For Immediate Release
15 May 2004

Contact: *Clare Roberts 020 7389 2117* *croberts@christies.com*

LOST ARCHIVE OF SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE TO BE OFFERED AT CHRISTIE'S IN MAY



The name-plate that Conan Doyle set-up outside his medical practice in Southsea in 1882 where he was a local GP (estimate £10,000-15,000).

The Lost Papers of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
19 May 2004

London – On 19 May 2004, Christie's will offer one the most exciting literary discoveries in modern times at auction – the lost personal papers of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Never before seen in public, until now, the collection was recently re-discovered in the London office of a firm of lawyers, its whereabouts having last been recorded some forty years earlier.

The archive includes over 3,000 items of personal letters, notes, hand-written manuscripts, 80% of which have not been published, and personal effects taken from Conan Doyle's writing desk after his death in 1930. It reveals many previously unknown details behind events in the life of the legendary Sherlock Holmes author. At the heart of the archive is a highly important collection of letters relating to his family, allowing a re-evaluation of his relationships with family members, as well his

private and public life and his fascination with spiritualism. The collection is estimated to fetch in the region of £2 million.

Opening the dozen or so large cardboard boxes, which had housed the archive since the 1960s, was a spine-tingling moment that I will never forget," says Tom Lamb, Head of Christie's Books and Manuscripts department. "The whereabouts of this material was previously unknown and it is for this reason that no modern day biography of the author exists. Scholars and admirers of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle have long been tantalised by the list of the writer's personal papers published in the authorised biography by John Dickson Carr in 1949", adds Jane Flower, Christie's Manuscript Consultant.

Conan Doyle's fame today rests on his creation of enduring literary characters, foremost among them Sherlock Holmes, but also the indomitable scientist Professor Challenger, and the irrepressible Napoleonic cavalryman, Brigadier Gerard. The surviving papers include a whole collection of the writer's literary notebooks, demonstrating the genesis of his major works in painstaking historical and scientific research, and tracking the course of his creative output. Some of the most important pieces include a sketch for the first appearance of Sherlock Holmes in the novel A Study in Scarlet, with the original title `A Tangled Skein' crossed through (sold as part of the three Southsea Notebooks, written as a young Doctor in Southsea near Portsmouth (estimate: £100,000-150,000) and a brief biographical chronicle of his writings in which as early as 1893 he inserts the laconic note `Killed Holmes', offered in the Norwood Notebook (estimate: £20,000-30,000).

Much of what survives in the collection, has a strong bearing on Conan Doyle; the-man and his life, a formidable campaigner and reformer of protean inventiveness (he is credited among other things with introducing downhill skiing to Switzerland, and championing the introduction of the tank in World War I).

There is considerable correspondence relating to his various causes – for example to right miscarriages of justice in what became known as `The Edalji Case' (involving a young Parsi lawyer wrongly convicted of murder, (estimate £30,000-50,000) and `The Slater Case' (which revolved around the gambler Oscar Slater) (estimate £15,000-20,000). Another of Conan Doyle's causes was his campaign to promote spiritualism throughout the English-speaking world. A further huge body of material in the archive relates to psychic writings and visits as well as his support of the Turin Shroud.

The archive boasts material relating to his major historical works, including Conan Doyle's histories of the Boer War (in which he served as a military doctor) and the Great War, with regards to which he rigorously campaigned on the lack of equipment for British troops, particularly body armour.

Further correspondence relates to his writings on the South African War, for which he was created a knight in 1903.

The collection also includes long correspondences with his brother Innes and his sister Lottie, which cast a light on the inner workings of Conan Doyle's emotional and intellectual life over thedecades; these major correspondences will be offered intact. Also offered are individual letters received from the public figures with whom Conan Doyle came into contact – including Winston Churchill, Oscar Wilde, Bernard Shaw, P.G. Wodehouse and Teddy Roosevelt, to name just a few (individual estimates ranging from £1,000 to £10,000).

The archive sheds light on Conan Doyle's relationship with his public, containing a number of correspondences with fans who had sent Conan Doyle their own mysteries to be solved by the author, including one correspondences which comprises a series of such letters, relating to the 'mystery of the missing fiancé'. It is thought that Conan Doyle drew upon details and episodes from these correspondents as part of his research and development of fictional characters and plots.

Some of the most charming survivals in the collection have a much more personal slant. From his early adult life is the name-plate that Conan Doyle set up outside his medical practice in Southsea in 1882 when he was a local GP dreaming of literary success (estimate: £10,000-15,000). Also offered are his log books from the SS Hope, a Peterhead whaler, on which he served as ship's physician in 1880 (estimate: £30,000-50,000). Other personal mementoes include his wallet and passport, engagement diaries and account books and the gold medal he had struck for his wife shortly before his death, engraved `To the best of nurses' (estimate: £800-1200).

Adrian and Denis Conan Doyle took over custodianship of the papers from their mother, the writer's widow Jean, following her death in the early 1940's. She passed on a collection which had been carefully sorted, and in many cases lovingly annotated with memories of her much loved husband. After their deaths, lengthy legal disputes on the division and amount of income from the Conan Doyle Literary Estate resulted in the collection being tucked away and lost from view. The reappearance and sale of the archive now is therefore a major event.

Brief Biography
Arthur Ignatius Conan Doyle was born on May 22, 1859, in Edinburgh, Scotland, and as a young man studied medicine in the city, eventually serving as a physician in the Boer War (1899-1902). The young medical student met a number of future authors who were also attending the university, including James Barrie and Robert Louis Stevenson, but the most formative influence on the young Conan Doyle was one of his teachers, Dr Joseph Bell, a master at observation, logic, deduction, and

diagnosis. All these qualities were later to be found in the persona of the celebrated detective Sherlock Holmes.

Conan Doyle published his first Holmes tale, A Study in Scarlet, in 1887. Over the following 40 years he published 56 short stories and four novels featuring Holmes and his sidekick, Dr Watson, who, like Conan Doyle, was a medical doctor, a writer and served in the British Army. Despite the fact that Conan Doyle was knighted in 1903 for his services to the crown, including his authorship of the 1902 pamphlet The War in South Africa, he became increasingly alienated by established society as a result of his forceful and public support of spiritual practises and teachings.

Viewing
An exhibition of highlights will be held at our Rockefeller Center salerooms on 29 March to 1 April.

*The Archive will go on view at Christie's 8 King Street, London SW1 from Friday 14th May, ahead of the auction on 19 May ***A photo and filming opportunity for the entire collection will take place on Thursday 13 May ****

Events
We are excited to present a special evening of readings from Conan Doyle's Collection, 'Sir Arthur Conan Doyle – the man revealed', to be held at Christie's King Street on Tuesday 18 May, 2004.

Catalogues
An illustrated catalogue will be available approximately 4–5 weeks before the sale. Please telephone 020 7389 2820 for further details.

###

Images available on request

Visit Christie's on the web at www.christies.com