

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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With *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes* (Gasogene Books, PO Box 68308, Indianapolis, IN 46268, USA; \$26.95) Leslie S Klinger completes *The Sherlock Holmes Reference Library*. The nine large paperback volumes don't look as impressive on the shelf as the three huge hardback tomes that constitute *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes*, but this is really an even more splendid achievement, because, being aimed at the Holmesian scholar, it's fuller and more detailed. The annotations are probably as complete and accurate as any editor could achieve, though (which is better than 'but') Mr Klinger seems unaware of Bernard Davies's definitive identifications in 'The Haven Horror', and once again he confuses two great but separate British Sherlockians, Lord Donegall and Sir Paul (later Lord) Gore-Booth. Christopher Redmond contributes a perceptive introduction, evaluating the stories and relating them, as Les Klinger does not, because that isn't his brief, to the life of Arthur Conan Doyle. There are appendices that touch on Watson's marriages, vampires [*Les Klinger is currently working on an annotated edition of Dracula*], Professor Presbury's timetable, the authorship of 'The Mazarin Stone', and the identity of Shoscombe Prince, as well as chronologies and a bibliography. Editor and publisher deserve our deepest gratitude. The whole project is a triumph!

Four years ago Joseph Green and Peter Ridgway Watt gave us *The Alternative Sherlock Holmes*, the fullest survey yet of Holmesian pastiche and parody (see DM 234). Now we have *Alas, Poor Sherlock: The Imperfections of the World's Greatest Detective (to say nothing of his medical friend)* (Chancery House Press, 15 Wickham Road, Beckenham, Kent BR3 5JS; £16.95 or \$35.00). The subtitle gives us a good idea of what to expect. The editors have scoured the Canon and researched the writings about the writings to produce a substantial volume — 370 pages — devoted entirely to errors, omissions and falsehoods. Put that way, it sounds thoroughly negative, but when you think about it nearly all Sherlockian scholarship is based on the exposure of errors and (which Messrs Green and Watt don't attempt) the explaining of them. *Alas, Poor Sherlock* makes for entertaining reading, though at times the authors strain just that bit too hard, especially with their comments on the illustrations (one per story, and reproduced very small). Just one example: of F D Steele's picture for 'The Empty House', captioned, *With my face over the brink I saw him fall for a long way*, they say, 'If this is Watson, he looks remarkably like Holmes. He is even, it seems, wearing Holmes' deerstalker hat. Did he walk round and pick it up after Holmes had lost it when he went over the falls?' Ho ho. But of course it *is* Holmes, who did *not* go 'over the falls' — and this carelessness merely suggests that the authors haven't read the story, though otherwise it's clear that they have. The great value of the book, I fancy, will be as a source of inspiration for future scholarship.

In the last DM I noted the death of Ely M Liebow, shortly after the welcome reissue, after twenty-five years, of his book *Dr Joe Bell: Model for Sherlock Holmes* (Popular Press, 3 Henrietta Street, London WC2E 8 LU; £16.50). There are, I suppose, two basic kinds of biography, the personal memoir and the fully researched posthumous account. Dr Bell's life has attracted one of each, Jessie M Saxby's *Joseph Bell, MD, FRCS, JP, DL: A Appreciation by an Old Friend*, and the present book. Between them they tell us probably as much about this brilliant, brave and likeable man as we can know. Miss Saxby's book is hard to find now, but Mr Liebow's, thank goodness, is available. It would be absurd to claim that Joseph Bell *was* Sherlock Holmes (it must be stressed that

David Pirie's entertaining *Murder Rooms* films and novels are fiction) but there can be no doubt that without Bell the Holmes we know wouldn't exist. *Dr Joe Bell* is essential reading, for that reason and, more importantly, because the man himself deserves to be remembered and celebrated. (Which reminds me: the exhibition *Conan Doyle & Joseph Bell: The Real Sherlock Holmes* remains at Surgeons Hall Museum in Edinburgh until 31 May. See [www.rcsed.ac.uk/site/619/default.aspx](http://www.rcsed.ac.uk/site/619/default.aspx).)

*Oscar Wilde and the Candlelight Murders* by Gyles Brandreth (John Murray, 338 Euston Road, London NW1 3BH; £12.99) grew from the realisation that Wilde and Conan Doyle were both guests of J M Stoddart of *Lippincott's* at that dinner in 1889, which resulted in both *The Sign of Four* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Mr Brandreth knows his Wilde — he attended Bedales, where Cyril, Wilde's elder son, was a pupil, and became friends with the school's founder, John Badley, who had known the family well. He knows his Holmes too. The events of this novel, the first of nine, begin shortly before that momentous dinner at the Langham. Oscar Wilde discovers the naked body of a young male prostitute, his throat cut, surrounded by candles, in an otherwise deserted house, and he determines to find the killer. Wilde as detective is thoroughly convincing. He was, after all, highly intelligent, imaginative and observant. The narrator, looking back after fifty years, is Oscar Wilde's friend and first biographer, Robert Sherard, through whom we get a generous but rounded view of our protagonist. The period, and the two or three worlds in which Wilde himself moved, are richly evoked (mention of 'the twopenny tube', a term coined for the Central London Railway in 1900, can be excused on the grounds of the elderly Sherard's faulty memory). *Oscar Wilde and the Candlelight Murders* is an excellent detective story. I'm keenly looking forward to the rest of the series, in which Conan Doyle will continue to play a major part.

There are many Sherlock Holmes books available at [www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com), as paperbacks or in some cases as downloads. Most authors' names are unknown to me.

Dave Blank of Redbird Studio points out that the website for *Crime Scene Sketches: Reproduced in Fac-Simile from the Pen and Ink Drawings in the Note Book of a Private Enquiry Agent*, edited by Thomas F Hanratty and Daniel P King (see DM 266) is actually [www.redbirdstudio.com/CrimeScenes](http://www.redbirdstudio.com/CrimeScenes). And Sam Bonnamy tells me that his first Mycroft Holmes novel *The Other Mr Holmes* is now available from [www.writers-exchange.com](http://www.writers-exchange.com).

The manuscript of 'The Three Gables', formerly owned by Lord Donegall and then by Walter Pond, will be auctioned at Sotheby's in New York on 21 June, the estimate being \$350,000 - \$500,000, as will Mr Pond's copy of *Beeton's* — estimate \$75,000 - \$125,000. Meanwhile Bibliotopus (120 South Crescent Drive, Beverly Hills, CA 90212, USA; phone 310 271 2173) offers the MS of 'Lady Frances Carfax' at \$500,000, the MS of 'His Last Bow' at \$375,000, and 'a very good copy' of *Beeton's* at \$260,000. [*\*It's another world...\**]

BBC News on 24 April reported that Sean Connery and Ian Rankin are among those backing a campaign to raise £5,000,000 to ensure the purchase by the National Library of Scotland of the **John Murray Archive**, which includes manuscripts and letters from Lord Byron, Jane Austen, Charles Dickens and Arthur Conan Doyle.

Winners of the Mystery Writers of America's **Edgar Awards**, presented on 26 April, included *The Science of Sherlock Holmes* by E J Wagner (best critical or biographical book) and *Sherlock Holmes: The Final Adventure* by Stephen Dietz (best play). Thanks to Laura Kuhn and others for passing this on. See [www.theedgars.com/nominees.html](http://www.theedgars.com/nominees.html).

The plaque recording the first meeting of Holmes and Watson in the chemical laboratory at **St Bartholomew's Hospital** is now housed in the

hospital's museum, inside the Henry VIII Gate. The museum is open from 10.00 till 4.00, Tuesday to Friday. Admission is free — and there's much more to the history of Bart's than Holmes and Watson!

Arthur Conan Doyle has been accused of having his alcoholic, epileptic father committed to a mental asylum. On 5 May The Scotsman reported the discovery of Charles Doyle's medical records, proving that Arthur had no hand in the matter, and that Charles's 'repeated drinking had resulted in brain damage and loss of memory.'

Hurrah for Waverley Borough Council, who have sent builders to carry out urgent repairs to ACD's former home **Undershaw** at Hindhead, which the owners have signally failed to do. Meanwhile we await a response to the Victorian Society's widely supported appeal against the government's refusal to upgrade the house to Grade 1 listing.

The **statue of Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson** in Moscow was unveiled, later than originally thought, on 27 April. The ceremony was attended by Vasily Livanov, on whom the figure of Holmes is based, and the British Ambassador, Anthony Brenton. There's a report, with good photos, on the website of the **Société Sherlock Holmes de France** at [www.sshf.com/index.php3?file=news&num=587](http://www.sshf.com/index.php3?file=news&num=587), with a link to more pictures on the website of Alek Morse.

The first complete recording of Miklós Rózsa's score for Billy Wilder's film *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* (Tadlow Music, 57 High Street, Tadlow, Royston, Herts. SG8 0EU; [www.tadlowmusic.com](http://www.tadlowmusic.com)) can only be bought from Tadlow Music, but they've done Rózsa proud for his centenary. There's ten minutes of bonus material and a 24-page booklet, and the City of Prague Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Nic Raine, and solo violinist Lucie Svehlová are on top form.

BBC TV's very enjoyable two-part family drama *Sherlock Holmes and the Baker Street Irregulars* is now available on Region-2 DVD from Acorn Media UK (10 Smith's Yard, Summerley Street, London SW18 4HR). Yes, there are liberties taken. It's no secret now that the villain of the piece is Irene Adler, but she's not the wronged contralto of 'A Scandal in Bohemia'. As played by Anna Chancellor, she's a master-criminal, beautiful, brilliant and ruthless, and she provides a very serious challenge for Holmes and his friends, even getting the detective himself arrested for murder. It's time Jonathan Pryce played Sherlock Holmes, and the character fits him very comfortably. I hadn't thought of Bill Paterson in terms of Dr Watson, but he's right for the part, and the rapport between the two actors is a pleasure to see. Wisely, the suspicious and resentful policeman who arrests Holmes isn't one of the Canonical regulars, but one Inspector Stirling, portrayed with just the right amount of moral integrity by Michael Maloney. The Irregulars themselves are older than the kids of the 1983 series *The Baker Street Boys*, and they come across as strong characters. The plot crackles with ingenuity, tension and humour, and the Dublin locations look just right for late-Victorian London. I very much hope more will follow.

In the Daily Mail for 11 May, Baz Bamigboye reported that **Hammer Film Productions** has been sold, and the new owners are keen to 're-imagine the classic films with new productions'. That's to be expected, but what do you make of this? 'Simon Oakes, one of the executives behind the takeover, told me how, when researching Hammer, he found hand-written documents from Arthur Conan Doyle in 1930 giving the company the right, at that time, to make the "moving motion picture of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.'" I'd love to see those documents!

In Dallas, Texas, on 30 & 31 March, at the **Heritage Auction Galleries** sale of vintage movie posters, a 'beautiful six sheet for Errol Flynn's *The Adventures of Robin Hood* and a stone litho six sheet for Basil Rathbone's *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, previously unknown to exist, finished at \$31,070 each.' That includes buyer's premiums.

A play called *The Reluctant Resurrection of Sherlock Holmes* by David Belke of Edmonton, Alberta, has had considerable success since it was first staged in 1992. Last September, Mr Belke was startled to receive an e-mail from Peter E Blau: '*The Unexpected Return of Sherlock Holmes*, a comedy by Jack L Herman, is being performed at the Sierra Stage in West Hollywood, and it appears to be a slightly revised version of your *The Reluctant Resurrection of Sherlock Holmes*...' Not just 'slightly revised', as Mr Belke discovered, but actually plagiarised. Jack L Herman seems to have made a habit of it — and, worryingly, he's a police detective! (There are full accounts in The Edmonton Journal for 6 May and, increasingly, in other papers.)

A pity that it clashes with our own Society's London weekend, but — Cloak & Dagger Theatre Company's production of *The Mystery of*

*Sherlock Holmes* by Richard James, at **Wycombe Swan** (Town Hall, High Wycombe; 01494 512000; [www.wycombeswan.co.uk](http://www.wycombeswan.co.uk)) on 25 May promises to be both entertaining and thought-provoking.

Next time I visit The Hague I shall look for **The Sherlock Holmes** bar at 314 Sumatrastraat, 2585 CZ.

**Howard Goorney**, who died on 29 March aged eighty-five, was, says The Daily Telegraph, 'one of Joan Littlewood's longest-serving and most dedicated lieutenants in the Theatre Workshop'. His career was mainly in theatre and television. In 1968 he impressed as Jonathan Small in the BBC's *The Sign of Four*, with Peter Cushing and Nigel Stock. **Stanley Holden**, during his long service with Sadler's Wells and the Royal Ballet, created the characters of Widow Simone in Frederick Ashton's ballet *la Fille Mal Gardée*, and Pierrot in John Cranko's *Harlequin*. In 1953, when Kenneth Macmillan took the title rôle in *The Great Detective* at Sadler's Wells, Holden was 'his friend, the Doctor'. Stanley Holden died on 11 May, aged seventy-nine.

**The Bootmakers of Toronto** will celebrate their 35th anniversary with a one-day symposium on 9 June at the Metro Reference Library in Toronto. Contact Dave Drennan at [drennan@allstream.net](mailto:drennan@allstream.net).

The summer meeting of **The Musgraves** will be at Stonyhurst College on 21 July. You can get details from Christine Fell, 13 Greaves Town Lane, Lea, Preston, PR2 1PD.

**Jens Byskov Jensen** has returned from Louisiana to Denmark, and can be contacted at Egtvedvej 132, DK-6000 Kolding, Denmark.

Simon Hall tells me that **The Baker Street Fellowship** now has a branch for funeral directors, called **The Clean Collared Victorians**. They can be contacted via Simon at [sdehall2000@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:sdehall2000@yahoo.co.uk).

**The Crew of the SS May Day** (anchored at Belfast) will be in London on 23 May. They'll be at the Sherlock Holmes pub between 12.30 and 2.00, and will be pleased to meet any fellow-Holmesians there. If you're interested in taking a greater part in this Great Day Out, contact Oscar Ross at [rocross221b@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:rocross221b@yahoo.co.uk). [\*I gave Oscar's e-mail address wrongly in the last issue. Apologies!\*

Periodicals received. *The Camden House Journal*, April 2007 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, Debbie Tinsley, PO Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). *Canadian Holmes*, Christmas (Winter) 2006 (**The Bootmakers of Toronto**, Trevor Raymond, 4 Lyons Court, Georgetown, Ontario L7G 1P1, Canada) [\*this one really is Trevor's last issue as editor before handing over the reins to Barbara Roden\*]. *The Arthur Conan Doyle Birthday File and Research File XIV (The Conan Doyle [Crowborough] Establishment*, Brian Pugh, 20 Clare Road, Lewes, Sussex BN7 1PN). *Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections*, March 2007 (Suite 111, Elmer L Andersen Library, University of Minnesota, 222 21st Avenue S, Minneapolis, MN 55455, USA). *The Illustrious Clients News*, May 2007 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T Doyle, 9 Calumet Court, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). *Ineffable Twaddle*, May 2007 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). *Mayday Mayday*, April 2007 and May 2007 (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardarn Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). *The Passengers' Log*, Summer & Autumn Issues (**The Sydney Passengers**, Rosane McNamara, 4/2a Merlin Street, Neutral Bay, NSW 2089, Australia). *The Petrel Flyer*, Spring 2007 and May/June 2007 (**The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia**, Len Haffenden, 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7P 3C6). *QuinCahier I*, Mai 1907 (**Société Sherlock Holmes de France**, 36 avenue Jean-Jaurès, 63500 Issoire, France) [\*a new and, as always with the SSHF, very stylishly presented journal, with a tribute to John Bennett Shaw, research into the origins of *A Study in Scarlet*, an account of Conan Doyle's contribution to the entente cordiale, and more\*]. *The Soft-Nosed Bullet-in & Striking (T)Rifles*, Winter 2006/7 (**Von Herder Airguns Ltd**, Michael Ross, Hermeskeiler Platz 14, 50935 Köln, Germany). *The Torr*, Spring 2007 (**The Poor Folk Upon The Moors**, Reggie Musgrave, Drummond Cottage, Old Tavern Yard, Westbourne, Chichester, West Sussex PO10 8TA). *The Whaling News*, March 2007 and April 2007 (**The Harpooners of the Sea Unicorn**, Michael E Bragg, PO Box 256, St Charles, MO 63302-0256, USA).

And *Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press*, April 2007 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; [blau7103@comcast.net](mailto:blau7103@comcast.net)).

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