

The DISTRICT MESSENGER



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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I give such addresses and prices as I have; if I don't provide details of importers or agents, it's because I don't have those details.

Jackson Beck, who died on 28 July, aged ninety-two, was probably the greatest American vocal actor from the 1930s to the 1990s, yet I can trace just one Sherlockian credit in his career: he was in the cast of the 1977 CBS Radio Mystery Theater production of *The Sign of Four*, starring Kevin McCarthy as Sherlock Holmes. **Bernard Levin**, who died on 7 August, aged seventy-five, was one of the most influential journalists of our time. The pleasures discussed in his 1983 book *Enthusiasms* did not include the Sherlockian game, which he dismissed in an essay in *The Times* on 9 October 1980, under the title 'The Footprints of a Gigantic Bore'.

On 11 August the composer **David Raksin** died, aged ninety-two. The most famous of his 400 scores for film and television is the haunting theme for *Laura*, but he also contributed music to the 1939 Fox classics *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (uncredited) and *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. **Peter Woodthorpe** (d. 13 August aged seventy-two) had a dazzling early career on the stage, and became one of the great British radio actors; his performance as Gollum in the classic 1981 BBC Radio serial *The Lord of the Rings* was outstanding. His many TV and film appearances included Wilson Kemp in the now-lost 1968 BBC production of *The Greek Interpreter*, with Peter Cushing. Another great film composer, **Elmer Bernstein**, died on 19 August, aged eighty-two. Among classics such as *The Ten Commandments* and *The Magnificent Seven*, his many scores included a short animated film, *Sherlock Holmes in the Singular Case of the Plural Green Mustache*, shown at the IBM Pavilion at the 1964 New York World's Fair.

Peter Blau notes the death on 11 July of **Gerald R Clark**, former Pinkerton agent and founder of **The Mycroft Holmes Society** of Syracuse.

Fantastic Publishing (300 Upper Street, Islington, London N1 2TU) has issued a quite stunning set of four full-colour prints by Douglas Telford, illustrating key scenes in *A Study in Scarlet*. The style is intensely dramatic, in the tradition of the graphic novel rather than of the great illustrators of a century ago, but the atmosphere and the detail are entirely right. Mr Telford has, I think, the imagination of a film-maker, and the hand of a true artist. To give you an idea, the final scene, of Holmes and Watson discussing the case in their sitting-room, is shown from above, and the nearest object to us is a branch of the gasolier on the ceiling — yet everything we see is precisely proportioned and beautifully rendered. The prints are handmade, in a limited edition of 700 numbered and signed copies, on heavy art paper, and they come with a certificate of authenticity. They aren't cheap — individual prints are £60, or £199 for the set — but these are true collectors' items. The publisher's website is at www.fantasticpublishing.com.

Cenarth Fox has sent copies of issues 3 and 4 (August 2003 and August 2004) of his magazine *Nicholas Twit: The Schoolboy Sherlock Holmes*. As I observed of Nick Twit's earlier exploits, his use of Holmes's techniques makes perfect sense in these tales of 21st century Australia. Each issue contains three clever and exciting stories of his agency, *Basket Case Investigations*, and there are

puzzles and Sherlockian Snippets to keep the young — or older — reader engaged. The fifth and final issue is due next year, and it promises to be quite something: Nicholas is taken in by faked psychic phenomena, and a journalist is about to expose him! The magazines are available in the Europe from Fox Plays UK, 84 Littlehaven Lane, Horsham, West Sussex RH12 4JB (e-mail sales@nicholastwit.co.uk). And you can contact Cenarth Fox at Fox Plays, PO Box 2078, Richmond South, 3121 Victoria, Australia (e-mail editor@twit.biz). Check the website at www.twit.biz.

That admirable Florentine society **Uno Studio in Holmes** has published a very nice edition of *The Adventure of the Red Circle*, translated by Gianluca Salvatori into Italian — as *L'Avventura del Cerchio Rosso* — and more unexpectedly, but most appropriately, by Roberto d' Ajello into Neapolitan, in which language the title is '*O Cunto d' 'o Chirchio Russo*'. The book is really aimed at the Italian reader, of course, and I blush to admit that my Italian is very limited. Still, even I can get some idea of the fascinating differences between the two tongues. I was interested to note that 'Attenta' is the same in both, but the Neapolitan equivalent of 'Pericolo' is 'Periculo'. There's a useful Neapolitan-Italian glossary, and altogether this is a quite fascinating little book. Copies may still be available from Prof. Gabriele Mazzoni, Viale Boccaccio, 273, 50053 Empoli (FI), Italy. You can also order from Gianluca Salvatori at mycroft@versilia.toscana.it and pay via PayPal. The society has a good website at www.unostudioinholmes.it.

Daniel Stashower calls Arthur Conan Doyle's short novel *The Mystery of Cloomber* a 'strange, confusing tale [featuring] a trio of Buddhist monks, apparently returned from the dead, who seek revenge against an English army officer for a crime committed forty years previously' — which neatly sums up its virtues and its deficiencies. For all its excesses and its misunderstanding of Buddhism, *The Mystery of Cloomber* is an exciting read. It's newly available in a sturdy paperback edition from Hesperus Press (4 Rickett Street, London SW6 1RU) at £6.99.

Many years ago Vincent Starrett wrote a charming episodic novel *Seaports in the Moon*, in which, he said, 'I brought together a number of romantic rascals I had loved in other men's books. Since some of them were centuries apart I had to find a plausible thread on which to string them, and this I found in the legend of the Fountain of Youth.' Perhaps for copyright reasons, Starrett didn't include Holmes and Watson in his novel, but in advance of his 118th birthday on 26 October this year Hugo Koch has supplied an additional chapter. *The Gift of Immortality is Bestowed in Baker Street* is a witty and affectionate tribute to both Vincent Starrett and Arthur Conan Doyle. Mr Koch has printed just 100 copies as an attractive 32-page booklet, and he has generously sent me three extra copies, which may be claimed by the first three British readers of the DM to contact me.

Susan Rice is preparing the 2004 *Baker Street Journal Christmas Annual*, to be titled *Dubious and Questionable Memories: A History of the Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes*. It's a chapter in the history of the Sherlockian game that will be of interest to many, in America and elsewhere. The annual will cost \$11.00 (\$12.00 international) from the *Baker Street Journal*, PO Box 465, Hanover, PA 17331, USA — or you can order it online at www.bakerstreetjournal.com. They take PayPal.

Francis Perry has been investigating Sherlock Holmes titles available from print-on-demand publishers, and has discovered the following pastiches that you should be able to order from www.amazon.com. *The Final Four* by Harriet Brenda Reiff (it is revealed that Dr

Watson was in fact a woman); *Heroes and Villains: A Thomas Patrick Murderer-for-Hire Adventure* by Steve Jacks (this looks like an engagingly crazy fantasy involving all sorts of fictional and other characters); *Elementary, My Dear* by Jaron Summers (Sherlock Holmes, turned into a vampire by Moriarty, teams up with Dr Watson's great-great-granddaughter to hunt down the undead professor); *Dental Probe* by Betty Dickson Casteel ('a satirical murder mystery' involving private eye Shirley Locke-Holmes); *Indian River Trilogy: From Sherlock to Shuttle* by Donald W Holmes (the first section comprises three stories of Sherlock Holmes in Florida); *Infinity Express* by C Wayne Owens (Cecil W McCall follows his Uncle Shelby back through time to Victorian London, where they meet Arthur Conan Doyle and the 'real' Sherlock Holmes); *Sherlock Holmes and the Case of the Missing American Culture* by Kenneth Frawley (a satirical novel); *Watson Without Holmes* by Jeffrey B Embler (an amateur actor turns detective). Not yet available is *Death in a Victorian Manor: The Shropshire Manor Murder Case* by Otto A Schultz (the investigators are Holmes's cousins, Guy Vernon and his brother Dr Hector Vernon).

Also available is Rodger Garrick-Steele's much-trumpeted book *The House of the Baskervilles*, in which he accuses Conan Doyle of killing Bertram Fletcher Robinson, the true author of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. I can't do better than quote Mr Perry: 'What I hadn't realised, when it was reported that Garrick-Steele was looking for and failing to find a publisher, was that the reason for his difficulty in getting someone interested might have been that the book is appallingly written, whatever one thinks of the content. It is virtually unreadable — wrong words, hopeless punctuation, terrible sentences, poor factual accuracy, etc, etc! Added to this is that much of his investigation seems to be the product of psychic revelation rather than genuine research. Not recommended!'

Catherine Cooke alerts me to *Sherlock Holmes Quotation Puzzles* by James E Irwin (Trafford Publishing, Suite 6E, 2333 Government Street, Victoria, B.C., Canada V8T 4P4). No price, but check the website at www.trafford.com/4dcgi/robots/04-0200.html.

Our French friend Bernard Oudin is the author of *Sherlock Holmes et la Suffragette Amoureuse*, seven short stories published by Mycroft's Brother (26 avenue de la République, 75011 Paris, France; €18.00).

Lenny Picker reports via Peter Blau that John Gardner should begin writing his long-delayed third Moriarty novel later this year.

Also from Peter: 'Stephen Clarkson's *First Magazine Appearances of the Sherlock Holmes Stories* offers the results of his research into the priority of the British and American magazines that published the Canonical tales; the 24-page pamphlet is available from Steve (91 Haven Lane, Berkeley Springs, WV 25411, USA); \$5.00 postpaid.'

Readers in Melbourne, Australia should head for the Clayton Auditorium, where the Encore Theatre Company present Cenarth Fox's play *The Real Sherlock Holmes* from 2 to 5 September, in which Arthur Conan Doyle tells his own story, helped by his mother and Mr Holmes. For bookings phone 0500 842 538.

It was announced earlier this month that Richard Lancelyn Green, who died in March, bequeathed his collection of Conan Doyle manuscripts and memorabilia to the city of Portsmouth, which can claim to be the true birthplace of Sherlock Holmes. The collection is thought to contain more than 20,000 items, ranging from the 1887 *Beeton's Christmas Annual* to the sign from the *Sherlock Holmes* pub in London. Plans for exhibiting the collection are not yet settled.

Catherine Cooke, Peter Horrocks and Bob Graham are among members of our Society who will be seen in a French television programme to be broadcast some time in September by TMC. [*If anyone can record this, I'd be grateful for a copy.*]

SoldierPac Ltd (Crigglestone Industrial Estate, Wakefield WF4 3HT; website www.soldierpac.com) makes a superb, exquisitely detailed 54mm lead miniature of Holmes and Watson at 221B — Watson sitting reading his paper while Holmes plays the violin (item XHV18). You can buy it online for £13.00, plus £1.30 postage.

Roger Llewellyn continues to tour with David Stuart Davies's play *Sherlock Holmes — The Last Act!* On 3 September he'll be in Cumbernauld, and on 7 September in Paisley. Later in the month

he'll be in Ireland: 23 September Armagh, 24 Downpatrick, 25 Letterkenny, 28 Waterford, 30 Drogheda, 4 October Castlebar, 6 Antrim, 9 Enniskillen, 11 Newry, and 13 Cookstown. Catch his performance if you can.

John Hoath recently visited Prague and reports that in the old town, near Wenceslas Square are a pipe shop called *Baker Street* and a tobacconist and pipe shop called *Sherlock Holmes*, both with suitably Sherlockian signs.

The cover of *Sherlock* no. 61 shows the new Miss Marple, Geraldine McEwan, surrounded by some of her predecessors. Inside, David Stuart Davies looks at Agatha Christie's other great detective. Also in this issue, Kathryn White considers distressed damsels in the Sherlock Holmes stories, Calum McLeod examines the books of Stephen Booth, Paul M Chapman considers Holmes's more humble clients, Martin Edwards laments the lot of the modern crime writer, M J Elliott investigates the amateur cracksman, Gavin Collinson celebrates *The Pearl of Death*, we conclude the interview with David Renwick ... There's a new Sherlock Holmes story by Gillian Linscott, and a host of further articles. The magazine is published six times a year by Atlas Publishing Ltd, at £3.95 or \$6.50 the issue. A six-issue subscription is £23.70 (rest of world £26.00 or \$40.00) from Atlas Publishing Ltd, Jordan House, Old Milton Green, New Milton, Hants. BH25 6QJ. The US representative is Classic Specialties (PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH 45219, USA; sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com). Check the website at www.sherlockholmes.com.

221B - Deutscher-Sherlock-Holmes-Club will make a pilgrimage to Meiringen over the weekend of 10-12 September. All Sherlockian societies are welcome to participate: contact Olaf Maurer, 221B - Deutscher-Sherlock-Holmes-Club, PO Box 150314, D-67071 Ludwigshafen, Germany (olaf.maurer@221b-DSHC.de)

In June next year, to mark Mr Holmes's retirement from active practice, **The Sherlock Holmes Society of London** will visit Meiringen and other parts of Switzerland, including Berne, Lausanne, Zermatt, Leukerbad, the Gemmi Pass and Kandersteg. Pilgrims will visit the Sherlock Holmes Museum in Lucens as well as the one in Meiringen, and of course there'll be the tradition re-enactment at Reichenbach. Late Victorian costume must be worn by all participants. This jaunt will be called *Making a Bee-Line for Switzerland*. Interested parties should contact Judi Ellis at 13 Crofton Avenue, Orpington, Kent BR6 8DU.

Periodicals received. *The Sherlock Holmes Journal*, Summer 2004. *Sherlock Holmes-Kurier*, Frühjahr/Sommer 2004 (**Von Herder Airguns**, Uwe Sommerlad, Rödelheimer Landstrasse 32, 60487 Frankfurt a. M., Germany). *The Camden House Journal*, August 2004 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, Debbie Tinsley, PO Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). *The Parallelogram*, July 2004 (**The Parallel Case of St Louis**, Joseph J Eckrich, 914 Oakmoor, Fenton, MO 63026, USA). *Ineffable Twaddle*, August and September 2004 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). *Quivers on the Web*, August 2004 (**221B**, Philip Weller, 6 Bramham Moor, Hill Head, Fareham, Hants. PO14 6RU). *Canadian Holmes*, St Jean Baptiste Day (Summer) 2004 (**The Bootmakers of Toronto**, Trevor Raymond, 4 Lyons Court, Georgetown, Ontario L7G 1P1, Canada). *Sherlockiana*, nr. 2, 2004 (**Sherlock Holmes Klubben i Danmark**, Mia Stampe-Lagergaard, Hellebækgade 19, 3.tv., 2200 København N, Denmark). *The Baker Street Journal*, Summer 2004 (Steven Rothman, 220, West Rittenhouse Square, #15-D, Philadelphia, PA 19103, USA; subscriptions, PO Box 465, Hanover, PA 17331, USA; correspondence for **The Baker Street Irregulars** should go to Michael Whelan, 7938 Mill Stream Circle, Indianapolis, IN 46278, USA).

And of course the great Sherlockian newsletter *Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press*, July 2004 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; pblau@dgsys.com).

Roger Johnson