John Hall is a member of the Consultancy of The Northern Musgraves. He is a full time writer and the author of _I Remember The Date Very Well_, a Sherlockian chronology, published by Ian Henry books.

-=-=-

140 Different Varieties John Hall

-=-=-

In the Sherlock Holmes stories of Arthur Conan Doyle there are a great many references to tobacco in all its various forms. Only four of the sixty cases fail to mention tobacco at all: "The Beryl Coronet", "The Dancing Men", "The Lion's Mane" and "The Sussex Vampire"; and even then the _Strand_ illustrations to "The Sussex Vampire", by Howard Elcock, show both Holmes and Watson with a pipe apiece, indicating that by that time their smoking habits needed no specific mention in the text, but were taken for granted.

The monograph: tobacco as evidence

Holmes says in _The Sign of the Four_ that he had produced a monograph, in which he noted the characteristics of the ash from no less than a hundred and forty varieties:

'I have been guilty of several monographs. They are all upon technical subjects. Here, for example, is one "Upon the Distinction between the Ashes of the Various Tobaccos". In it I enumerate a hundred and forty forms of cigar, cigarette, and pipe tobacco, with coloured plates illustrating the difference in the ash. It is a point which is continually turning up in criminal trials, and which is sometimes of supreme importance as a clue. If you can say definitely, for example, that some murder had been done by a man who was smoking an Indian lunkah, it obviously narrows your field of search. To the trained eye there is as much difference between the black ash of a Trichinopoly and the white fluff of bird's-eye as there is between a cabbage and a potato.'

Madeleine B. Stern [1] has suggested that Holmes may have consulted various works when compiling his monograph, such as Redi's "Esperienze intorno a Diverse Cose Naturali", of 1686, and Philone "de Conversationibus' Venus Rebutee", of 1722. Perhaps

Stern's most convincing suggestion is that Holmes consulted Friedrich Tiedemann's "Geschichte des Tabaks", published in 1854, which was probably the most recent work on the topic, and seems to have been very close in content to Holmes' own monograph.

Holmes does not actually make any use of his expert knowledge in _The Sign of the Four_ itself, but in "The Boscombe Valley Mystery" — where the monograph is mentioned again, though not named in full — he does identify the ash from a cigar, along with the butt of the cigar itself, and he identifies cigar butts in some detail in "The Resident Patient".

It was cigar ash which proved that Sir Charles Baskerville stood at the gate of the yew alley in _The Hound of the Baskervilles_, though in that case it was Dr James Mortimer, not Holmes, who observed and deduced. Later in the same case, though, Holmes does deduce Watson's presence in a stone hut on the moors from a carelessly dropped cigarette end.

Cigarette ends also helped in identifying the lodger in "The Red Circle" as being a woman, while in "The Golden Pince-Nez", Holmes smoked an inordinate number of cigarettes so that footprints in the resultant residue of ash might reveal a secret door.

In "The Man with the Twisted Lip", Holmes deduced that an envelope had been gummed by someone who chewed tobacco rather than smoking it.

There are a few instances of deductions which are not an integral part of a case as such, but just Holmes being Holmes, unable to resist the temptation to draw inferences from apparent trivia, such as that cigarette end outside the stone hut in _The Hound of the Baskervilles_, or the instance in "The Crooked Man" where Holmes identifies ash as being from Watson's Arcadia mixture. And, although Holmes says in "The Yellow Face" that 'nothing has more individuality' than a pipe, except perhaps watches and bootlaces, the only case in which a pipe is the object of his close scrutiny is "The Yellow Face" itself, where the inferences are not strictly relevant to the case.

The total figure (140) for the 'forms of cigar, cigarette, and pipe tobacco' is an interesting one. It is on the high side if the individual cultivars or varieties, Burley, Perique and Virginia are meant, but a bit low to cover all the various a blends and mixtures, which are discussed later. Perhaps Holmes, having noted 'US the main single types, then studied the effects of mixing those types on the es resultant ash. If the detective were able to identify the main components of a [14], particular tobacco, it would then be possible to narrow it down to two or three ve popular blends, which would help considerably, even if the exact mixture could not be identified by name.

Holmes, the smoker

Holmes was an inveterate smoker and he obviously enjoyed the activity. And he was, for part of his life at any event, a slave to the weed, as demonstrated by the eagerness with which he lit up after three days of abstinence in "The Dying Detective".

But was there nothing more to it than that? Happily for our own sanity, we he need not concern ourselves with the murkier psychological aspects such as whether or not Holmes was breast fed. Being born in 1854, it is almost certain that he was — and all the better for it too. Nevertheless there are some aspects as of psychological interest connected with his smoking habits. Holmes said in _The Hound of the Baskervilles_ that 'a concentrated atmosphere helps a concentration of thought', and on other occasions, as in "The Man with the Twisted Lip", he produced that same 'dense tobacco haze' during his all night contemplations.

The sedative properties of tobacco may perhaps have helped relax the detective's mind so that he was able to concentrate more effectively on the problem before him, and in that sense he may have been using tobacco as a mere drug, pure and simple. It was a less immediately damaging drug than some he had recourse to. But then again, there is the definite mystique of the pipe — the panoply of reamers, tampers, tobacco boxes and the like can produce a ritual of filling and lighting not unlike the Japanese tea ceremony, So it may have been that the breaks in concentration necessary to empty, refill and relight, helped in themselves, by temporarily diverting Holmes' mind from the more immediate details of the case, and allowed him to look at it afresh once the pipe was going again.

In this respect, it is interesting that many, if not most, of those dense tobacco hazes were demonstrably pre-Hiatus, such as that in "The Man with the Twisted Lip" in which Conan Doyle creates a wonderful atmosphere:

"He took off his coat and waist-coat, put on a large blue dressing-gown, and then wandered about the room collecting pillows from his bed, and cushions from the sofa and armchairs. With these he constructed a sort of Eastern divan, upon which he perched himself cross-legged, with an ounce of shag tobacco and a box of matches laid out in front of him. In the dim light of the lamp I saw him sitting there, an old brier pipe between his lips, his eyes fixed vacantly upon the corner of the ceiling, the blue smoke curling up from him, silent, motionless, with the light shining upon his strong-set aquiline features. So he sat as I

dropped off to sleep, and so he sat when a sudden ejaculation caused me to wake up, and I found the summer sun shining into the apartment. The pipe was still between his lips, the smoke still curled upwards, and the room was full of a dense tobacco haze, but nothing remained of the heap of shag which I had seen upon the previous night."

In some of the post-Hiatus cases, such as "The Bruce-Partington Plans", Holmes demonstrates a more epicurean attitude to such things as Signor Goldini's cigars:

There sat my friend at a little round table near the door of the garish Italian restaurant. 'Have you had something to eat? Then join me in a coffee and curacao. Try one of the proprietor's cigars. They are less poisonous than one would expect.'

It may be that Holmes' wanderings in the East had produced more internal systems of mind controls, enabling him to concentrate on the case in hand without needing tobacco in vast amounts. Equally, of course, the cynic might argue that the necessity to carry all his possessions on his back between 1891 and 1894 simply proved to Holmes that tobacco was a luxury which he could, if occasion demanded it, forego.

If it could be proved conclusively that Holmes smoked more before the Hiatus than after it, that might be used to help determine the chronology of such disputed cases as _The Hound of the Baskervilles_, which has one of the most spectacular (and hence pre-Hiatus?) smoked-filled rooms:

My first impression as I opened the door was that a fire had broken out, for the room was so filled with smoke that the light of the lamp upon the table was blurred by it. As I entered, however, my fears were set at rest, for it was the acrid fumes of strong, coarse tobacco, which took me by the throat and set me coughing. Through the haze I had a vague vision of Holmes in his dressing-gown coiled up in an arm-chair with his black clay pipe between his lips. Several rolls of paper lay around him. 'Caught cold, Watson?' said he. 'No, it's this poisonous atmosphere. 'I suppose it is pretty thick, now that you mention it. 'Thick! It is intolerable. '

The real problem here, though, is that Holmes and Watson may well have been so accustomed to smoking that they did not think it worthy of remark every time they lit up.

Pipes

As noted by Sue Woolcock [2] it is as a pipe-smoker that Holmes is best known. The phrase 'a three-pipe problem' has become almost proverbial, even among those individuals who could

not hazard a guess as to the origins of the expression. There are excellent Canonical reasons for this: Holmes is referred to as smoking a pipe in at least twenty-two cases. One cannot be absolutely certain as to the exact number because in such cases as "The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax" and "Wisteria Lodge", where Holmes is said to be smoking 'hard', it seems very likely that it was a pipe he was smoking but there is no positive proof.

Watson seems to suggest that Holmes had a good many pipes. In "The Dying Detective", the doctor notes 'a litter of pipes' and other objects on Holmes' mantelpiece, while in "The Blue Carbuncle", Holmes has a pipe rack placed conveniently to hand as he examines Mr Henry Baker's hat, and it is a reasonable assumption that a man does not buy a pipe rack for only one or two pipes.

And yet the specific references do not immediately corroborate our overall first impression of a multitude of pipes. There are half a dozen references to an old, black or oily clay pipe, a couple of references to a briar ('brier' in some texts) and a solitary mention in The Copper Beeches of a long cherry-wood, though Watson does go on to say that Holmes was wont to smoke the cherrywood, when in 'a disputatious rather than a meditative mood,' and, knowing Holmes, that was probably quite frequently.

It does not follow that the briar mentioned in, say, _The Sign of the Four_, was the same one as that mentioned in "The Man with the Twisted Lip", so in theory Holmes could have possessed any number of briars. But it may well have been the same one, and could well have been the 'unsavoury pipe' noted in The Valley of Fear, as it would become more and more unsavoury with continued use. The briar — or one of them — may even have been an ADP pipe similar to that used by Straker in "Silver Blaze".

The 'old black pipe' of "The Creeping Man" may well have been a clay, perhaps even the clay referred to in "A Case of Identity" as 'old and oily.' The clay pipe is of very great antiquity, being used in Britain, according to G.F. Harris [3] even before the introduction of tobacco for the smoking of medicinal herbs, itself a practice even older than the pipe. The Romans and other ancient peoples were in the habit of throwing the herbs on a fire and breathing in the resultant fumes. In Holmes' day the clay was probably the most frequently used pipe, with the meerschaum next on the list. The briar was then a comparative newcomer, though since then it has pretty well ousted the other two types.

The bowl of a clay gets so hot that it cannot be held in the hand. The pipe needs a special grip with the first three fingers of the hand, the first and third going under, and the second going over the stem, as seen in the drawing of Hall Pycroft by Sidney Paget in the Strand_ version of "The Stockbroker's Clerk", and

also in George Hutchinson's drawing of Watson in the 1891 Ward Lock edition of "A Study in Scarlet". (In which Watson's moustache is a thing of beauty, if not a joy forever, though this is a digression.

There is a limit to how 'old and oily' a clay can get before the stem simply jams solid, and for that reason the common practice was to place the whole pipe in the fire to burn off the residues. This naturally made the clay more brittle and consequently prone to breakage, a fact which accounts for the vast quantities of clay pipestems which turn up in any garden which has existed for a number of years. This cleaning was done routinely in inns and pubs which provided pipes (and tobacco — a reflection of the low cost of smoking at that time) free for the use of patrons, though in that instance there were also hygienic considerations. Mr Reuben Hayes, landlord of the Fighting Cock, may have been better advised to use one of the cleaned pipes from his own bar rather than the 'black clay' which he was smoking when Holmes and Watson encountered him in the case of "The Priory School".

Mr Thaddeus Sholto smoked an exotic pipe, a hookah, in _The Sign of the Four_, but he does not appear to have tempted Holmes to follow suit. Holmes did play with an opium pipe as part of his disguise in "The Man with the Twisted Lip", even if he did not actually smoke it — and speculation as to that is outside the scope of this paper!

In all the Canonical references to pipes, though, there is one glaring omission, and that is to the pipe which has perhaps become most closely associated with Holmes in the public mind, the bent or calabash. ('Bent,' incidentally, is converted by pipe makers and sellers from an adjective to a noun, to mean 'a pipe with a bent stem.'

The cherrywood may well have been slightly curved, as in Paget's illustration for "The Copper Beeches" in the _Strand_, and the clay may possibly have begun life as a churchwarden and been broken down to a more manageable length. Even the briar may have been a bent, though the _Strand_ illustrators all show a straight stem, and this may result from the fact that Watson does not say 'a bent pipe,' or anything similar, anywhere, though he frequently says 'old', or 'black', or the like.

But these days the bent is everywhere, on book covers and society logos. Over the past few decades it has altered insensibly to the calabash, as seen on the signboard of the Sherlock Holmes pub in Northumberland Avenue,' or on the cover of the _Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes_.

The bent pipe is as much a part of the popular image of Holmes as is the deerstalker, though the texts of "The Boscombe Valley Mystery" and "Silver Blaze" (the _Strand_ illustrations to

which feature the deerstalker) are not specific as to that either.

As noted, the _Strand_ illustrators show a pipe with a straight stem. Paget tended to draw the shape called 'Dublin' which has a straight stem and a bowl which widens slightly towards the top. This shape is close to the Victorian form of the clay, and the pipe shown by Paget may in fact be intended as a clay rather than a briar.

Frank Wiles shows a 'billiard', ie straight stem and more or less cylindrical bowl in his illustration to _The Valley of Fear_, and this pipe has a thickish stem with a silver band, so is either a briar or a meerschaum. The front cover of the January 1927 issue of the _Strand_, illustrating "The Retired Colourman", shows this pipe again, and it is clearly a briar.

The bent seems to have originated with the 1899 stage production of Sherlock Holmes_ with William Gillette in the title role. Gillette's publicity photographs show him in a splendidly embroidered dressing gown, smoking a bent briar. Gillette adopted the bent shape because he found difficulty delivering his lines with a straight-stemmed pipe. In contrast to the _Strand_ illustrators, the illustrators of Collier's seem to have favoured the bent, as seen very well on the front cover of the August 1908 issue in which Frederick Dorr Steele illustrates "Wisteria Lodge". Perhaps it may be that Gillette's being American was an influence here, though that must remain pure speculation.

One interesting fact is that the Danish actor Alwin Neuss smoked a bent meerschaum in _Den Stjaalne Million-Obligation_ released by Nordisk Films in 1908. It would be odd if Holmes had not possessed a meerschaum, as they were then so popular, but there is no mention in the Canon of his owning one, and it may be that the Neuss film is one origin of the later emphasis on the calabash, which has a removable meerschaum bowl.

Other big-screen actors such as Eille Norwood in _The Sign of Four_, in 1923, and Clive Brook in "Sherlock Holmes", in 1932, used the bent briar, perhaps following where Gillette had led, and Basil Rathbone — arguably the most influential portrayer of Holmes on the cinema screen — did the same in his dozen films for Universal, effectively guaranteeing that the bent would be permanently identified with Holmes in the public mind.

The calabash, a section cut from the narrow end of a gourd with the same name, with a wide, flat, removable meerschaum bowl, can be seen — very briefly — making an appearance in the 1965 film, _A Study in Terror_, and again in Wilder's 1970 _The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes_, although it is difficult to be certain that there are no earlier occurrences.

What is almost certain is that Holmes is very unlikely to have been much of an enthusiast for the calabash, even if he did

own one. The gourd acts as an expansion chamber, not only cooling the smoke — acceptable enough — but also removing some of the tars and nicotine from it, and that is not likely to find much favour with a man who habitually smokes the strongest tobacco he can buy. If Holmes did own a calabash, it was probably a gift from a grateful client, and is unlikely to have seen much use.

In "The Yellow Face", Holmes is somewhat dismissive of the stem of Mr Grant Munro's pipe — 'a good long stem of what the tobacconists call amber. I wonder how many real amber mouthpieces there are in London? Some people think that a fly in it is a sign. Why, it is quite a branch of trade, the putting of sham flies into the sham amber'. (For some curious reason the last sentence is omitted from the Penguin text, which is a pity, as it tends to demonstrate that Holmes was not entirely devoid of a sense of humour, albeit a trifle academic in nature.) It seems likely that Holmes possessed at least one pipe with an amber mouthpiece, for in "The Priory School" he indicated points of interest on a map 'with the reeking amber of his pipe', but it may have been one of those early plastics, rather than the real thing. One trusts that it contained a sham fly, for the sake of completeness.

Those who are intrigued by the more esoteric by-ways of Sherlockian scholarship may care to ponder what, if anything, the initials 'ADP' which appeared on Straker's pipe in "Silver Blaze", may have stood for. This has proved a tough nut to crack. The obvious candidates are 'something, something Peterson' or 'Alfred Dunhill Pipe', but they have been tried and found wanting. In view of the very large number of pipe makers and sellers, in the provinces as well as London in the Victorian period, 'ADP' may well represent an actual maker or vendor, but the identity of the firm or individual concerned remains a mystery, and a modest Sherlockian fame awaits any scholar who can crack the acronym.

Tobacco

A pipe is not much use without tobacco, and we may reasonably assume that Holmes had produced the ash from those 140 varieties by smoking his way through the entire list. It is a dismal thought that if he bought one ounce each of the 140, the process would, based on the prices quoted in "The Yellow Face", have cost him somewhat less than L3. (US $5 or Y750.)

Sherlock Holmes does seem to have settled on the cheapest and strongest tobacco he could find, for everyday smoking at least. And Watson, in the early stages of their acquaintance, did the same, for in _A Study in Scarlet_ Holmes asks if Watson has any objections to strong tobacco, and Watson replies that he always

smokes 'ship's' himself. 'Ship's' is corded plug, formed by placing the leaves of an inexpensive tobacco — in Watson's day, quite probably the inferior "Nicotiana rustica", rather than the now universal "N. tabacum" — on top of one another in a long row, then rolling them up and compressing them, originally with a thin cord, though machinery was used on a commercial scale later. When the resulting roll was a very thin one, the tobacco was called 'pig-tail,' and this form was widely smoked, or, in the days of wooden hulls, when burning tobacco would have been a fire hazard, chewed, by sailors.

'Ship's' can still be found at specialist tobacconists, but is not recommended for those of a weak constitution. The mere act of lighting the pipe produces a concentrated blast of tar and nicotine at the back of the throat, which makes breathing extremely difficult. There is no taste as such, only a harsh, rasping sensation, and the fumes and smell are 'acrid', just as Watson describes them in _The Hound of the Baskervilles_. A marvellous line by the underrated Nigel Bruce, in one of his films with Rathbone, sums it up very well: 'Fresh in here. Smells like a pub after closing time.'

If Holmes' before breakfast pipe consisted, as Watson says in "The Engineer's Thumb", of plugs and dottles from yesterday's smokes, and if he had been smoking 'ship's' yesterday, then it is not surprising that he sometimes left his breakfast — and other meals — untouched.

Holmes remained faithful to his early love, the strongest possible tobacco, frequently asking Watson to arrange for vast quantities of 'shag' to be sent round. 'Shag' is a generic term for any rough-cut tobacco, but Holmes usually insists on the strongest available.

Watson's own contribution to the tobacconists' profits is sometimes overshadowed by that of Holmes, yet Watson did his share. Holmes seldom takes out his pouch or cigarette case without throwing it over to Watson, who never actually refuses.

However, Watson's tastes in pipe tobacco did move upmarket, as time passed, for in "The Crooked Man" Holmes notes that Watson was 'still smoking that Arcadia mixture of your bachelor days'. It seems highly likely that Watson switched from 'ship's' to 'Arcadia mixture' soon after meeting Mary Morstan in _The Sign of the Four_ (around 1887 — authorities differ) because a refined lady would not take kindly to the rank stench of corded plug, particularly when smoked by the man she intended to marry.

There were a great many other mixtures available to the smoker. Mr Grant Munro in "The Yellow Face" smokes Grosvenor mixture, and Holmes remarks upon its very high price — 8d an ounce. (3p, 5US cents, Y8 — no further comment is needed.) The

tobacconists in London's clubland would make up an exclusive blend for anyone not happy with an off the peg mixture (Dunhill's will still do so) so Holmes' monograph, as already suggested, may not have been entirely comprehensive in this area.

There are a few other tobaccos mentioned. In _The Sign of the Four_, Holmes remarks that his monograph includes the ash of 'bird's eye', but he is not recorded as smoking it. However, an illustration in the Sketch_ of 18 September 1901, shows Gillette as Holmes 'surrounded by his bird's eye clouds', in which are pictured various characters, including Holmes' sweetheart (not Agatha, this one!) which is perhaps the first recorded instance of a serious distortion of the Canon by adaptors and dramatists, though it is hard to be sure. 'Bird's eye' is a tobacco in which the mid-rib is fermented along with the lamina — in many tobaccos, the mid-rib, which is slightly woody, is removed before fermentation — and the name comes from the pattern of circular dots, the cross-sections of the mid-ribs, seen in the finished product.

Straker in "Silver Blaze" had 'long-cut Cavendish' in his pouch — 'Cavendish' is any sort of strong cake tobacco — while in _The Sign of the Four_ Thaddeus Sholto preferred the 'balsamic odour of the Eastern tobacco.' It seems odd that Holmes should not beg a fill of this exotic mixture, if only to add its ash to his collection. Perhaps he did, though, and Watson simply failed to notice, being preoccupied with Mary Morstan? This may also account for Watson's own failure to ask for a pipeful of a tobacco which would have recalled his own time in India.

In "The Cardboard Box", the eponymous container used to send the ears to Sarah Cushing had contained half a pound of 'honeydew'. Honey, like rum or whisky, can be added to tobacco after curing, partly to give it flavour and partly to prevent its drying out, although Holmes' tobacco was probably not left around long enough for it to dry out, anyway. The honey in a commercial 'honeydew' is, however, more likely to be molasses or treacle rather than the real thing.

Cigars

Cigars are mentioned in some seventeen cases, though it is not always Holmes who smokes them, for he does tend to offer a cigar to someone else: to Colonel Ross in "Silver Blaze", Lestrade in "The Six Napoleons", Hopkins in "The Golden Pince-Nez", Croker (or Crocker — texts vary) in "The Abbey Grange", von Bork in "His Last Bow". The reason for this behaviour is probably that it would be considered an act of impoliteness, if not actual

aggression, to offer anyone a fill of strong ship's tobacco.

A cigar is traditionally regarded as the end to a good meal, and Holmes suggested that Watson smoke one in Goldini's Italian restaurant in The Bruce-Partington Plans, even though Watson had had nothing more than a coffee and curacao. Holmes does seem to have been rather more discriminating about his cigars than he was about his pipe tobacco, for he remarks that those at Goldini's are 'less poisonous than one might expect'. Poisonous or otherwise, it is doubtful whether Watson was able to enjoy that particular cigar to the full, as he was concerned about the burglary he was to comnit later that evening.

There are several references to Indian cigars, the 'lunkah' and 'Trichinopoly' being noted in Holmes' monograph. For some reason, perhaps because they lend a raffish air to a man, Indian cigars are, Canonically at least, an almost certain guarantee of a bad character. Indian cigars are smoked by Turner in "The Boscombe Valley Mystery", by Grimesby Roylott in "The Speckled Band", and by the two murderers in "The Resident Patient", though in the last case the victim had had sufficient good taste to prefer Havanas.

We know from "The Dying Detective" that Holmes and Watson occasionally enjoyed 'something nutritious at Simpson's', so they must have been aware of Simpson's Cigar Divan, on the second floor of the famous restaurant at 101 — 103 the Strand, even if they did not patronise it. Admission to the Divan was restricted to gentlemen — ladies had their own room elsewhere on the premises. For the price of one shilling, gentlemen not only gained admission to the premises and were provided with a cup of coffee and a cigar, but also had unlimited access to a wide variety of English and foreign newspapers into the bargain. The Divan was also the haunt of chess players.

The cigar provided at Simpson's must have been in the middle of the range, or slightly below, for Baedeker [4] said that the best Havanas cost 6d, while 3d was the least which would produce a tolerable 'weed'. (Baedeker's quotes, not mine.) Even allowing for inflation, it is not surprising that there were more cigar smokers in Holmes' day than there are now.

Cigarettes

Pipes and cigars do require a certain amount of time to be devoted to them if they are to give of their best, which is why the cigarette is the preferred smoke for the man or woman on the move. A song popular in the music halls at the turn of the century [5] alludes to Holmes' smoking cigarettes, and this is confirmed by some half dozen Canonical references.

When Holmes was expecting his Royal visitor in "A Scandal in Bohemia", he had no time to bother with filling and lighting a pipe, so he celebrated a brilliant deduction about that visitor by sending up 'a great blue triumphant cloud from his cigarette'. And it was a cigarette that he most desired after he had gone three days without food, drink or tobacco in "The Dying Detective."

Holmes' consumption of cigarettes seems to have been as great as his consumption of pipe tobacco. In "The Boscombe Valley Mystery" he refers to 'a caseful of cigarettes here which need smoking', and, as noted earlier, he turned this great consumption of cigarettes to good use in "The Golden Pince-Nez", though it seems quite likely that he would have smoked just as many of Professor Coram's cigarettes had he not wanted to produce a carpet of ash in connection with his investigation.

Watson, too, fell in with the new fashion in smoking, and bought his cigarettes from Bradley,'s in Oxford Street, a fact which revealed his presence to Holmes in _The Hound of the Baskervilles_. In Watson's case, one might again suspect the civilising influence of Mary, who may even have helped herself to one of Watson's cigarettes in the privacy of her own drawing room.

Holmes and Watson both appear to have bought their cigarettes ready made, even if they did not import them in bulk from Lonides of Alexandria, as did Professor Coram in "The Golden Pince-Nez". In _The Hound of the Baskervilles_, though, Dr Mortimer preferred to roll his own.

Chewing tobacco

Neither Holmes nor Watson seems to have chewed tobacco, a practice largely confined to that section of the working class for whom smoking presented obvious dangers, such as miners and sailors. It is possible that Holmes may have experimented with the habit, or made use of it when he was disguised as a dockyard worker, in _The Sign of the Four_, for instance, but that must remain speculation.

There is only one Canonical reference to the habit, in "The Man with the Twisted Lip", where Holmes observes that an envelope has been sealed by someone who had been chewing tobacco, and this is in keeping with the 'docklands' flavour of the case, for it was by the river that Neville St Clair 'disappeared'.

Snuff

Taking snuff, like the chewing of tobacco, was popular with

miners and sailors for safety reasons, and snuff was also used by some members of the aristocracy, a hangover from the previous century, though its popularity had declined somewhat since the days of the Regency bucks.

Jabez Wilson in "The Red-Headed League" was an example of a working class snuff taker. He had begun life as a ship's carpenter, a profession where smoking was an obvious hazard.

Sherlock's brother, Mycroft, was an example of a snuff taker from the other end of society to Mr Wilson. Mycroft seems to have taken snuff regularly, for he used a large handkerchief to brush away the wandering grains in "The Greek Interpreter". A large handkerchief is essential to the regular user of snuff, for the well-known 'pinch' is in fact two pinches in quick succession. The first produces a reaction, a sneeze, but it also desensitises the nose so that the second pinch, and subsequent ones if not too long delayed, can be savoured to the full without the snuff being violently ejected. The fact that Mycroft did not sneeze proves that the pinch of snuff he had just taken in "The Greek Interpreter" was not the first of the day.

Neither Sherlock Holmes nor Watson seem to have taken snuff regularly. One instance is noted, in "A Case of Identity", of Holmes offering Watson a pinch, but that seems to have been because he wished to show off the old gold snuff box, with a great amethyst in its lid, which the grateful King of Bohemia had given him for his assistance in "A Scandal in Bohemia".

Matches

It was quite common to light a pipe at a candle or gas-jet, as Mr Grant Munro was in the habit of doing in "The Yellow Face". Many tobacconists kept a small gas burner lit throughout the day, at which any passersby (not necessarily paying customers) could light pipes or cigars. A tobacconist in Covent Garden still continues this delightful custom. Holmes himself used a glowing cinder to light his cherrywood in "The Copper Beeches".

However, matches were common, and they had improved since the introduction of the phosphorus match, which presented a danger to both those who made it, mostly women, and those who used it. On of Straker's vestas was a clue in "Silver Blaze" — Vesta was the Roman goddess of the hearth, the domestic fire, centre of the home in ancient times.

Watson certainly carried matches, as is clear from "The Norwood Builder", and it would be odd if Holmes neglected this obvious precaution against being able to find a handy candle or gas-jet ready lit. However, Holmes did cadge a light from Watson

quite frequently, as in "The Norwood Builder", or "The Red Circle" — 'Thank you, Watson — the matches!' (Not, you will note, 'the needle!' as in one regrettable adaptation [6]) It seems odd that such a heavy smoker should need to borrow a match, but then perhaps Holmes took a full box out each morning, and used them all by noon, necessitating the request?

Transport and Storage

Both Holmes and Watson possessed at least one tobacco pouch, as shown by references in "The Dying Detective" and "The Crooked Man". It is possible that they may have made been of sealskin, as was the one owned by Patrick Cairns ("Black Peter") — who also smoked strong ship's tobacco.

Holmes had a cigar case, the filling of which was an essential preliminary to the investigation of "The Cardboard Box", and he had a cigarette case, as noted earlier, in "The Boscombe Valley Mystery". This was almost certainly the 'silver cigarette-case which he used to carry', and which he used to weight down the note he left for Watson at the end of "The Final Problem". One wonders, in passing, just how he managed without tobacco during his nocturnal ramble over the Swiss Alps. Perhaps he had his cigars, though?

Holmes' possession of a gold and amethyst snuff box, a gift from the King of Bohemia, has already been noted. This snuff box seems to have been more for show than anything else, though that owned by Mycroft, made of the humbler tortoiseshell, probably saw regular use. It is interesting to note the way Holmes ignored the King's outstretched hand at the end of A Scandal in Bohemia, a rather childish thing to do. The King seems to have had far better manners, for he gave Holmes the very valuable snuff box as a token of his thanks, when Holmes had seemed willing to settle for the photograph of Irene Adler. (And the balance of the Ll,000 expenses, of course.

Holmes' habit of keeping his cigars in the coal scuttle and his pipe tobacco in a Persian slipper has attracted a certain amount of comment, which is probably what was intended. Christopher Morley [7] has said that these storage places do not appeal to him much as they are 'conscious eccentricities', but it may be worth asking whether they were Holmes' conscious eccentricities, or Watson's. Vincent Starrett [8] notes a little known poem by Robert Browning, A Likeness, which mentions 'a satin shoe used for a cigar-case'. Could this, asks Starrett, have been Holmes' inspiration? Possibly. Yet it is Watson whom we must regard as the man of letters, as Holmes says in Wisteria Lodge.

As Dorothy L. Sayers [9] has shown, Watson appears to have greatly exaggerated his experience of women, and it is perhaps not completely out of the question that he also made much of that 'natural Bohemianism of disposition' of which he seems so proud in "The Musgrave Ritual". In fact it is difficult to imagine anyone less Bohemian than Watson. Holmes affirmed our conception of a Watson as a thoroughly decent and law-abiding citizen in "The Abbey Grange" when he said there was no man 'more eminently fitted to represent' a British jury. In "His Last Bow", Holmes regarded his friend as 'the one fixed point in a changing age'. Watson may just possibly have felt that he needed to add one or two exotic touches to his accounts, though few of his friends would think the same, for the plain statement of the cases, and Watson's own honourable part in them, should surely suffice.

Accessories

Those matches which Watson lent to Holmes in "The Norwood Builder" may well have been carried in one of the little silver or gold boxes which could be hung on a watch chain to prevent loss, though there is no evidence that this was the case with Watson.

Neither Holmes nor Watson seems to have used a cigar or cigarette holder, though John Turner used a cigar holder in "The Boscombe Valley Mystery", as did one of the murderers in "The Resident Patient".

A penknife would be useful to both Holmes and Watson, if only to cut the ends of their cigars, as did both Turner and one of the villains in "The Resident Patient". Interestingly, both these murderers had permitted their penknives to become blunt, perhaps as a consequence of their general moral laxity. One can guarantee that the penknife which Holmes carried, and which he used to divide the poison pills in _A Study in Scarlet_, would be razor sharp, just as one can (almost) guarantee that Watson would not wish to bite the end off his. Particularly one of 'these multiplex knives' noted in "The Abbey Grange", with a corkscrew and other implements, would be very useful to Watson in the event of unexpected calls on his medical skills — or perhaps just to open the odd bottle of Beaune.

Can smoking damage your health?

When tobacco was first introduced into Britain it was recommended by such authorities as Gerard [10] as a medicine, particularly for ailments of the chest, incredible as that now seems to us. Holmes offers Croker a cigar to steady his nerves in

"The Abbey Grange", and recommends the sedative effects of tobacco to John Hector MacFarlane in "The Norwood Builder", despite the fact that he had diagnosed MacFarlane as asthmatic at first sight. (Though it is worth remembering that the smoking of herbs such as coltsfoot and "Datura stramonium" was recommended for chest complaints until very recently.

If tobacco is indeed a sedative, then, in view of the quantities which Holmes smoked, it is not surprising that in "The Mazarin Stone" he stayed in bed until seven o'clock in the evening.

The effect of smoking on the appetite has been noted in passing, and it seems that Holmes was aware of it, for he says of smoking in "The Golden Pince-Nez" that 'it kills the appetite'. In fairness, it does not really seem to have killed Holmes' appetite, though, as Trevor Hall notes in "Sherlock Holmes: Ascetic or Gourmet?" [11]

In another essay, "The Late Mr Sherlock Holmes", [12] Trevor Hall suggests that Holmes may have suffered from a far more dangerous condition than loss of appetite as a result of excessive smoking. Hall says in fact that Holmes may have begun to go blind as a result of tobacco amblyopia.

In support of this suggestion, Hall points out that Holmes was very, proud of his keen eyesight in early cases such as _A Study in Scarlet_, in which he was able to spot a tattoo on the back of the hand of a man on the other side of the street, while in later cases he was obliged to get Watson to read aloud to him such things as telegrams or newspaper reports, since he could not read them himself. Now, we are all occasionally obliged to be selective when we quote our authorities, it is part of the game, but it really is a bit naughty of Trevor Hall not to mention that in _A Study in Scarlet_, immediately after the deduction involving the tattoo seen from across the street, Holmes asks Watson to read aloud the message brought by the tattooed man.

It is not absolutely clear whether Holmes asked Watson to read items aloud in order to ensure that he himself had missed nothing of importance on first reading them, rather as some people read draft letters aloud to spot inconsistencies or bad grammar, or whether Watson simply invented the instances of reading aloud, a common enough literary device to present the reader with a sizeable slab of information in a palatable form. In either event, Holmes indubitably asked Watson to read aloud to him throughout his career, from the very first case, so that it is scarcely indicative of progressive deterioration of his sight.

Furthermore, there is no indication of approaching blindness, or even of the natural deterioration caused by age, in later cases such as "The Lion's Mane", dated by Holmes in 1907 but, for

example, by Henry T. Folsom [13] as even later, or "His Last Bow", which is very definitely in 1914. And in this investigation, Holmes' activities in America and Britain from 1912 onwards are not such as to indicate any loss of any of his powers from whatever cause.

However, it may be that the 'absolute breakdown' which Holmes came close to suffering in "The Devil's Foot" in 1897 was caused, in part at least, by excessive indulgence in tobacco, though Watson gallantly cites overwork as the main cause, and David Stuart Davies [l4] has suggested that it was induced by hard drugs. Holmes seems to have behaved in a very human and believable fashion, taking the advice of Dr Moore Agar, who was almost a stranger, although he had until then ignored the advice of his old friend Watson, familiarity with whom had bred, if not exactly contempt, then perhaps a sort of casual indifference to his medical opinions.

Certainly Holmes did not use hard drugs in any of the later cases, and he seems to have cut down on his smoking as well, for there is no mention of pipes, tobacco, or any sort of smoking in "The Lion's Mane", and in "His Last Bow" Holmes did not smoke at all unless he lit a cigar for himself at the same time as he offered one to von Bork, and in view of what he had just accomplished, it might reasonably be thought that he had earned one.

Tobacconists

The nearest tobacconist to 221B seems to have been Bradley's, in Oxford Street, mentioned twice in _The Hound of the Baskervilles_. It was clearly a large establishment, for the firm produced its own cigarettes, as bought by Watson. One possible candidate for Bradley's is Benson's at 296 Oxford Street, noted in the 1883 edition of Baedeker [15] as a purveyor of cigars.

Another tobacconist named is Mortimer's, in Saxe-Coburg Square. There was, and is, no such square, so we must do a little detective work. Holmes and Watson took the Underground to Aldersgate station, now called Barbican, and then had a short walk to the Square. An obvious candidate is Charterhouse Square, but that does not really tie in with Watson's description, besides being sufficiently well known not to need a pseudonym. Nor does the Smithfield Meat Market, which then stood in Charterhouse Street, seem to qualify as one of the 'fine shops and stately business premises'.

A better candidate might be Falcon Square, which will be sought in vain on a modern map, but which then stood about where

the Museum of London stands today. One side of Falcon Square gave on to a maze of narrow streets, now the Barbican complex, while the other faced Aldersgate Street, which probably agrees better with Watson's account. There was a large Post Office opposite the square, and that may possibly have been the model for the City and Suburban Bank, though it is hard to be sure. The directions to the Strand, 'third right, fourth left', agree quite well, ignoring minor side roads, and for good measure there was even a vegetarian restaurant nearby, The Apple Tree, though it was in the wrong direction, in London Wall.

It is not clear who Mortimer may have been, though the name is far from uncommon in the Canon. Holmes' muttered, 'Mortimer's, the tobacconists', sounds rather as if the name or the shop were familiar to him, but he may simply have been reading the legend over the shop window, and Mortimer may well have been in a fairly small way of business.

One tobacconist who was certainly in a large way of business was John Vincent Harding, 'the well-known tobacco millionaire', who was subjected to a 'peculiar persecution' in April 1895. Watson, in his usual irritating way, fails to tell us exactly what was so peculiar about the persecution, but presumably it was more than simply criticism from the anti-smoking lobby. One wonders if Holmes took his fee from Mr Harding in cash, or in large quantities of strong shag tobacco.

A final query

At meetings of Sherlockian societies, convened with the express purpose of celebrating the life and works of the world's most renowned smoker (with the possible exception of Sir Walter Raleigh) why are the chairman's first words invariably a ban on smoking?

References

[1] Stern, Madeline B., _Sherlock Holmes: Rare-book Collector_, New York: Pualette Greene, 1981 (and earlier editions).

[2] Woolcock, Sue, "A Man of Many Pipes", The Sherlock Holmes Gazette, 5, 1992.

[3] Harris, G.F., "Medieval Tobacco Pipes", _Papers on Antiquity_, 1882 (unpublished manuscript, copies in Wiltshire Record Office and Salisbury and South Wiltshire Library; original in a private collection).

[4] Baedeker, Karl, ed., _London and its Environs_, 4th edition, Leipzig: Karl Baedeker, 1883.

[5] 'A song popular ... at the turn of the century...' This is one of those embarrassing things which persist in happening. I am not familiar with this song personally, so the assertion is based on a reference the location of which I am unable to recall, and which a most diligent search has failed to reveal. Readers may perhaps wish to do their own detective work here!

[6] _The Hound of the Baskervilles_, Twentieth Century Fox, 1939.

[7] Morley, Christopher, "In Memoriam Sherlock Holmes", Introduction, Doyle, Arthur Conan, _The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes_, Penguin, 1981.

[8] Starrett, Vincent, _The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes_, New York: Pinnacle, 1975.

[9] Sayers, Dorothy L., "Dr Watson, Widower", in _Unpopular Opinions_, London: Gollancz, 1946.

[10] Gerard, J., _Herball_, 1597 (and many subsequent editions).

[11] Hall, Trevor H., "Sherlock Holmes: Ascetic or Gourmet?" _The Late Mr Sherlock Holmes_, London: Gerald Duckworth, 1971.

[12] Hall, Trevor H., _The Late Mr Sherlock Holmes_, ibid.

[13] Folsom, Henry T., _Through the Years at Baker Street_, 3rd edition, privately printed, 1991.

[14] Davies, David Stuart, "The Great Breakdown", _The New Baker Street Pillar Box_, No. 14, April 1993, Portsmouth: Sherlock Publications.

[15] Baedeker, op cit.

Other books consulted

The illustrations to the _Strand_ and other magazines have been reproduced in many different publications. One cheap version is the Chancellor Press Complete Novels, and Complete Short Stories, reprinted recently in 1993, though the quality of the

reproductions is variable, and the text contains many errors.

Two books very useful for their illustrations are:
Eyles, Allen, _Sherlock Holmes: A Centenary Celebration_, London: John Murray, 1986 (is still available, though becoming scarce).

Hall, Charles, _The Sherlock Holmes Collection_, Edinburgh: Charles Hall Productions, 1987.

The Musgrave Monographs

The Musgrave Monographs are published annually by The Northern Musgraves Sherlock Holmes Society. The Society is open for all those with a love of the character Sherlock Holmes. The Society has an international membership, holds a series of meetings through the year, and produces two chunky magazines in the Spring and Autumn, (The Ritual), along with an annual journal, (The Musgrave Papers) containing lengthy articles on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's magical Baker Street world.

If you are not already a member of this celebrated Sherlockian society, membership details may be obtained from our membership secretary:

Mr John Addy 23 East Street Lightcliffe Halifax West Yorkshire HX3 8TU

Scanned and corrected by Steve Masticola, 1 August 1996, using Hewlett-Packard ScanJet 4p scanner, Visioneer PaperPort OCR, and Emacs

19. 29 editor. Italics are represented in double quotes, boldface type is represented by underscores. All typos probably mine. -S.