

A STUDY GUIDE TO SHERLOCK HOLMES

By William S. Dorn



**The Return of Sherlock Holmes
Adventure XXIX -- The
Adventure of the Norwood
Builder**

THE NORWOOD BUILDER
DATE OF THE ADVENTURE*
(Date when Jonas Oldacre was flushed
from his hiding place)

CLUES:

1. Watson says, “ ... Holmes had been back for some months, ... “ (496)
2. Holmes returned in “The Adventure of the Empty House” in April 1894.
3. Holmes says, “I crawled about the lawn with an August sun on my back, ... “ (504)
4. Holmes may not have meant literally an August sun; he may merely have meant a hot summer sun.
5. Holmes says, “ ... it had not rained for a month.” (504)
6. The summer of 1894 was generally quite wet except for June 11 to July 6 when there was practically no rainfall.
7. On the day the case opened Holmes says, “The weather has been very warm these last few days.” (497)
8. From June 28 through July 2 of 1894 the temperature in England was above 80° every day.
9. On the day the case opened Holmes was “ ... unfolding his morning paper ... “ (496) which turned out to be the *Daily Telegraph* (497).
10. The *Daily Telegraph* is not published on Sunday.
11. July 1, 1894 was Sunday.
12. Watson says, “ ... when I came down to breakfast (the next morning) ... An open telegram lay upon the table.” (505)
13. Holmes responded to the telegram and went to Norwood that day where he flushed Oldacre from his hiding place.

*The story may contain other clues to the date of the adventure. However, use only the clues shown here. Your only goal should be to use logical reasoning to find a date based on the clues shown here.

CONCLUSIONS:

- A. 1 and 2 imply it was 1894 after April
- B. A, 3 and 4 imply it was summer of 1894
- C. B, 5 and 6 imply it was early July of 1894
- D. C, 7 and 8 imply the case opened on July 1 or July 2 of 1894
- E. D, 9, 10, and 11 imply the case opened on Monday, July 2, 1894
- F. E, 12 and 13 imply that Oldacre was discovered on Tuesday, July 3, 1894

**Jonas Oldacre was flushed from his hiding place on
Tuesday, July 3, 1894**

THE NORWOOD BUILDER VOCABULARY WORDS

deprecation (496) – **belittling**

demur (496) – **hesitate because of doubts or scruples**

palpitating (496) – **trembling, shaking**

solicitor (497) – **attorney who is not a member of the bar and who may be heard only in the lower courts**

Freemason (497) – **member of the Free and Accepted Masons, an international fraternal and charitable organization with secret rites and signs**

indorsed papers (498) – **papers with signatures on the back as evidence of the legal transfer of its ownership**

conflagration (498) – **large, destructive fire**

E. C. (498) – **East Central postal district in London that includes The City and the financial district**

French windows (498) – **pair of windows extending to the floor and opening in the middle**

scrip (500, 505) – **an interim document to be exchanged for a more formal certificate when payments have been made on stocks or bonds**

frugal (500) – **meager**

points (501) – **details or distinguishing features**

flurried (502) – **confused or agitated**

frockcoat (502) – **double-breasted coat with knee-length skirts**

blackguard (503) – **scoundrel**

aviary (503) – **enclosure for holding birds in confinement**

villa (503) – **house in a middle-class suburb**

treasure-trove (503) – **hidden treasure**

privet hedge (503) – **hedge formed by green-leaved plant that has clusters of white flowers**

fiasco (504) – **complete failure**

close as wax (504) – **tight-lipped**

tinder (504) – **readily combustible material, such as dry twigs, used to start fires**

paroxysm (504) – **sudden outburst of emotion**

inanity (505) – **exhaustion**

insolence (506) – **being presumptuous and insulting in manner or speech; arrogant**

equanimity (507) – **quality of being calm and even-tempered**

outhouse (507) – **building separated from the main building**

conjurer (508) – **someone who performs magic tricks; a magician**

chaffed (508) – **made fun of or teased in a good natured way**

withered (508) – **dried up; withered or shriveled**

odious (508) – **offensive or disgusting**

foolscap (509) – **sheet of writing paper measuring approximately 13 by 16 inches with a watermark of a fool's cap with bells**

THE NORWOOD BUILDER OPEN QUESTIONS

1. Watson says, “ ... I had at his (Holmes’s) request sold my practice and returned to share the old quarters in Baker Street.” (496) Where did Watson get the money to support himself after moving back to Baker Street?

Watson’s income could have consisted of (a) royalties from his published stories of Holmes’s adventures, (b) interest on the investment of the money he received from the sale of his practice, and/or (c) a stipend from Holmes in exchange for Watson’s assistance in succeeding cases.

2. MacFarlane says, “The will was duly finished, signed, and witnessed by my clerk.” (500) However, a will must have two witnesses. Was Oldacre’s will illegal?

If there were only one witness, then the will was illegal. Perhaps, however, the will was witnessed by a second person – a clerk in a neighboring office – and MacFarlane never thought to mention that fact. It also is possible that MacFarlane was not a very good lawyer.

3. When Lestrade says, “You are aware that no two thumb-marks are alike?”; Holmes replied, “I have heard something of the kind.” (506) The subsequent activities show that Holmes had heard and knew much more than he implied with his statement. Why then did Holmes reply to Lestrade as he did?

Holmes probably was either (a) pulling Lestrade’s leg or (b) was intentionally vague to assure that Lestrade didn’t solve the case before he (Holmes) solved it.

4. Holmes says, “Well, well, I daresay that a couple of rabbits would account both for the blood and for the charred ashes.” (510) Were the Scotland Yard detectives so incompetent that they could not see the difference between human and rabbit bones? And why didn’t Holmes ask for an analysis of the bones as further evidence of his client’s innocence?

The Scotland Yard detectives were either incompetent or not thorough. Holmes, of course, didn’t come to the conclusion that the bones were rabbit bones until after his client had been cleared by the discovery of Jonas Oldacre.

THE NORWOOD BUILDER SIMPLE QUIZ*

1. Where was Jonas Oldacre hiding?
 - a. in his lumber yard
 - b. in the cellar
 - c. in a hidden room
 - d. none of the above

2. What clue did Holmes immediately recognize as a fake clue?
 - a. a thumb print
 - b. a forged signature
 - c. a torn photograph
 - d. none of the above

3. What was the connection between Jonas Oldacre and John Hector McFarlane's mother?
 - a. they were brother and sister
 - b. Oldacre had been a suitor of Mrs. McFarlane
 - c. Mrs. McFarlane had been Oldacre's housekeeper
 - d. none of the above

* The Simple Quiz is designed to determine if the student has read the story. Anyone who has read the story through should have no trouble in completing this quiz. The Intermediate and Advanced Quizzes are more challenging.

THE NORWOOD BUILDER INTERMEDIATE QUIZ[#]

1. What was Jonas Oldacre's business?
 - a. builder
 - b. land speculator
 - c. lawyer
 - d. none of the above

2. What was the location of Graham and McFarlane, John Hector McFarlane's place of business?
 - a. the Gresham Buildings
 - b. King Edward Street
 - c. Lyon Place
 - d. none of the above

3. Where did Jonas Oldacre write his will?
 - a. in a hansom
 - b. in a train
 - c. in McFarlane's office
 - d. none of the above

4. Who purchased Dr. Watson's Kensington medical practice?
 - a. Farquhar
 - b. Jackson
 - c. Verner
 - d. none of the above

[#] The Intermediate Quiz is designed to test whether the student has read the story with reasonable attention to detail. The Simple Quiz is an easier test while the Advanced Quiz is much more challenging.

THE NORWOOD BUILDER ADVANCED QUIZ[&]

1. Early in the story Watson mentions the Friesland. What was the Friesland?
 - a. a Dutch steamship
 - b. a past case of Sherlock Holmes
 - c. a city in Denmark
 - d. none of the above
2. How old was Jonas Oldacre?
 - a. 52
 - b. 63
 - c. 70
 - d. none of the above
3. Where did John Hector McFarlane spend the night after visiting Jonas Oldacre?
 - a. the Anerly Arms
 - b. the Crown Inn
 - c. the Northumberland Hotel
 - d. none of the above
4. What was the name of Jonas Oldacre's housekeeper?
 - a. Mrs. Dixon
 - b. Mrs. Lexington
 - c. Mrs. Warren
 - d. none of the above

[&] The Advanced Quiz is designed for aficionados of the Canon. The questions are quite challenging. The Intermediate and Simple Quizzes are designed for the more casual reader of the stories.

ANSWERS TO QUIZZES FOR THE RETURN

QUESTION	1	2	3	4
Empty House				
Simple	c	c	c	xx
Intermediate	a	b	c	c
Advanced	c	a	a	b
Norwood Builder				
Simple	c	a	b	xx
Intermediate	a	a	b	c
Advanced	a	a	a	b
Dancing Men				
Simple	b	b	a	xx
Intermediate	b	c	a	a
Advanced	b	b	a	b
Solitary Cyclist				
Simple	a	c	c	xx
Intermediate	b	c	c	b
Advanced	b	c	a	c
Priory School				
Simple	b	a	c	xx
Intermediate	c	b	a	b
Advanced	d	a	c	b
Black Peter				
Simple	b	a	c	xx
Intermediate	b	c	b	c
Advanced	b	c	b	d
Charles Augustus Milverton				
Simple	b	a	a	xx
Intermediate	c	c	a	b
Advanced	b	c	b	a

QUESTION	1	2	3	4
Six Napoleons				
Simple	a	c	c	xx
Intermediate	b	b	c	b
Advanced	c	a	a	b
Three Students				
Simple	c	a	d	xx
Intermediate	a	b	c	b
Advanced	b	c	a	b
Golden Pince-Nez				
Simple	a	b	a	xx
Intermediate	c	c	c	a
Advanced	b	b	c	c
Missing Three-Quarter				
Simple	b	c	b	xx
Intermediate	b	a	b	c
Advanced	a	c	b	a
Abbey Grange				
Simple	a	c	c	xx
Intermediate	c	b	b	c
Advanced	b	b	a	b
Second Stain				
Simple	a	a	b	xx
Intermediate	c	a	b	c
Advanced	a	b	a	c