

# Conan Doyle and the barbarians

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Last updated July 31 2010 1:01AM

## Undershaw is unique — it remains one of the few examples of a literary home that was built to the writer's design

Sir, We call upon Jeremy Hunt, the Culture Secretary, to review the recent decision by Waverley Borough Council to permit the redevelopment of Undershaw.

Undershaw was built at Hindhead, Surrey, for Arthur Conan Doyle. During the period of his residency there he wrote many of his most important works, including *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, and he also received many notable guests, including Bram Stoker and J. M. Barrie. The house is unique in that it remains one of the few examples of a literary home that was actually built to the writer's own ideas and design.

As the constituency MP for Hindhead, Mr Hunt is no doubt aware that Undershaw has been neglected since it was purchased by Fossway in 2004. The building has no security, little water-proofing and a number of the heraldic stained-glass windows have been broken. In 2008 Waverley Borough Council served a repair notice on Fossway but it failed to serve a compulsory purchase order, as is usual when a Grade-II listed building is left derelict by its owners.

Recently, the council approved a planning application by Fossway to redevelop Undershaw. However, these plans are insensitive because they entail the loss of Conan Doyle's billiards room, stables, garage, and his brick-lined well. These same plans have also inflated the value of Undershaw and thereby undermined the efforts of the Undershaw Preservation Trust to have it converted into a hotel complex with open public access.

Before the election in May, Mr Hunt indicated that he would support a change of listing for Undershaw to afford it better protection. Hence, we trust that he is now willing to work closely with the council, to find a more acceptable solution to the preservation of Undershaw.

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Film & TV Actor: 'Colditz' & 'The Return of Sherlock Holmes' series

Gyles Brandreth  
Author, broadcaster & former Conservative Member of Parliament

Uri Geller  
Paranormalist & entertainer

Robert Daws  
Actor: 'Jeeves and Wooster' and 'The Secret of Sherlock Holmes'

Peter Egan  
Actor: 'Ever Decreasing Circles' & 'The Secret of Sherlock Holmes'

Philip Franks  
Actor: 'The Darling Buds of May', 'Heartbeat' & 'The Secret of Sherlock Holmes'

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Great great nephew of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

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Great great nephew of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

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