

Watson's Gun? Or Holmes's Gun

I've been re-reading all the Holmes canon (in the chronological order that I believe to be true). I've got to the "The Spectacled Band" where Holmes states (regarding armament):

"An Eley's No. 2 is an excellent argument with a gentleman who can twist a steel poker into knots."

"Eley" never produced a gun, they made cartridges.

As I have stated in "The Vault", Watson's revolver (often referred to "as Service") was issued to him in 1878 before he was sent from Netley training school to his post in India, and thence to Afghanistan. This date cannot be disputed: Watson was at the Battle of Maiwand in 1880, thus his gun was issued before that year.

The British army revolver issued from 1853 to 1880 was the Beaumont-Adams .450 calibre, a 5 round pistol capable of being "cocked" with an overall length of 11 ¼ inches (28.5 cm). It was superseded by the Enfield (MK I) .456 calibre - used from 1880 to 1887.

Eley's never made a cartridge for the Beaumont-Adams, their "No. 2" range of cartridges includes the .440 calibre for the Webley "Revolver No. 2" - a confusion of the "No. 2" now becomes clear. The Webley had a short 2 ½ inch (64 mm) barrel length, had 5 shots, and was "designed to fit in a coat pocket".

Whilst Holmes often requested to Watson "bring your service

revolver", he himself is also known to be armed: "The Final Problem", "The Solitary Cyclist", and "The Disappearance of Lady Carfax". I thus deduce (or Holmes would do "abduce") that the "Eley" reference is to Holmes's own gun: A Webley Revolver No. 2 also known as the "British Bulldog", an apt name for such a weapon for the person and his times.

A problem regarding guns however is in this quote from "Thor Bridge":

"I produced it [my revolver] from my hip pocket, a short, handy, but very serviceable little weapon."

This gun was "serviceable" but not "a service revolver", but evidently from the account it belonged to Watson. How to explain this anomaly? It is difficult to believe that Watson confused his own gun. Perhaps this was just another "so called amendment to the story" made by Conan Doyle for reasons no longer apparent. Alternatively perhaps a literary exchange of ownership of the gun that suited Watson to keep the essence of the story, but to explain why he was not overly concerned to lose his own gun (even if temporarily), and to use a gun whose stature was more in keeping with the then perceived weakness of womankind.