

### **Watson's history before Holmes.**

When was he born? The date... both Kimball & Baring-Gould agree that his birthday was July 7th. Others have disagreed and set a date in March as possible. I have followed Baring-Gould as the definitive analyst of the texts.

So, his birthday is July 7, based upon a dubious reference as stated in the "Sign of the Four" to a "hangover" from an excess of Beaune (for those with little or no knowledge of wine) a light (by colour) red (but full-bodied) French wine akin to Beaujolais.

Now, as the year. We must work backwards from known dates, and thus to speculation...

Battle of Maiwand 27 July 1880, where Watson is seriously injured.

Meets Holmes 1881 (my date is 20 February).

We know that Watson had been in Australia, quote from the "Sign of the Four" where Watson is surveying the diggings at Sholto's grounds: "I have seen something of the sort on the side of a hill near Ballarat, where the prospectors had been at work." Note the words "I have seen". In the "Boscombe Valley Mystery", Watson exhibits that he has a knowledge of the State of Victoria in Australia, but not of how he gained such knowledge, or having any personal connection. In the "Colonial Conspiracy" I use Watson's background in Australia, but this cannot be used in this commentary - I need to justify

why such a reference was possible.

The next assertions are somewhat more speculative with regard to duration...

Before his deployment to Afghanistan, Watson was initially in India, having been transferred there from England.

Watson was in Afghanistan before being wounded, he recuperated in Afghanistan, then at Peshawar (then in Afghanistan, now a city in Pakistan). He contracts Enteric Fever (typhoid) and is determined by a medical board to be no longer fit for duty and is returned to England.

Working backwards from this point, Watson was at Netley (the Royal Victoria Military Hospital in Hampshire) where his training as a doctor was “converted” into that of a military medical officer.

Before Netley, he was at the University of London Medical School (almost on the doorstep of 221B Baker Street), and even closer to his future publisher Conan Doyle's residence in Devonshire Place (where a residence in the same street Watson and his first wife also occupied) - now renamed as Wimpole Street.

To gain a degree in Medicine, one must have a prerequisite degree in another field of study, this taking three years, I have Watson studying Arts at the University of London.

Watson also stated “I have neither kith nor kin in England” in “Study in Scarlet” (June 1881). So what of

parents? There is also the receipt of his father's watch from his late brother in "Sign of the Four".

It also suited my whim that Watson should not, in age, be significantly different to Holmes - specifically not as portrayed by Nigel Bruce in the Basil Rathbone series of movies, and also not as Bruce's portrayal of Watson as somewhat of a "bumbler" (buffoon comes to mind). This latter point is not in my opinion compatible with Holmes and Watson sharing accommodation, nor is it acceptable as Watson being Holmes "Boswell" ("Scandal in Bohemia"), so I place them both of similar age.

There those who postulate Watson's birth year as 1852, but I find this to be 2 years more than required, thus for personal reasons, and my decision that Holmes and Watson were of similar ages, I have decided that Watson's birth was 7th July 1854, 1854 being 100 years before my own birth. Setting this date also affects my calculations as to Holmes's birth - this will be another future "Commentary Note").

My history of Watson's background up to that fateful day in 1881 when he met Holmes is detailed in "Chronicles Volume II" in the appendix (and updated here on the web page).

Here however is my own personal creation of the history of Watson, some details may be new to those I that I already have published...

1854 July 7, Watson is born, second son of James Andrew (known as "Hamish") and Rose Mary Innes in Northumberland in Riding Mill (see my story "BERTIE"), a

village near Hexham, close to the old Roman fort of Coria – Corbridge today - the northernmost significant Roman settlement in England, some 40 or so miles west of Newcastle. His elder brother Hamish Isambard was born there in 1846. Rose's maiden name Innes re-occurs in my use of James Innes Watson, as the publisher of the "Chronicles".

1861 The Watson family move to Melbourne, Victoria, in Australia. The Northumberland railway engineers were in great demand throughout the world, James (Hamish) was one of the best. The Watson family reside in South Melbourne, Hamish and John attend Melbourne Grammar School. Their father is frequently away from home building the railway from Melbourne to the gold diggings of Ballarat.

1865 Watson's father is killed in a railway accident. Rose and John return to England, Watson's elder brother Hamish remains in Australia. Rose and John stay with Rose's elder sister Marigold. Brother Hamish is somewhat "wild" and chooses, to the distress of his mother, to remain in Melbourne.

Watson attends Wellington College near Reading in Berkshire (I incorrectly state Hampshire in the appendix to the Chronicles Volume II), Reading is 5 miles North of the boundary between Hampshire and Berkshire, Marigold lived in Boughurst Hampshire, but 2 miles from the Berkshire border. It is the great Holmes chronicler William S. Baring-Gould who asserts that Watson went to Wellington College in his book "Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street", this is an unsubstantiated fact, and it is also Baring-Gould who gives rise to the error that

Wellington College was in Hampshire.

Clearly the settlement from the railway company in Australia for the death of his father had been substantial, although Wellington was a new school, it had considerable prestige. Watson was a boarder at Wellington, but lived sufficiently close to spend the weekends at home.

1872 Watson commences a degree at the University of London, to read Arts: English and the Classics (surprisingly one of his lecturers encouraged his interest in Middle English, and thus, as was then popular by influence of the Royal Family, he acquired some understanding of German).

1875 Watson gains his Bachelor of Arts, in September he commences his studies as a Doctor of Medicine - a title rather than a degree, "MB" as a signification of "Bachelor of Medicine", i.e. "doctor" but not as in say "Dsc." or "Doctor of Science". He does practical work St. Bartholomew's Hospital.

1877 July, Watson's aunt Marigold dies.

1878 Watson attains his "MB", he proceeds immediately to Netley in June or early July for army training. It is a short course, and December he is *en route* to India, thence Afghanistan to join the 5th Northumberland Fusiliers.

1880 Spring, Watson is attached to the "Berkshires", the 66th Foot Regiment. Then he is sent to major field action, culminating in the Battle of Maiwand on July 27<sup>th</sup> where is

wounded in the shoulder and leg.

1880 August, Watson recuperates at Peshawar in Afghanistan, and after in India. He contracts Enteric Fever (Typhoid). After months of illness when he has recovered sufficiently a medical board determines that he should be sent back to England.

1880 August, Watson's mother dies. Now Watson has "Neither kith nor kin in England" ("Study in Scarlet"): his brother Hamish is in Australia.

1881 January. Watson arrives back in England at Portsmouth. He is pensioned from the army at £0/11/6 per day. He gravitates to London and stays at a private (cheap) hotel in the strand.