

For Immediate Release

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CONAN DOYLE AT CHRISTIE'S

**Important Manuscripts by the late Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
to be sold to Benefit Charities**

Important Books and Manuscripts

Christie's King Street - 19 November 2003

London - Christie's announces that six unique and important Manuscripts by the late Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, world-famous creator of Sherlock Holmes, will be offered in the *Important Books and Manuscripts* sale at King Street on 19 November. The six manuscripts are being offered for sale by the Executors of the Estate of Dame Jean Conan Doyle to benefit charities nominated by Sir Arthur's daughter, and last surviving child, who died in November 1997.

"This is the largest number of Conan Doyle Manuscripts to appear on the market for several decades, and will undoubtedly create enormous excitement," says Tom Lamb, Head of Christie's Book Department, London. "It is a fitting tribute to the generosity of Dame Jean that her father's manuscripts will be sold to benefit these charities associated with the armed forces."

As a prominent member of the RAF for much of her life – Dame Jean served for thirty years, and was the ranking woman in the RAF at the time of her retirement – the charities to benefit from the sale will be RAF Benevolent Fund, the Not Forgotten Association, the RAF Association, the Elizabeth Finn Trust (formerly The Distressed Gentlefolks Aid Association), Help the Hospices, and the Royal Star and Garter Home, Richmond.

Many of these manuscripts were gifts to her from her celebrated father, who died in 1930 when she was seventeen years old. They include two stories from the *Brigadier Gerard* series, which many critics believe superior to even *Sherlock Holmes* in story-telling craft. 'How Brigadier Gerard lost his Ear' and 'Brigadier Gerard at Waterloo' were published in *The Strand Magazine* in August 1902 and January 1903 respectively, and in book form in 1903 (estimates £15,000-20,000 and £30,000-50,000). Conan Doyle had studied Napoleon's life deeply, wrote other works about him, and was praised for the skill with which he brought that era to life in his fiction. Gerard, a young picaresque officer in Napoleon's army, is the only truly consistent comic figure created by Conan Doyle, and these manuscripts represent high points in his body of work.

The collection also includes the intriguing manuscript of another pioneering science-fiction tale from the author of *The Lost World*. *The Maracot Deep* (estimate: £30,000-50,000) was serialized in *The Strand* in 1927 and published in book form in 1929. Conan Doyle's imagination ran wild in this novel of a band of explorers who, travelling to the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean in a diving bell, face disaster and death before being rescued by beings from Atlantis.

A Duet (with an Occasional Chorus), published in 1899, is a novel possessing a great deal of autobiographical content. In examining the courting and the ups and downs of a young Late-Victorian couple's newlywed life, the author drew upon his first marriage to Louise Hawkins and their life together in Southsea, Portsmouth, when he was a struggling young doctor turning to literature. This manuscript (estimate: £30,000-50,000) was bound up by the author as a present for his second wife, Jean Leckie (Dame Jean Conan Doyle's mother), whom the author married in 1907 after his first wife's death.

Two important pieces of *militaria* by Conan Doyle will be also be offered at Christie's. A poignant 3½ page poem titled 'Ypres, September 1915,' dated October 10th of that year of The Great War was published in *The Queen's Gift Book* in December 1915 to benefit war charity work, before being collected in the author's *The Guards Came Through and Other Poems* in 1919. The 13 page article titled 'A Glimpse of the Army,' dated 12th May 1900, was published in *The Strand* later that year and is based on Conan Doyle's experiences and observations in South Africa as a doctor doing dangerous volunteer work for the British Army during the Boer War.

Dame Jean Conan Doyle (1912-1997) was an extraordinary person brought up in the literary milieu of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. She was devoted to her father, and accompanied her parents on tours of the United States, Australia, and Africa during the 1920s. She enlisted in the RAF in 1938, spent World War II as an officer in intelligence work, and continued in the service after the war, eventually rising to the rank of Air Commandant and the post of Director of the Women's Royal Air Force. She was also Aide de Camp to the Queen, and a C.B.E. Following her retirement from the RAF,

she became Lady Bromet as the wife of Air Vice Marshal Sir Geoffrey Bromet, RAF (Ret.). In later years she was closely involved with charitable work and with the founding of the Arthur Conan Doyle Society. She was an Honorary Member of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London, and one of the first women to become a member of The Baker Street Irregulars, in the United States.

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