

End notes:

- 1 *Edward Clodd (1840- 19300), the owner of Strafford House, was a banker and man of letters with an unusual gift for friendship. Although he is today a forgotten figure, he is commemorated by a plaque on the south side of Strafford House.*
- 2 *The original of this table is now in the collection of Leeds University. It is not known if Clodd ever used the table at his Aldeburgh residence.*
- 3 *There is a famous photograph of Hardy and Dugdale sitting primly on Aldeburgh beach. The photograph is actually dated 1907. In 2011 The Thomas Hardy Society met in Aldeburgh using Strafford House as their base. Hardy it turns out was a fan of Aldeburgh's most famous poet, George Crabbe.*
- 4 *Philip Wilson Steer (1860- 1942) was a landscape painter and a leading light of the Impressionist movement in Britain. He is best known for his Suffolk works such as The Beach at Walberswick (1890) and Girls Running: Walberswick Pier (1894).*
- 5 *Walter Sickert (1860-1942), the artist who loved a good murder, was a friend of Steer and a regular visitor to Southwold.*
- 6 *Satan Smith was a local fisherman, who built his own boat The Gypsy at Slaughden and sailed it as far as Iceland and The Faroe Islands. He is an ancestor of the well known Aldeburgh resident Stephen Salter.*
- 7 *Spontaneous combustion? Dickens famously used spontaneous combustion in Bleak House as a device to kill off Krook, the eccentric rag and bottle merchant, after he had served his purpose in the plot. Earlier this year – that is 2011 - an Irish coroner recorded a verdict of spontaneous combustion to explain the death of an elderly resident of the City of Cork.*

### ALDEBURGH BOXING DAY SWIM

Over the years the Aldeburgh Shiverers have raised thousands of pounds for medical charities. We would welcome your support for this year's swim. The choice is yours.

*Dip in*

Turn up with your towel at **11am** on Boxing Day opposite Aldeburgh Moot Hall, take the plunge and persuade lots of people to sponsor you. The money we raise will go to Médecins sans Frontières or a medical charity of your choice.

*Chip in*

Or, if a Boxing Day dip is not your scene, you can sponsor me instead. The most tax efficient way is over the internet, as the government will add 28 percent to what you give. Just go to: [www.justgiving.com](http://www.justgiving.com). When you visit the site you are asked for the name of your friend – that's me. You then select the Aldeburgh Shiverers page from the ones on offer. Or make your cheque payable to Médecins sans Frontières and send it to me at 51 High Street, Leiston, Suffolk IP16 4EL. Cash is equally good. In the past most donors have given £10 or so, although bigger amounts are always welcome. The money this firm would otherwise spend on Christmas cards will also go to the charity.

## Sherlock Holmes and The German Ocean Part 6

As recounted by Dr Watson in very advanced old age to a very juvenile  
Mark Fairweather

You can read the five previous instalments on our website:  
[www.aldeburghchristmasswim.org.uk](http://www.aldeburghchristmasswim.org.uk)

*The story so far.*

It is the morning of Christmas Day 1906. The previous day, a mysterious and beautiful young lady – believed to be a princess of the royal family of Bohemia - had called at Holmes's rooms at 222B Baker St London. She had been staying at Captain Vernon Wentworth's new hotel on Tiffany Corner Aldeburgh where her jewellery had been stolen from a locked room. Holmes announced he would stay in London. Meanwhile Dr Watson was dispatched to Aldeburgh and had found lodgings at the Cross Hotel, a mean establishment frequented by local fishermen, smugglers, footpads and wreckers.

Dr Watson had initially believed that the perpetrator of the crime was to be found among the town's low life. But he had to accept that springing jewels from a secure room without forcing entry required intelligence and panache. This, so it seemed, was the work of a master criminal. Then at the town's annual Boxing Day swim Dr Watson met the sinister Lady Incarnadine. Was she the evil genius behind the crime? Just as Dr Watson was (as he thought) moving towards a solution of the crime, he realised that a lone violinist playing by the Moot Hall was none other than Sherlock Holmes in disguise. Holmes explained to Watson that the life of the princess was in danger, and that Watson must take her into hiding. Dr Watson chose the Ursuline Convent opposite the church as a place of refuge, but the convent turned out to be a trap, as Lady Incarnadine was the chatelaine. Dr Watson and the princess made their escape, with Lady Incarnadine in hot pursuit.

*Dr Watson continues:*

**T**he dilemma was acute. I alone was responsible for the safety of the gentle princess; and indeed, not knowing the precise nature of the danger, there was no one in the town whom I could trust and with whom I could share the responsibility. I could not even tell the princess about my fears for her safety, as I did not want to distress her. But I had to act decisively and swiftly. In moments such as these, my training as a medical practitioner often came to my aid. So it was now. I knew that the princess had trust and confidence in me, and this would allow me a degree of intimacy that would be entirely inappropriate with other men. I had to use this

to advantage. So I suggested to her – entirely for her own protection - that we should make our way back into the town as if husband and wife. Much to my gratification, the princess fell along with my plan and I was able to entwine my arm – in a noble cause, as I would later emphasize to my dear wife - around the princess’s slender waist. In this way we walked unhurriedly, with the princess nestled against my stocky frame, from Church Walk to the Town Steps. On the way I was not indifferent to the sweet fragrance of her perfume and the soft brush of her hair against my cheek. At the top of the steps we stopped. The roof-scape of the town below was laid out before us, like a patient under ether before an operation. In the cold and still air, we could hear with pinprick acuity sounds from far and near – seagulls squawking over fishheads and other scraps, children playing innocently on the treacherous shingle of the beach, and the rhythm of the waves like the turbid breaths of a sleeping and malevolent giant. As we made our way down the steps, I almost fell into a trance observing the liquefaction—poetry in motion—of the princess’s coat rising and falling over her lithe body.

Down in the High Street however, I was awakened from my reverie. Where should we go? I came to the conclusion that there was safety in crowds, and that I should take up an invitation from Edward Clodd<sup>1</sup>—man of letters and confidant of many famous authors of his time (including one Arthur Conan Doyle) - to join him and his guests in their festive celebrations at Strafford House. Mr Clodd was jovial and rubicund, and bore a striking similarity to images of Santa Claus. In his dining room he showed us the table he had been given by his illustrious friends to celebrate his sixtieth birthday<sup>2</sup>. The name of each of the friends who had contributed to the gift was engraved at his place around the table, as if each were a knight of the Round Table at the court of King Arthur. I noticed the name of the scandalous modern novelist Thomas Hardy, who I knew was an occasional visitor to Aldeburgh with his mistress Florence Dugdale<sup>3</sup>. Among the guests was the Southwold artist Philip Wilson Steer<sup>4</sup>, Royal Academician and his inseparable companion and agent Cornelius Glamgall. I was struck by Cornelius’s cobalt blue eyes under eyelashes that flickered up and down while he was talking. He was the master of the art of making everyone with whom he spoke feel special to him, while at the same time ever so patiently - with little conversational flourishes of endearment and flattery - soliciting their patronage of Mr Steer’s paintings. Cornelius had taken charge of the menu for luncheon, and had explained that we were to have a favourite dish of Mr Steer’s: Sickert<sup>5</sup> scrambled egg. The special feature of this was that it was stirred slowly over a candle for three hours before serving. This, I realized,

would put luncheon at risk of not happening at all before teatime. But the freckle-faced Mr Glamgall, who had press ganged a surly native of the town by the name of Satan Smith<sup>6</sup> into stirring the pot, was blithely unconcerned. There were murmurings of discontent among other guests. Mr Glamgall meanwhile was sailing off round the room – like a Spanish galleon on the high seas - seeking a sale here and a commission there.

Just as I was observing this sociable scene of writers and artists, a tall and gaunt figure with an aquiline nose approached us and started talking to us about the violinist Paganini. Did we believe that the devil’s fiddler, as Paganini was known, had murdered his mistress and strung the bow of his instrument with her intestines? Did he play the devil’s tunes? Why else did the Roman Catholic Church at the time refuse to bury his body in consecrated ground? All this was said without introduction. The startling figure before us had not given or even indeed been asked for a name. Why did he think that we might want to talk about Paganini, or wish to discuss tritones – harmonies, so our anonymous interlocutor told us, banned by the Catholic Church because of their satanic connection? Did he not realize what offence he might give to the gentle princess? I believe myself at core to be a gentleman, that is to live by and hold fast to simple codes of good conduct and in particular to be chivalrous in the company of women, especially (and I do not see this as a weakness) beautiful women. This impostor, as I now felt him to be, had deliberately chosen to shock the princess. He was not playing the game. He was...he was worse than a criminal, he was a cad. I felt indignation swelling in my breast and in earlier times (and if the leg wound which I had picked up in the Second Afghan War had not started to throb with pain) I would have challenged him to a duel.

And it was at this point that I looked round and realized that the princess, who until a moment ago had been at my side, had vanished. All this talk of violinists, human gut, and diabolical goings on had been a smoke screen and distraction. Now even while I was looking round the room for the princess, the impostor had disappeared from view as well as if by spontaneous combustion<sup>7</sup>. No one had seen anything. This was the low point of my investigation. I had not solved the original crime. I had not kept the princess safe, and indeed I might have exposed her to another even worse crime while she was in my care. If only, I remonstrated with myself, I had put the princess into the safe hands of Holmes right from the start, all would now be well.

As I turned out of Stafford House I thought I caught a fleeting glimpse of Lady Incarnadine skittering up Crag Path in the twilight.