

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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Peter Ling, who died on 14 September aged eighty, created two famous soap operas, *Compact* and *Crossroads*, and wrote for many different TV and radio dramas, including *The Avengers*, *Doctor Who*, *The Gideon Fell Mysteries* — and five scripts for Radio 4's Sherlock Holmes series with Clive Merrison and Michael Williams.

Val Andrews died of a heart attack on 12 October. His popular Sherlock Holmes novels served him in lieu of the pension that a lifetime at the lower end of show business didn't provide, and his deep knowledge of magic and the music hall is evident in the best of them. I miss him for his kindness, his courtesy, and his fascinating reminiscences of people like Tommy Cooper and Orson Welles.

Just before the 'ACD at 35' celebrations in Toronto came the news that **Maureen Green** had died on 17 October as the result of a fall. With her husband Edwin van der Flaes, Maureen was held in affection and esteem by Holmesians in Canada, America, Britain and elsewhere (they participated in last year's Swiss Pilgrimage in which Maureen took the role of Agatha). In 1992 she was invested into the Baker Street Irregulars as 'Kitty Winter'. **Peter Barkworth** (d. 21 October, aged seventy-seven) was a highly watchable actor, who may be best remembered for dramas such as *The Power Game*, *Telford's Change* and *Crown Matrimonial*. In 1988 he was the perfect Colonel Ross in *Silver Blaze* for Granada TV.

Two new books were launched at Marylebone Library this month, both published by MDF The BiPolar Organisation (Castle Works, 21 St George's Road, London SE1 6ES). *Dancing in the Moonlight: Jeremy Brett — a celebration* by David Stuart Davies (£14.95) is something of a supplement to the same author's *Bending the Willow: Jeremy Brett as Sherlock Holmes* (Calabash Press, 1996). It fills in some of the details, notably relating to JB's manic-depression, in a more considered way than would have been possible soon after his death. Written by one who knew his subject, the book also serves as a corrective to *The Man Who Became Sherlock Holmes* by Terry Manners, which, despite the great title, is shallow, exploitative and tacky. Here, by contrast, we have a portrait of a great actor and his fight with both mental and physical illness. Edward Hardwicke and Jeremy Paul attended the launch; need I say more? Well, yes. Thanks to Stephen Fry's recent brave BBC documentary, manic-depression is probably more widely understood now than it has ever been, but we should remember that Jeremy Brett's last public engagement, shortly before his death, was an appeal on behalf of the Manic-Depression Fellowship. Sales of this admirable book will benefit what is now called MDF The BiPolar Organisation.

Rags to Riches: The Case of the Hire Shop Fiend by Richard Roberts (£7.99) is a much slighter affair. It's a story in rhyme for young children, with full-colour illustrations by the versatile author. The characters are all costumes in a hire shop, and it takes Sherlock (deerstalker and tweed cape, of course) to find out who shot Saville the evening suit and destroyed Tiffany the ball-gown. This nice

little fantasy is a very charming addition to the list of Holmesian books for young readers.

The Printer's Proof by Shuggie Ó Scolláin (Cadds Printing Ltd, 59 Lancaster Avenue, West Norwood, London SE27 9EL; £8.99) is a fictionalised account of how the British printing unions were screwed by crooked newspaper barons. An investigator named Wiggins who lives at 11½B Baker Street is really the only connection with Sherlock Holmes. The novel is full of anecdotes of the trade and is written with passion and knowledge, but it's disappointingly badly written. To give you an idea, this is supposed to be an Irish workman speaking: 'Jamesy may jest be tryin' tae get me out of de syndicate, but I t'ink it's deeper den dat. He wouldn't want the Brothers on his case. Dem boyo's kick arse, and when ye mess wid dem, den gawd help ye. Look, we've been stringing deez result t'gether fae tae years now.' I tried hard to like the book, but it defeated me. It's incoherent, the punctuation is lousy, and so is the proof reading (Jack Scargill? Kate Addie?). Not recommended.

A British edition of Laurie R King's *The Art of Detection* — not a Mary Russell novel but Sherlockian all the same — has been published by Poisoned Pen Press (Basement Flat, 6 Rodney Place, Bristol BS8 4HY) at £15.95.

The Man from the Diogenes Club by Kim Newman (MonkeyBrain Books, 11204 Crossland Drive, Austin, TX 78726, USA; \$19.95) envisages the club in the 1960s and 70s as a front for a secret counter-espionage organisation. Reviews suggest that it has more in common with *The Avengers* than with the Holmes Canon.

In *The Beautiful Cigar Girl: Mary Rogers, Edgar Allan Poe and the Invention of Murder* (Dutton, \$25.95) Daniel Stashower examines the 1841 murder of a shop girl in Manhattan, the inspiration for Poe's story 'The Mystery of Marie Rogêt', which transfers the events to Paris, enabling Poe to investigate the case through his fictional detective, C Auguste Dupin. The book does apparently mention Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes. A British edition is due in November from Oneworld Publications (185 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7AR) under the title *Edgar Allan Poe and the Murder of Mary Rogers* (£16.99).

Flat at 221B Baker Street by Joseph R Cammarata (Outskirts Press, 10940 S. Parker Road – 515; Parker, CO 80134, USA; \$15.95; £11.95) sees one Geoffrey Holmes set up as a private detective in the flat once occupied by his forebear. During his first investigation he teams up with the beautiful Dr Bridget Watson-Burns, a descendant of the Dr Watson. See www.outskirtspress.com.

Arthur Conan Doyle plays a part in *Agatha Christie: The Finished Portrait*, a new biography by Andrew Norman (Tempus Publishing, The Mill, Brimscombe Port, Brimscombe, Stroud, Gloucs. GL5 2QG). Both he and Dorothy L Sayers took an interest in Christie's mysterious disappearance in 1926, which Dr Norman believes was the result of a fugue state or psychogenic amnesia. In February Tempus will publish Andrew Norman's *Arthur Conan Doyle: Beyond Sherlock Holmes* (£18.99).

There are Holmesian bargains to be had in the Autumn/Winter sale from **Calabash Press** (P.O. Box 1360, Ashcroft, British Columbia, Canada V0K 1A0). See the website for details at www.ash-tree.bc.ca/Calabashsale2006.htm.

Classic Specialties (PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH 45219, USA) recommends a new novel on a theme that's been used several times

before, *Sherlock Holmes and the Plague of Dracula* by Stephen Seltz (Mountainside Press, PO Box 407, Shaftsbury, VT 05262, USA; £16.95. You'll find it, with much else, in *The Sherlockian E-Times*, at www.sherlock-holmes.com/e-times14.htm.

And there's always something of interest in the catalogues from **Nigel Williams Rare Books** (25 Cecil Court, London WC2N 4HE; nwrarebook@tcp.co.uk).

Lots 247 - 278 in the sale of modern first editions at Christie's on 1 November (85 Old Brompton Road, London SW7 3LD) are works by or about Conan Doyle, the property of René de Chochor, who was director of the estate of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle from 1956 to 1967, during which time he negotiated the many contracts for cinema. All, I think, are first editions, and several are signed.

The famous *Sherlock Holmes* pub in Northumberland Street, just off Trafalgar Square in London, reopened last week after a much-needed refurbishment, extensively and sensitively carried out for the owners Greene King. Sue Collier, the manager, had a final say in the decoration, taking advice from members of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London. The building is handsomer than ever, the exhibits in the bar and on the walls are shown to best advantage, and the Baker Street sitting-room looks as it was intended to — as if Holmes and Watson have just popped out and will be back any moment. The food and drink, of course, are of the expected high quality. Look out for Murder Mystery dinners, beginning on 1 December. There's a website at www.sherlockholmespub.com, or you can phone for information on 020 7930 2644.

A new two-part family drama is planned for Sunday afternoons on BBC1 next year. '*Baker Street Irregulars* is an original Sherlock Holmes mystery written by Richard Kurti and Bev Doyle, which pits Holmes and the Irregulars against one of Holmes' greatest enemies.' Jonathan Pryce and Bill Paterson play Holmes and Watson, with Anna Chancellor and Michael Maloney also starring. The director, for RDF Television, is Julian Kemp. Filming began last week in Dublin.

E J Wagner reports that Trillium Productions has bought an option on television rights for her highly recommended book *The Science of Sherlock Holmes*. She says, 'They plan a documentary series based on the book, on which I will collaborate.' See DM 263 or visit www.forensic.to/webhome/ejwagner.

Robert Graham passes on news of two new stage productions. The Rotary Club of Chatham presents *The Revenge of Sherlock Holmes* by Leslie Bricusse (formerly known as *Sherlock Holmes the Musical*), performed by Second to None Productions on 14 November at the **Hazlitt Theatre, Maidstone**, in aid of Cerebral Palsy Care and Rotary Foundation. This is a black tie event with a champagne reception. Tickets are £18.00 from 01622 859538. And TableNine Productions present *The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr Sherlock Holmes* in the studio theatre of **South Hill Park Arts Centre, Bracknell**, from 23 to 25 November. Tickets are £7.50 (£6.50 concs) from 01344 484123, or www.southhillpark.org.uk.

Next June the Midsommer Actors' Company will perform a unique walkabout production of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* in **Peel** on the Isle of Man. 'The plan is to start the first scene on the site of St Peter's Church, in the town centre, and to involve as much of the local community as possible to create the feel of a late Victorian country fair. The opening scene, to set the legend of the ghostly hound, will be conveyed as a rustic melodrama... After the scene at the church, the audience will walk, via the new footbridge, to the castle, which will represent Baskerville Hall and its environs on Dartmoor. There will be about 10 scenes in the castle grounds, becoming more spookily atmospheric as the evening progresses and darkness falls.' Get more information from the Isle of Man Arts Council on 01624 694598.

Solihull in the West Midlands is polling its residents to determine the greatest Silhillian of all time. So far the names include John Wyndham, Felicity Kendal, Stephanie Cole and Gordon Giltrap, but in the lead are the *Top Gear* presenter Richard Hammond and ... Jeremy Brett! The top ten will be announced on 20 November.

The army base at Colchester, which proudly proclaims itself 'a garrison town since Roman times', is being completely redeveloped, with the several barracks dating from the 1930s and 40s replaced by one. That one, which will also be the headquarters of 16 Air Assault Brigade, is called Merville Barracks. I'd love to think that it's named after General de Merville 'of Khyber fame', but the name actually comes from a site in the French campaigns of 1918. Conan Doyle visited that site just a month after the fighting and surely remembered it when writing of the old soldier in 'The Illustrious Client' (see Donald Redmond's *Sherlock Holmes: A Study in Sources*).

The Bootmakers of Toronto will present the first public playing of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* at 2.00pm on 2 December in the Beeton Auditorium, Toronto Reference Library 789 Yonge Street, Toronto. Made for *The Footprints of the Hound* conference in 2001 of Edith Meiser's 1941 radio script, the recording will be introduced by Philip Elliott, Doug Wrigglesworth and Karen Campbell. Admission is free. (The recording is available on CD. Contact Doug Wrigglesworth at 16 Sunset Street, Holland Landing, Ontario, Canada L9N 1H4.) Meanwhile there's an exhibition at the library, *A Case of Considerable Interest*, marking thirty-five years of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection, running till 7 January.

Periodicals received. *The Baker Street Journal*, Autumn 2006 (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). *Bohemian Newsletter*, no. 69 (České společenství Sherlocka Holmese, Aleš Kolodrubec, Milešovská 1, 130 00 Praha 3, Czech Republic). *Irregular Newsletter*, October 2006 (**The Conan Doyle [Crowborough] Establishment**, Brian Pugh, 20 Clare Road, Lewes, Sussex BN7 1PN). *The Confederate Chronicles*, October 17, 2006 (**The Confederates of Wisteria Lodge**, Kent Ross, 6875 Fielder, Rex, GA 30273, USA). *The Formulary*, September 2006 (**The Friends of Dr Watson**, Nino Cirone, 31 Muswell Avenue, Flat 2, London N10 2EB). *Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections*, September 2006 (Suite 111, Elmer L Andersen Library, University of Minnesota, 222 21st Avenue S, Minneapolis, MN 55455, USA).

Ineffable Twaddle, October 2006 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). *Ironmongers Daily Echo and Franco-Midland Branches Advertiser*, October 1906 [*sic*] (**Société Sherlock Holmes de France**, Thierry Saint-Joanis, 2 impasse de la Serre, Saint Julien, 63320 Montaigut-le-Blanc, France). *The Magic Door*, Fall 2006 (**The Friends of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection**, Doug Wrigglesworth, 16 Sunset Street, Holland Landing, Ontario, Canada L9N 1H4). *Mayday Mayday*, October 2006, *Chronicles*, June 2006, and *C-Extra*, 28 May 2006 (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardarn Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). *Prescott's Press*, September 2006 (**The Three Garridebs**, Warren Randall, 15 Fawn Lane West, South Setauket, NY 11720-1346, USA). *The Serpentine Muse*, Fall 2006 (**The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes**, Evelyn Herzog, 301 Warren Ave, #203, Baltimore, MD 21203, USA). *3 Pipe Problem Plugs and Dottles*, October 2006 (**The Nashville Scholars of the Three Pipe Problem**, Kay Blocker, 5017 Maywood Drive, Nashville, TN 37211, USA pkblocker@comcast.net). *The Torr*, Autumn 2006 (**The Poor Folk Upon The Moors**, Reggie Musgrave, Drummond Cottage, Old Tavern Yard, Westbourne, Chichester, West Sussex PO10 8TA).

And *Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press*, September 2006 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; blau7103@comcast.net).

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