

Land, Sea, and Air - A Study in Transportation in Sherlockian Times - Excerpts from "Mobile Holmes"

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Extracts below as footnoted, with supplements of horse sense, nonsense and a tuppence worth from Tom Vickstrom

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What would the "who-done-it" of the Canon be without transportation? Clients regularly make their way to 221B Baker Street conveyed by various types of cabs or carriages. Holmes and Watson are always dashing off to visit the scene of the crime using the transportation options of Victorian England – a hansom cab or a growler oftentimes, or by train for longer journeys into the countryside.

Transportation on Foot

Perhaps a surprise for today's topic, the one most commonly used mode of transportation in Victorian London was by foot. "Victorians were great walkers. Keeping a private carriage, entailing the expense of the carriage itself, its coach house, the horse or horses, stabling, groom and so forth, was a luxury only the rich or more well off could afford." ⁱ

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was a walker himself, rain or shine. One instance in real life, is quoted, "As the party was sitting round the hall after dinner the rain was driven by the wind against the window. Arthur immediately wanted to walk in the storm, and with a younger member of the assembled party went out across the hills. They reappeared after an hour or so laughing and wet, after which they went to the billiard room for a game that Arthur proceeded to win."ⁱⁱ

Holmes sometimes walked to mull over a problem, and at other times to clear his mind. In *The Resident Patient* he said to Watson, "But the evening has brought a breeze with it. What do you say to a ramble through London? I was weary of our sitting room and gladly acquiesced. For three hours we strolled about together, watching the ever-changing kaleidoscope of life as it ebbs and flows through Fleet Street and the Strand. His characteristic talk, with its keen observance of detail and subtle power of inference, held me amused and enthralled."

In *Hound of the Baskervilles*, Holmes directs his client to walk as bait for a dangerous adversary's impending attack. "I wish for you to drive to Merripit House. Send back your trap, however, and let them know that you intend to walk home"... "To walk across the moor?"... "Yes" ... "But that is the very thing which you have so often cautioned me not to do"... "This time you may do it with safety. If I had not every confidence in your nerve and courage I would not suggest it, but it is essential that you should do it."

Holmes, seemed to have the streets of London memorized, much probably learned firsthand by walking, as well as a keen study of maps. In "Sign of the Four" Watson recalls that during a cab ride, "At first I had some idea as to the direction in which we were driving; but soon, what with our pace, the fog, and my own limited knowledge of London, I lost my bearings, and knew nothing, save that we seemed to be going a very long way. Sherlock Holmes was never at fault, however, and he uttered the names as the cab rattled through squares and in and out by tortuous by-streets".

In *Sign of the Four*, he observed Watson's shoes and knew he had been to the Wigmore Street Post Office, because of reddish earth from a construction site nearby. Holmes could estimate someone's height by the length of their stride, as seen in *A Study in Scarlet*. In *The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist* he knew Violet Smith was not a walker but rather a cyclist by her footwear.

While the expression "afoot" is a figure of speech, it implies movement and action, especially "The game is afoot" which has origins in hunting game, and is found in Shakespeare's *King Henry IV Part I*, dated 1597. Here's an example in the Canon: "I could tell by numerous subtle signs, which might have been lost upon anyone but myself that Holmes was on a hot scent. As impassive as ever to the casual observer, there were none the less a subdued eagerness and suggestion of tension in his brightened eyes and brisker manner which assured me that the game was afoot." ("*The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge*") The word "afoot" appears nine times in the Canon, a meaningless bit of trivia but it was at hand.

Bicycle

The first pedal bicycle was invented in the mid-1800s. Bicycles of that era were nicknamed “boneshakers” because of their wooden wheels and tires made of steel, which were needed to prevent warping. Improvements in design as well as better roads led to widespread use. Wire spoked wheels, whose spokes had an adjustable tension, were a major breakthrough and led to the ordinary, which was the bicycle with the huge front wheel, and before long the pneumatic tire came along as well. One report, as of 1881, estimated the number of bicycles and tricycle riders in England at 250,000. The bicycle, to an extent was a social equalizer. The bicycle craze included women, and fashions changed to accommodate – out went the corsets and in came bloomers. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was himself an avid cyclist.

Holmes rode a bicycle in “The Adventure of the Missing Three-Quarter.” Author Richard Olken writes, “In the course of his investigations Holmes follows, on a bicycle, the carriage of Dr. Armstrong, whom he believes to be concealing someone. Holmes rushed into a nearby bicycle shop and rented a bicycle to follow the carriage. The existence of a convenient bicycle shop would be expected in Cambridge at that time, as many students were bicyclists. The question that come to mind are: Where did Holmes learn to ride and how did he gain proficiency to follow Dr. Armstrong’s carriage for a distance of quite a few miles?” Holmes, at the time, 1897, was 43 years old. There is no previous mention of him riding during his association with Dr. Watson. Therefore it is likely the Holmes learned to ride while at school or university, meaning that his bicycling experience had been on an Ordinary, a high-wheeler. iii

In “The Adventure of the Priority School Holmes” shows that he knows his bicycles. “A bicycle, certainly, but not *the* bicycle,” said he. “I am familiar with forty-two different impressions left by tyres. This, as you perceive, is a Dunlop, with a patch upon the outer cover.”

In 1903 and 1904 Strand Magazine published thirteen Sherlock Holmes stories that comprise the “Return of Sherlock Holmes.” Three of these stories, “The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist, set in 1896, “The Adventure of the Missing Three Quarter,” set in 1897, and “The Adventure of the Priority School” set in 1901, make up the majority of Sherlock Holmes’ involvement with bicycles. Bicycles are never mentioned again in the Canon.” iv

Railways

“In the century between the Battle of Waterloo (1815) and the beginning of the Great War (1914), there were greater technical advances in transportation and communication than any other period in the history of the world. ... People’s notions of distance and time were profoundly changed by the technical progress made in so many areas of mechanical engineering and construction. ... This was the world in which Sherlock Holmes lived and worked, chased criminals, and recovered jewels. ...The railways also play a role in the stories. From the many stories having trains in them, we draw a mental picture of the world where it’s always 1895.” v

Victorian trains had first-class, second-class and third-class carriages, similar to classes on passenger ships. Holmes and Watson, as were the first-class types. Early on, third class carriages did not have roofs. There was no heating on the trains before the 1880s. The carriages were lit by oil or paraffin lamps in the early days, and later on had gas lamps. Queen Victoria, by the way, was a great admirer of trains. She had an opulent carriage, and a rail line to her castle, Balmoral Castle, in the north of Scotland where she liked to enjoy holidays.vi

On a side note, The UK National Archives has this to say, “The railways were to make a huge difference to the leisure activities of the Victorians. Not only were opportunities for holidays and day trips increased, sporting events also grew in popularity. Special trains and trips were run to take people to the races, cricket matches or the FA Cup Final, which was held for the first time in 1872. It was not only spectators that benefited, the football clubs that were being started in many of Britain’s Happy cities could now travel away to play against each other. In 1888 the Football League was founded. This was made up of professional teams. It would have been impossible for the first teams to have travelled to play away matches without regular trains. So the railways were very important in the development of professional

football in Britain. But many of these developments only affected the better off people in Britain. For most working people, the important changes were the cheap day returns that many railway companies began to offer. In 1871 bank holidays were introduced and so began the great British tradition of a day at the seaside, along with sticks of rock, candy-floss, walks along the pier, fun-fair rides and fish and chips.” vii

That fact a cross section of society could be found on the trains is inferred by Watson’s remark upon reading a published magazine on the topic of keen observation. Watson scoffs about the writer’s assertions, “I should like to see him clapped down in a third class carriage on the Underground, and asked to give the trades of all his fellow-travelers. I would lay a thousand to one against him.” “You would lose your money,” Sherlock Holmes remarked calmly. “As for the article I wrote it myself.” “You!” exclaims Watson.

As posted on the website, Everything Sherlock.com, “Trains played a very large role in thirty nine of Sherlock Holmes adventures. Train routes crisscrossed England, enabling Holmes, Watson and the occasional police detective to travel to Dartmoor (“The Hound of the Baskervilles”), Cambridge (“The Missing Three Quarter”), Surrey (“The Retired Colourman”) or perhaps the most interesting of all being “The Final Problem” where a train chase ensues eventually leading to the continent.” viii

In “the Adventure of the Speckled Band” Watson’s journals noted, “At Waterloo we were fortunate in catching a train for Leatherhead, where we hired a trap at the station inn and drove for four or five miles through the lovely Surrey lanes.”

As to the dependable punctuality of the trains, as they say, “you can set your watch by them.” In, “The Adventure of the Engineer’s Thumb” Watson was advised, “We shall want you to come tonight by the last train.... There is a train from Paddington which would bring you there at about 11.15.”

As the United States had some colorful railroad lines such as the Dixie Flyer, the Hummingbird Special, and the Southwest Chief, some trains in England had some colorful names, too. Examples are: The Flying Scotsman, the Sunny South Express and the Southern Belle; those latter two train lines activated as of 1905 and 1908. Punch magazine dubbed one extremely crowded train, the “sardine box railway.” “Twopenny Tube,” was a nickname given to The Central due to its two pence fare and the tunnels.

London’s Underground and the Tube

London’s Underground is referred to in several stories of the Canon and is featured prominently in “Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans.” In that story, a dead body had been placed atop a carriage until it jolted off and Holmes walks along the underground line to investigate the case.

The Underground has its origins in the Metropolitan Railway, and it was world's first underground railway. Opened in 1863, it is now part of the Circle, Hammersmith & City and Metropolitan lines. The network has expanded to 11 lines, and in 2016–17 carried 1.379 billion passengers making it the world's 11th busiest metro system, with 270 stations. The 11 lines collectively handle approximately 4.8 million passengers a day, according to Wikipedia sources.

The system's first tunnels were built just below the surface, using the cut-and-cover method; later, smaller, roughly circular tunnels—which gave rise to its nickname, the Tube—were dug through at a deeper level. The system presently has 270 stations and 250 miles (400 km) of track. Despite its name, only 45% of the system is actually underground in tunnels, with much of the network in the outer environs of London being on the surface. In addition, the Underground does not cover most southern parts of Greater London, with less than 10% of the stations located south of the River Thames.”ix

“When a system of underground railways was first proposed in the middle of the nineteenth century, a popular preacher declared very seriously that ,’the forthcoming end of the world would be hastened by the construction of underground

railways burrowing into the infernal regions and thereby disturbing the devil.”^x Early riders had to experience dirty coal smoke from steam engines and insufficient ventilation, which may have seemed mildly infernal, but thankfully not eternal. About 1890 electric-powered systems began to be introduced, a great improvement.

BSI Author John Durein provides interesting examples of important train stations that were prominently mentioned in the Canon, and described their commercial development in real life.

Ships and Boats

Great Britain has an extensive maritime history, being surrounded by ocean and at various times it had great sea battles or invasions by the Spaniards, French, Romans and Scandinavians. Ships began to have decks around the 12th century, previously being open. Rudders were fitted on the stern of ships by 1200. Sailing technology progressed; for example in 1416 the king's ship "Anne" had two masts. By the 16th century the Thames region had become the main shipbuilding area and the Royal Dockyards were built there as well. England progressed as a great far-flung power because of its ships, sailors, merchants and navy.

There are over 2,000 miles of navigable waterways in England today. The UK was the first country to acquire a nationwide canal network. Canals played a vital role in the United Kingdom's Industrial Revolution at a time when roads were only just emerging from the medieval mud and long trains of packhorses were the only means of "mass" transit by road of raw materials and finished products. (It was no accident that amongst the first canal promoters were the pottery manufacturers of Staffordshire.) By the second half of the 19th century, many canals were increasingly becoming owned by railway companies or competing with them, and many were in decline. ^{xi}

As explained by knowledgeable author Walter Jaffee, ships and boats are the only objects in the English language referred to by gender. The practice of giving a feminine name to a ship, was a tribute by sailors to the vessel's beauty and respect for the ship on whose life they depended, thus it was near and dear like one's wife or mother. In the earliest days ships were named for goddesses, and this evolved to mortal women, giving a benevolent feminine spirit to the ships that carried them across the treacherous oceans.

As to terminology, what is a boat versus a ship? One basic guideline is that "a boat can be put on a ship." In other words, any vessel, regardless of configuration, mean of propulsion or type of use, which can be lifted and set aboard a ship, is a boat. The Oxford Companion to Ships and the Sea defines a boat as "a small open craft without any decking and usually propelled by oars or sometimes by a small sail" but then follows a number of exceptions such as fishing boats with deck or half-deck and propelled by an engine. ^{xii}

"The largest flotilla of boats in the Canon is found in "The Sign of the Four." Partway through the story Holmes and Watson follow the dog Toby as he tracks the creosote trail of Jonathan Small and Tonga. "Several small punts and skiffs were lying ... in the water at the edge of the wharf" A *punt* is a flat-bottomed pleasure boat with square ends and draws very little water. It is propelled by poling and measures 10 to 14 feet. A *skiff* is a flat-bottomed, shallow draft, open boat of simple construction with a sharp bow and square stern and is a light pleasure boat used in inland waters. Holmes later interviews the wife of the Aurora and says, "There is a boatman here with a wherry, Watson. We shall take it across the river." A *wherry* is a distinct type of boat, described as an open boat used for the carriage of passengers on the tidal reaches of the River Thames. They were propelled by oars, and varied in size from about 14 feet with a single rower to about 25 feet with four rowers. Once the Aurora is located Holmes sets his trap. He tells Inspector Jones, "I shall want a fast police boat – a steam launch, and Watson described the crew, "There was one man at the rudder, one to tend the engines, and two burly police inspectors forward." In stalking the Aurora, Holmes tells the inspector, "Cruise gently up and down here under cover of this string of lighters." A lighter is a broad, flat-bottomed boat used to transport cargo short distances between a vessel and the shore. Lighters are so called because they lighten an ocean-going ship by removing some of her cargo. Lighters of this era measured about 50 -60 feet in length with a beam of about 20 feet. One the chase began, the police boat "flashed past barges, steamers, merchant vessels..." In this era, the *barge* was a flat-bottomed coastal trading vessel, equipped with sails and retractable leeboards in place of a keel or

rudder. This allows it to operate in shallow water.. the mast was set so that it could be lowered when going under a bridge. They were 50 to 100 feet in length and 10 to 20 feet across. With distinctive red-brown sails, you might say they were the 18-wheelers of the day. *Tugs* were usually steam powered and driven by side paddle wheels, and were larger than the barges. In the “Sign of the Four” story, the craft being chased, the *Aurora* is mentioned several times as a “clipper” and a “flyer” so she is fast – probably a ferry craft with a cabin maybe 30 feet in length. “The boy held the tiller while against the red glare of the furnace I could see old Smith, stripped to the waist, and shoveling coals for dear life”. As the two boats draw near, *Tonga’s* poison dart flies between Holmes and Watson, sticking in the wood of the hatchway behind them.xiii

Ships are woven into so many of the stories and plots in the Canon. In “Five Orange Pips”, for example, Holmes examines the threatening letters being sent to Colonel Openshaw. He says to Watson, “Did you remark the postmarks of those letters?” “The first was from Pondicherry, the second from Dundee, and the third from East London.” Watson - “They are all seaports.” Holmes - “Excellent. We have already a clue. There can be no doubt that the probability—the strong probability—is that the writer was on board of a ship.”

“One ship was involved with a case that gives us one of the most famous lines of the Canon. In the *Adventures of the Sussex Vampire*, Holmes explains to Watson, ‘*Matilda Briggs* was a ship which is associated with the giant rat of Sumatra, a story for which the world is not yet prepared.’”xiv

Doyle used a number of real British ships in his stories, and some made up names as well. The *Esmeralda*, The *Hotspur*, the *Alicia*, the *Lone Star*, and the troopship *Orontes* are some real ships that made their way into the Canon. A real ship named the *Friesland* also appears. It was part of the Red Star Line, the same line that brought young Vito Corleone to New York in the *Godfather* book. The *Esmeralda*, outward bound for the Brazils in “Sign of the Four” was a clipper of the White Star Line, that line of Titanic fame. Blue Star and Green Star Line existed as well as a Black Star Line for a short time, although none of the Star lines names appear in the Canon.

The *Gloria Scott* was a fictitious name. In fact the Perth Mint of Australia has minted a series of silver coins entitled, “Famous Ships That Never Sailed” and the *Gloria Scott* is one of them. The obverse includes an image of Sherlock Holmes smoking a pipe in the foreground.

An example of Doyle’s’ plentiful use of ships in his stories and the salty zest and character that ships bring to the Canon if offered here, in describing that above-named vessel bound for Australia as a convict ship. “The *Gloria Scott* had been in the Chinese tea-trade, but she was an old-fashioned, heavy-bowed, broad-beamed craft, and the new clippers had cut her out. She was a five-hundred ton boat; and besides her thirty-eight jail-birds, she carried twenty-six of a crew, eighteen soldiers, a captain, three mates, a doctor, a chaplain, and four warders. Nearly a hundred souls were in her, all told, when we set sail from Falmouth.”

To conclude this category of transportation we must mention “The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans”, which begins in late the year 1895, when a dense yellow fog settled down upon London. Holmes impatiently paced in his sitting room when a telegram arrived, and he proclaimed “Brother Mycroft is coming round.” Lestrade and Mycroft explain, “It is a real crisis. I have never seen the Prime Minister so upset. As to the Admiralty—it is buzzing like an overturned beehive.” They are talking about the loss of top-secret technical papers of a submarine. As written by BSI authors in “Underhand, Unfair, and Damned Un-English” There was a close race between nations to produce the first, effective, modern submarine, with the winner arriving at the end of the nineteenth century. It must be noted, however, that there never has been a submarine with the name of Bruce-Partington. That merely seems to have been Mycroft’s code name for a real French submarine, the *Sirene* of 1890, which was the largest submarine in the world at that time, weighing 130 tons. It exploded and was rebuilt and renamed as of 1893, although plagued with defects, xv To illustrate the advance of technology, by the end of the Great War, 228 British submarines has been commissioned. As a trivia side note, during the war a trawler that was pressed into service as English merchant convoy vessel was re-named the

H240 Conan Doyle. Doyle understood the potential submarine dangers to England. In 1914 he wrote a story for Strand Magazine entitled “Danger” in which eight submarines from a fictitious country implied as Germany, reduce England nearly to the point of starvation by preying on merchant shipping, which foretold many incidents that truly came to pass.^{xvi}

“Start Her Up, Watson,” Horsepower in the Canon

BSI Author Marcus Geisser does a masterful job of explaining the likelihood that Watson owned a car in 1912 or perhaps as early as 1907. Holmes and Watson had not seen each other for 2 years as of August 2, 1914 when Holmes sends a wire to Watson, asking that he meet him “with the car,” therefor the assumption is Holmes knew of the car from when they’d last seen each other. In “The Last Bow” Holmes compliments Watson’s “excellent driving” as they pay a visit to the German spy Von Bork at his residence.

Holmes, playing the part of an espionage agent named Altamont, who is an Irish American motor expert. His telegram to Von Bork says, “Will come without fail to-night and bring new sparking plugs. — Altamont.” Von Bork discusses the telegram with a colleague, “Sparking plugs, eh?” “You see he poses as a motor expert and I keep a full garage. In our code everything likely to come up is named after some spare part. If he talks of a radiator it is a battleship, of an oil pump a cruiser, and so on. Sparking plugs are naval signals.”

In the end, Watson & Holmes bring Von Bork to justice trussed up in the back seat of Watson’s “little Ford.” This particular model is identified by the author as a Model T Runabout, introduced on the market as of Sept 1912 for a price of 135 pounds. It had a folding back seat called a “dickey seat,” as an option that sold for one additional pound.

An analysis is offered about some visitors of past years to Holmes’ place at 221B Baker Street, to understand whether they had arrived by automobile. As we remember, Holmes, delighted in accurately identifying how a caller had arrived and what they had been doing, and other details of their lives.

Motorcars first appeared in London in 1897, when 25 cabs were introduced by the London Electrical Cab Company, and 50 more the next year. Yes, that’s right – London’s first cabs were not powered by gasoline engines but by batteries. The speed limit was 14 MPH. Before that speed limits were regulated by the Light Locomotives on Highways Act, also known as the Red Flag Act. Any machine powered vehicle was limited to 4 MPH and had to be preceded by a footman carrying a red flag.

Where did the term, “horsepower” come from? According to Popular Mechanics, in 1781, the story goes, James Watt who invented an improved steam engine, needed to convince skeptics to retire their draft horses and buy his new steam engine. To prove his machine’s superiority, he measured a horse walking in circles to turn a grindstone in a mill and developed the horsepower calculation.

Traps and Dog-Carts

Dog-carts appeared first in the Canon in tale of “The Man with the Twisted Lip” published in The Strand Magazine in 1891. Upon leaving a vile opium den, Holmes tells Watson that, ‘our trap should be here.’ He put his two forefingers between his teeth and whistled shrilly – ‘a signal which was answered by a similar whistle from the distance, followed shortly by the rattle of wheels and the clink of horses’ hoofs.’ And ‘a tall dog-cart dashed up through the gloom, throwing out two golden tunnels of yellow light from its side lanterns.’^{xvii}

In “The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist”, “Watson mentions dog-carts (or just carts) no less than ten times and traps five times.” The ending scenes of the story are built around an empty cart, when Holmes and Watson, “spring into the dog –cart and Homes, after turning the horse, gave it a sharp cut with the whip, and we flew back along the road.” Holmes demonstrated that he is fully at home with the reins.^{xviii}

Quoting the BSI author, Ray Bennett, “In Victorian days, dog-carts were often used for hire (mainly in the countryside) while the more comfortable and desirable hansom of cabriolet, both of which had covers to protect the passenger from the element, were the carriage of choice in streets of the cities.”

In “The Adventure of the Speckled Band, “Holmes shocks his new client by deducing her journey to see him included a ride in a dog-cart. He did this from the number and pattern of mud splatters on her left arm. Holmes says, ‘there is no other vehicle save a dog-cart which throws up mud in that way, and then only when you sit on the left-hand side of the driver.’”^{xix}

Dog-carts originated as small carriages with a slatted box behind the seat to carry hunting dogs. Variations of this evolved, with the box being used as a seat on which passengers could ride, facing to the rear. Some were two-wheeled and some four-wheeled.

But what are traps? The trap was a variant of the gig, whose distinguishing feature was that it was on springs to ease the ride. A gig was a light two-wheeled one-horse open carriage. ^{xx} “In Victorian England the term ‘trap’ was often used in a very broad sense and could include any small passenger-carrying cart pulled by one or two horses. When Watson refers to a trap, we can suspect it is any of the small, two wheeled, open-air type of vehicles.”^{xxi}

On a side note, Holmes never took a “taxicab” that we know of. Why? It did not come into common use until the 1900s and did not make its way into the Canon. The invention of the taximeter, which records distance traveled and displays the price of the ride, was at some point placed into a Cabriolet (carriage) and at the name was shortened to “taxicab.” German inventors introduced the taximeter in 1897 and made its way to London in 1903 in gasoline-powered cabs.

Hansom Cabs and Carriages

Holmes and Watson first rode off in a Hansom cab in “A Study in Scarlet” “Get your hat,” he said. “You wish me to come?” said Watson. “Yes, if you have nothing better to do.” A minute later we were both in a hansom, driving furiously for the Brixton Road. It was a foggy, cloudy morning. “... and they were off to thirty years of adventures.

The Hansom cab is mentioned more often than any other type of public transportation in the Canon. “If a Victorian gentleman chose not to walk, the hansom cab was the usual way for a gentleman to travel around London. It evolved from a kind of horse-drawn carriage designed and patented in 1834 by Joseph Hansom, and architect from York.” “As BSI author Guy Marriott writes, “Hansom cabs enjoyed immense popularity as they were fast, light enough to be pulled by a single horse, and were agile enough to steer around other horse drawn vehicles in the notorious traffic jams of nineteenth-century London. There were 7,500 hansom cabs in use at the height of their popularity.”^{xxii}

In a vividly written passage from “A Study in Scarlet” Watson recalls, “I saw that a hansom cab with a man inside which had halted on the other side of the street was now proceeding slowly onward again. ‘There’s our man, Watson! Come along! We’ll have a good look at him if we do no more.’ At that instant I was aware of a bushy black beard and a pair of piercing eyes turned upon us through the side window of the cab. Instantly the trapdoor at the top flew up, something was screamed to the driver, and the cab flew off madly down Regent Street.”

The pop-open door at the top was for communication between passenger and driver, and for payment of fares. The Hansom also had side windows, ideal for Holmes to observe the outside world while traveling from point to point.

“If you needed a larger cab, you would need a four-wheeler, which could accommodate four passengers. Such vehicles could be hailed in the street, or found a cab stands, or were always at railway stations for passengers arriving by train with luggage. The official name for a four-wheeler was the “‘Clarence’ but it was colloquially called a ‘growler’ from the noise it made driving over the cobble-stone streets. It was a closed carriage on four wheels, sometimes glass-fronted, and taking luggage on the roof... the Clarence took its name from Prince William, Duke of Clarence, who succeeded to the British throne in 1830 as King William IV.”^{xxiii}

In “A Case of Identity” we can recall the scene when Miss Mary Sutherland arrived at the church for her wedding while her husband-to-be was coming separately in a four-wheeler. When the vehicle arrived, he never stepped out. The cabman got down and looked, but there was no one there. The cabman had no idea what had become of his passenger, for he had seen him get in with his own eyes.^{xxiv}

In “The Greek Interpreter” a remark is made that the four-wheeled cab is often ‘a disgrace to London’ – for it was common for four-wheeled cabs to be old and poorly maintained.^{xxv} Sometimes various old carriages and coaches were pressed into service as licensed cabs.

Various other horse drawn vehicles in the Canon include the wagonette, landau, brougham (numerous times), a van, and a drag. In “Hound of the Baskervilles” there is a gig, ideal for the hilly roads across the moor. As to the greater population in the streets of London, horse-drawn busses were regular transport for the common man and for ladies as well. Omni-busses (“Omni” meaning “all”) carried 28 passenger at the turn of the century.

In the Canon, believe it or not, Holmes is never found actually riding on horseback. Watson, on the other hand, most likely had his life saved by riding on horseback. As described in *The Blanched Soldier*, “I got an elephant bullet through my shoulder. I stuck on to my horse, however, and he galloped several miles before I fainted and rolled off the saddle.”

Holmes has an expert knowledge of horses and carriages. In “A Study in Scarlet”, Holmes explains to Lestrade that the perpetrator and his victim came together in a cab drawn by a horse, “with three old shoes and one new one on his off foreleg.” In “A Scandal in Bohemia” he sizes up his client beforehand. “There was the sharp sound of horses’ hoofs and grating wheels against the curb, followed by a sharp pull at the bell. Holmes whistled. “A pair, by the sound,” said he. “Yes,” he continued, glancing out of the window. “A nice little brougham and a pair of beauties.”

Holmes sometimes carried horse drawn transportation-related accessory – a hunting crop, in fact a “loaded hunting crop”, meaning that it was filled with a heavy metal. The hunting crop plays a role in *Silver Blaze*, *The Red-Headed League*, *The Adventure of the Speckled Band*, and more. In *The Adventure of the Six Napoleons*, Holmes “picked up his hunting crop and struck Napoleon a sharp blow to the head” to break it apart and reveal the black pearls inside.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century the age of the horse began to wane. “In 1870 there were approximately three million horses in England, two thirds of them in agriculture. By 1900 the number of agricultural horses had fallen to one million, and their day was clearly ending.”^{xxvi}

In the Air

A very tough assignment for the BSI author who drew this one- must have drawn the short straw! There is very little if any airborne transportation in the Canon. One will find the expression “to fly”, “flying”, and so on in the Canon many times but there is actually no airborne flying. In “A Study in Scarlet”, for example, is found, “Political assassins are only too glad to do their work and to fly.”

In “Hound of the Baskervilles”, Watson writes, “One great gray bird, a gull or curlew, soared aloft in the blue heaven. He and I seemed to be the only living things between the huge arch of the sky and the desert beneath it. The barren scene, the sense of loneliness, and the mystery and urgency of my task all struck a chill into my heart.” And later.. “A wisp of green floating in the air caught my eye, and another glance showed me that it was carried on a stick by a man who was moving among the broken ground. It was Stapleton with his butterfly-net.” That’s about it for air travel in the Canon!

Humans have wondered about flight throughout their existence. It brings to mind the Greek story of Icarus, who waxed features to himself, but flew too close to the sun. The first manned flight by aircraft took place in 1903 when Holmes retired, in “The Second Stain”, so no wonder aircraft do not turn up in the previous stories.

In “The Sign of the Four” while tracking a suspect: “What the deuce is the matter with the dog?” growled Holmes. “They surely would not take a cab, or go off in a balloon.” BSI author Mark Mower has written a piece named “Zeppelins” and explains that lighter than air craft had been in use for quite some time, in fact since 1783 when a manned ascent took place in Paris. Observation balloons were used in the Napoleonic Era, and later in the American Civil War, where a young Prussian engineering officer came as an observer and went home inspired. His name was Count Ferdinand Adolf Heinrich August Graft von Zeppelin. His diaries show sketches for a rigid frame lighter than air ship as early as 1874, however his dreams would not come true until 1909 when a commercial company was formed. By 1914 its commercial airships had completed almost 1,600 flights, carrying over 10,000 passengers and covering 107,000 miles, with its largest Zeppelin 470 feet in length and a top speed of 45 mph. ^{xxvii}

In *The Last Bow*, a remark is made, “How still and peaceful it all seems. There may be other lights within the week, and the English coast a less tranquil place! The heavens, too, may not be quite so peaceful if all that the good Zeppelin promises us comes true.”

In “The Last Bow”, a safe is opened and amongst the many files stowed away by German agent Von Bork, is one labelled “Aeroplanes.” Holmes, in the disguise an American name Altamont, tricks the villain and captures him. In the process he gives Van Bork, a wrapped parcel alleged to contain state secrets, but in fact it is the Practical Handbook of Bee Culture. Holmes probably knew far more about these creatures of flight than Aeroplanes, but who know, maybe he went on to become a flyer. In closing the Canon, Holmes foretells the coming of the Great War it by remarking to Watson that a strong wind is blowing in from the east, and as to Holmes’s fate, he would probably delight in knowing that topic is a great mystery.

ⁱ Catherine Cooke, “What Do You Say to A Ramble Through London”, page 7

ⁱⁱ Ibid, source noted as : Doyle, Georgina, “Out of the Shadows”, Ashcroft, BC, Calabash Press, 2004, page 112

ⁱⁱⁱ Richard Olken, “On A Bicycle Built For ...”, page 131

^{iv} Ibid, page 134

^v John Baesch, “Sherlock Holmes on the Rails”, page 145

^{vi} Margaret Stephen, “Transport in Victorian Times”, Wayland Publishers Ltd, 1998, page 8

^{vii} <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/victorianbritain/happy/default.htm>

^{viii} Jacqueline A, “Sherlock Holmes Transportation History”, <https://everythingsherlock.com/sherlock-holmes-transportation-history/>

^{ix} https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_Underground

^x John Durein, *Sherlock Down the Tubes*, page 162, quoting from Peter Ackroyd’s “London Under: The Secret History Beneath the Streets”

^{xi} https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_British_canal_system

^{xii} Captain Walter W Jaffee, “At Sea on ships and Boats” page 197

^{xiii} Ibid

^{xiv} Ibid

^{xv} Philip and Jane Weller, “Underhand, Unfair, and Damned Un-English”, page 230

^{xvi} Ibid, page 226 -227

^{xvii} Ray Bennett, “The Trappings of Sherlock Holmes”, page 75

^{xviii} Ibid, page 78

^{xix} Ibid, page 76

^{xxxx} “Your carriage awaits, Mr. Holmes”, <http://www.worldwidewords.org/articles/ar-gal3.htm>

^{xxi} Ray Bennett, “The Trappings of Sherlock Holmes”, page 69

^{xxixxxii} Guy Marriott, “Joseph Hansom’s Wonderful Cab”, page 81

^{xxiii} [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clarence_\(carriage\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clarence_(carriage))

^{xxivxxiv} Guy Marriott, “Horse Cabs, Carriages and Commercial Vehicles”, page 102

^{xxvxxv} Ibid, page 103

^{xxvi} Roger Donway “Horsing Around With Holmes”, page 43

^{xxvii} Mark Mower, “Zeppelins”, pages 246-247