



# THE BIMETALLIC QUESTION

Box 883 Stock Exchange Tower  
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## *Minutes of the Meeting of The Bimetallic Question August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2016*

**Date of our next meeting:** Thursday, October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2016 at 6:30pm at the Westmount Public Library, Westmount Room, 4574 Sherbrooke Street West, Westmount, QC.

**The quiz at the next meeting:** *The Adventure of the Missing Three-Quarter*, prepared and presented by Wilfrid de Freitas.

**Next meeting's toast presenters:** The Master: David Dowse; Dr. Watson: Paul Billette; *The Woman*: Kathryn Radford; Mrs. Hudson: Melodie Tardieu; The Society: Susan Fitch.

**Minutes of the meeting of the Bimetallic Question** held on Thursday, August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2016 at the Westmount Public Library, Westmount Room, 4574 Sherbrooke Street West, Westmount, QC.

**Present:** Carol Abramson, Rachel Alkallay, Paul Billette, Louise Corda, Wilfrid de Freitas, David Dowse, Kristin Franseen, Chris Herten-Greaven, Raf Jans, Miyako Matsuda-Pelletier, Kathryn Radford, Susan Ravdin, Arlene Scher, Bruno Paul Stenson, Melodie Tardieu, and our guest Nelly Leitner.

**Regrets:** Jack Anderson, Maureen Anderson, Patrick Campbell, Elliott Newman, and Karl Raudsepp. *I have a deep regret that my trusty minutes side-kick Susan Fitch was not with us tonight. Hope you are all back at our next meeting. – David*

**Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order by our Sovereign, Carol Abramson at 6:30 pm.

## ITEMS OF BUSINESS AND GENTLE TRANSACTION

*It was a hot and muggy night, with a lot of "muggles" present. There was no air conditioning and the "cold" water generously provided by the library was only "Luke", after Mark, cool. Our numbers were down, I think due to the summer holidays, but all had a splendid time. – David*

### 1. Welcome to Our Guest!

Rachel Alkallay brought a first time guest to the meeting, Nelly Leitner. Nelly is an artist who has done many exhibitions around Montreal and beyond. We hope to see her with us again soon. Welcome!

### 2. Condolences to Eva and Elliott Newman on the Loss of Zwi Taub

It was with great sadness that we learned of the passing of Eva Newman's father, Zwi Taub, at the age of 94. Elliott recalls for us how, "Zwi was a Holocaust survivor who spent time in a concentration camp, and most of his family was killed in the Second World War. Following this he took his remaining family to Israel, at that most turbulent of times, shortly before it became a state. Essentially, a rifle was put in his hands the day that he arrived. His was a life of struggle, but through it all he never lost his sense of dignity, and compassion for people, and remained always a generous, kind, warm and hospitable man." A card was signed by all present with our heartfelt condolences and sent to Eva and Elliott.



Elliott Newman, Paul Billette, Joe Marino, Elaine Marino, Tom Holmes, Susan Fitch, and Melodie Tardieu

### 3. Bimetallicers Meet Up With Visiting Sherlockian Friends Joe and Elaine Marino

On Wednesday, June 29<sup>th</sup> at noon, five Bimetallic Question members rendezvoused at a secret location in Old Montreal (Jardin Nelson). Our mission was to exchange intelligence reports with visiting Sherlockian Joe Marino and his wife Elaine, of Herfordshire, England. We successfully eluded Moriarty's agents by charting a zig-zag course through the many construction cones surrounding this lovely garden terrace restaurant, in Place Jacques Cartier in the Old Port.

Joe, who has Montreal roots and last lived here some 40 years ago, is a member of several Sherlockian societies in England, Ireland, Canada, the USA and Japan. So, when he contacted us to say he would be back in town for a visit with family here this summer, we leaped at the chance to exchange news and views on all matters Sherlockian with him. In addition it was a great pleasure to meet Elaine, a very tolerant and open-minded non-Sherlockian spouse, who put up with our group's passionate Canonical discourses over lunch with patience and aplomb.

An accomplished jazz combo played live music in the restaurant throughout our luncheon, most certainly confounding the Professor's listening devices, if any. We were delighted when Joe accepted our invitation to become our newest member of the Bimetallic Question, and perhaps our first trans-Atlantic active (via email) participant. Glad to have you aboard! See Joe's paper *Try as We Might* in email included with these minutes.

#### **4. Tour and Event Reminders**

Bruno Paul Stenson will be giving a tour of the Chateau Ramezay on Saturday, August 13<sup>th</sup> at 12:30 pm for members and guests of the Bimetallic Question...

On Sunday, October 16<sup>th</sup>, Bruno will also give a Sherlock Holmes specific tour of the Redpath Museum at 12:30 pm...

And we are invited to Carol and Jacob Abramson's Victorian Tea, on Sunday, September 18<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 pm at their home: 13 Dephoure, Dollard-des-Ormeaux. Period dress is requested.

#### **5. Toast to the Master by Raf Jans sourced from *The Sherlock Holmes Book*, May 2016**

##### *The Immortal Reputation*

Try this test. Can you think of another fictional character whose image would be instantly recognized all over the world by so many people? Mr Pickwick? Fagin? Bill Sikes? Not in, say, South America, surely? Maybe not even in England. Falstaff? Same objections...

It's extraordinary, but I really believe that the only imaginative creations that could be so instantly and universally recognized from their appearance are the early Disney cartoon characters: Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, Pluto and Goofy. And what does a cartoon mouse do if he wants to solve a mysterious problem? He frowns, dons a deerstalker and over-sized ulster, and glares through a magnifying glass, peering at the carpet for clues.

I propose a toast to the Master!

### **Show and Tell**

#### **6. Share a Treasured Small Museum Experience with Rachel**

Rachel Alkallay is once again putting out a call to any members who know small, obscure and eclectic museums in Montreal to include in her second volume of *Museum Treasures of Montreal*. [purplelililac@yahoo.ca](mailto:purplelililac@yahoo.ca)

#### **7. Don't Count Them Out**

Chris Herten-Greaven sprung upon us a book entitled *Blood Relative* by Michael Gray proposing an alternative theory as to what happened to the last Russian Imperial family, the Romanovs. A conspiracy theorist's delight, the book puts the Romanovs alive and well with us today.

#### **8. Lessons and Insights from Mrs. Beeton's Household**

Carol Abramson showed us her copy of *Mrs. Beeton's Household Management*, Wordsworth Reference Series now in paperback, as well as her book of Mrs. Beeton's *All About Cookery*, published by Pan books.

#### **9. A Little Meeting Night Music**

Bruno Paul Stenson informed us that he will be giving a lecture and demonstration of some of his collection of over 250 Weird Musical instruments at the Stewart Museum on Isle Ste. Helené on Saturday, October 1<sup>st</sup> at 2:00 pm. <http://www.stewart-museum.org/en/curiosities-144.html>

For our delight he pulled from a bag four to entertain us, described in his own words, thusly:

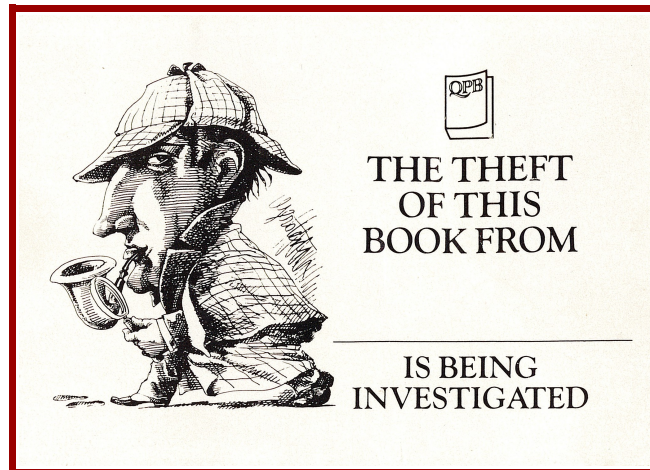
Globular Flute used as any other flute, without the fuss and bother of strict fingering. Sounds like a hollow recorder.



Gopichard from India and a beggar's instrument. Like highland bagpipes, it is a drone instrument and plays the same note throughout. It is played like any lute-like instrument except the left hand squeezes the neck to achieve the "boing-boing sound".

Helixbowl is from the US and was originally composed of a bearin bau gourd and bow but now is metal with a spring. It is played by striking the spring while moving the bowl towards and away from one's stomach to achieve the pleasing sound.

Flaxatone is played by striking the instrument back and forth while bending the metal sheet as one would a musical saw to change the note that is wanted.



#### 10. Notice of Investigation

Kathryn Radford brought us an outstanding Sherlock Holmes book plate and Chris thinks that he knows someone who can make us some replicas to protect our books.

#### 11. One Lucky Dad

For the love of a father, Genevieve and Audrey Ann Dowse invited their Dad and three other family members to "a murder in the study", *The Cadavera Case*. This is a production of EZKAPAZ, a Montreal mystery company similar to A/Maze. Carol Abramson recently went to a similar mystery room in Ottawa.

<http://www.ezkapaz.com/>



Koki Mitani's Sherlock Holmes puppet television star

#### 12. Miyako on Koki Mitani's Sherlock Puppets, a New Horowitz Series, and the UK's *New Blood*

*Here is Miyako Matsuda-Pelletier's latest Sherlockian entertainment roundup for us. Enjoy!*

As I've said many times, Sherlock Holmes is very popular in Japan, and in order to attract new readers, especially children, NHK (Japanese National television) decided to commission a new Holmes show in 2014. Due to a limited budget, they decided to create a puppet show, and just like Italy and France, Japan has a long history of puppet theatre, called "Bunraku", since the 1870s. The creator of this new show is Mr. Koki Mitani who's a big fan of Holmes, and a very famous movie director and screenwriter there. In fact his movies have often been shown at the Montreal World Film Festival. Since Mr. Mitani normally creates comedy or funny movies, he decided to create a playful show to make his audiences laugh, especially kids. Some Sherlockian

fans might object to his story telling and direction as a comedy of Holmes, but it is important to interest children in this classic. Here, the main characters are teenage boys who live in a fictional boarding school called Beeton School. John Watson, in this show, has just arrived from Australia with his family. His father was a doctor there but decided to come back to England due to John's problem, because he could not stand the racism etc. The DVD of this cute and clever show was just released last year and I hope Holmes fans can buy them for their children to laugh with and enjoy!

[http://schoolserver.xsce.org:3000/wikipedia\\_en\\_all\\_2015-05/A/Sherlock\\_Holmes\\_\(puppetry\).html](http://schoolserver.xsce.org:3000/wikipedia_en_all_2015-05/A/Sherlock_Holmes_(puppetry).html)

*Totally British* magazine's July 2016 issue is introducing Mr. Anthony Horowitz's new TV show, *New Blood* which was shown in the UK recently. As you know, Mr Horowitz is the author of the authorized Sherlock Holmes novel *The House of Silk*, as the Conan Doyle estate people really admire his finest work, especially the *Foyle's War*, and *Alex Rider* series. My husband and I watched this latest series *New Blood*, and saw how it portrays London changing rapidly as a cosmopolitan city with immigrants from all over the world, and here with two young detectives who were born and raised in Britain but with parents who immigrated from Tehran, Iran and from Poland. Viewers can enjoy the friendship of this *New Blood*'s team lead-characters, Stefankowski and Arrash Sayyad, just like Holmes and Watson. Mr. Horowitz has a style that captivates readers/audiences and I couldn't stop watching this show and wanted more episodes! I think it's his style to bring us really evil characters that audiences hate, and when they die, or are caught, you really feel, "Oh, justice has prevailed!"

*Totally British* magazine's August 2016 issue has a full page advertisement for British theatre called, *National Theatre Live*. Here in Canada we can't go to see those National Theatre shows at all and we just read about them in the newspapers or magazines. But nowadays some movie theatres have decided to bring those theatre shows to the big screen in Canada for fans to enjoy, like how many sports fans who can't go to see their games can watch them in the movie theatres! If you're a fan of Benedict Cumberbatch, and are a bit frustrated at not being able to see his live theatre performances like *Frankenstein* or *Hamlet*, etc, you can now go to the movie theatres, rather than a trip to England to see them!

July's *Totally British* issue is also introducing a brand new period drama, *The Living and the Dead* (on BBC - One) which takes place in 1894 during Sherlock Holmes's era. It stars Colin Morgan who became a household name thanks to his big success with the BBC fantasy series *Merlin* 8 years ago. Now 30 years old, he has matured and is playing a doctor in this new show. My husband, a big fan of *Merlin* wanted to watch this show right away, additionally because the excellent writer/creator Ms. Ashley Pharoah is involved, a member of the writing team for *Dr. Who*, which my husband also adores, and as you may have guessed, we both find this new show is really a treat! *The Living and the Dead* is a blend of the super-natural world, a bit of horror, of relationships and our human life and death, of joy and sadness, and basically it's a story of family life and love.

WPBS-Ottawa offers many British TV shows, and in August they're showing *Secrets of Scotland Yard*, in which we can see how this police institution works and much about its history. Watching this show made me learn much more about Sherlock Holmes and his association with police detectives!

### **13. Toast to Dr. John H. Watson by Wilfrid de Freitas**

Let's see: we were founded in May, 1979, so our first meeting may have been in June. At a rough calculation, and assuming that we've never missed one, this could easily be our 218th meeting and, therefore the 218th time a toast has been proposed to our hero, Dr. Watson. One might think that everything that could be said about him has already been said – perhaps many times. Yes, he is definitely our hero, because without him the chances are we would not be here today. I'm sure none of us need to be reminded that it is only because of his diligence and perspicacity that he was minded to record the extraordinary cases which came to his co-lodger's attention.

I suspect that for many of us our first exposure to the good Doctor, was in those non-canonical black & white films of the nineteen forties, with titles like "The Spider Woman" and "The Scarlet Claw", the latter set in the backwoods of French Canada. He's usually portrayed as a bumbling oaf, a foil if you will, to the suave Holmes played by Basil Rathbone.

In more recent years however, directors have begun to realize how important Watson is in his own right. To my mind the best example of this is Martin Freeman's interpretation in the TV series "Sherlock", where he frequently gives back as good as he gets from Benedict Cumberbatch's put downs and smart ass remarks.

On a separate tack, it's interesting to note the few occasions in the Canon where Watson actually records the compliments paid to him by Holmes e.g. the "fixed point" remark in LAST and his "native shrewdness" in VALL. Perhaps even more interesting is Watson's own admission, one might even say boasting, of "...an experience of women which extends over many nations and three separate continents" in SIGN. Even in tonight's adventure RETI, Holmes refers to Watson's "natural advantages" and again in SECO, "the fair sex is your department". It seems to me that there's a lot more to the good Doctor than meets the eye.

Ladies and gentlemen, I give you Doctor Watson.

#### 14. Quiz on *The Adventure of the Retired Colourman* by Anne Millar, presented by Paul Billette

The results: 1<sup>st</sup> Wilfrid de Freitas 52 Book prize: *Country Flowers of a Victorian Lady*  
2<sup>nd</sup> Carol Abramson 46½ Book prize: *Death in a White Tie* by Ngaio Marsh  
Rachel Alkallay 46½  
3<sup>rd</sup> Bruno Paul Stenson 31 DVD prize: *Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*

*David's reflections on the quiz story:* On meeting Josiah Amberley for the first time Holmes expounds on the nature of life in general: "Exactly Watson. Pathetic and futile? Is not this story a microcosm of the whole? We reach. We grasp. And what is left in our hands at the end? A shadow. Or worse than a shadow - Misery." What a depressing and pessimistic, almost suicidal impression this man has made on Holmes. Amberley must have been a tremendous actor to have fooled Holmes.

*Miyako's reflections:* In this story the retired colourman Josiah Amberley claims that his wife had left with a neighbour, Dr. Ray Ernest, taking a sizable quantity of cash and securities worth £ 7,000. Now, living in Canada in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it's not so easy to think exactly how much £7,000 is worth today. But incidentally, I was watching one of those Sherlock Holmes documentary shows on PBS, and bingo!! In the programme, someone, an expert on Holmes, was saying that £1,000 is worth about \$85,000 Canadian dollars. So, it means Josiah Amberley's £7,000 is worth about \$595,000 in Canadian dollars today. How in the world can he claim such a huge amount of money from such a past occupation and as a famous miser??

#### 15. Toast to the Woman by Kristin Franseen

Many Doylean approaches to the Canon have proposed that Irene's home state is a roundabout reference to Lillie Langtry, known as the "Jersey Lily." But, taking Watson at his word, what do we know about the prima donna from New Jersey? Charles H. Kaufman's *Music in New Jersey: 1655-1860* reveals that, during the 1850s, the state was entering a period of great cultural transformation. The Adlers likely hailed originally from Central or Eastern Europe. The revolutions of the 1840s brought an influx of German and Yiddish-speaking immigrants to North America. In cities with sizable communities, German immigrants set up choral societies and (in larger cities, such as Newark) opera companies. Perhaps Irene was a relative of the violinist Max Adler who, like her, gave up life as a professional musician for marriage into a respectable family (in his case, one with a controlling interest in Sears, Roebuck, and Co.), and eventually gave his name to Chicago's Adler Planetarium.

Assuming the Adlers lived in Newark, Trenton, or New Brunswick, Irene would have had plenty of experience to observe professional musicians as a child. Although touring performers received mixed reviews in the state's newspapers and often had unkind things to say about their audiences--Louis Moreau Gottschalk wrote that his Trenton audience was "icy" and that "concerts will never take" in New Jersey--one can imagine the young Irene encountering touring singers that gave her some idea of the options that awaited her elsewhere. Gottschalk, despite his complaints, gave several tours of the state, often performing with opera singers, bringing the medium to cities and towns without established theatrical companies. There was also the contralto Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield, one of the first African-American opera singers, who received far greater praise on her European tour (including performing for Victoria and studying with Jenny Lind's vocal coach) than she did in New Brunswick. And as a child, Irene may have even seen Cora de Wilhorst (who left her respectable New York banking family to marry in Europe, scandalously turning to opera professionally after her husband, "a pretended foreign count," abandoned her).

One can imagine her family arranging for studies in preparation for a European tour. Family ties or a recommendation from a respected instructor might also explain Holmes's dubious claim that Irene was prima donna of the Warsaw Imperial Opera. After her marriage to Godfrey Norton and return to the States decades later, one can imagine her performing at private or semi-private concerts wherever the Nortons settled (although,

hopefully happier in her marriage than was Madame de Wilhorst, the gossip that would have invariably followed her homecoming is not reported in the press). To Irene Adler!

#### **16. Toast to Mrs. Hudson by Chris Herten-Greaven**

Dear Sherlockian friends:

Where would Holmes & Watson have been without dear old Mrs Hudson, the quintessential landlady and caretaker ? I said old, but I don't recall reading anywhere in the Canon a clue as to her age, though I would estimate somewhere in the comfortable forty to fifty range. In a previous toast I theorised about a hypothetical Mr. Hudson, who although never mentioned, existed in at least one persona, who was a contemporary of the good lady, and did eventually marry a retired operatic singer who had previously lived (owned? administered?) several failed boarding houses.

Bearing in mind Holmes' eccentricities and unusual timetable, both he & Watson were probably fortunate that She did not ask either or both of them to leave, retire herself or sell the property. What would they have done if they had suddenly had to fend for themselves and find an ongoing lodging and board arrangement...?

Ladies & gentlemen I ask you to raise your glasses and toast the indispensable Mrs. Hudson!



**Montreal Steam Punk Creative Inventions**

#### **17. Montreal Steam Punk**

The last event of the evening was an encore visit and performance from Montreal Steam Punk. Along with Alexander Adam came five or six other Steam Punk enthusiasts with a plethora of objects and gadgets and outlandish costumes to entertain us. We were treated to mechanical spiders, ray-guns and hybrid canes to pens and jewelry. See more great meeting photos in the special minutes email attachment.

#### **18. Toast to the Society by Bruno Paul Stenson**

Former Canadian prime minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau wrote that "the Just Society will be one in which all of our people will have the means and the motivation to participate." Clearly, this applies to The Bimetallic Question. The means to participate are limited to the means to attend our meetings. Beyond that, to participate fully, one need only have access to the Sherlockian Canon, something our members would happily arrange for even those of the littlest means. As to motivation, well... Therefore, our Society is a Just Society.

In 1965 the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism spoke of Québec as a Distinct Society, a population inspired by a "common culture" that "lives as a homogeneous group according to common standards and rules of conduct." No more clinical a description of The Bimetallic Question has ever been written. We all share in a common Holmesian culture and are a homogeneous group adhering to standards and rules of conduct in our meetings. Therefore, our Society is a Distinct Society. American political commentator Walter Lippman wrote that "a free press is not a privilege but an organic necessity in a great society." Presses called into the service of periodical and book publishers have always been free to print the Sherlockian Cannon, the ultimate necessity of our Society. Therefore, our Society is a Great Society. Ladies and gentlemen, I believe I



need go no further to prove that our Society, The Bimetallic Question, is a Just Society, a Distinct Society, indeed a Great Society.

Ladies and gentlemen, I give you The Society.

### 19. Close of the Meeting

Carol Abramson, Sovereign, called our meeting to a close at 9:00 pm.

### 20. Stop the Presses... This just received:

#### Report on Carol Abramson's Victorian Tea by Wilfrid



Carol and Jacob Abramson and their Victorian Tea guests

Our Sovereign Carol's, Victorian Tea on Sunday, September 18th, was outstanding! Most of you will know that I'm not given to hyperbole but Susan and I have been to teas at some of London's swish hotels as well as the Orangery in Kensington Gardens (check it out at <http://www.orangerykensingtonpalace.co.uk/afternoon-tea/>) and it's no exaggeration to say that this event was far and away superior. I cannot begin to describe all the delicacies Carol had laid out before us, so let's start with the actual tea: there were four on offer, but since I'm not one for all those flavoured varieties, I bypassed the Earl Grey, peach, (and one other I don't remember\*), and went with the Darjeeling, in a glass teapot! These were served in fine bone china cups and saucers (not a mug in sight!) On the savoury side ... where does one begin: round tomato sandwiches (*sans* crusts, of course) which when you think about it is perfectly logical (tomatoes being generally roundish), cucumber sandwiches (also *sans* crusts), lox and cream cheese, with capers, on black bread, open faced cheese & grape slices ... and these are just the ones I remember (OK, the ones I ate!) The sweet table was positively groaning with Victorian delicacies: scones (both plain and with raisins), Bakewell Tart, nut and date loaf, a real English Trifle (with Grand Marnier), Victorian Sponge cake, Scotch shortbread and Queen's Cake, to name but a few. There were many others; so many in fact that I simply couldn't manage to try everything, something on which I usually pride myself. No matter, I unabashedly asked Carol if I could take home a sampling of those items I'd missed (I pretended they were for my wife Susan who was unable to join us, owing to a previous family commitment in Vermont). To be fair Susan was smart (and quick) enough to pounce on them the moment I got in the door, but I did manage one of the small latticed-pastry apple tarts later that evening.



All in all, a wonderful afternoon (which stretched into the evening) for which, Carol, we thank you and your home team (daughter-in-law Julie, dressed as a Victorian maid, who greeted and served us, and husband Jacob who regaled us with ... well, you had to be there!) The photo above will give you an idea of the event, but cannot really do it justice.

*\* Editorial note: The name of the tea that eluded Wilfrid was chocolate with cherries. And while we are on the subject, other heavenly delicacies prepared by Carol were light as a feather gingerbread, strawberry shortcake, hand-crafted caramel chocolates sprinkled with maple sugar, and fresh lemonade. – S.R.F.*



*Special thanks to Carol's daughter-in-law Julie for the group photo, and to Kathryn Radford for the photos of Carol's wonderful table and roses centrepiece.*

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, October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2016, at 6:30p.m.



Our talented Sovereign Carol Abramson can be contacted at: [ciz\\_abramson@yahoo.com](mailto:ciz_abramson@yahoo.com)

Have you detected any errors or omissions in these minutes? If so, please do not hesitate to report same to our Co-Founder and Scribe/Recording Secretary David Dowse at: [david dowse@hotmail.com](mailto:david dowse@hotmail.com)

Emailing a copy of your toast to both David and our Webmaster and Secretary Susan Fitch makes the process of including it in the minutes quite a bit easier. Thanks! [susanruthfitch@yahoo.ca](mailto:susanruthfitch@yahoo.ca)

New Bimetallic Question members are most welcome. Why not consider bringing a friend to our next meeting to share an amazing evening with us! Membership information details can be obtained from our Florin/Treasurer Paul Billette at: [pabillette@hotmail.fr](mailto:pabillette@hotmail.fr)

A tip of the deerstalker hat to our Sergeant-at-arms and Vintner Hudson, Raf Jans, for printing and mailing Society minutes to all members requesting the paper version. [raf.jans@hec.ca](mailto:raf.jans@hec.ca)

