

## IN DEFENSE OF THE INCREDIBLE RAFFLES CLAN

By Brad Mengel

Recently, Catherine D. Stewart wrote "The Wold Newton Alternative Universe Theory" which was published in THRILLER UK over two issues, no.15 July 2003, and no. 16 October 2003. This article raised a great many concerns, many of which have been covered in Win Scott Eckert's "Reply" (<http://www.pjfarmer.com/woldnewton/Reply.pdf>).

The purpose of this piece is to examine the criticisms Stewart made about my article "The Incredible Raffles Clan." [1] Should you read Stewart's article (which can be found at [http://www.cd.stewart.btinternet.co.uk/The\\_Wold\\_Newton\\_Theory.txt](http://www.cd.stewart.btinternet.co.uk/The_Wold_Newton_Theory.txt)) you will not find this article named anywhere nor, in relation to the theories she refers to, my name. [2] This would seem to be poor or lazy scholarship on Stewart's part. [3]

Stewart starts her critique by praising the notion that Hon. Richard Rollison, the Toff from the series by John Creasy, is the nephew of A.J. Raffles as brilliant and logical. Other family members I posit are however "quick fix" or "tack on characters."

Stewart argues that Raffles Holmes was only created by Wold Newton Scholars to create a closer relationship between A.J. Raffles and Sherlock Holmes "a quick and easy way to increase the contact between Holmes and Raffles by giving them a mutual, close family relative over whom they could interact, respectively son and nephew." [4]

Now the truth is a little more complex. In 1906, humorist John Kendrick Bangs wrote R HOLMES & CO. where he revealed that in 1883, that Sherlock Holmes stopped A. J. Raffles and his daughter Marjorie in the commission of a crime. Holmes let them go on the condition that he is allowed to marry Marjorie. The couple did marry and have a son, the titular Raffles Holmes.

Now I cannot honestly say why Bangs wrote the book but I imagine that he was aware of the fact that Doyle and Hornung were brother-in-laws and chose this way make fun of that relationship. Stewart argues that "Marjorie Raffles was blatantly created as not a character, but a plot device" and as far as Bangs was concerned that's probably all she was.

As was pointed out previously, Bangs wrote his book in 1906, it was not until 1972 that Philip Jose Farmer proposed that A.J. Raffles was Sherlock Holmes' cousin as their mothers were sisters. Farmer was either unaware of R HOLMES & CO or chose to ignore it in his speculating.

Stewart points out in recent times there has been a renewed flood of Wold Newton speculation, thanks mainly to Win Eckert's webpage. Anyway, after Win started the site various fans of the idea started to email Win and eventually an email group formed and ideas, crossovers, speculations, and drafts were shared. At some point R HOLMES & CO came up for discussion. In truth, I forget who brought it up but Chris Davies pointed out the unlikely nature of A.J. Raffles having a daughter old enough to marry in 1883 and so the speculation was that Marjorie was A. J. Raffles' sister. Oddly enough this gave Holmes and Raffles the same relationship their editors had.

Win Eckert then put that speculation into his timeline entry and then speculated that Sherlock's grandson Creighton Holmes, from Ned Hubble's *THE ADVENTURES OF CREIGHTON HOLMES*, was Raffles Holmes' son.

Stewart then points out that the whole scenario is unlikely on two grounds

- a) "Dr Watson, already Holmes' companion of two years, making absolutely no reference to any such occurrence, just as he ignores Holmes' widely accepted illegitimate son, Nero Wolfe."
- b) "Considering the vigorous, robust good health of the mutant WNU family, how unlikely it would be for Marjorie to succumb to such a death."

Let us look at these points.

Dr Watson wrote nothing of Holmes' marriage and subsequent child. Watson, ever the gentleman, would not have wished to remind his friend of his lost wife and to spare his feelings would not have mentioned the marriage in any way. Secondly, one only needs to look at the events of the film *SHERLOCK HOLMES IN NEW YORK*, where Professor Moriarty kidnaps Scott Adler, another son of Sherlock Holmes, to see why Watson did not mention any of Holmes' children.

As to Marjorie dying in childbirth, I forget if Bangs wrote that or if it was speculation on the group's part, but the truth of the matter is that women die in childbirth even now in 2004. Complications still arise in births, and conditions were worse in 1884. Bad things still happen even to those with good genetics.

Or if you still have problems with a member of the Wold Newton family dying of natural causes, perhaps one of Holmes' enemies was able to poison Marjorie, which also explains why Watson was so quiet about Holmes' relationships and family.

Stewart then points out that Raffles Holmes, as relative to so many adventurers and detectives ("his illustrious WNU heritage as a son of Holmes, nephew of Raffles, half-brother of Nero Wolfe, great-great-grandson of The Scarlet Pimpernel and cousin to a whole host of heroes such as The Saint, The Shadow and Tarzan."), "his rich fictional potential" was never explored.

A fair point but I should point out that *R HOLMES & CO* was a collection of short stories printed in 1906, *The Scarlet Pimpernel*'s came to the world's attention in 1905 as a stage play in London, Tarzan did not appear in print until 1912, *MEET THE TIGER* which introduced The Saint saw print in 1928, the first Shadow pulp appeared in 1931 (although The Shadow first appeared on radio as the narrator for *Detective Story*), the first Nero Wolfe novel *FER-DE-LANCE* was published in 1935, and it was not even hinted that many of these characters may be related until 1972 (the theory that Nero Wolfe was the son of Sherlock Holmes was propounded much earlier) so Bangs was certainly unaware of both the other characters mentioned and the familial relationship between them. Stewart seems to expect from *R. HOLMES & CO.* something it cannot deliver.

Another point of contention was the final fate of Raffles Holmes, succumbing to drug addiction after World War One. Win Eckert found the reference to the lovely lost son in Laurie R. King's Mary Russell-Sherlock Holmes series and speculated that this was Raffles Holmes as none of the other known and accepted sons of Holmes were compatible with this statement.

Raffles Holmes was a very conflicted man as he felt his "evil" Raffles side fighting with his "good" Holmes side. I imagine that the horrors of war would have left him traumatised. Also some studies show that addiction is hereditary. So why does Stewart point out "it is extremely unlikely that someone with the vigorous intellect of the Raffles/Holmes families plus their superlative physique would perish in such an ignoble manner" Smart people use drugs, Olympic athletes use drugs, musicians and actors use drugs and these people also die from drugs. How many Doctors smoke even though they know the health hazards? Stewart, later in her article, points out that

"The reason that WNF [Wold Newton Family] works so well is that it is REAL LIFE BELIEVABLE. The reader can read a WNF story and suspend disbelief precisely because the whole idea is so close to science fact. There is a plausible "scientific" explanation for the mutations. The WN Family might be a bit stronger, faster, and brighter than normal, but they are STILL HUMAN. If you shoot one in the heart, he or she will die, without you having to resort to force feeding them Kryptonite, or decapitating them with a sword to "really" kill them."

In real life situations people die from drugs. So why is it so unbelievable to Stewart that a member of the real life believable Wold Newton family might be afflicted by drug addiction?

Stewart argues that many of the characters in the Raffles family article were unnecessary, "quick fix" or "tack on characters." I would like to show how the characters used in "The Incredible Raffles Clan" were added to the article, the textual basis for their inclusion and the chain of reasoning used for that inclusion. I will also highlight Stewart's misrepresentation of my theories

Dennis Power had speculated on his site that Raffles was the father of Simon Templar, The Saint and Farmer himself had speculated that Raffles was the father of Detective Napoleon Bonaparte in an introduction to one of Arthur Upfield's books.

There stood Wold Newton speculation on the Raffles family before I started on "The Incredible Raffles Clan." I had read about Bang's MRS RAFFLES (1905) and had read Barry Perowne's "Raffles on the Riveria" which featured Dinah Raffles and Jon L Breen's "Ruffles Versus Ruffles."

Breen speculated that the A. J. Raffles chronicled by Hornung was A.J. Ruffles and that the A. J. Raffles of Perowne was his brother R. J. Ruffles. Breen also speculated that their assistants Bunny were Beany and Benny respectively.

This then gave me four textually based Raffles siblings A. J., R. J., Dinah, and Marjorie. I had children for A. J. – The Saint and Napoleon Bonaparte but none with

Mrs Raffles, and Marjorie – Raffles Holmes. So I looked around for other similar desperadoes, to see the results just read “The Incredible Raffles Clan.”

In my research on the Saint, I found out that George Sanders had played both the Saint and the very Saint-like The Falcon at the same time. I inferred from the choice of actor that the two must look very similar, and speculated that A.J. and R.J. were identical twins and the Falcon was R. J.’s son.

Far from being the cliché, which is an overused expression or idea, the twin is hardly used in Wold Newton speculation. A quick survey of Wold Newton literature shows less than 10 instances of twins both identical and fraternal, none of which are without either a direct reference (Mr Lyle and Miss Parker in *THE PRETENDER*) or textual evidence (the Delegardie twins in *Farmer* or Nero Wolfe and Marko Vukic in *Baring-Gould*). Given that a percentage of births every year are twins, (sources vary from 1-in-33 (about 3%) to 4.1%) and that since the Wold Newton Meteor event we have had about 9 generations, the idea has not been overused nor has it been used invalidly without some supporting evidence. So far from being cliché the notion of the Raffles twins is textually supportable and plausible.

“E. W. Hornung "killed" off A. J. Raffles in 1902 in the Boer War. Whilst Hornung's Raffles was a jewel thief/mystery solver, Barry Perowne's Raffles was more of an adventurer/Secret Service hero, designed and used as a more socially acceptable propaganda tool than the blatantly racist "Bulldog Drummond" in the build up to World War II. Resolving (if only!) this "discrepancy" and providing a way for Raffles to have adventures after his "death," writers resorted to The Ultimate Cliché...the identical twin.” adds Stewart. As Stewart points out there are differences between Hornung’s and Perowne’s portrayals of Raffles but it was the fact that Perowne’s second series of Raffles stories were set in the same period as Hornung’s stories that created the discrepancy and it was Breen’s story that resolved this discrepancy. The issue of Raffles “death” in the Boer War and adventures after that was resolved by Peter Tremayne in *THE RETURN OF RAFFLES*.

Stewart argues “what on Earth could make Edignia and James Raffles create a will which stipulated that Marjorie, Dinah, and R.J. be packed off to the Land Down Under, whilst R.J.'s identical in-every-respect twin brother be allowed to remain continuing his education with interruption in Great Britain? The answer clearly is nothing.” Indeed, Stewart is correct, if A.J. and R.J. had been separated as she suggests but she did not get that from my article. I never speculated that any of the children were sent to Australia, I did point out that A.J. had been to Australia as recorded in Hornung’s “La Premier Pas” which records A.J. Raffles’ first crime and suggested that R.J. had followed him.

Stewart then points out “R. J. Raffles was really the unrepentant jewel thief, and after his more virtuous brother's death at Bloemfontein, R.J. took over A. J.'s identity, working for truth, justice and the British way...aided by his own trusty best friend... Benjamin "Benny" Manders, first cousin of Bunny” actually this is misstatement of my position which was “Indeed it is even possible that the identities may be the other way around as the Hornung Raffles would not be above incriminating his more virtuous brother. But to avoid confusion, I will refer to the brothers by the names accorded them by Breen.” (Mengel, “Incredible Raffles Clan.”) To clarify the point, I

refer to Hornung's Raffles as A. J. and Perowne's as R. J. as per Breen's story. The point I was making was that Hornung's Raffles may well have used his twin's name as he would have no scruples about framing his nobler brother; he certainly had none about leaving Bunny to go to jail. It was Hornung's Raffles who died at Bloemfontein and I never suggested otherwise.

As for Benny and Bunny, the Manders cousins who aid the brothers which Stewart argues is implausible, the third and final straw of frivolity that broke the suspension of disbelief for Stewart. One may argue that it is equally unlikely that four men could successfully pose as J.G. Reeder, yet Stewart is able to believe that.

So as we can see Stewart makes a number of misleading statements about the theories presented in "The Incredible Raffles Clan," without citing or quoting the article in question. It appears that Stewart wrote the article with the intention of showing just how frivolous and unnecessary most of this recent Wold Newton Speculation was. Throughout the article Stewart uses terms such as "if only!", "I kid you not," "brain hurting notion," "twiddling," which are emotive words designed to show how silly it all is. Perhaps one may take Stewart more seriously in her criticism if she did not have as many errors in her work as she does, if she took the care to check her facts and ensure that she was correctly representing other people's work.

[1] I should point out that I do welcome feedback, commentary, and criticism, but I prefer that criticism to be well reasoned and informed.

[2] My name does rate a mention when Ms Stewart writes "Brad Mengel's article 'Watching the Detectives' eagerly gives [Sherlock] Holmes four brothers as well as three sisters." I must take issue with "eagerly." The Holmes Family article has been the subject to several revisions over time, at the start of the article I mention this "I should also mention that not every work about Sherlock Holmes is true and a number of Holmes' relatives have had their identities used to mock the Great Detective. It is also possible that some of the people who claim to be descended from Sherlock Holmes may be lying." and all of Holmes' siblings have a basis in literature as well as a connection to another relative of Holmes.

For example, Mark Twain's Fetlock Jones who was nephew to Sherlock Holmes, is able to be connected to Sherlock's sister Shirley. This in turn allowed me to speculate the very Mycroftian Jupiter Jones was a member of the Holmes family.

[3] Whilst not directly related to the Raffles Family article, Stewart makes some errors in her basic facts about the publication of the Raffles stories. Stewart asserts that the Raffles stories are plagiarisms of the Sherlock Holmes stories. Plagiarism is the taking of one writer's work and passing them off as your own. Whilst Hornung was Doyle's brother-in-law there is no evidence that any Raffles story he wrote was directly taken from a Holmes story, what Hornung did was to invert the formula that Doyle had used for the Holmes stories. I would argue that Doyle inspired many imitators just as he was inspired by Poe's Dupin stories.

Stewart then claims that Perowne started writing Raffles stories set in the Edwardian era and then changed to writing contemporary accounts and citing the chronological problem this raised as Raffles and Bunny would be in their sixties by the 1930's.

The truth was that Perowne started writing contemporary stories in 1933 which finished in 1940 and it was not until 1974 that Ellery Queen asked him to write new adventures of Raffles set in the 1890's.

For other issues surrounding Stewart's article please see Win Eckert's "Reply" (<http://www.pjfarmer.com/woldnewton/Reply.pdf>)

[4] Unless otherwise stated this and all other quotes in this article are from "The Wold Newton Alternate Universe Theory."