



## Cast and production details

### Cast

Richard Roxburgh .....	Sherlock Holmes
Ian Hart .....	Dr Watson
Richard E Grant	Stapleton
Matt Day	Baskerville
Neve McIntosh	Miss Stapleton
John Nettles	Dr Mortimer
Geraldine James	Mrs Mortimer
Ron Cook	Barrymore
Liza Tarbuck	Mrs Barrymore
Danny Webb	Inspector Lestrade
Paul Kynman	Selden

THIS INFORMATION IS EMBARGOED UNTIL AFTER THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF  
THE BBC'S CHRISTMAS SEASON LINE-UP ON NOVEMBER 24

## Introduction

“Arthur Conan Doyle’s *The Hound Of The Baskervilles* is one of the great classics, and a mark of its enduring popularity is the number of film and television versions that have been made of it,” explains producer Christopher Hall, whose film of Conan Doyle’s *The Lost World* was shown last Christmas on BBC One. It is nearly 20 years since the last version was made and he felt that the time was right for a new one. “*The Hound Of The Baskervilles* requires re-inventing all the time. It’s a very good yarn, a great thriller,” he says, “and the characters are fantastic.”



The casting of Holmes and Watson was central to the decision to make the film. Richard Roxburgh (*Moulin Rouge*, *Mission Impossible II*) was not an obvious casting choice for the iconic role of Holmes, acknowledges Hall. “He’s a film star who is not terribly well known to the British television public, but he’s perfect for the part,” explains Hall. “We were keen to cast a Holmes who did not bring a lot of baggage with him, who was not going to be associated with something else. He is physically suited to the part, and has exactly the right charisma and presence that the role of Holmes necessitates.”

Similarly, Ian Hart is primarily a film actor, who is best known for his roles as Professor Quirrell in *Harry Potter And The Philosopher’s Stone* and as the father in Stephen Frears’s *Liam*. “Our mission was to cast the best actor,” says Hall. “Watson is our guide through the story, and we needed an actor who was sympathetic, passionate and eminently watchable. Ian encapsulates all that.”

The film takes place in 1901, the year the novel was written, rather than 30 years earlier when it was originally set. This was primarily screenwriter Allan Cubitt’s choice, explains Hall. “We wanted something up to date and modern in feel,” he says. “When you read the book, although Conan Doyle is writing about 30 years previously, he’s obviously writing from the perspective of 1901.”

The thinking behind this time shift was to help accentuate the contrast between the civilised nature of London and the bleak and lawless moorland of Dartmoor: “1901 was a good time to set the film because it pushed us into the Edwardian period, a period of increased scientific discovery,” explains Cubitt, whose credits include *Prime Suspect II* and *Anna Karenina*. “London was welcoming in the 20th century, a new age of technology. This was useful for creating a contrast between London and Dartmoor.”

“I love the neo-gothic qualities of the novel,” continues Cubitt, “the way it sets up the contrast between the civilised and the pagan. The story takes us back on a journey in time as well as in geography, back down to Dartmoor to this wild and barren expanse where superstition reigns. That sense of dissension between the rational and supernatural seems pertinent today.”

For director David Attwood, it is this contrast that accounts for the enduring appeal of *The Hound Of The Baskervilles*. “I think it’s one of

those English stories that people like to hear again and again, and part of the reason is the fusion of the rational and supernatural, the real and the myth. I believe that this was Conan Doyle's intention in the novel, and I wanted it to be true of our adaptation."

In addition, considerable care has been taken over the characterisation of both Holmes and Watson. "Allan Cubitt has tried to flesh out the relationship between Holmes and Watson, to give it more bite than you normally get and to resolve it, dare I say, in a way that even Conan Doyle didn't," says Attwood. "We've added depth and a bit of weight to the partnership."

"Watson isn't just a cypher who says 'Good Lord, Holmes!'" explains Hall. "Watson is on his own for much of the story and is our guide, so it wouldn't make sense to treat him as a bumbling old buffer who doesn't have some intellectual capacity himself. And because there are no deerstalkers or meerschaum pipes in this film, the portrayal of Holmes and Watson feels fresher and far more real than before," continues Hall. "In fact, neither the peaked cap nor the pipe are in the novel. They featured in a stage version in the Twenties and were picked up by the Basil Rathbone film of 1939, and every version since, to a point where they have become iconic. In our version, as in the novel, Sherlock Holmes wears a square bowler and smokes cigarettes."

"In some ways Nigel Bruce's performance in the Basil Rathbone film sets a benchmark for the Watson who is amiable, bumbling, and very slow off the mark," adds Cubitt. "There's no doubt that in some respects he is portrayed as quite dim in order to make Sherlock Holmes look all the brighter, but that doesn't seem to me to be true to the Watson in the books and certainly not true to the Watson that I wanted to create."

"Conan Doyle's Watson is an army surgeon, he's a man of action and has played rugby for Blackheath," says Cubitt. "I've also tried to make him a perfectly reasonable detective, although he's not as brilliant or as insightful as Sherlock Holmes. But Holmes, for his part, has

huge gaps in his knowledge as well as enormous expertise and idiosyncratic knowledge – and Watson understood that. Watson was aware of Holmes's weaknesses as well as his strengths. Then there is the drug-taking and Watson's attitude towards it. I've drawn this from other stories in an attempt to make the relationship between Holmes and Watson as full and rounded as I could make it."

Every generation reinvents Holmes and Watson and for this version the hound has also been newly depicted. "We've been able to produce a three-dimensional hound with computer generated animation, which previous productions just weren't able to do," says Hall. "We have used the same kind of technology that was used in *The Lost World* and documentaries such as *Walking With Dinosaurs* to make a beast that is genuinely dangerous, nasty and has developed a taste for human ears."