

THE BIMETALLIC QUESTION

Box 883 Stock Exchange Tower
Montreal, Canada H4Z 1K2

MINUTES
of the meeting
of the
BIMETALLIC QUESTION
April 7, 2005

Date of next meeting

The next meeting will take place on:
Thursday, June 2nd, at 6:30 p.m. at:

The Westmount Public Library
(Westmount Room)
4574 Sherbrooke Street West
Montreal, Quebec

The Quiz at the next meeting

"The Abbey Grange"

Minutes of the MEETING of the BIMETALLIC QUESTION held on Thursday, April 7th, 2005 at the Westmount Library (Westmount Room), 4574 Sherbrooke Street West, Westmount, Quebec.

Present: Carole Abramson, Rachel Alkallay, Jack Anderson, Maureen Anderson, Robert Aikman, Mac Belfer, Paul Billette, Patrick Campbell, Kevin Chappell, Wilfrid deFreitas, Davis Dowse, Tom Holmes, David Kellett, Joan O'Malley, Erica Penner, Kathryn Radford, Bernard Robaire, Arlene Scher, Cheryl Surkes,

Regrets: Elliott Newman

Special thanks: Patrick Campbell did a great job of taking notes at the meeting for Elliott to type up. Editorial and other comments are those of the typist and Patrick should be held blameless in these matters.

CALL TO ORDER:

Our Sovereign Paul Billette called the meeting to order promptly at 6:30 p.m. with 20 members present.

ITEMS OF BUSINESS AND GENTLE TRANSACTION:

- 1) Carol Abramson was introduced as our new "Sixpence" to general applause.
- 2) Albert Aikman offered up the first toast to the Master.
- 3) David Dowse introduced Kevin Chappell, a long-time, long-lost member, formerly a Sixpence and a Sovereign. Kevin reminisced over a number of events he had attended over the years. Kevin had moved his company to Stittsville some time ago, as can be proven by his membership number (26).
We were also pleased to welcome another long-lost member, Tom Holmes, who recalled events from the historic past he had attended at the BmQ.
- 4) **SHOW AND TELL**
 - a. David Dowse produced a set of British stamps depicting some of the better-known stories from the canon of the WGCD.
 - b. David also presented us with pictures of a fountain pen as described in our minutes of the previous meeting.
 - c. David Kellett produced a paper on the Bulwer Lytton contest – giving awards for the worst opening lines for a story. The 1840 novel by Bulwer Lytton started with the immortal words: "It was a dark and stormy night ..."
(What's wrong with that? Not only has it been launched into immortality by a beagle reclining atop a doghouse reminiscing about Kansas, but it arguably delivers a tad more cachet and much less contention than another tome whose English version commences with "In the beginning ..." I mean, really! Is nothing sacred, people?)
 - d. Paul Billette produced the two-volume set of Leslie Klinger's latest offering, "updating Baring Gould's World Bibliography of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson." Klinger's magnum opus covers the 56 short stories only.
 - e. Bernard Robaire produced a poster with the genealogy of the Holmes family and highlights of the life of Holmes.
 - f. Wilfrid deFreitas discussed the recent problem of the mailing of the minutes, as they were returned because of insufficient postage. This resulted from Maureen's having been misled by some postal clerk who will have to pay double if he ever joins the BmQ. Through Wilfrid's tenacious sleuthing, the problem was brought to ground and we received our minutes with minutes to spare. All's Well That Ends Well.

- g. Patrick Campbell handed around a set of cigarette cards of the Conan Doyle stories, including those of the WGCD, released some years ago (when decent people smoked cigarettes) by Bogslavsky & Co.
5. Bernard gave the toast to Dr. Watson, with particular reference to the unhappy case of Nigel Bruce.
6. The high point of the evening was the unveiling and distribution of the Magnum Opus of the Bimetallic Question, our collective, published tome, *Musings from an Overturned Beehive*, a slim yet powerful volume, beautifully put together and replete with people, places, and events that have illuminated the history of the society and cemented its bonds with other such acolytes, adherents, followers, and devotees around the world.

Wilfrid described the problems of collecting the material for the book, finding a publisher, and for preparing and editing the result. The press run consists of 60 volumes, each dedicated to one of the stories. The books are hard-bound and the cover is gilt-lettered. The intention is that each of the members of the BmQ in good standing will receive a copy, with the balance to be sold at \$40 per.

We donated one copy to the Westmount Library, with another going to the Toronto Library, as well as to those who contributed material for the book.

There followed a period during which each member present chose a favorite story, and they then received that particular book. The books were numbered in the order in which the stories were published, not the order in which the stories occurred. Wilfrid then handed out their chosen copies and there was a brief flurry of members autographing each other's books.

It was acknowledged that this has been a very big project, but well worth the effort! We trust that one or more of our younger members will begin work soon on the semi-centennial issue. After all, that's only a scant 25 years off!

The Westmount Library copy was presented at the meeting to Dylan Spevack, representing the library. Jack Anderson recorded the event photographically for posterity and also took photographic note of Rachel Alkallay's receiving her copy too.

7. Carole Abramson administered her quiz based on "The Engineer's Thumb" amid general merriment and the euphoric high of everyone's having just gone through the presentation of our memory book (settle down, class). The quiz consisted of 55 questions for a total of 100 points.

The winners were:

First:	David Kellett	75
Second:	Patrick Campbell	71
Third:	David Dowse	61

Carole handed each of the winners a nicely wrapped present. All were copies of books appropriate for the occasion.

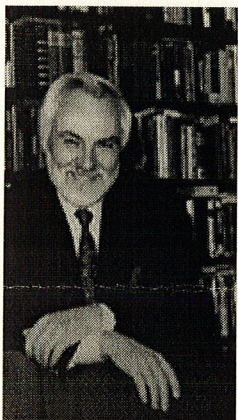
Over the past few years, we seem to have been breaking with the tradition of presenting only the first-place winner with a prize. Our purpose in announcing the first three winners is so that we can record these scores which will provide us with an annual aggregate of points so that we can determine the overall quiz champion of the year. We realize this is an imperfect system, since we cut off after the third-place winner, and usually, no two quizzes total the same number of possible points. Also true, our Solomonian decrees as to which answers are permissible and which are not are somewhat arbitrary, generally based on the need to restore order in the court. But we are making the best of an imperfect world and when we're having this much fun, can we not throw up our hands and join in the melee?

8. Rachel proposed the toast to Mrs. Hudson.
9. David Kellett chose "The Abbey Grange" for his next quiz.
10. Paul gave a toast to "The Woman."
11. Patrick then produced yet another rather spectacular "Show and Tell," in the form of a copy of *The Collected Poems of Arthur Conan Doyle*, first edition (1922), and read the poem "The Athabasca Trail" aloud. This was written by ACD after his goodwill tour of Canada's national parks in 1914. This tour was accomplished in style in a private railroad car provided by the president of the Grand Truck Railway, no less!
12. Joan O'Malley offered what she called a "negative toast" to the Society saying we are not a secret society, and she extolled the virtues of the BmQ in that vein.
13. The meeting broke up at 8:50 p.m.

ADDENDA

1. Former Bimetallic Member Feted at Clyde's
Bruce Holmes, long-time member of The Bimetallic Question in its formative years, was granted a Toronto award at Clyde's Pub in Pointe Claire, Quebec, in a somewhat roundabout fashion.

The idea for the ruse began when Wilfrid deFreitas, a former Sovereign and very active member of the BmQ found himself in Toronto on April 16, and attending a meeting of their Sherlockian society known as the Bootmakers. At that meeting, Bruce was awarded the honour of Master Bootmaker, *in absentia*. Wilfrid suggested to the society that since he knew Bruce would be in Montreal in the near future, why couldn't he make the presentation to Bruce among a gathering of old friends from Bruce's Montreal days?



The idea grew into a plan which was realized on Monday, May 9, when Bruce was invited to join his brother and sister-in-law Tom and Solveg Holmes, and a group of friends at Clyde's. In all innocence did he venture there, only to be presented with a certificate and shoehorn, the Master Bootmaker's badge of honour.

We of the Montreal society do hereby acknowledge that we would not know what to do with a shoehorn, but we were pleased to note that the deception went over smoothly and resoundingly, thereby elevating Clyde's Pub of Point Claire to a "must-visit" venue on the map of the WGCD and all the societies dedicated to his honour.

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2. As hard as it may be to imagine, some secret few of us within the BmQ do from time to time indulge in mystery fiction other than that involving the canon of the WGCD. Here is a 2004 "Top Ten" list of such ilk chosen by Otto Penzler whose bio follows.

1. Night Fall -Nelson DeMille
2. At Hell's Gate - Ethan Black
3. The Bookman's Promise - John Dunning
4. Best American Mystery Stories 2004 - Nelson DeMille
5. Take Me, Take Me With You - Lauren Kelly
6. Double Play - Robert B. Parker
7. Hark! - Ed McBain
8. Wolves Eat Dogs - Martin Cruz Smith
9. The Road to Ruin - Donald E. Westlake
10. Call for the Dead and A Murder of Quality (reissues) - John le Carre

About Otto Penzler

Otto Penzler is the proprietor of The Mysterious Bookshop in New York City. He was the publisher of The Armchair Detective, the Edgar-winning quarterly journal devoted to the study of mystery and suspense fiction, for seventeen years. Mr. Penzler was the founder of The Mysterious Press, which has now become part of the Warner publishing empire; he also created the publishing firm of Otto Penzler Books, which is now an imprint at Carroll & Graf, and The Armchair Detective Library, a publishing house devoted to reprinting classic crime fiction for the collector and library markets.

In 1977, he won an Edgar Award for The Encyclopedia of Mystery and Detection. The Mystery Writers of America gave him the prestigious Ellery Queen Award at the 1994 Edgars for his exceptional contributions to the publishing field. He was also honored with a Raven in 2003.

Mr. Penzler's most recent publications are The Best American Mystery Stories of the Year, which he edits for Houghton Mifflin (1997 Guest Editor, Robert B. Parker; 1998 Guest Editor, Sue Grafton; 1999 Guest Editor, Ed McBain; 2000 Guest Editor, Donald E. Westlake; 2001 Guest Editor, Lawrence Sanders; 2002 Guest Editor, James Ellroy; 2003 Guest Editor, Michael Connelly); Best American Crime Writing (with Thomas H. Cook), an annual series for Random House; Murderer's Row, an anthology of original baseball mysteries; and Murder On the Ropes, an anthology of original boxing mysteries; the original anthologies edited for Delacorte, Murder For Love (1996), Murder For Revenge (1998), and Murder and Obsession (1999); and the Best American Mystery Stories of the Century, Guest Edited by Tony Hillerman. He wrote 101 Greatest Movies of Mystery and Suspense for ibooks and the Literary Guild.

He was born July 8, 1942. He works and resides at: 129 West 56th Street, New York, New York 10019.

Our dear friends, you would confer a great favour upon us by joining us at the next meeting of "THE BIMETALLIC QUESTION" which is being held on Thursday, June 2nd, 2005, at 6:30 p.m.

For the latest society news or updates on our history, please go to www.bimetallicquestion.org