



The Essential Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Biography • Stories • Articles

Read by David Timson • Tim Pigott-Smith • Crawford Logan
Rupert Degas and others



NA695512D

***A Life of Arthur Conan Doyle* by Hesketh Pearson**

Read by Tim Pigott-Smith

1	Introduction by David Timson	1:05
2	A British Celt	6:56
3	At the age of nine...	7:18
4	Some odd jobs	8:29
5	Meanwhile, those sixpences had to be earned...	6:37
6	During the last year of his study at Edinburgh...	7:34
7	Doctor Budd	7:43
8	Budd's carriage pulled up on the Hoe...	10:26
9	Doctor Doyle	10:58
10	While waiting	4:37
11	Doyle never made a penny more than £25...	7:35
12	To Berlin and Austria	3:07
13	Sherlock Holmes	7:19
14	The notion of writing a series of short stories...	9:46
15	Friends and Fame	9:52
16	The Brigadier	4:38
17	The Man of Action	4:30
18	On to Cairo	4:22
19	In South Africa, the Boer War...	4:24

20	Titanic	8:26
21	The Man in the Street	6:47
22	The Last Phase	7:44
23	Doyle's home life was exceptionally happy...	7:43

The Adventure of the Speckled Band

Read by David Timson

24	Introduction	1:46
25	Early morning in Baker Street	3:56
26	'It is not cold which makes me shiver...'	3:54
27	'My name is Helen Stoner...'	8:19
28	'I could not sleep that night...'	7:15
29	'This is very deep business,' he said at last...	3:05
30	A huge man and an iron bar	3:41
31	A will, and a journey to Stoke Moran	12:26
32	I had never seen my friend's face so grim...	6:13
33	A night visit to Manor House	3:15
34	A dreadful vigil	5:37
35	Such are the true facts...	4:39
36	Recording of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle part 1	2:00

Two short stories by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Read by Carl Rigg

37	Introduction by David Timson	0:29
38	Lot No. 249	7:48
39	Bellingham's Room	10:08
40	The strange habit	7:34
41	One afternoon...	8:06
42	The next evening...	9:37
43	Next day...	7:32
44	The Sealed Room	7:03
45	At the end of the passage	8:36
46	Some days later...	8:41

How the Brigadier Slew the Fox

Read by Rupert Degas

47	Introduction by David Timson	0:34
48	In all the great hosts of France...	7:58
49	Ah, how my heart swelled...	5:50
50	I had never known it...	7:38
51	Presently an officer, in a blue uniform...	5:56
52	Such a crowd...	4:54
53	In front of us were the dogs...	5:52

From *The Lost World*

Read by Glen McCready

53	Introduction by David Timson	0:16
54	The most wonderful things have happened...	6:40
55	It was midday...	5:48
56	'Wealden!' cried Challenger, in an ecstasy...	6:40
57	I had the same feeling of mystery...	8:31

The White Company

Read by David Timson

58	Introduction	1:01
59	The company stood peering...	6:22
60	Sir Nigel, meanwhile, had found a foeman...	4:57

Beliefs and Causes – Other Writings by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

61	Introduction by David Timson	0:54
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From *The Vital Message*

Read by Crawford Logan

62	The Dawning of the Light	6:28
63	At first it was only physical...	5:58
64	None the less, it was greeted...	7:01

From Danger!

Read by Jonathan Oliver

65	Introduction by David Timson	0:26
66	Being the log of Captain John Sirius	7:15
67	On she came...	6:42
68	On the round-the-corner page...	5:42
69	I had no time to read our papers...	7:16

From The Cottingley Fairies

Read by Crawford Logan

70	Introduction by David Timson	0:40
71	Should the incidents here narrated...	7:26
72	The matter being in this state...	6:58
73	I may add as a footnote...	6:15

The Inner Room

Read by Crawford Logan

74	Introduction by David Timson	0:23
75	It is mine – the little chamber...	2:51
76	Recording of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle part 2	5:52

Total time: 7:37:28

The Readers

Introductions by David Timson

A Life of Arthur Conan Doyle by Hesketh Pearson read by Tim Pigott-Smith

The Adventure of the Speckled Band and *The White Company*
read by David Timson

Lot No. 249 and *The Sealed Room* read by Carl Rigg

How the Brigadier Slew the Fox read by Rupert Degas

The Lost World read by Glen McCready

The Vital Message, *The Cottingley Fairies* and *The Inner Room*
read by Crawford Logan

Danger! read by Jonathan Oliver

The Essential

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

In seeking the essential ingredients that make up the man who was Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, there is one characteristic that recurs again and again: he loved a good fight. In writing of his earliest years, for instance, in his entertaining autobiography *Memories and Adventures*, recollections of the 'scraps' he got into frequently occur:

'If there is any truth in the idea of reincarnation...I think some earlier experience of mine must have been as a stark fighter, for it came out strongly in youth, when I rejoiced in battle. We lived for some time in a cul de sac street with a very vivid life of its own and a fierce feud between the small boys who dwelt on either side of it. Finally it was fought out between two champions, I representing the poorer boys who lived in flats

and my opponent the richer boys who lived in the opposite villas and had an excellent contest of many rounds, not being strong enough to weaken each other. When I got home after the battle, my mother cried, "Oh Arthur, what a dreadful eye you have got!" To which I replied, "You just go across and look at Eddie Tulloch's eye!".'

As he matured, his inclination to fight moved away from the directly physical to the philosophical – fighting for a cause.

In 1912, Conan Doyle gave his support to the actions of the captain of the *Titanic*, whom he felt had been unjustly blamed for the disaster. George Bernard Shaw had started the skirmish by writing an article in *The Daily News and Leader*, in which he called the public reaction to the so-called heroism of the captain and crew as nothing but

'romantic' rubbish. The captain, Shaw wrote: *'had lost his ship by deliberately and knowingly steaming into an ice-field at the highest speed he had coal for'*. His actions, Shaw claimed, had not been courageous, as the popular press reported. *'I ask,'* Shaw continued, *'what is the use of all this ghastly, blasphemous, inhuman, braggartly lying?'*

Conan Doyle protested in a spirit of self-righteous anger at this attack on Captain Smith's courage:

'How a man could write with such looseness and levity of such an event at such a time passes all comprehension...His next paragraph is devoted to the attempt to besmirch the conduct of Captain Smith... the false suggestion being that the sympathy shown by the public for Captain Smith took the shape of condoning Captain Smith's navigation. Now everyone – including Mr. Bernard Shaw – knows perfectly well that no defence has ever been made of

the risk which was run, and that the sympathy was at the spectacle of an old and honoured sailor who has made one terrible mistake, and who deliberately gave his life in reparation, discarding his lifebelt, working to the last for those whom he had unwillingly injured, and finally swimming with a child to a boat into which he himself refused to enter.'

Shaw replied at length in print: *'Sentimental idiots, with a break in the voice, tell me that "he went down to the depths": I tell them, with the impatient contempt they deserve, that so did the cat.'*

Shaw may have been a realist in his reactions, but the public mood was for the romantic view of Conan Doyle.

He always had sympathy for the underdog, and in taking their part, would often end up with a bloody nose himself. In the cases of George Edalji and Oscar Slater, it is unlikely the public would have noticed the unjust outcome of their respective trials if

Conan Doyle had not exposed the flaws in the evidence against them. George Edalji had been convicted in 1906 of maiming horses in Staffordshire. Conan Doyle, employing his fictional sleuth's approach, looked at the evidence and proved Edalji's innocence, though the real perpetrator of the crime was never found. Oscar Slater was wrongly accused of murder and spent eighteen years of a life sentence in prison before Conan Doyle exposed the gross incompetence of the police in the case and facilitated his release. Conan Doyle felt that, in both cases, racism had played a part – Edalji being a Parsee and Slater a Jew.

The outcome of these interventions proved uncertain. He was rewarded with ingratitude from Oscar Slater, and from Edalji, bewilderment at all the attention.

In the Boer War, Conan Doyle longed to fight with the British Army, but his age – he was over 40 – excluded him and he had to be content to take up his pen rather than his sword, and attack the accusations of British cruelty against their Boer prisoners.

In his fiction, too, Conan Doyle is at

his most vivid when describing conflict. His historical novel *The White Company*, which he considered his greatest work, is full of scenes of medieval aggression. There is hand-to-hand combat, jousting, sea-battles, castle sieges and the final conflict between the White Company (an elite band of mercenaries), and the full might of the Spanish forces (*an extract from which is included on CD 5*).

The fascination with fighting continued in *Rodney Stone* in which he explores the world of eighteenth-century bare-knuckle fighting, the forerunner of the modern boxing match.

But there was one fight that Conan Doyle would never win, though he refused to admit defeat until almost at the end of his life: Mr Sherlock Holmes was to prove more than a match for his creator. Conan Doyle had quickly grown tired of his most famous creation and had attempted to kill him off after only twelve stories. The public, however, would not allow it, and the clamour to revive Holmes was too compelling for the pragmatic Conan Doyle to resist. So Sherlock Holmes was re-born from

the depths of the Reichenbach Falls where Conan Doyle had left him in his short story *The Final Problem*, believing such a violent end would mean it was the last he would ever have to do with him. Why did the author fight so hard to rid himself of his most famous (and most lucrative) creation? Had the Holmes stories become too easy for his literary skills? Did Conan Doyle feel he constantly needed to challenge himself as a writer? Was he experiencing an internal battle with which he could not come to terms? Conan Doyle called himself 'the man in the street', but he was more complex than that, and in his poem *The Inner Room* (on CD 6) – perhaps the most intimate confession we have from him – he reveals the many aspects of Conan Doyle that made the man.

By 1927, when he wrote the final collection of Sherlock Holmes stories, he had thrown in the towel and conceded defeat, though not without humour: *'I fear that Mr. Sherlock Holmes may become like one of those popular tenors who, having outlived their time, are*

still tempted to make repeated farewell bows to their indulgent audiences...'

By this stage of his life, however, Conan Doyle had other battles to concern him. He had embarked on the greatest fight of his life – to convert the world to spiritualism (see CD 6).

He was to endure much hostility from the public in this conflict. Bloodied, but unbowed, he soldiered on, even surviving the howls of ridicule that ensued when he declared he believed in fairies (CD 6).

In 1929, Conan Doyle was given the opportunity to spread the word about psychic phenomena to a potentially vast audience. The film company Fox-Case Movietone invited him to speak on the subject in a short, eleven-minute film. 'Talking pictures' were a new phenomenon, but Conan Doyle responded enthusiastically. After declaring: 'I've got to speak one or two words, just to try my voice I understand...', he plunged into a seemingly spontaneous and energetic speech, which included a declaration of his complete belief and faith in

spiritualism (*an extract can be heard on CD 6*). But the first part of the speech, no doubt at the insistence of the film company, consists of a frank account of the creation of his masterpiece, Sherlock Holmes (*an extract is on CD 3*).

A year later, in July 1930, Conan Doyle died, aged 71. The epitaph on his grave is fitting for an old warrior who loved a fight: 'STEEL TRUE – BLADE STRAIGHT'.

Notes by David Timson

**The music on this recording is taken from
the NAXOS and MARCO POLO catalogues**

CDs 1 and 2 (From *A Life of Arthur Conan Doyle* – NA224212):

- DVOŘÁK** STRING QUARTET OP. 34 8.553373
Vlach Quartet Prague
- DVOŘÁK** STRING QUARTETS OP. 80 AND 61 8.553372
Vlach Quartet Prague
- DVOŘÁK** STRING QUINTETS OP. 1 AND 97 8.553376
Vlach Quartet Prague /Ladislav Kyselák
- GRIEG** STRING QUARTETS 8.550879
Oslo String Quartet
- SMETANA** PIANO TRIO, OP. 15 8.553415
Joachim Trio

Music programming by Sarah Butcher

CD 3 (From *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* – NAX35312):

- BELLA** STRING QUARTET IN E MINOR 8.223839
Moyzes Quartet
- BELLA** NOTTURNO FOR STRING QUARTET 8.223839
Moyzes Quartet

Music programming by Nicolas Soames

CD 4 (From *Four Short Stories* – NA205012):

GRIEG STRING QUARTETS 8.550879
Oslo String Quartet

CDs 5 and 6:

BERLIOZ OVERTURES: ROB ROY 8.550999
San Diego Symphony Orchestra/Yoav Talmi

SMETANA MÁ VLAST: NO. 5. TABOR 8.550931
Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra/Antoni Wit

GLAZUNOV ORCHESTRAL WORKS, VOL. 1: 8.220309
NO.2. CORTEGE SOLENNEL
Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra/Kenneth Schermerhorn

ELGAR STRING QUARTET IN E MAJOR/PIANO 8.553737
QUINTET IN A MINOR: I. ALLEGRO MODERATO, I. MODERATO
Maggini String Quartet

ELGAR WAND OF YOUTH: IV. SUN DANCE, 8.557166
V. FAIRY PIPERS
New Zealand Symphony Orchestra/James Judd



Tim Pigott-Smith's film credits include *The Remains of the Day*, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *Escape to Victory* and *The Four Feathers*. His theatre credits include *Shakespeare*, *Amadeus*, *The Iceman Cometh* and *Major Barbara*. His television credits include *Fame is the Spur*, *Jewel in the Crown* and *Kavanagh QC*. He reads *A Life of Arthur Conan Doyle*, *The Brothers Karamazov*, *They Saw it Happen* and *Jung* for Naxos AudioBooks.



David Timson has made over 1,000 broadcasts for BBC Radio Drama. For Naxos AudioBooks he wrote *The History of the Theatre*, which won an award for most original production from the Spoken Word Publishers Association in 2001. He has also directed for Naxos AudioBooks four Shakespeare plays, including *King Richard III* (with Kenneth Branagh), which won Best Drama Award from the SWPA in 2001. In 2002 he won the Audio of the Year Award for his reading of *A Study in Scarlet*. He also reads the entire Sherlock Holmes canon for Naxos AudioBooks, as well as *The Sign of Four* and *The Valley of Fear*.



Carl Rigg trained at The Central School of Speech and Drama before working extensively in theatre. His television appearances include *Softly Softly*, *Emmerdale Farm* and *Squadron*. His film credits include *The Body Snatchers* and *The Living Daylights*. He is also an experienced scriptwriter. He reads *Four Short Stories* for Naxos AudioBooks.



Rupert Degas is in considerable demand as a voice for cartoons, but is also regularly seen in plays as varied as *Stones in his Pockets* and *The 39 Steps*. He is the voice of Pantalamon in Philip Pullman's *Northern Lights*. His audiobook credits include Murakami's *A Wild Sheep Chase*, *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*, *Dance, Dance, Dance*, Kafka's *The Trial* and McCarthy's *The Road*, all for Naxos AudioBooks.



Glen McCready trained at The Webber Douglas Academy. His theatre credits include Oberon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Son in *A Voyage Round My Father* and Walter Langer in *Five Finger Exercise*. He reads *The Woman in White*, *The Children of the New Forest*, *The Visible World* and *The Lost World* for Naxos AudioBooks.



Crawford Logan has been involved in a number of programmes over many years, including *The Archers*, *Dr Who*, *Eastenders*, *The Mousetrap* and *The Forsyte Saga*. He reads *Beowulf* and *Ancient Greek Philosophy – An Introduction* for Naxos AudioBooks.



Jonathan Oliver's theatre credits include *War and Peace*, *The Homecoming* and the role of Antony in *Antony and Cleopatra*. His television credits include *Eskimo Day*, *House of Elliott* and *Hannay*. He reads *Frankenstein* and *Ivanhoe* for Naxos AudioBooks.

Credits

Selected by David Timson

Produced by David Timson and Nicolas Soames

Recorded at Motivation Sound Studios, London

Cover picture: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, photo circa 1908; courtesy of Mary Evans Picture Library

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Rupert Degas and others

Was Arthur Conan Doyle really like his most famous fictional character, the rational Sherlock Holmes? Why then, irrationally, did he become a fervent follower of Spiritualism? Did he really believe in the existence of fairies or was he mad? This intriguing compilation offers a portrait of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in fact and fiction. There are extracts from his spiritualist writings, as well as a complete Sherlock Holmes short story *The Adventure of the Speckled Band* and extracts from the rarely read short story *Danger!* There are excerpts too from other popular works, *The Lost World* and *Brigadier Gerard* and the largely forgotten *The White Company*. All these combine to give us an insight into this complex character.

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Produced by
David Timson
and Nicolas
Soames

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FICTION

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