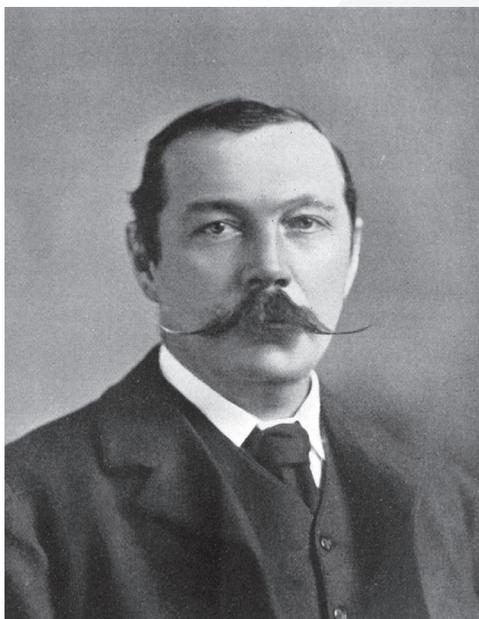




NUGGET

Bro. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Summary: Arthur Conan Doyle – the creator of Sherlock Holmes.



Arthur Conan Doyle

Arthur Ignatius Conan Doyle was born on May 22nd 1859, in Edinburgh. His father Charles Altamont Doyle was a civil servant in the Edinburgh Office of Works. His mother Mary (Foley) Doyle was a vivacious young woman of seventeen. He was the first in a family that included three sisters and a brother.

His father suffered from epilepsy, and not long after arriving in Edinburgh, started to drink, eventually he was institutionalised and died in an asylum in 1893. Doyle's mother was very well educated and a master storyteller¹ who encouraged her son to read, and by the age of six, to produce his first story, an illustrated tale about a man and a tiger.

At the age of ten, Arthur Doyle went first to a Jesuit boarding school in London, then a prominent public school at Stoneyhurst in Lancashire. It was from here that he used his teachers and his fellow pupils as models for his characters in many of his stories. At seventeen he studied medicine at Edinburgh University and graduated with a degree as *Bachelor of Medicine* in 1881, completing his *Doctor of Medicine Degree* in 1885. After acting as a ship's doctor, he went on to practise medicine, first in Plymouth and then in Southsea, as an eye specialist. He was not particularly successful, so began to write and finally gave up his career in medicine in 1891.

At University, Doyle was taught by Dr Joseph Bell, who was a master at observation, logic, deduction and diagnosis. All these qualities were later to be found as part of the persona of the celebrated detective Sherlock Holmes. It was at this stage that he adopted his middle name Conan to his surname.

In *Beeton's Christmas Annual* of 1887, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle presented to the public his first story about Sherlock Holmes, *A Study in Scarlet*. Hence was born this remarkable series of over fifty detective fiction stories. Conan Doyle in fact, became so disenchanted with his famous detective, that on several occasions he attempted to kill him off. In *The Final Problem* written in 1893, Holmes was killed in a fall over the Reichenbach Falls in Switzerland, whilst in deadly combat with his arch enemy, Professor Moriarty, but subsequently brought back to life in *The Adventure of the Empty House* in 1903. Although best known for

his Sherlock Holmes collection, he was actually a very prolific writer on various topics of current interest. He actually wrote more than one hundred other titles. These included plays, verse, memoirs, short stories, several historical novels as well as supernatural and speculative fiction. He was also a remarkably creative character who introduced downhill skiing into Switzerland, successfully campaigned for steel helmets for soldiers in combat and inflatable rubber collars, the forerunner of today's life jackets, for sailors. In 1900 and then again in 1906 he ran unsuccessfully for Parliament. Conan Doyle was subsequently knighted in 1902.

He married, Louise 'Touie' Hawkins in 1885, who died of tuberculosis in 1906. They had two children, one of whom, Kingsley, died from his wounds incurred during the First World War. As a result of his supposedly contacting his son, Conan Doyle began to dedicate himself to Spiritualism.² In 1907 he married Jean Leckie and there were three children from that marriage.

Initiated into Phoenix Lodge No. 257, Southsea, Hampshire, on 26th January 1887,³ at the age of 27, he was passed to the Second Degree on 23rd February 1887, and was raised to the Sublime Degree on 23rd March 1887. He resigned from his Lodge two years later in 1889.

In the October 1901 edition of *Masonic Illustrated* it was reported that Conan Doyle visited a Lodge at Bloemfontein with Bro. Rudyard Kipling during the Boer War. Also, in 1901, he was made an Honorary Member of the Lodge of Edinburgh (Mary's Chapel) No.1. This was conferred upon him when he accepted an invitation to speak at a Burns Night Dinner. In 1902, he re-joined his Lodge, coinciding with him becoming a Knight of the Realm. Without having made any further progress he finally resigned from the Craft in 1911.

He was taken ill upon his return home following a psychic lecture tour on the Continent in 1929. On a cold day in 1930 he was found lying in his garden with his hand upon his heart and clutching a single snowdrop. He passed to the Grand Lodge above on 7th July 1930 surrounded by his family. He was buried in the garden of the family home at Windlesham in Surrey. The headstone over his grave was of English Oak and is inscribed with his name, his date of birth, and the four words: *Steel True, Blade Straight*.

Endnotes

1. Arthur's touching description of his mother's beneficial influence is poignantly described in his biography:
'It is not only that she was — is still — a wonderful story-teller, but she had, I remember, an art of sinking her voice to a horror-stricken whisper when she came to a crisis in her narrative'
'In my early childhood as far as I can remember anything at all, the vivid stories she would tell me stand out so clearly that they obscure the real facts of my life'.
2. Arthur Conan Doyle became President of several important spiritualist organisations; and in 1925 he opened the Psychic Bookshop in London. To the surprise of his closest friends Doyle supported the existence of *'The Little People'* and he spent a vast amount of his fortune in support of their cause. During this period the so-called *'Cottingley Fairy Photographs'* caused an international sensation, when Doyle published a favourable account of them. The photographs showed fairies dancing in the air. A year later The Star newspaper reported that the photographs were a hoax and that the fairies had in fact been taken from a poster.
3. <https://www.ugle.org.uk/9-famous-freemasons/204-sir-arthur-conan-doyle>
4. Harper, Paul, Famous Freemasons - A Prologue, <https://solomon.ugle.org.uk/mod/resource/view.php?id=2084>

Recommended use of Nuggets

Nuggets offer a short, simple and readily absorbed means of progressing Masonic knowledge and an easy way to introduce learning to Lodges and Chapters. It is hoped that they will become a regular feature of Lodge and Chapter meetings as well as a source for private-study.

Nuggets can be included as an item in the summons and read at most Lodge/Chapter meetings. They can be:

Read by either a new or an experienced Mason with the minimum of preparation and practice; though ideally, they need to be read a few times beforehand.

Themed with the meeting or activity.

Used to initiate a discussion within a Lodge/Chapter, LOI/COI, or group.

Read at home and shared as a topic for a future discussion.

Used as a focus for an unplanned, informal discussion.

*Note: All biblical passages are taken from the Authorized King James version unless otherwise specified.

For further papers and other learning materials visit *Solomon* at <http://solomon.ugle.org.uk>

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