a nod to Micah Clarke —

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 5, NUMBER 2, AUGUST 2025



A mature Douglas Kerr, with his childhood copy of *The Professor Challenger Stories*. Courtesy of the subject.

HOW DOUGLAS KERR MET ACD

In 2022, Paul Chapman and Mark Jones of *Doings of Doyle* interviewed Douglas Kerr, editor of *The Edinburgh Edition of the Works of Arthur Conan Doyle*. Here is how the conversation began:

Paul Chapman: I'll get going with the first question, Douglas, which is how did you first become introduced to the world of Arthur Conan Doyle?

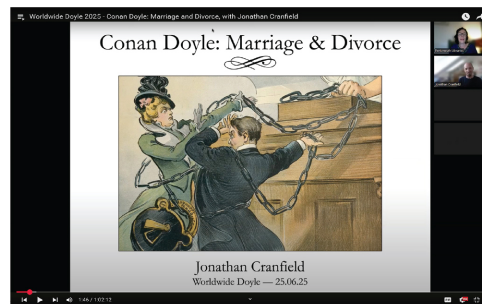
Douglas Kerr: Oh, I was hoping that you would ask me that question. I can't tell you how, but I can tell you when exactly. And it's pity you can't see this, but I'm holding in my hands a copy of *The Professor Challenger Stories* published by John Murray in the 1950s. On the flyleaf, very carefully written in pencil, is my name, and it says "Thursday 21st of June 1962."

That was the first day on which I encountered Conan Doyle. I can't remember now if I bought that book for myself or more likely somebody gave it to me, I should think. It did mean that I must have known about Sherlock Holmes — I'm sure I did — but my first reading of Conan Doyle was not in Sherlock Holmes. It was actually Professor Challenger, and I think that has probably rather oriented my later approach to Conan Doyle, which is not necessarily to put Sherlock Holmes front and center in everything but to think of Conan Doyle as a writer of broad interests.

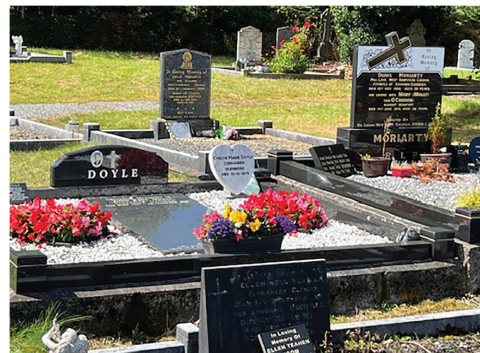
It is a thought-provoking anecdote, but is it too good to be true? We asked Professor Kerr for evidence. He delivered (shift your gaze to the left). The answer is: No. It is in fact both good and true.

WORLDWIDE DOYLE

Every spring/summer, the Portsmouth Library hosts its "Worldwide Doyle" speaker series. This year's featured talks by Jonathan Cranfield, Clifford Goldfarb, Sheldon Goldfarb, and Burt Wolder. You can watch them at the *Doings of Doyle* YouTube channel: youtube.com/@doingsofdoyle.



Laura Weston, Portsmouth Libraries Education and Learning Officer, introduces Jonathan Cranfield, Senior Lecturer at Liverpool John Moores University, for his June 25 presentation, "Conan Doyle: Marriage and Divorce."



Doyle (related to the doctor?) and Moriarty (related to the professor?), together forever. Courtesy of Mike Homer.

IRISH DOYLE (AND MORIARTY)

On a recent visit to Ireland, Mike Homer and Nancy Browning spotted an intriguing pair of plots at Killeen Cemetery in County Kerry. "I know ACD's grandfather immigrated to London from Dublin," says Mike, "but perhaps his family had roots in other counties."

(continued from other side)

... unusually and regularly cold and damp, colder than the ambient temperatures in summer — and the circumstances of the events of the story, I started to wonder if there wasn't some merit to this approach ...

— Max Magee

Max's enlightening look at the armpit question continues on page 11 of our website (acdsociety.com/bjg/11/bjg11a.html). Luckily for us, Max did double duty. Revisit page one to find his other new, very interesting contribution there.

— Margie Deck and Nancy Holder

