

# News Release



**Monday 14 October 2002:**

**Embargoed until 11 AM Wednesday 16 October 2002**

## **Royal Society of Chemistry to Honour Sherlock Holmes with a Special Honorary Fellowship**

The Royal Society of Chemistry is to bestow an Extraordinary Honorary Fellowship upon Sherlock Holmes, the first detective to exploit chemical science as a means of detection. The honour marks the centenary of Holmes' most celebrated case *The Hound of the Baskervilles* as well as the hundredth anniversary of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's knighthood.

Holmes began, albeit it fictionally, a tradition that is now part of everyday policing around the world in which science and rational thinking are allied to combat evil. Since then countless people around the world have believed - and believe today - that Holmes truly existed, venturing forth from his smog-steeped Baker Street lodgings to take on the most baffling cases known to Victorian England.

*The award will be presented at the statue of Holmes outside the entrance to Baker Street station at 11.00am on Wednesday 16 October. Present to mark the occasion will be a modern Dr John Watson, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Chemistry. Also present will be a Mastiff cross-breed hound as a reminder of the dog which haunted the Baskerville family through two centuries on darkest Dartmoor.*

Chief Executive of the Royal Society of Chemistry, Dr David Giachardi said today: “Of course Sherlock Holmes did not exist, despite the wishful thinking of millions of people at home and abroad who have followed his deeds in the books, on television, radio and in films. Nevertheless the value of the Holmes legend today, and in previous decades, is profound, having brought tangible moral benefits to society as well providing extraordinary entertainment value that has continued through six or seven generations.”

He added: “Our particular interest is his love of chemistry, and the way that he wielded such knowledge for the public good, employing it dispassionately and analytically. He also embodied other personal traits that society seeks in today’s law officers – personal rectitude and courage. Last month the Royal Society of Chemistry honoured the achievements of Sir Alec Jeffreys, whose work in the 1980s led to the employment of DNA fingerprinting in criminal detection. But Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, through Holmes, anticipated 120 years ago the utilisation of chemistry in the battle against crime.

“Last week, in a broadcast debate in Parliament Lord Russell quoted Sherlock Holmes’ views on moral values. Holmes was for that moment a very real historical figure. Holmes did not exist but he should have existed. That is how important he is to our culture. We contend that the Sherlock Holmes myth is now so deeply rooted in the national and international psyche through books, films, radio and television that he has almost transcended fictional boundaries. His legacy is so potent that a tribute such as this is a fitting expression at a time when the personal probity and professional excellence of crime fighters in Great Britain and around the world are continually under scrutiny.”

**ENDS**

## **Notes for Editors**

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1) The Royal Society of Chemistry is the UK Professional Body for chemical scientists and an international Learned Society for the chemical sciences with 46,000 members world-wide. It is a major international publisher of chemical information, supports the teaching of the chemical sciences at all levels and is a leader in bringing science to the public.