

The DISTRICT MESSENGER



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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The death of **Chris Willis** on 11 November at the age of forty-four deprives the Sherlock Holmes Society of a recent member who would certainly have become an active regular contributor. As Matthew Sweet wrote in the Independent: 'Academic, campaigner, journalist, socialist, biker and aspiring sailor — the range of Chris Willis's passions, and the energy with which she pursued them, was a frequent source of amazement to her friends and colleagues.' An enthusiastic authority on Dorothy L Sayers, Margery Allingham, Wilton's Music Hall, mausolea and monuments, Wilkie Collins, M E Braddon, and much else, Chris is widely and deeply missed.

Frank Shelley, one of the last great actor-managers, died on 8 November at the age of ninety-two. He took unidentified parts in the 1957 BBC radio production of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* with Carleton Hobbs and Norman Shelley as Holmes and Watson. The cartoonist and illustrator **Harry Hargreaves**, who died on 12 November aged eighty-two, was one of the few important illustrators of *The Wind in the Willows* to recognise the clear Sherlockian influence on the Wild Wood episode and dress the Rat in tweeds and a deerstalker.

Peter Blau reports the death on 15 November of **Elmer L Andersen**, businessman, bookman, philanthropist and former governor of Minnesota, who helped make possible the library at the University of Minnesota, named after him, that houses the Sherlock Holmes Collections. As a writer, **Stephen Mallatratt** (d. 22 November aged 57) is likely to be best remembered for his stunning play *The Woman in Black*, based on Susan Hill's ghost story. He was a successful actor too, and in 1984 played Percy Armitage in the Granada TV production of *The Speckled Band*. **Molly Weir** (d. 28 November aged ninety-four) became famous as Aggie in the 1950s sitcom *Life with the Lyons*, and achieved national fame all over again in the 1970s as Hazel the McWitch in the children's TV series *Rentaghost*. On BBC radio in 1964 she played Mrs McFarlane in *The Norwood Builder*, with Hobbs and Shelley.

Hugo Koch's latest monograph, *In Re: 55 Baker Street, with meditations on other matters evoked by the enclosures laid into a volumes of Wellcome's Excerpta Therapeutica owned by Vincent Starrett* throws new light on one of the great Sherlockian scholars. Hugo has generously sent me three extra copies, which I offer available free to the first three applicants the UK.

Just received is *The Baker Street Journal Christmas Annual 2004*. This issue is entitled *Dubious and Questionable Memories: A History of the Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes* by Susan Rice, ASH, BSI (*The Baker Street Journal*, PO Box 465, Hanover, PA 17331, USA \$11.00 [\$12.00 international]). It's a pleasure to read a full and reasonably authoritative account of an organisation that, more than most, revels in the sheer pleasure its members have in the company of Sherlockian kinsprits, female and male. The ASH achieved its original single purpose, to see women accepted on

equal terms with men in the Baker Street Irregulars, and has since proved one of the most versatile and resilient Sherlockian societies, and one of the most likeable. You can order the 64-page booklet online at www.bakerstreetjournal.com. They take PayPal.

Recent books of interest. *Sherlock Holmes: The Hidden Years* edited by Michael Kurland (St Martin's Minotaur, 16365 James Madison Highway, Gordonville, VA 22942-8501, USA; \$24.95). *In All Sincerity ... Peter Cushing* by Christopher Gullo (Xlibris, 436 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106-3703, USA; \$32.00 hardback, \$22.00 paperback). *Mrs Hudson and the Spirits' Curse* by Martin Davies (Berkley Prime Crime [no address to hand]; \$13.00). *Sherlock Holmes and the Panamanian Girls* by Frank Thomas (Xlibris; £14.00). *Imagined London: A Tour of the World's Greatest Fictional City* by Anna Quindlen (National Geographic Society, c/o Hi Marketing, 38 Carver Road, London SE24 9LT; £12.99). *Cambridge: A Cultural and Literary History* by Martin Garrett (Signal Publishing, 36 Minster Road, Oxford, OX4 1LY; £30.00 hardback, £12.00 paperback). And yes, those last two do indeed feature Sherlock Holmes.

In the latest listing from **Classic Specialties** (PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH 45219, USA; www.sherlock-holmes.com) are *The Canadian Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* by Stephen Gaspar (\$20.50); *No Ordinary Terror*, the first exploit of the Watson twins by J Brook Van Dyke (\$15.95); *A Distinct Touch, Watson* by David L Hammer (\$13.95); *Sherlock Holmes: A Duel with the Devil* by Roger Jaynes (\$8.95); *Sherlock Holmes' Solutions from the Sussex Downs* by Balaji Narasimhan (\$16.95); and *Sigerson at the Pole* by Mary Ellen Daugherty (\$5.95).

And some forthcoming titles. *Sherlock Holmes Was a Pompey Keeper* by Kevin Smith (December: Halsgrove, Halsgrove House, Lower Moor Way, Tiverton Business Park, Tiverton, Devon EX16 6SS; £19.99); *The Ghosts of Baker Street: New Tales of Sherlock Holmes* edited by Martin H Greenberg, Jon Lellenberg & Daniel Stashower (February: Carroll & Graf, 245 West 17th Street, 11th Floor, New York, NY 10011-5300, USA; \$13.95).

Susie Drost reports that **The Mongolia Society** (322 Goodbody Hall, Indiana University, 1011 East Third, Bloomington, IN 47405-7005, USA; e-mail monsoc@indiana.edu) has another batch of *Stories about Sherlock Holmes Book 6* (FIVE, SPEC & ABBE) and *Book 7* (DANC, CROO & SECO) in Cyrillic Mongolian script, priced at \$30.00 each, plus postage.

There's much of interest in the new catalogues from **Rupert Books**, 58/59 Stonefield, Bar Hill, Cambridge Cb3 8TE (www.rupert-books.co.uk); and **Nigel Williams Rare Books** (25 Cecil Court, London WC2N 4HE; nwrarebooks@tcp.co.uk).

Despite an early setback, **Lloyd Scott** did manage to cycle across Australia in fifty days on a vintage 'ordinary' — that's the correct name for a penny-farthing bicycle — dressed more or less as Sherlock Holmes. A former leukaemia sufferer himself, his aim is to raise a million pounds for children with leukaemia.

Stimulated, I'm sure, by the very favourable reception of *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes* vols 1 and 2 (WW Norton, £35.00) and by the publicity for the forthcoming TV movie *Sherlock Holmes and the Case of the Silk Stocking*, there's been a small spate of articles about the death last March of our colleague Richard Lancelyn Green, most notably in the *New Yorker* for 13 December, *The Mail on Sunday* 12 December and the *Sunday Times* of the same date.

Bob Cornwell gave Teddy Hayes' musical *The Baskerville Beast* a terrific review when it was given an abridged preview production at Uxbridge Library (unexpectedly but logically during Black History Month, as the multi-talented Mr Hayes is black). From 21 to 27 March the show will be staged in full at the famous **Questors Theatre** in Ealing, and it's to be hoped that a tour will follow. Teddy Hayes and his co-producer John Elnaugh, who plays Sherlock Holmes, are looking for backers for *The Baskerville Beast*. Prospective angels should call Mr Hayes on 020 8876 3984.

David E Jacobs sends word that Alan Barnes' *Sherlock Holmes Suite* [*the CD was favourably reviewed in DM 233*] will be performed on 26 February at the University of Bath's **ICI Arts Theatre** (01225 386777) and on 22 May at the **Theatre Royal**, Bury St Edmunds (01284 769505). Call Mr Jacobs for news of further performances on 01892 516722.

Matthew Elliott was the first British writer to contribute scripts to Imagination Theater's radio series *The New Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. Now Matthew Booth and John Hall have followed his lead, and Matthew E has branched out into a *Raffles* series (the first volume just out), and intends to adapt 'The Lost Special' and 'The Man with the Watches' as Holmes plays! Imagination Theater has a website at www.harrynile.com/.

I forgot to mention seeing posters in Brussels for the new French film *Arsène Lupin*, with Romain Duris as Lupin and Kristin Scott Thomas as the Comtesse de Cagliostro. Peter Blau says that there seems to be no Sherlockian content, but he recommends the website at www.club-internet.fr/arsenelupin/.

I need hardly mention that Allan Cubitt's new drama *Sherlock Holmes and the Case of the Silk Stocking* will be transmitted at 9.25 pm on Boxing Day, with Rupert Everett and Ian Hart as Holmes and Watson, Neil Dudgeon as Lestrade, and Helen McRory as Watson's intended, Mrs Vandeleur. [*The only 'Mrs Vandeleur' who comes to mind ended up dead in Mr Cubitt's film of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.*]

Meanwhile the ITV film with Stephen Fry and Hugh Laurie as Holmes and Watson seems to have been put on hold. Perhaps we'll find out more from Mr Fry at our Society's annual dinner next month, when he will be the Guest of Honour.

David Pirie is following his *Murder Rooms* series with a one-off TV film *The Strange Case of Sherlock Holmes and Arthur Conan Doyle*, which claims that Holmes was based on ACD's father Charles Altamont Doyle. According to the *Sunday Herald* Douglas Henshall, Brian Cox and Emily Blunt will play Conan Doyle, Joseph Bell and Jean Leckie. Filming will start in Scotland in the new year.

One episode of the fifth series of *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* will be called *Who Shot Sherlock Holmes?* According to talk.csifiles.com, the victim is actually 'Joe Bell, a man who has trouble distinguishing the difference between fact and fiction. Bell is the leading member of a literary society whose members dress up in period costume and role-play Sherlock Holmes mysteries with each other.' [*Gosh! I wonder who they could be thinking of...*]

There's a sale of English literature at **Sotheby's** in London today that features a good deal of Conan Doyle material, including ten lots of letters and a first edition of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. On 16 November the manuscript of 'The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist' was sold at Sotheby's in New York for \$344,000.

The exhibition of Conan Doyle papers in the Front Hall of the **British Library** at St Pancras opened on 3 December and runs until 31 January. [*A must for those attending the Society's annual dinner.*]

Arthur Conan Doyle's name crops up now and again (as does Sherlock Holmes's, I'm sure) in the proceeding of **The Police History Society**. You can find out about it on the website at www.policehistorysociety.co.uk.

The Strand Magazine (PO Box 1418, Birmingham, MI 48012-1418, USA) has published a rather handsome *Sherlock Holmes Calendar* for 2005. Details are on the website at www.strandmag.com and the on-line bookshop at

www.shopmysteries.com. **Mark Alberstat** also offers a 2005 Sherlock Holmes Calendar (US\$12.00 from 5 Lorraine Street, Dartmouth, N.S., Canada B3A 2B9).

The cover of *Sherlock* no. 63 bears a striking photograph of Granville Saxton, Holmes in the Nottingham Playhouse production of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Inside, David Stuart Davies interviews the play's author, Clive Francis. Also in this issue, DSD also interviews Allan Cubitt, Paul M Chapman exposes Holmes's failures, Paul Singleton reveals what happened at Reichenbach, Alan Perry looks at the dazzling mysteries of John Dickson Carr, Calum McLeod examines the *oeuvre* of Judith Cutler, Martin Edwards seeks out European crime writers, MJ Elliott contributes a new Holmes story, my column looks at the crime fiction of Robert Louis Stevenson and Arthur Machen ... And there's more! The magazine is published six times a year by Atlas Publishing Ltd, at £3.95 or \$7.50 the issue. A six-issue subscription is £23.70 (rest of world £26.00 or \$45.00) 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.

Our good friend Marcus Geisser reports that the **Société d'études de Sherlock Holmes de la Suisse Romande** has recently unveiled a plaque in Lausanne to commemorate Dr Watson's stay at the Hôtel National during the case of Lady Frances Carfax. Lausanne is the home town of the society's Chairman, Vincent Delay. No doubt **The Sherlock Holmes Society of London** will pay its respects at the plaque during the Swiss Pilgrimage of 2005.

Periodicals received. *Tonga Times*, Fall 2004 (**The Mini-Tonga Society**, Trish & Jay Pearlman, 1656 E 19th Street #2-E, Brooklyn, NY 11229, USA) [*I managed to miss this one when I wrote DM 247 — apologies*]. *The School Report*, Winter Term 2004 (**The Priory Scholars**, Horace L Coates, 21 Butcombe Road, Leicester LE4 0FY). *Communication*, Special Caption Issue (**The Pleasant Places of Florida**, Jeff & Wanda Dow, 1737 Santa Anna Drive, Dunedin, FL 34698, USA) [*Sidney Paget's illustrations do seem to lend themselves to scurrilous captions, don't they?*] *Ineffable Twaddle*, December 2004 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 98332-8981, USA).

Mayday Mayday and Chronicler, December 2004 (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardarn Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). *The Camden House Journal*, December 2004 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, Debbie Tinsley, PO Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). *Quivers on the Web*, November 2004 (**221B: The International Sherlock Holmes Study Group**, Philip Weller, 6 Bramham Moor, Hill Head, Fareham, Hants. PO14 3RU; e-mail 221b@acd-221b.info). *The Serpentine Muse*, Winter 2004 (**The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes**, Evelyn Herzog, 360 West 21st Street, #5A, New York, NY 10011, USA). *The Illustrious Clients News*, November 2004 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T Doyle, 9 Calumet Court, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA [*note the new address*]). *The Petrel Flyer*, November/December 2004 (**The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia**, Len Haffenden, 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7P 3C6). *The Passengers' Log*, Spring 2004 (**The Sydney Passengers**, Rosane McNamara, 4/2a Merlin Street, Neutral Bay, NSW 2089, Australia).

And *Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press*, November 2004 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; blau7103@comcast.net).

Now *The District Messenger* and I shall take a break until around the beginning of February, so I'll wish you all

THE COMPLIMENTS OF THE
SEASON

Roger Johnson