

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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The Christmas treat at the wonderful Wilton's Music Hall (020 7702 2789; wiltons.org.uk) is *Mrs Hudson's Christmas Corker, or Your Goose is Cooked, Mr Holmes* by **Bob & Barry Cryer**, in association with **Spymonkey**. It's inspired by Barry and Bob Cryer's delightful book *Mrs Hudson's Diaries: A View from the Landing at 221B*, and it's just as much fun, but this time the humour is much broader and more physical. On press night Petra Massey (Mrs H's cheerfully dim friend Mrs Brayley) was hampered by an leg injury, but we wouldn't have known it. Plot? Well, the story of the Blue Carbuncle is just about recognisable, though it takes Holmes and Watson (Toby Parks and Aitor Basauri) to, er, Wilton's Music Hall, where one of the turns is the Elephant Man and another, if I remember rightly, is Jack the Ripper – both, apparently, lodgers at 221 Baker Street, alongside Karl Marx and Oscar Wilde. Sophie Russell as Mrs Hudson is the pivot around which the madness revolves, but like the others she plays a variety of characters, including Lady Hall (who lives at Hall Hall) in the case of the Monstrous Regiment. This one involves Coca Cola, white slavery, and Dr Fu-Manchu. Like Javier Marsan of Peepolykus, Aitor Basauri uses his Spanish accent to great effect, proudly declaring his Englishness as Dr Watson. There are elements of pantomime as well as music hall, and jokes that had me thinking, 'Did I really hear that?' And the final case for Holmes, Watson and Mrs Hudson is the mystery of the Immaculate Conception. Yes, honestly – complete with pantomime donkey. And it's very funny! Which reminds me: who knew that Holmes and Watson were saxophone virtuosi?

I found out rather late that Baroque Theatre Company is touring with *Sherlock Holmes and The Case of The Christmas Carol* by **John Longenbaugh**. On 13 December they'll be at The Seagull Theatre, Lowestoft (01502 589726; www.theseagull.co.uk), and on 19 December at The Lights, Andover (01264 368368; www.thelights.org.uk), with afternoon and evening performances at both theatres.

Potted Sherlock, condensing sixty stories into eighty minutes, opens at the Vaudeville Theatre in London on Monday 8 December (0844 482 9675; https://tickets.nimaxtheatres.com/WebPages/EntaWebShow/ShowDatesC_ombo.aspx). There'll be a 'Superfan Saturday' on 13 December at 9.45pm, but this may already be fully booked.

The Hound of the Baskervilles, adapted and illustrated by **Petr Kopl** (MX Publishing; www.mxpublishing.co.uk; 12 December; £9.99) is clever, funny, beautiful and brilliant. It's the first in Mr Kopl's *Victoria Regina* series (*A Scandal in Bohemia* is the fourth). Don't be surprised to find the narrative intersecting with the events of *Dracula*, *The Lost World*, *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and even *Rossum's Universal Robots*, as well as other exploits of Holmes and Watson. Look closely at the illustrations and you'll see all sorts of unexpected details — though you may be too engrossed in the story on first reading.

Sherlock: Chronicles (BBC Books; www.eburypublishing.co.uk; £25.00) by **Steve Tribe** is what we hoped *Sherlock: The Casebook* would be: the story of how and why the mad idea of making Sherlock Holmes modern again spawned an international phenomenon. Mr Tribe has interviewed the writers (including the elusive Stephen Thompson) and actors, which is good, but here too are interviews with the designer, the composers, two directors, the sfx masters, and more, so we get a truly authoritative look at what makes *Sherlock* so successful. There are scripts of scenes that were cut, comparisons between passages from the canon and extracts from the scripts, and any number of gorgeous photos – stills, of course, and, more interestingly, pictures taken behind the scenes. It's a definitive companion to a wonderful series.

The Real World of Sherlock by **BJ Rahn** (Amberley; www.amberley-books.com; 2014) is an absorbing account of how a Scottish-born member of an artistic Anglo-Irish family came to create a character that still, nearly 130 years later, defines the Great Detective in the public mind. BJ Rahn

examines fictional and factual antecedents, and compares Sherlock Holmes's methods with those of the police. Even old hands will learn something, and find pleasure in doing so.

Two leading Canadian lawyers, **Hartley R Nathan** and **Clifford S Goldfarb**, are also leading Holmesian scholars. Most of the twelve pieces in *Investigating Sherlock Holmes: Solved & Unsolved Mysteries* (Mosaic Press; www.mosaic-press.com; £13.45) began as talks to the Bootmakers of Toronto, and they all have a very engaging freshness. The law naturally features, and since both authors are Jewish they can offer with authority provisional identifications of the 'Hebrew rabbi', 'old Abrahams' and Ikey Sanders, as well as a look at Jewish stereotypes in the canon. And did you know that the solicitor Sir George Lewis, one of the few real-life people referred to by name in the stories, was Jewish? This very welcome book also includes contributions by Joseph Kessel and John Linsensmeyer.

In *Benedict Cumberbatch: Transition Completed* (MX; £11.99) **Lynnette Porter** continues her survey (begun in *Benedict Cumberbatch, In Transition*) of his work, his approach to that work, and his fame, in a year that has seen him on screen in *The Fifth Estate*, *12 Years a Slave*, *August: Osage County*, the second *Hobbit* film, *The Imitation Game*, and of course *Sherlock* – not to mention his work on radio and on stage. This isn't just a fan's act of worship; rather, it's an admirer's exploration of how a decent, intelligent man has become a star while remaining a major actor.

Retired Flying Squad detective **Dick Kirby** is well qualified to write *Whitechapel's Sherlock Holmes: The Casebook of Fred Wensley OBE, KPM - Victorian Crime Buster* (Pen & Sword Books; www.pen-and-sword.co.uk; £25.00). Frederick Porter Wensley joined the Met in 1887, and was one of the many officers drafted into Whitechapel in 1888 in the hunt for Jack the Ripper. Over the next 25 years he came to know the area very well, as a uniformed copper and then as a spectacularly successful detective. His *modus operandi* was different from Sherlock Holmes's, because of the place and the people, and because of his own stern, blunt personality. He broke up gangs, arrested murderers; his local knowledge was essential in the notorious 'siege of Sidney Street'; he founded the Flying Squad, and was one of the first recipients of the King's Police Medal. Like Bernard Spilsbury's, his career had its questionable aspects, notably the convictions for murder of Stinie Morrison and Edith Thompson, but he was a great policeman and a great detective.

When a senior French officer asked whether Sherlock Holmes was fighting in the Great War, **Sir Arthur Conan Doyle** replied, 'Mon Général, il est trop vieux pour service.' *Conan Doyle's War* (Amberley; £7.99) is a timely edited selection from the first volume of his *The British Campaign in France and Flanders*.

Moriarty, by **Anthony Horowitz** (Orion; www.orionbooks.co.uk; £19.99) opens with a Pinkerton man, Frederick Chase, asking, 'Does anyone really believe what happened at the Reichenbach Falls?' He has arrived at Meiringen just in time to join Athelney Jones of Scotland Yard in identifying the body of James Moriarty, and he makes a refreshingly different narrator, appropriate to the dark and bloody events that ensue when his elusive quarry, a vicious American criminal, makes his presence felt in London. Chase and Jones, whose opinion of Holmes and his methods has changed since the Pondicherry Lodge case, make a formidable team. (Jones's epiphany is recounted by Dr Watson in the story of the Three Monarchs, which forms a neat appendix to the novel.) I confess that I prefer *Moriarty* to *The House of Silk*.

The first volume in The 223B Casebook Series sets a high standard. *The Early Punch Parodies of Sherlock Holmes* edited by **Bill Peschel** (Peschel Press; £9.56) contains RC Lehmann's wickedly funny exploits of Picklock Holes, with spoofs and satires by PG Wodehouse, CL Graves, EV Lucas, and EV Knox, as well as the prolific Anon. Verse, reviews, cartoons too, nicely presented, with interesting editorial notes.

The tales of Sebastian McCabe and Jeff Cody by **Dan Andriacco** follow an appealing tradition dating back to Anthony Boucher's *The Case of the Baker Street Irregulars*. They're quality fair-play detective stories about a Sherlock Holmes devotee. After four novels, all highly recommended, Dr Andriacco's latest book is *Rogues Gallery* (MX; £8.99), a collection of witty and ingenious short stories.

Sherlock Holmes and the Ghost in the London Athenaeum by **Jack Zonneveld**, President of the Sherlock Holmes Society of the Hague, is a handsomely presented slim hardback (De Nieuwe Haagsche; bookshop@kds.nl; €13.50 + postage). In 1883 Holmes is consulted on behalf of King William III of Holland, currently visiting London, who has had a disturbing experience at (of all places) the Athenaeum Club. It's a clever and amusing puzzle, related in English.

As *Sherlock Holmes: Disquiet at Albany* by **NM Scott** (Book Guild; www.bookguild.co.uk; £8.99) opens, a resident of the exclusive chambers in Piccadilly has vanished. Then a Norfolk eel-catcher is brutally murdered, another gruesome death follows, and an enormous rodent is sighted. One of the writers is slain at the opening night of *The Giant Rats of Sumatra*. Alfred Russell Wallace and Charles Darwin are consulted... Mr Scott's first novel-length pastiche is an entertainingly mad thriller.

The Final Page of Baker Street by **Daniel D Victor** (MX; £8.99) concerns the last 'boy in buttons' to serve at 221B before Sherlock Holmes's retirement. Although like his predecessors he's known as 'Billy', he is actually a rather unruly adolescent Irish-American pupil at Dulwich College. His name is Raymond Chandler, and he has literary ambitions. Add murder, suicide, Colonel Moran and Youghal of the CID, and you have an exciting, intelligent, literate mystery.

Many writers have pitted Sherlock Holmes against Jack the Ripper, who has been named as Athelney Jones, Dr Watson's brother, and even Holmes himself. *The Last Confession of Sherlock Holmes* by **Kieran Lyne** (MX; £8.99) gives us another, equally unappealing candidate for the canon. It's well written, and you may enjoy it more than I did.

In the Company of Sherlock Holmes: Stories Inspired by the Holmes Canon edited by **Laurie R King** and **Leslie S Klinger** (Pegasus; www.pegasusbooks.us; \$24.95) is an intriguingly varied collection. Andrew Grant presents the Baskerville case as if on Facebook. Michael Sims gives Silver Blaze's own story. John Lescroart tells of a volunteer seaman named Sigerson at the evacuation of Dunkirk. Michael Dirda reveals the 'true' identity of Arthur Conan Doyle. Gahan Wilson reminisces and provides three splendid cartoons. The nine other pieces include work by Sara Paretsky, Jeffrey Deaver, Harlan Ellison and Michael Connelly. The book was worth waiting for.

The people behind *A Study in Terror*, MX's excellent two-volume collection of ACD's weird fiction, have come up with something very different. *The Amazing Airship Adventure*, written by **Derrick Belanger** and illustrated by **Brian Belanger**, is the first of 'the MacDougall Twins Mysteries with Sherlock Holmes' (MX; £6.99). I'd like to see the Americanisms anglicised for British readers, but it's great fun.

Bryan Talbot writes and illustrates superb graphic novels, rightly praised by the likes of Philip Pullman and Michael Moorcock. His tales of Detective-Inspector LeBrock are set in a steampunk world in which animals have developed higher intelligence and humanity was sidelined long ago. LeBrock, a badger, owes something to Sherlock Holmes, and his fantastic adventures involve him in genuinely serious issues, whose importance isn't muffled by the wit and sly humour of the telling. LeBrock's search for his housekeeper's niece in *Grandville Noël* (Jonathan Cape; www.capegraphicnovels.co.uk; £16.99) leads him to Paris and the messianic cult of Apollo, a charismatic unicorn. The question of religion in such a world is treated thoughtfully and imaginatively.

Everyman's Library has issued an attractive hardback containing *A Study in Scarlet*, *The Sign of Four* and *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, with a long, informative introduction by **Andrew Lycett**. It's priced at £12.99 (www.everymanslibrary.co.uk/).

Filming has begun on *Arthur & George*, dramatised in three parts for ITV from the novel by **Julian Barnes**. Martin Clunes plays Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, with Arsher Ali as George Edalji.

Paddington Bear has made his big screen debut, and until 30 December you can follow the Paddington Trail around London visiting each of fifty statues, (www.visitlondon.com/paddington), designed by all sorts of different people, including Paddington's creator Michael Bond. At the

Museum of London is **Sherlock Bear**, designed by Benedict Cumberbatch, and there's a free Paddington exhibition.

'Sherlockians Collection', a numbered, limited edition of twelve figures by **Marco Navas**, hand-crafted in resin and hand-painted, is available for €35.00 each from www.marconavas.com.

An anonymous benefactor has sent the September issue of *SOTQ: Soldiers of the Queen*, the journal of the Victorian Military Society (20 Priory Road, Newbury, Berks. RG14 7QN). It includes a good four-page article on 'Sherlock Holmes and the Victorian Army' by **Dan Allen**.

And I'm grateful to **Showsaku Mashimo** for kindly sending the catalogue of *The 66th Annual Exhibition of Shōsō-in Treasures* at the Nara National Museum. (Baron Gruner would have known all about it!) The exhibition commemorates the 80th birthdays of the Emperor and Empress of Japan.

There's a good piece on 'Coins in the Canon: the Money of Late Victorian England' at www.studium.com/holmes/viccoins.html.

Zsófia Marincsák points out that I was wrong to credit her with the jokes at <http://sherlockian-sherlock.com/sherlock-holmes-jokes.php>. She translated them, but they were created by her colleague, **Adrienn Fray**. Zsófia adds: 'I am happy to share a great new article with you: www.sherlockian-sherlock.com/inda-pritchard-jeremy-brett-interview.php – and if you are looking for a great Sherlockian gift: www.sherlockian-sherlock.com/bbc-sherlock-doll-keyring.php.'

Graham Theakston, who died on 2 September aged sixty-two, was an important TV drama director (*The Politician's Wife*, *The Tripods*, *The Mill on the Floss*). One of his lesser works was the 2002 film *Sherlock*, also called *a Case of Evil*. Older collectors will remember **Camille Wolff**, proprietor of Grey House Books. She died on 4 September at the age of 102. The actor **Warren Clarke**, who died aged sixty-seven on 17 November, played many memorable roles, such as Andy Dalziel in *Dalziel & Pascoe*. His Colonel Gould was one of the better things in the 1990 TV film *Hands of a Murderer*. **Stu Shiffman**, a notable illustrator in both Sherlockian and science-fiction publications, died on 26 November, more than two years after suffering a stroke. He was just sixty years old. **PD James** (Baroness James of Holland Park) died on 27 November aged ninety-six. As a crime writer she's considered the natural successor to Dorothy L Sayers and Margery Allingham. She was Guest of Honour at our annual dinner in 1984.

Periodicals received. *The Bilge Pump*, November 2014 (**The Crew of the Barque Lone Star**, Steve Mason, <http://barquelonestar.com>). *For the Sake of the Trust*, Fall 2014 (**BSI Trust**, Marshall S Berdan BSI, editor@bsitrust.org). *Gaslight Gazette*, November & December 1904 [*sic*] (**The Survivors of the Gloria Scott**, David J Milner, 6 Crowndale Drive, Taylors, South Carolina 29687, USA). *Ineffable Twaddle*, November & December 2014 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, www.soundofthebaskervilles.com). *Irregular Newsletter*, December 2014 (**The Conan Doyle [Crowborough] Establishment**, Brian Pugh, 20 Clare Road, Lewes, Sussex BN7 1PN). *Mayday Mayday* and *Chronicler*, November 2014 (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, www.thessmayday.org.uk). *Proceedings of the Pondicherry Lodge*, December 2014 (**The Sherlock Holmes Society of India**, Jayantika Ganguly, shseditors@yahoo.in). *Proceedings of the Sherlock Holmes Society of The Hague*, November 2014 (The Society, Jacques Zonneveld, Vlierboomstraat 464, 2564 JL Den Haag, Holland). *Sherlockiana*, no. 4 2014 (**Sherlock Holmes Klubben i Danmark**, Svend Ranild, sr@ranild.dk). *Sherlockian E-Times*, November 2014 (**Classic Specialties**, Carolyn & Joel Senter, www.sherlock-holmes.com/e_times14-11.html). *Report from the Unscrupulous Rascals*, November 2014 (**The Sherlock Holmes Society of South Australia**, Mark Chellew, <https://sites.google.com/site/sherlocksau/>). *The Solar Pons Gazette*, November 2014 (Robert Byrne, www.solarpons.com). *The Watsonian*, Fall 2014 (**the John H Watson Society**, Don Libey, buttons@johnwatsonsociety.com).

And *Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press*, October and November 2014 (Peter E Blau; <http://redcircledc.org/index.php?id=39>).

The Compliments of the Season

Roger Johnson