

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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Doug Wrigglesworth of the Friends of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection at Toronto (check their website at [www.acdfriends.org/](http://www.acdfriends.org/)) has alerted me to something quite unexpected and very interesting. In the preface to *The Great Boer War*, ACD wrote: 'There are many who have helped me in my task, but I especially acknowledge the co-operation of Mr Blasson, of the Langman Hospital, now dead in the service of his country...' In 1900 **Charles Blasson** was one of five senior students from University College Hospital recruited as dressers to the medical professionals at the Langman Field Hospital in South Africa. Conan Doyle was there for just over four months, writing as well as tending the sick and wounded. Blasson, who acted as his secretary, died only three weeks later, on his twenty-third birthday, of typhoid – the enteric fever that had laid John H Watson low at Peshawur. **Ken Cooper**, married to Blasson's great-niece, has edited and published *Aide-de-Camp to Conan Doyle: The Boer War Diary of Charles Blasson* as a 64-page A4 paperback, illustrated with twenty photographs and a map. The title isn't inaccurate, though it implies a closer relationship with Conan Doyle than Blasson actually had, but it should attract people to read the book – which, short as it is, is an intelligent, honest and, in its very matter-of-factness, moving first-hand account of an extraordinary situation. *Aide-de-Camp to Conan Doyle* is available from Amazon.co.uk at £6.99 and from Amazon.com at \$9.99.

Back in March I noted that our Swedish member **Peter Bevelin** had gathered pithy quotations from Holmes and others, arranged to illustrate important points, in a privately printed volume called *A Few Lessons from Sherlock Holmes*. (For instance, under 'The eye sees only what it is trained to see' we find observations from Jean-Martin Charcot, C Auguste Dupin, William Osler and Thomas McCrae, as well as Holmes himself.) Now, as it deserves, the book has been made available as an attractive slim paperback by MX Publishing ([www.mxpublishing.co.uk](http://www.mxpublishing.co.uk); £6.99).

*The Shoso-in Bulletin*, published in English between 1991 and 2004, was the most truly international Holmesian periodical of all. It was founded by our distinguished Japanese member **Hirayama Yuichi**, whose own contributions alone justified the *Bulletin's* existence. *East Wind Coming: A Sherlockian Study Book* by **Yuichi Hirayama** and **John Hall** (MX, [www.mxpublishing.co.uk](http://www.mxpublishing.co.uk); £9.99) gathers twenty-eight of Dr Hirayama's essays, from *The Shoso-in Bulletin*, *The Baker Street Journal*, *The Ritual* and elsewhere, along with four written jointly with a leading English Holmesian, John Hall. Yuichi has discovered, in a Japanese detection manual of 1940, the simple means by which Holmes determined the direction Herr Heidegger's bicycle travelled on the moor. In Grand Duke Paul of Russia, he has identified the most credible candidate for the King of Bohemia. As a dentist, he explains, entirely convincingly (alas!), that Sherlock Holmes was toothless. The collaborations examine Holmes's sporting prowess, Watson's qualifications, and the travesty of Holmes in the Arsène Lupin canon, but most stimulating, I think, are the authors' discussions of the first nine cases in *The Adventures*. Altogether it's a grand collection!

Something entirely new and excellent from MX is *Benedict Cumberbatch, in Transition: An Unauthorised Performance Biography* by **Lynnette Porter** ([www.mxpublishing.co.uk](http://www.mxpublishing.co.uk); £12.99). Dr Porter is the editor of *Sherlock Holmes for the 21st Century: Essays on New Adaptations*, so I was confident that the new book would not be simple hagiography. As title and subtitle suggest, this is a survey of

Cumberbatch's career as an actor, touching on his extra-curricular life only to the extent that it influences his acting or is influenced by the transition from jobbing actor to star to celebrity. The facts are meticulously (but not tediously) referenced, and the writing, as one would expect, is both literate and engaging. *Sherlock* is the turning-point, but it's good to be reminded of the extent and importance of the actor's career, before, during and after the breakthrough to stardom – acclaimed rôles in *Rhinoceros* and *Hedda Gabler* at the Royal Court, *After the Dance* at the Old Vic, and *Frankenstein* at the National Theatre; performances as Van Gogh and Stephen Hawking on television; leading parts in *Copenhagen*, *Neverwhere* and the continuing comedy series *Cabin Pressure* on radio; *War Horse*, *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* in the cinema, and his emergence as a real film star in *Star Trek: Into Darkness*. Benedict Cumberbatch is a great actor, unpretentious, honest and dedicated. He's also a genuinely nice man.

In 2010 I welcomed a new graphic novel, *Sherlock Holmes: The Painful Predicament of Alice Faulkner*, written and illustrated by **Bret M Herholz** after William Gillette's play. Mr Herholz's latest book is *A Study in Sherlock: 13 Years of Sherlock Holmes Artwork 2000-2013* (Soft Shoe Press, <http://herbertzohl.blogspot.co.uk/>; priced at £8.99 on Amazon.co.uk). It's interesting to see the development of his distinctive Edward Gorey-esque style through scores of mostly unpublished drawings, including a whole sequence for 'The Cardboard Box', illustrations for stories by Lyndsay Faye, Bert Coules and Lee Shackleford, and set designs for Gillette's *Sherlock Holmes* and Conan Doyle's little-known play *The Crown Diamond*. What's in the book may be only a fraction of the Holmesian artwork that he's done. Personally, I'd love to see the rest of it!

At [www.nplh.co.uk/](http://www.nplh.co.uk/) you'll find an unexpected gem: *No Place Like Holmes*, a series of comedy-dramas written and directed by **Ross K Foad** (who also plays Sherlock Holmes), based on the premise that Holmes and Watson were frozen in a time-spell by the demonic Hugo Baskerville, emerging eventually in the year 2010. We witness them, as the website says, fighting both evil masterminds and modern appliances. The films – nine so far, plus three *Mary Morstan Mysteries*, two reminiscences from the Great Hiatus, and six miscellaneous shorts – are attracting an increasing and enthusiastic audience worldwide, people who will surely welcome Mr Foad's two (yes, two) new books. *The Story and the Scripts Behind No Place Like Holmes* (MX, [www.mxpublishing.co.uk](http://www.mxpublishing.co.uk); £9.99) contains four full-length scripts plus the promos for the Great Sherlock Holmes Debate 3 and the Baker Street Babes' *Sherlopalooza*, and, as the title suggests, an account of the curious birth and development of the series. *Holmes in Time for Christmas* (MX, [www.mxpublishing.co.uk](http://www.mxpublishing.co.uk); £7.99) is a novel adapted from one of the Great Hiatus mysteries, involving Mycroft Holmes, Irene Adler and death in the festive season. Like the scripts and the films themselves, it's clever, intelligent and funny.

Other new titles from MX Publishing are *Sherlock Holmes: Studies in Legacy* by **Luke Benjamin Kuhns** (£9.99) – four interlinked novellas together with two unrelated short stories; *Sherlock Holmes & Young Winston: The Giant Moles*, the third in the Young Winston Churchill series by **Mike Hogan**, in which is at last revealed the truth about the Paradol Chamber; *Sherlock Holmes: The Skull of Kohada Koheiji and Other Stories* by **Mike Hogan** (£9.99) – five investigations into the apparent supernatural; *Sherlock Holmes and The Mystery Writer* by **Fred Thursfield** (£8.99) – an adventure shared with Mary Watson after the death of her husband; and volume one of a new edition of *The Papers of Sherlock Holmes* by **David Marcum** (£9.99). Volume two will be out in September. (The original edition was reviewed favourably in DM 317.)

**Peter Tong** has taken his own successful comedy *Mrs H of Baker Street* as the inspiration for a series of e-books, in which Mrs Hudson and her maid, Fanny-Annie Grubbins, take over the agency after Holmes's reported death. *The Detective Ladies of Baker Street*, *The Detective Ladies Meet Jack the Nipper* and *The Detective Ladies in Death Holds a Séance* are available as Kindle books from Amazon.co.uk at 99p each. There'll be a printed omnibus later in the year. The author's website is at [peterotong.org](http://peterotong.org).

The magnificent edition of *A Study in Scarlet*, illustrated by the Danish artist **Nis Jessen**, is now available in Kindle form from Amazon.co.uk at £25.99 – not cheap, but, trust me, it really is magnificent!

There's no shortage of Holmes in the theatres. *Sherlock Holmes – The Best Kept Secret* by **Mark Catley** will be at the New Theatre, Cardiff ([www.newtheatre Cardiff.co.uk/](http://www.newtheatre Cardiff.co.uk/)) 18-22 June, and Manchester Opera House ([www.manchestertheatres.com/operahouse.htm](http://www.manchestertheatres.com/operahouse.htm)) 25-29 June. There's talk of the play coming to London too. We shall see.

A couple of days ago Jean & I were thoroughly entertained by **The Pantaloons'** outdoor production of *Sherlock Holmes* by **Mark Hayward**, which presents 'The Speckled Band', *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and, depending on what the audience says, either 'The Blue Carbuncle' or 'The Red-Headed League', with bits of *The Sign of Four* and 'The Final Problem' cleverly and wittily worked in. There are songs too, and 'elementary' jokes. The play is on tour until 22 August: ([www.thepantaloons.co.uk/shows/sh2013.asp](http://www.thepantaloons.co.uk/shows/sh2013.asp)).

At Chorley in Lancashire this coming week there's a new adaptation of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* by **Mark Jones**. 'In a world of illusions, where fact and fiction blur, this modern-day Sherlock Holmes adventure is not for the faint-hearted!' It's at Chorley Little Theatre 17-22 June (<http://chorleylittletheatre.com/chorleytheatre/>).

In October our Society will visit Gladstone's Library at Hawarden, near Chester. Those who'd like to spy out the country beforehand can catch the **Hawarden Players** in *Sherlock Holmes and the Case of the Stolen Suspender* by **Bob Bishop** at the Hawarden Institute, 18-20 July ([www.hawardenplayers.com/](http://www.hawardenplayers.com/)).

*Gladfest* is **Gladstone's Library Literary Festival**, which will take place on 7 & 8 September. On Saturday evening, the crime writer **Martin Edwards** presents *Who Killed George Hargrave?* 'Come and solve a Victorian crime in this interactive event. Martin will be your guide...' Details are at [www.gladstoneslibrary.org/GladFest/](http://www.gladstoneslibrary.org/GladFest/) - or write to Gladstone's Library, Church Lane, Hawarden, Flintshire CH5 3DF (phone 01244 532350).

**Kristina Manente** reports: 'Me and a powerhouse of other nerdy girls are throwing a giant *Sherlock* party at San Diego Comic Con. In order to fund it we're offering lots of goodies plus raffle tickets to win a signed *Sherlock* script (signed by Benedict Cumberbatch, Martin Freeman, Mark Gatiss, Steven Moffat, and Andrew Scott). If you wouldn't mind spreading the word around the society/etc I'd be very much so obliged. The link to the funding site is [www.sherlockedcc.com](http://www.sherlockedcc.com).'

At [www.sherlockology.com/news/2013/6/1/big-chief-studios-sherlock-update-010613](http://www.sherlockology.com/news/2013/6/1/big-chief-studios-sherlock-update-010613), the invaluable **Sherlockology** website, there's an update from Big Chief Studios Ltd on their officially licensed collector figures of Sherlock Holmes and John Watson: 'We are well into development for both Sherlock and Watson 1:6 scale figures, working on costume tailoring and pack design right now. We plan to have these figures made available for pre-order in July. Both figures are scheduled for delivery in Q4 in time for the holidays.'

*The Real Sherlock Holmes*, which appears to be a very good TV documentary, was first broadcast last September in Canada. This month it's being shown in Australia, New Zealand and nearly a hundred other countries – see [www.realsherlock.com/](http://www.realsherlock.com/). But it hasn't yet aired in the USA, and there's no indication that it'll be shown here. Weird or what?

Visitors to London might wish to check out the new **London Film Location Walking Tour**, rather incongruously combining locations relating to *Bridget Jones' Diary*, Sherlock Holmes and Harry Potter. The information is at [www.viator.com/tours/London/London-Film-Location-Walking-Tour-Bridget-Jones-Diary-Sherlock-Holmes-and-Harry-Potter/d737-5936FILMWALK](http://www.viator.com/tours/London/London-Film-Location-Walking-Tour-Bridget-Jones-Diary-Sherlock-Holmes-and-Harry-Potter/d737-5936FILMWALK).

This is from **Katri Leikola**, whom I just failed to meet at the fourth *Great Sherlock Holmes Debate* last weekend: 'Sherlock Finland and **Sherlock Turku**, two unofficial fan groups of Sherlock Holmes, are arranging a semi-academic seminar in Turku on 3 August 2013. The

event will be held in lecture hall Janus, Artium, Sirkkala campus (Kaivokatu 12) at University of Turku. The main speaker of the event is Mattias Boström. He is one of the leading Sherlockians of Sweden and Nordic countries. He is finishing a book about the history of Sherlock Holmes, which is to be published in Sweden at the end of the year. The event is bilingual (Finnish and English). There's no charge to attend. The programme is at <http://sherlockfinland.wordpress.com/tapahtumia-happeningis/semiakateeminen-sherlock-kohtaaminen-3-8-2013/tapahtumakuvaus-event-description/>, and there's a Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/events/518525201519562/](http://www.facebook.com/events/518525201519562/).

*The Good Mr Holmes* is a tribute in song to the great detective, written and performed by **John Paul McGuire** and **Linda E Smith**. You can listen to it, and read the lyrics, on YouTube at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y7vUEy7GyMI&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y7vUEy7GyMI&feature=youtu.be).

Bad news from **Scott Monty**: the **Sherlock Holmes Social Network** ([http://sherlockholmes.ning.com/?xg\\_source=msg\\_mes\\_network](http://sherlockholmes.ning.com/?xg_source=msg_mes_network)) will shortly close for good., owing to the cost of running the site and the overwhelming number of spam accounts. Fortunately there are two alternatives that are free to use and to administer. At <https://plus.google.com/communities/114565123495685504221> is **The Sherlock Holmes Community** on Google+, and at <http://facebook.com/ihearofsherlock> is the **I Hear of Sherlock Everywhere** Facebook Page.

Next Friday and Saturday will see what I think is London's first conference devoted to the great detective: **Sherlock Holmes: Past and Present**, mounted by the Institute of English Studies at the University of London Senate House. 'The *Strand Magazine* and the Sherlock Holmes stories contribute one of the most enduring paradigms for the production and consumption of popular culture in the twentieth- and the twenty-first centuries. The stories precipitated a burgeoning fan culture including various kinds of participation, wiki and crowd-sourcing, fan-fiction, virtual realities and role-play gaming... This conference aims to unpick the historical intricacies of Holmesian fandom as well as offering a wide variety of perspectives upon its newest manifestations.' The bewilderingly full programme is online at [www.ies.sas.ac.uk/ies-events/conferences/SherlockHolmes](http://www.ies.sas.ac.uk/ies-events/conferences/SherlockHolmes), and there's a Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/SherlockHolmesPastAndPresent](http://www.facebook.com/SherlockHolmesPastAndPresent).

Peter Blau notes that **Sherlocktron**, Willis Frick's invaluable website at [www.sherlocktron.com](http://www.sherlocktron.com), features updated listings of 'Sherlockian purveyors and Sherlockian publications' plus Peter's own lists of 901 Sherlock Holmes societies, with contact details for the 419 active ones.

My friend **Roger Dobson**, who died recently, was never a member of our Society, but Sherlock Holmes was among his many interests, which also included the author Arthur Machen and the disputed Realm of Redonda. His article 'Sherlock Holmes: The Last Mystery', published in *Antiquarian Book Monthly Review* in February 1988, proposes a link between Holmes and George Gissing – and makes a curiously convincing case for Owen's College (now Manchester University) as Holmes's *alma mater*.

Publications received. *The Alfalfa Gazette*, June 2013 (**The Friends of a Soldier Named Murray**, Jody Baker, 1005 Mountain Creek Road, #531, Cattanooga, TN 37405-1649, USA) *The Gaslight Gazette*, May 2013 & June 2013 (**The Survivors of the Gloria Scott**, David J Milner, 6 Crowndale Drive, Taylors, South Carolina 29687, USA). *The Illustrious Clients News*, June 2013 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Alisa West, [IllustClients@gmail.com](mailto:IllustClients@gmail.com)).

*Ineffable Twaddle*, June 2013 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, [www.soundofthebaskervilles.com](http://www.soundofthebaskervilles.com)). *Ironmongers Daily News*, 21 April 1913 [\*sic\*] (**La Société Sherlock Holmes de France**, Thierry Saint-Joanis, [www.sshf.com/inscription-sshf.php](http://www.sshf.com/inscription-sshf.php)). *Mayday Mayday*, May 2013 (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardarn Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). *Proceedings of the Pondicherry Lodge*, June 2013 (**The Sherlock Holmes Society of India**, Jayantika Ganguly, [shseditors@yahoo.in](mailto:shseditors@yahoo.in)). *Proceedings of the Sherlock Holmes Society of The Hague*, 16 May 2013 (The Society, Jacques Zonneveld, Vlierboomstraat 464, 2564 JL Den Haag, Holland).

And *Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press*, May 2013 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; [blau7103@comcast.net](mailto:blau7103@comcast.net)).

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