The DISTRICT MESSENGER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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2008 is (astonishingly) the fortieth anniversary of **The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes**. This month men were honoured with full membership for the first time: 16 Americans, two Canadians, and one Englishman — me. The full list is at http://www.ash-nyc.com/. (My ASH investiture is 'Shinwell Johnson', by the way.)

At the **Baker Street Irregulars** annual dinner, Wiggins announced the following investitures: **Betsy Rosenblatt** ('Lucy Ferrier'), **Dana Richards** ('The Priory School'), **David Morrill** ('Count von Kramm'), **Barbara Roisman Cooper** ('Mary Maberley'), **Randall Stock** ('South African Securities'), **John Genova** ('Harry Pinner'), and **Guy Marriott** ('The Hôtel du Louvre'). **Sherry Rose-Bond** received the Two-Shilling Award, and the Eddies (the editors' medals) went to **Roy Pilot**, **Al Rosenblatt**, and **Christopher & Barbara Roden**.

At our Society's annual dinner, Freda Howlett presented the Tony Howlett Award to **Derek Hinrich**.

And in the Queen's New Year's Honours List, **June Lancelyn Green** received the MBE for services to the community in Merseyside.

Wordsworth Editions (8B East Street, Ware, Herts. SG12 9HJ) have published a welcome paperback edition of **David Stuart Davies's** *Sherlock Holmes and the Hentzau Affair*, priced at just £2.99. As I said when the book was first published in 1991, what we have, as the title suggests, is a sequel to *The Prisoner of Zenda*. *A* sequel: not the official sequel that Anthony Hope gave us, under the title of *Rupert of Hentzau*. David has speculated on what might have happened if Sherlock Holmes had been brought into the affair, and a jolly good job he's made of it, re-creating Hope's world of romantic intrigue and the vivid characters that inhabit it. *The Hentzau Affair* is a less reflective, less elegaic tale than *Rupert of Hentzau*, with a much happier conclusion: a comedy rather than a tragedy, and a cracking good read.

You Know My Methods, Watson (The Battered Silicon Dispatch Box, PO Box 204 Shelburne, Ontario L0N 1SO, Canada; www.batteredbox.com; Can$20.00) is the latest volume from **David Hammer,** an amiably discursive collection of articles and talks. Mr Hammer is a notable Holmesian scholar: see, for instance, his account of the Molly Maguires, and his investigation of John Francis Moriarty, Arthur Conan Doyle's contemporary at Stonyhurst and a likely inspiration for the Napoleon of Crime (though he wasn't a mathematician but, like Mr Hammer, a lawyer). He regales us with tongue-in-cheek theories, such as the identification of Inspector MacDonald with… no, no spoilers! — and with some curiously undignified experiences from his many years as a Sherlockian. And he reminiscences fondly about friends, living and dead, among them Michael Harrison, Richard Lancelyn Green, and Donald Izban. His editor, Susan Diamond, notes that David Hammer, 'like the late John Bennett Shaw, is both a stellar Sherlockian and an excellent raconteur'. I couldn't have put it better myself.

In the last DM I mentioned **Old House Books**, (The Old Police Station, Pound Street, Moretonhampstead, Devon TQ13 8PA; 01647 440707; www.OldHouseBooks.co.uk), who specialise in facsimile editions of guidebooks and maps. Before me now is *Baedeker's Great Britain 1890: A Handbook for Travellers* (£15.99) a solid, beautifully produced volume of what I suppose was regarded as 'pocket size' a century ago. I use maps and guides of the late 19th and early 20th centuries both for research and for simple pleasure, as I love to explore the London and the England of Holmes and Watson. Here we have, *inter alia*, practical information for the Victorian visitor to Britain, a brief outline of English history (and a page about Wales and the Welsh, though nothing about the Scots), and a good chapter on English architecture. But the bulk of the book, nearly 600 pages, takes us all around the country, from Land's End to John O'Groats and beyond, plus 50 pages of maps and plans, most in full colour. I find that when Violet Hunter went to Winchester to take up her position in the Rucastle family, the journey from Waterloo was 66½ miles, taking between 1¾ and 2½ hours. Her second-class fare would have cost her 9/8d. Originals of this sort of book are getting hard to find, and harder yet to find in good condition. This Old House edition is cherishable in its own right. The reproduction is clean and crisp, the print and the maps enticingly legible, and the whole book splendidly bound. Other publications of immediate interest from Old House Books include *Baedeker's London & Its Environs 1900* (£14.99), *Murray's Modern London 1860* (£13.99), *Bacon's up to date Map of London 1902* (£9.99), *London Railways Map 1897* (£9.99), *Dickens's Dictionary of London 1888* (£12.99)… not to mention *The Lady's Dressing-Room 1892* (£12.99) and *Enquire Within upon Everything 1890* (£14.99)!

The Trained Cormorants of Long Beach have just celebrated their Diamond Jubilee, which was marked by, among other things, a picnic at a lighthouse, a meal at the only McDonald's in the world with a Sherlockian theme, and a large-format 48-page booklet, full of personal reminiscences, photographs, newspaper cuttings and so forth. I love to learn about other Holmes societies, and especially the people who founded, nurtured and developed them. Some of the Cormorants are almost legendary (Dean and Shirley Dickensheet, Don Hardenbrook, Robert Pattrick, Irving and Mary Jaffee, crime writers John Ball and Stuart Palmer, Doylean scholar Al Rodin) and others, such as Vinnie Brosnan, Jim Coffin, John Farrell, and June and Ross Kinnee, are friends to many of us. Among the honorary members I note not only August Derleth, but John Gielgud and T S Eliot — and Luther Norris, who introduced me to the Sherlock Holmes Society of London and, indirectly, to the Baker Street Irregulars. Proof reading isn't all it should be (T S Eliot's name has only one l), but *The Trained Cormorants 60th Anniversary Commemorative* is a pleasing read. It costs $20.00 postpaid from Vincent Brosnan (1741 Via Allena, Oceanside, CA 92056, USA). It might be wise to ask about overseas rates: sherlockinla@cox.net.

Just out is *A Remarkable Mixture* edited by Steven Rothman, marking fifty years of the **Morley-Montgomery Award** for the best essays in *The Baker Street Journal* (The Baker Irregulars, 2 Dettling Road, Maynard, MA 01754, USA; www.bakerstreetjournal.com; $35.00 plus postage). I hope to review the book in the next DM, along with *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes: 75th Anniversary Edition* by Vincent Starrett, edited by Ray Betzner (Gasogene Books, PO Box 68308, Indianapolis, IN 46268, USA; $29.99), and possibly *The Quintessential Sherlock Holmes*, a deluxe illustrated omnibus of Richard L Boyer's good Holmes stories (Alexander Books, 65 Macedonia Road, Alexander, NC 28701, USA; SherlockHolmesLives.com; $75.00).

Hugo Koch has uncovered an unexpected original for Neville St Clair *alias* Hugh Boone. He has generously sent me six copies of his booklet *The Real 'Man with the Twisted Lip': Francis Thompson*, which are free to the first six applicants within the UK (a 'large letter' stamp would be appreciated).

I mistyped the URL of **Jeff Falkingham's** website last time. Find out about his fine book *Sherlock Holmes and the County Courthouse Caper* (Beaver's Pond Press, 7104 Ohms Lane, Suite 216, Edina, MN 55439, USA; $17.00) at www.cccaper.com.

Leslie Klinger notes that 'several new annotations [to *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes*] appear in' the March issue of *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*. *[*I'm not having much luck with the website at www.fictionwise.com/eBooks/eBook54354.htm?cache.*]*

Sidney Paget died in January 1908. Catherine Cooke has an interesting article on Westminster Libraries' **Sherlock Holmes Collection** website at www.westminster.gov.uk/libraries/special/sherlock.cfm about two portraits by Paget, one of which may have inspired an illustration in *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*. And running until 5 May at **Church Farmhouse Museum** (Greyhound Hill, Hendon, London NW4 4JR; www.barnet.gov.uk/index/leisure-culture/museums-galleries/current-exhibitions.htm) is the first ever exhibition devoted to the artist, *The Case of the Influential Illustrator: Sidney Paget's Sherlock Holmes*.

Roger Llewellyn is back in David Stuart Davies's new play *The Death and Life of Sherlock Holmes*, opening on 6 March at the **Mill Studio**, **Yvonne Arnaud Theatre**, Guildford (01483 440000; www.yvonne-arnaud.co.uk), and there till 8 March. Then: 26 **Theatr Brycheiniog**, Brecon (01874 611622); 28 **Grand Theatre**, Swansea (01792 475715; www.swansea.gov.uk/grandtheatre); 2 April **Armagh Theatre**, (028 3752 1821; admin@themarketplacearmagh.com); 3-5 April **Baby Grand**, **Grand Opera House**, Belfast (028 9024 1919); 15 April **Greenwich Theatre**, London (020 8858 7755; boxoffice@greenwichtheatre.org); 17 April **Maltings Arts Theatre**, St Albans (01727 844222; maltings.arts@stalbans.gov.uk); 19 April **Theatre Royal**, Margate (01227 787787; admin@theatreroyalmargate.co.uk); 24 April **Arlington Arts Centre**, Newbury (01635 244246; boxoffice@arlingtonarts.co.uk); 26 April **Forest Arts Centre**, New Milton, Hants (01425 612393; forest.arts@hants.gov.uk); 30 April **Middlesbrough Theatre** (01642 815181; boxoffice@middlesbrough.gov.uk). 2 May **Playhouse**, Alnwick (01665 510785; info@alnwickplayhouse.co.uk). More next time.

From 23 to 26 April, Thistles Musical Theatre Company will stage *The Revenge of Sherlock Holmes* (aka *Sherlock Holmes: The Musical*) at **The Kenneth More Theatre**, Oakfield Road, Ilford, Essex. Credit card bookings on 020 8553 4466.

BBC Worldwide (Woodlands, 80 Wood Lane, London W12 0TT) has more treats in store for us. *The Collected Adventures* and *The Collected Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* are out now as boxed sets of CDs, with *The Return* due in September and *His Last Bow* in November. These, of course, are the superb Radio 4 dramatisations with Clive Merrison and Michael Williams. The individual 4-CD sets are still available, but there's a considerable saving on the Collected boxes, especially in the BBC Shop sale at www.bbcshop.com. And there's more. March will see the release of *The Unopened Casebook of Sherlock Holmes*, a series of six ingenious new adventures first broadcast on Radio 5 in 1993, with Simon Callow and Nicky Henson as Holmes and Watson — these plays remind me of the best of the American radio series of the 1940s, with Rathbone and Bruce. And in April 2009 we'll have a boxed selection from the classic BBC series with Carleton Hobbs and Norman Shelley, newly introduced by Nicholas Utechin. Marvellous!

Hobbs and Shelley were my first Holmes and Watson, and theirs are the voices that helped define the characters for me. Merrison and Williams sound different, but — and this is essential — they sound *right*. There were eight writers for *The Memoirs*, but the others all took their cue from Bert Coules, whose scripts for *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Sign of the Four* had established the format (which trusts the listener's intelligence, often cross-cutting boldly between one story-thread and another and even between one time and another) and the characters. Watson is, properly, sensible and intelligent; Holmes is both as pleasing and as irritating as he should be, a flawed but likeable genius. It's a real pleasure to have these now-classic productions available as high-quality recordings. (The set includes 'The Second Stain' to even up the numbers between *The Memoirs* and *The Return*.)

David Ian Davies has recorded an audio adaptation of my own play *The Great Detective*, which can be bought or downloaded from www.audible.com. Steven Rothman says of it: '*The Great Detective* is great fun. Roger Johnson's play carefully selects vignettes from both the Sherlock Holmes Canon and Conan Doyle's other writing...The play skillfully confuses reality and fiction. David Ian Davies is able to produce a series of wonderfully evocative voices, and the sound effects amuse. This is an excellent production of an enjoyable radio play.'

Henry Mancini's grand score for *Without a Clue* is available on a limited edition CD (BSX Records, BuySoundtrax.com, Att. Customer Service, 2828 Cochran Street PMB #287, Simi Valley, CA 93065-2780, USA) from buysoundtrax.stores.yahoo.net/witcluorsoun.html. His equally enjoyable music for *The Adventures of the Great Mouse Detective* (i.e. *Basil the Great Mouse Detective*) is out on a Varèse Sarabande CD (11846 Ventura Boulevard, Suite 130, Studio City, CA 91604, USA) and is available from www.amazon.com and other outlets.

Due in February from Naxos AudioBooks (2nd Floor, 40A High Street, Welwyn, Herts. AL6 9EQ) is an unabridged reading by Glen McReady of *The Lost World*. Should be good!

An odd-looking DVD documentary called *The Madness of Sherlock Holmes: Conan Doyle and the Realm of the Faeries* by Phil Gardiner (Real2Can Films, info@real2can.com) is available from www.real2can.com/storedvd.htm for £11.99/$23.95 plus postage.

Charles Hall (12 Paisley Terrace, Edinburgh EH8 7JW) deals in a range of Holmesian collectibles, including his own fine resin sculptures. Drop him a line for details.

Tony Tenser, who died on 5 December aged eighty-seven, was an unashamedly commercial film producer (it was he who dubbed Brigitte Bardot a 'sex kitten'), but his output did include Roman Polanski's *Repulsion*, Michael Reeves' *Witchfinder General*, and James Hill's *A Study in Terror*. Our member **David Husain**, a distinguished chemist, winner of the RSC's Tilden and Corday-Morgan medals, and Emeritus Fellow of Pembroke College, Cambridge, died on 26 December at the age of seventy. A memorial service will be held on 1 March in Pembroke College Chapel. **Edward D Hoch** (pronounced 'Hoke') wrote more than 900 mystery and detective stories and a handful of novels. As well as his own many characters he wrote half a dozen ingenious Sherlock Holmes stories for *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, the latest being in the current issue (February 2008, which features cover art by Philip Cornell). Ed Hoch died on 17 January aged seventy-seven.

Periodicals received. ***The Baker Street Journal***, Autumn 2007 and Winter 2007 (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. 84 (**České společnost Sherlocka Holmese**, Aleš Kolodrubec, Milešovská 1, 130 00 Praha 3, Czech Republic). ***The Camden House Journal***, December 2007 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, Debbie Tinsley, PO Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). ***Communication***, no. 276, no. 277 and no. 278 (**The Pleasant Places of Florida**, Wanda & Jeff Dow, 1737 Santa Anna Drive, Dunedin, FL 34698, USA). ***The Illustrious Clients News***, December 2007 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T Doyle, 9 Calumet Court, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA**).** ***Ineffable Twaddle***, December 2007 and January 2008 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA).

The Master's Trestleboard, December 2007 (**The Master's Masons**, Ron Fish, PO Box 4, Circleville, NY 10919-0004, USA). ***The Passengers' Log***, October 2007 (**The Sydney Passengers**, Rosane McNamara, 4/2a Merlin Street, Neutral Bay, NSW 2089, Australia) *[*marking ten proud years of* The Log ***— long may it roll!*]***. ***The Petrel Flyer***, January/February 2008 (**The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia**, Len Haffenden, 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7P 3C6). ***Practice Notes,*** December 2007 (**The Friends of Dr Watson**, Nino Cirone, Highcroft Cottage, 14 Totteridge Common, London N20 8NL). ***The Scion***, Autumn 2007 (**The Musgraves**, Anne Jordan, Hallas Lodge, Greenside Lane, Cullingworth, Bradford BD13 5AP). ***The Serpentine Muse***, Winter 2007 (**The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes**, Evelyn Herzog, 301 Warren Ave, #203, Baltimore, MD 21203, USA). ***The Sherlock Holmes Journal***, Winter 2007. ***The Soft-Nosed Bullet-in & Striking (T)Rifles***, Winter 2006/7 (**Von Herder Airguns Ltd**, Michael Ross, Hermeskeiler Platz 14, 50935 Köln, Germany). ***The Solar Pons Gazette***, December 2007 (Bob Byrne, www.solarpons.com).

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

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Alistair Duncan, author of *Eliminate the Impossible: An Examination of the World of Sherlock Holmes on Page and Screen* (MX Publishing, 10 Kingfisher Close, Stanstead Abbotts, Herts. SG12 8LQ; £9.99 or $19.95) knows his Holmes, and he brings a fresh eye to this 240-page survey of the Canon and its film and TV offshoots. His reading list is idiosyncratic, including, for instance, Matthew Bunson's mediocre *The Sherlock Holmes Encyclopedia* (but not Jack Tracy's much superior *Encyclopaedia Sherlockiana*), and W S Baring-Gould's very unreliable *Sherlock Holmes: A Biography of the World's First Consulting Detective*. I can't help thinking that Mr Duncan's book would be richer and fuller were he familiar with more of the 'writings about the writings'. Still, *Eliminate the Impossible* is well written and entertaining. The story summaries are concise and accurate, and the notes are frequently incisive. Most interesting, to my mind, and most controversial, are the comments on film and television portrayals. I'd argue, for instance, that H Marion Crawford was a very acceptable Watson, and that Robert Stephens as Holmes doesn't deserve to be classed as 'bad and forgotten'!

Since 1958, with a fifteen-year hiatus, the best contributions to *The Baker Street Journal* have been recognised with the annual Morley-Montgomery Award, named after Christopher Morley and Bruce Montgomery, and instituted by Lew D Feldman. Now **The Baker Street Irregulars** have published a splendid 360-page hardback, *'A Remarkable Mixture': Award-Winning Articles from* ***The Baker Street Journal***, edited by Steven Rothman, who contributes masterly introduction and notes (The Baker Street Irregulars, 2 Dettling Road, Maynard, MA 01754, USA; www.bakerstreetjournal.com; $35.00 plus postage). It's a real treat, a gallimaufry of, as someone once said, scholarship and absurdity. Some favourites: Andrew Jay Peck on the true Solitary Cyclist; J C Prager & Al Silverstein on 'Lowenstein of Prague'; Peter Blau on what I may call the Muzaffar Ad-Din Stone; Jon Lellenberg on the BSI's 1940 dinner; Donald Pollock & Andrew Solberg's psychoanalytical report on 'J'; Catherine Cooke on Mrs Hudson; S E Dahlinger on William Gillette… All brilliant — *optimi optimorum* — but I'm particularly struck by 1963's 'Study of an Unknown Tale', in which Edward F Clark applied impeccable research and rigorous logic to 'The Matter of the French Republic' (his BSI investiture) and concluded that Moriarty had the Mona Lisa stolen in late 1890, and that Holmes's investigation led to the personal conflict that ended at Reichenbach. Had John Hawkesworth read this essay, or did he come up with the same scenario independently twenty years on, when he wrote the script for Granada TV's *The Final Problem*? It doesn't really matter. I always liked the idea, and now I know that it's perfectly sound, thanks to Mr Clark.

The proprietors of Gasogene Books (Wessex Press, PO Box 68308, Indianapolis, IN 46268, USA; www.wessexpress.com) have been very busy. To mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of Vincent Starrett's *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* they've issued a new edition, edited by Ray Betzner. *The Private Life* is a book that every Holmesian should read. Starrett, like Christopher Morley, was an exceptionally good writer, a stylist so good that you don't stop to think how good he is. Copies aren't too hard to come by, so why should I recommend this one? Well, it's a very nicely produced hardback, priced at a very reasonable $29.95. There's an affectionate and informative memoir of Starrett by his friend Robert J Mangler. The same adjectives apply to Ray Betzner's introduction and his account of the various editions of *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*. The body of the book is, appropriately, a facsimile of the (American) first edition, which differs substantially from the revised edition of 1960. It predates that marvellous sonnet '221B', but this is the book that tells us that Holmes and Watson 'still live for all that love them well: in a romantic chamber of the heart: in a nostalgic country of the mind: where it is always 1895.'

Also from Gasogene is Leslie S Klinger's *Baker Street Rambles: A Collection of Writings About Sherlock Holmes, John H Watson, MD, Arthur Conan Doyle and Their World* ($18.95). Les Klinger's reputation rests largely on his annotated editions of the Canon, to which he has most obviously contributed judicious selection and editing of the scholarship of others, so it's good to be reminded that only one who is a considerable scholar himself could achieve such near perfection. In this 210-page paperback we have twenty-four of his own wide-ranging essays, plus three book reviews and two interviews, all with the author's own pithy notes. Les Klinger is as good a scholar and as good a writer as our Game has produced.

And finally we have *From the Archives of* ***The Sherlock Holmes Review****: 'A Study in Celluloid'* by Michael Cox ($12.95). *The Sherlock Holmes Review* ran for ten years, during which time the magazine sponsored a series of symposia, the first being held in Bloomington, Indiana, in 1987. The main speaker was Michael Cox, producer and originator of Granada TV's *Sherlock Holmes* series, and what we have here, twenty-one years on, is a CD recording of the 55-minute talk he gave about the conception and the making of the series. Recording quality is excellent, and the speaker is on sparkling form before an appreciative audience. In 1999 Michael Cox's definitive account of the entire series was published, also under the title *A Study in Celluloid*. By then Jeremy Brett was dead, and the accountants had taken over from the programme-makers at Granada. Michael's recorded talk, as entertaining as it is fascinating, makes an admirable companion to his book.

The Quintessential Sherlock Holmes by Richard L Boyer (Alexander Books, 65 Macedonia Road, Alexander, NC 28701, USA; $75.00 plus postage) is one of the handsomest volumes to come my way in a long time: 496 pages, leather-bound and gold-stamped, in a strong and nicely decorated slipcase. (There are, however, too many missing commas. 'You see Watson?' doesn't mean the same as 'You see, Watson?') Mr Boyer first came to notice with *The Giant Rat of Sumatra* in 1976, a deliriously exciting novel that captured much of the atmosphere of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. He established himself as a successful author, winning an Edgar in 1982 for his first Doc Adams mystery *Billingsgate Shoal*, but continued to write the occasional Holmes story, of which *The Quintessential Sherlock Holmes* (hence the title) contains five — 'The Wilton Water Horror', 'The Adventure of Zolnay, the Aerialist', *The Giant Rat of Sumatra*, 'The Adventure of Bell Rock Light', and 'The Adventure of the Eyrie Cliff'. They are graced with attractive ink-and-wash illustrations by Phil Hawkins, in a style that would not be out of place in *The Strand Magazine*. Richard Boyer is not one of the very few writers who can adopt the Watson style with consistent fidelity: he overdoes the archaisms a little and his depiction of late-Victorian England is just a touch off-centre. But his heart is in the right place: he gives us the authentic Holmes and Watson, and he knows how to grab his reader's attention. See the website at www.sherlockholmeslives.com.

Glen McCready gives a first-rate unabridged reading of *The Lost World* for Naxos AudioBooks (2nd Floor, 40A High Street, Welwyn, Herts. AL6 9EQ; £19.99). I confess that I didn't recognise Mr McCready's name, but it's one that I'll be looking out for. He has the ideal combination of vocal versatility and the ability to engage the listener's attention. I became so gripped, despite the story's familiarity, that I

didn't immediately notice that *The Lost World*, unlike other Naxos audiobooks, doesn't feature any music — but since we have eight and a half hours of narrative on seven discs there really wouldn't have been time for any. What I did notice is the excellence of Conan Doyle's writing, both the drama and the humour. The suburban comedy of Edward Malone's scenes with Gladys is worthy of Jerome K Jerome, and of course both Professor Challenger and Professor Summerlee are profoundly comic characters, funny but heroic, and *believable*. Glen McCready's Challenger, by the way, sounds like a cross between Brian Blessed and Donald Sinden. I like that! Like other Naxos recordings, this can now be downloaded at www.naxosaudiobooks.com.

A few years ago Penguin Classics issued most of the Sherlock Holmes stories with perceptive introductions by the likes of Christopher Frayling and Peter Ackroyd. They've just released the complete Canon, in eight volumes (*His Last Bow* and *The Case-Book* are together), with 'vibrant two-tone covers [using] typefaces that evoke the Victorian era and an early cinema poster aesthetic [that] emphasises the adventure and excitement of the stories'. The covers are certainly different from previous Penguin designs, but they are growing on me. It seems a shame, though, not to include the introductions and annotations. (Penguin Books Ltd, 80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL; £6.99 per volume.)

Two new books from **David Stuart Davies**: *Without Conscience*, the third Johnny One Eye novel (Robert Hale, Clerkenwell House, 45-47 Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0HT; £18.99), and *The Game's Afoot*, an anthology of new Sherlock Holmes stories (Wordsworth Editions (8B East Street, Ware, Herts. SG12 9HJ; £2.99). More in the next DM!

At www.sherlock-holmes.com/e_times08-2.htm you'll find the February issue of the *Sherlockian E-Times*, the catalogue-newsletter from **Classic Specialties** (PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH, 45219, USA; e-mail sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com).

The Secret Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, *Souvenirs of Sherlock Holmes* and *The Great Detective in Paperback & Pastiche* by **Gary Lovisi** are available from Gryphon Books (PO Box 209, Brooklyn, NY 11228, USA; gryphonbooks@worldnet.att.net).

Mr A Hawken (I hope I've read that correctly) notes that the clock & watch auction at **Tamlyn & Son** (Bridgwater, Somerset TA6 3BN; 01278 458241) on 18 March will include his own collection of watches, one of which is a Semloh (spell it backwards) Lever silver pocket watch and chain. There's no real Sherlockian connection, but what the hell.

Tania Hollies (t.hollies@ntlworld.com) is looking to sell: eight colour stills from the Peter Cook & Dudley Moore *Hound of the Baskervilles*, eleven black & white stills and a full colour programme from *Young Sherlock Holmes and the Pyramid of Fear*, and a black & white programme from *Without a Clue*. If you're interested, please e-mail her.

A reminder that *The Death and Life of Sherlock Holmes* by David Stuart Davies opens on 6 March at the **Mill Studio**, **Yvonne Arnaud Theatre**, Guildford (01483 440000; www.yvonne-arnaud.co.uk), and will be there till 8 March. Roger Llewellyn reprises his role as Holmes. Then he'll take the play on tour: 26 March **Theatr Brycheiniog**, Brecon (01874 611622); 28 **Grand Theatre**, Swansea (01792 475715; www.swansea.gov.uk/grandtheatre); 2 April **Armagh Theatre**, (028 3752 1821; admin@themarketplacearmagh.com); 3-5 April **Baby Grand**, **Grand Opera House**, Belfast (028 9024 1919); 15 April **Greenwich Theatre**, London (020 8858 7755; boxoffice@greenwichtheatre.org); 17 April **Maltings Arts Theatre**, St Albans (01727 844222; maltings.arts@stalbans.gov.uk); 19 April **Theatre Royal**, Margate (01227 787787; admin@theatreroyalmargate.co.uk); 24 April **Arlington Arts Centre**, Newbury (01635 244246; boxoffice@arlingtonarts.co.uk); 26 April **Forest Arts Centre**, New Milton, Hants (01425 612393; forest.arts@hants.gov.uk); 30 April **Middlesbrough Theatre** (01642 815181; boxoffice@middlesbrough.gov.uk).

The new film *The Bank Job*, released on 25 February, is inspired by the robbery at Lloyds Bank in Baker Street in 1971. The thieves tunnelled into the bank and stole £1.5 million. They in turn may have been inspired by 'The Red-Headed League'.

M J Elliott advises me of the 3rd annual **Imagination Theatre Radio Script Competition**. Scripts can be in any genre. Proper format is very important: please contact jrfpress@yahoo.com for instructions, application forms and information. First prize, $150 plus production, goes to the script that can be produced 'straight out of the envelope'. Second Prize, $100 plus production, goes to the script that is very good, but still needs a little work. Third prize, $50, goes to the script that has good writing and inventive ideas, but needs more work. Three honourable mentions receive CDs. Fee is $15 per script. Scripts must be postmarked no later than 30 April. Winners will be announced 6 June. See jimfrenchproductions.com.

haha.nu/interesting/sherlock-holmes-the-true-story-of-dr-joseph-bell/ links to a 45-minute Discovery Channel documentary about Joe Bell. And at ve.torontopubliclibrary.ca/showcase/lcd_diary is a digital facsimile of Lady Conan Doyle's diary of the Conan Doyles' tour of Canada in 1914.

www.kappachan.com/sherlockholmes is the Holmesian website of **Nindya**, a graduate student in Jakarta, Indonesia. Aziz Bin Adam spotted this bright young lady's site. Are there other Sherlockians in South-East Asia?

I somehow missed noting the death on 2 January, aged eighty-two, of **George MacDonald Fraser**, who achieved the rare feat of taking another author's creation and making it his own: the bully Flashman, from Thomas Hughes' *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, whom Fraser took into a career as a coward, womaniser and accidental military hero. The few short stories about the egregious Flashy were collected in *Flashman and the Tiger* (1999), whose title story gives a different view, disconcertingly credible, of the capture of Colonel Sebastian 'Tiger Jack' Moran at the Empty House.

Only three months after the death of his former *Punch* colleague Alan Coren, **Miles Kington** died on 30 January, aged sixty-six. Style and approach were different, but they were the two most consistently, imaginatively witty writers of their generation. Kington is most famous for 'Let's Parler Franglais', in which, as Michael Bywater says, 'he dissected the vagaries of the British from behind the screen of a crazed bilingualism'. *The Franglais Lieutenant's Woman*, a collection of brief parodies, includes 'Sherlock Holmes: The Missing Histoire'. His affection for Holmes also resulted in a Shakespeare spoof, 'The Case of the Danish Prince', and a stage show, *The Death of Tchaikovsky*, written and performed in collaboration with Simon Gilman.

Desmond Tyler reports that **Mimi Langley**, actress and long-time member of our Society, died after a long illness on 24 February. We miss her lively presence at meetings. The funeral will be at Beckenham Crematorium (020 8650 0322) on 3 March at 10.30 am. Mimi was Jewish, so no flowers, please, but donations to Harris HospisCare will be welcome (Caritas House, Tregony Road, Orpington, Kent BR6 9XA).

Periodicals received. ***The Camden House Journal***, January 2008 and February 2008 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, Debbie Tinsley, PO Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). ***Cobwebby Bottles***, February 2008 (**The Musgraves**, Rafe McGregor, 62 Willow Park Road, Wilberfoss, York YO41 5PS; RafeG@aol.com). ***Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections***, December 2007 (Suite 111, Elmer L Andersen Library, University of Minnesota, 222 21st Avenue S, Minneapolis, MN 55455, USA). ***The Illustrious Clients News***, January 2008 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T Doyle, 9 Calumet Court, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA**).** ***Ineffable Twaddle***, February 2008 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). ***Irregular Newsletter***, February 2008 (**The Conan Doyle [Crowborough] Establishment**, Brian Pugh, 20 Clare Road, Lewes, Sussex BN7 1PN). ***The Magic Door***, Winter 2007 (**The Friends of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection**, Doug Wrigglesworth, 16 Sunset Street, Holland Landing, Ontario, Canada L9N 1H4). ***Mayday Mayday***, February 2008 (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardcarn Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). ***QuinCahier 2***, Hiver 1907/1908 (**Société Sherlock Holmes de France**, 36 avenue Jean-Jaurès, 63500 Issoire, France). ***The School Report***, Spring 2008 (**The Priory Scholars**, Horace L Coates, 21 Butcombe Road, Leicester LE4 0FY). ***The Whaling News***, November 2007, December 2007, January 2008 and February 2008 (**The Harpooners of the Sea Unicorn**, Michael E Bragg, PO Box 256, St Charles, MO 63302-0256, USA).

And ***Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press***, January 2008 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; blau7103@comcast.net).

Roger Johnson

The DISTRICT MESSENGER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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no. 281 31st March 2008

To renew your subscription, send 12 stamped, self-addressed envelopes or (overseas) send 12 International Reply Coupons or £6.00 or US$15.00 for 12 issues (dollar checks payable to Jean Upton, sterling cheques to me). Dollar prices quoted without qualification refer to US dollars. You can receive the DM electronically free of charge, as a PDF attachment or as plain text. Please contact me by e-mail.

Brian Pugh and **Paul Spiring** worked long and hard researching and writing *On the Trail of Arthur Conan Doyle: An Illustrated Devon Tour* (The Book Guild Ltd, Pavilion View, 19 New Road, Brighton BN1 1UF; £12.99). The result is not a big book — 136 pages — but it is most attractively presented. Its succinct account of Conan Doyle's association with Devon and with George Turnavine Budd and Bertram Fletcher Robinson is invaluable, and just to follow the Devon Tour on paper is fascinating. I must declare an interest, as I read through an early draft; I also provided the foreword, which I should not have done if I didn't think the book worthwhile. It's remarkable that, despite the recent publication of ACD's letters and Andrew Lycett's formidable biography, there's still a place (that's not strong enough: there's still a need) for carefully researched and well-presented books that concentrate on specific aspects of ACD's life. *On the Trail of Arthur Conan Doyle* has a proud place alongside Geoffrey Stavert's *A Study in Southsea* and Owen Dudley Edwards' *The Quest for Sherlock Holmes*.

As 'Anthony Boucher', William A P White (1911-1968) was a leading writer, editor and critic in the fields of mystery, fantasy and science fiction (Bouchercon, otherwise the Anthony Boucher Memorial World Mystery Convention, perpetuates his memory). His 1940 novel *The Case of the Baker Street Irregulars* had members of the BSI wondering whether one of their colleagues had written it under a pseudonym. Boucher was not yet an Irregular, but he received his investiture in 1949 as 'The Valley of Fear', having meanwhile helped establish The Scowrers and Molly Maguires as a scion society in northern California. He had also, in partnership with Denis Green, written over seventy scripts for the radio show *The New Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, truer to the Canonical spirit than most of what had gone before, and more ingenious, literate and witty. Recordings of those plays, with Basil Rathbone (later replaced by Tom Conway) and Nigel Bruce, are available, and now *Anthony Boucher: A Biobibliography* by Jeffrey Marks (McFarland, Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640, USA; www.mcfarlandpub.com; order line 800 253 2187; $35.00) gives us an insight into the man and his work. Mr Marks' style is not graceful (Boucher's name is repeated far too often when a simple personal pronoun would suffice), and the proof reading leaves something to be desired (*The Case of the Seven of Calvary* becomes *The Case of the Seven of Cavalry*), but the book is a very welcome study of an important figure in the world of Holmesiana.

In *Without Conscience*, the third Johnny One Eye novel by David Stuart Davies (Robert Hale, Clerkenwell House, 45-47 Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0HT; £18.99), Johnny Hawke's investigation of a philandering husband takes him beyond sexual intrigue to murder — and dirty work at the War Office. Meanwhile he becomes entangled in the search for a psychopathic killer, on the loose in wartime London. Time, place and character all ring true, and the wartime atmosphere is cunningly evoked. Isn't it time that the Johnny One Eye novels were published in paperback?

David Stuart Davies has also edited *The Game's Afoot*, an anthology of new Sherlock Holmes stories, published by Wordsworth Editions (8B East Street, Ware, Herts. SG12 9HJ) at just £2.99 — a remarkable price for 400 pages. The writers are all familiar names: June Thomson, Denis O Smith, M J Elliott, John Hall, Matthew Booth, Mark Valentine, Christopher Sequeira, Rafe McGregor, Alan Stockwell, John Howard, and David Stuart Davies himself. And there isn't a dud among their twenty offerings. Holmes and Watson were always at their best in the shorter format, and this is one of the best collections I've encountered.

In *Revenge of the Judoon* (BBC Books Quick Reads; £1.99), the latest of nearly seventy Doctor Who titles from Terrance Dicks, the Doctor meets Arthur Conan Doyle, whom he last encountered, I think, in John Peel's *Evolution*. Former scriptwriter and script editor for the TV series, Terrance Dicks is also the author of, among much else, the 'Baker Street Irregulars' novels, in which a likeable bunch of modern schoolchildren successfully apply the methods of Sherlock Holmes.

Michael Sims tells me that his anthology *The Penguin Book of Great Thieves: Confidence Tricksters, Burglars, Rogues and Scoundrels from the Time of Sherlock Holmes* is due for publication next winter. The stories, by the likes of Grant Allen, Guy Boothby, William Le Queux, O Henry, R Austin Freeman, and Edgar Wallace — and, inevitably, E W Hornung and Maurice Leblanc — range from 1896 to 1924.

Next month sees the triumphant conclusion of **David Timson's** reading of the complete Sherlock Holmes stories for Naxos AudioBooks (2nd Floor, 40A High Street, Welwyn, Herts. AL6 9EQ; £16.99). *The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes II* contains the last six stories as published in *The Strand Magazine* plus as a bonus a story written by Mr Timson himself. I hope to review this four-CD set in the next DM.

Several authors have imagined a melding of the world of Sherlock Holmes and that of H P Lovecraft's 'Cthulhu Mythos'. Few have been as successful as **Neil Gaiman** in his Hugo Award-winning short story 'A Study in Emerald', first published in the anthology *Shadows over Baker Street* and then in Mr Gaiman's own collection *Fragile Things*. Now, thanks to the author and his publishers, HarperCollins, you can freely download both a splendidly ornate copy of the text (at http://www.neilgaiman.com/p/Cool%20Stuff/Short%20Stories) and an MP3 recording of Neil Gaiman reading it, which he does beautifully (at http://www.harpercollinsebooks.com/3F7BC868-242B-46FE-AF3E-D40D471C5400/10/125/en/Gaiman-download.htm).

Peter Blau notes that copies of *Sir Hugo's Literary Companion: A Compendium of the Writings of Hugo's Companions, Chicago, on the Subject of Mr. Sherlock Holmes* signed by the editor, David C Humphrey, are available from 1843 Winnetka Avenue, Northfield, IL 60093, USA for $28.95. And Joseph & Elaine Coppola have edited *Voices from the Strangers' Room* (Aventine Press, 1023 4th Avenue, #204, San Diego, CA 92101, USA; $14.00), a collection of writings by members of **The Mycroft Holmes Society**.

The number of known copies of *Beeton's Christmas Annual* for 1887, containing the first printing of A Study in Scarlet, has just increased by one! On 29 March the *Knaresborough Post* reported that a copy has been found among a pile of donations at the Oxfam bookshop in Harrogate. It will be auctioned on 20 May at Bonhams' Oxford salerooms (39 Park End Street, Oxford OX1 1JD; 01865 723524; oxford@bonhams.com). Apparently the book has lost its original covers and advertisements, and the news article suggests that it's bound in with other material, a not uncommon practice.

On 18 March at Bonhams in Bond Street an undated one-page autograph letter, signed 'A Conan Doyle', to 'Dear Sir', was sold for £3,700. Concerning the origins of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, Conan Doyle wrote: '...My story was really based on nothing save a remark of my friend Fletcher Robinson's that there was a legend about a dog on the Moor connected with some old family. I had no place in my eye. What you say is interesting & extraordinary...'.

Peter Cushing was not only a fine actor and a great Sherlock Holmes: he was a talented painter, who studied under the great watercolourist

Edward Seago. At Canterbury Auction Galleries on 18 March twenty-five of his paintings fetched a total of more than £20,000. The results aren't yet on the auctioneers' website, but the fully illustrated catalogue can be viewed at http://www.catalogue-host.co.uk/canterbury/2008-03-18/category_4_page_1, and there are good reproductions of all Cushing's pictures.

Michele Andina of swissinfo.ch, who made a video record of our Society's trip to Switzerland in 2005, reports that it can now be seen on YouTube at http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=gOIuwowGsgU. Enjoy!

Roger Llewellyn is now touring in David Stuart Davies's new play *The Death and Life of Sherlock Holmes*. His schedule for the next couple of months is: 3- 5 April **Baby Grand**, **Grand Opera House**, Belfast (028 9024 1919); 12 April **Garrick Theatre**, Lichfield (the play here is *Sherlock Holmes — The Last Act!*) (01543 412 121; www.lichfieldgarrick.com); 15 April **Greenwich Theatre**, London (020 8858 7755; boxoffice@greenwichtheatre.org.uk); 17 April **Maltings Arts Theatre**, St Albans (01727 844222; maltings.arts@stalbans.gov.uk); 19 April **Theatre Royal**, Margate (01227 787787; admin@theatreroyalmargate.co.uk); 24 April **Arlington Arts Centre**, Newbury (01635 244246; boxoffice@arlingtonarts.co.uk); 26 April **Forest Arts Centre**, New Milton, Hants (01425 612393; forest.arts@hants.gov.uk); 30 April **Middlesbrough Theatre** (01642 81 51 81; boxoffice@middlesbrough.gov.uk); 2 May **Playhouse**, Alnwick (01665 510785; info@alnwickplayhouse.co.uk); 14 & 15 May **McCarthy Studio**, **Stephen Joseph Theatre**, Scarborough (01723 370541; tickets@sjt.uk.com); 17 May **Number 8 Community Arts Centre**, Pershore (01386 555488); 21 & 22 May **Nightingale Theatre**, Brighton (01273 709709; www.brightonticketshop.com); 27 May **Cramphorn Theatre**, Chelmsford (01245 606505; http://www.chelmsford.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=14684); 29 May **Trinity Arts Centre**, Tunbridge Wells (01892 678678; info@trinitytheatre.net).

From 23 to 26 April, Thistles Musical Theatre Company will stage *The Revenge of Sherlock Holmes* by Leslie Bricusse at **The Kenneth More Theatre**, Oakfield Road, Ilford, Essex (box office phone 020 8553 4466, e-mail kmtheatre@aol.com). This play was first staged professionally under the title *Sherlock Holmes: The Musical* with Ron Moody and Derek Waring as Holmes and Watson, and there was a later short-lived touring production with Robert Powell and Roy Barraclough.

Offers are invited for a considerable collection of Holmesiana. **Nate Lucyk** at nate.lucyk@mohawkcollege.ca can provide interested parties with a list and pictures. (Mohawk College is in Hamilton, Ontario, so you may want to think about the cost of postage from Canada.)

Andrew Parker notes that *Hansard*, the official record of Parliamentary proceedings, includes for 19 March 2008 the ministerial reply to an MP's question about jellyfish and their effect on coastal aquaculture. It seems that there are six species of jellyfish that occur in UK coastal waters: Mauve stinger (*Pelagia noctiluca*), Compass jellyfish (*Chrysaora hysoscella*), Blue jellyfish (*Cyanea lamarckii*), Moon jellyfish (*Aurelia aurita*), Barrel jellyfish (*Rhizostoma octopus*)… and, yes, our old friend Lion's Mane jellyfish (*Cyanea capillata*).

The website of **The Nashville Scholars of the Three Pipe Problem** at http://www.nashvillescholars.net/nashvillescholars/index.html is worth a look. It's a new site, still growing. The Webmaster is Jim Hawkins (jim_hawkins@comcast.net).

The seventh annual combined **STUD/Watsonian Weekend** will begin on Friday 11 April with the sixteenth annual STUD dinner at the Sheraton Four Points at Schiller Park, Illinois. Julie McKuras will speak on 'Edith Meiser: From Broadway to BSI', and the traditional toasts and awards will be given. Saturday will see the 49th annual running of the Chicago Silver Blaze, sponsored by the Watsonians, at Hawthorne Race Course, and the STUD 'fun(d)raiser' pizza party at the house of Susan Diamond and Allan Devitt in Bensenville, IL. On Sunday the weekend concludes with the Fortescue Honours Brunch. To participate in the Watsonians' Fortescue Scholarship Program (a series of three examinations in matters Canonical and Sherlockian) contact Susan Diamond at szdiamond@comcast.net. Information about the weekend can be had from Bill Sawisch at wmsawisch@sbcglobal.net.

A reminder that the 2008 **Annual Victorian Cricket Match** between the Gentlemen of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London and the Gentlemen of the P G Wodehouse Society will be held on Sunday 22 June at West Wycombe Cricket Ground. These events are quite delightful — and free! All are welcome, and Victorian costume and appurtenances are encouraged.

Barry Morse, who died on 2 February aged eighty-eight, is probably best remembered as Lt Philip Gerard, spending four years in pursuit of Dr Richard Kimble in the television series *The Fugitive*. Born in Bethnal Green, he studied at RADA and worked mainly in British theatre till 1951, when he moved to Canada, establishing himself there and in the USA as an actor and director on stage and screen. A devoted Shavian, he revived the flagging Shaw Festival at Niagara-on-the-Lake, and after his return to England in 1976 became President of the Shaw Society. His many less consequential rôles included Carter Morstan in the fun 1986 TV movie *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*, with Michael Pennington and Margaret Colin.

Peter Blau reports the death on 8 February of **Shirley Dickensheet** ('Ivy Douglas', BSI), a leading member of The Trained Cormorants and later The Scowrers and Molly Maguires. 'She was working for the Fireman's Fund when they insured the Loch Ness Monster in 1969, and paid off when it sank during the filming of *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* (the submersible is now at the bottom of the Loch, waiting to be found by one of the many people who still pursue 'Nessie').'

Novelist and historian **Julian Rathbone**, twice shortlisted for the Booker Prize, highly regarded for his thrillers, was a great-nephew of Basil Rathbone. In 1998 he presented the inaugural Sherlock Awards for crime writing. Peter Blau notes that his story 'Baz' ('about a thoroughly modern Holmes and Watson') was published in Maxim Jakubowski's *New Crimes 3* in 1991. He died on 28 February aged seventy-three.

Tony Church, one of our finest classical actors, died on 25 March aged seventy-seven. He was a founding member of the Royal Shakespeare Company, first director of Exeter's Northcott Theatre, dean of the Denver Center's National Theatre Conservatory graduate program, and director of drama at the Guildhall School. His radio rôles included Charles Augustus Milverton to Carleton Hobbs' Holmes in 1961, and Jephro Rucastle opposite Barry Foster in 1978.

Periodicals received. ***Bohemian Newsletter***, no. 86 (**České společnost Sherlocka Holmese**, Aleš Kolodrubec, Milešovská 1, 130 00 Praha 3, Czech Republic). ***The Camden House Journal***, March 2008 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, Debbie Tinsley, PO Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). ***Cobwebby Bottles***, March 2008 (**The Musgraves**, Rafe McGregor, 62 Willow Park Road, Wilberfoss, York YO41 5PS; RafeG@aol.com). ***Communication***, no. 279 (**The Pleasant Places of Florida**, Wanda & Jeff Dow, 1737 Santa Anna Drive, Dunedin, FL 34698, USA). ***The Illustrious Clients News***, March 2008 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T Doyle, 9 Calumet Court, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). ***Ineffable Twaddle***, April 2008 (**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***, March 1908 [*sic*] (**La Société Sherlock Holmes de France**, Thierry Saint-Joanis, 36 avenue Jean-Jaurès, 63500 Issoire, France). ***Mayday Mayday***, March 2008 (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardcarn Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). ***The Serpentine Muse***, Spring 2008 (**The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes**, Evelyn Herzog, 301 Warren Ave, #203, Baltimore, MD 21203, USA). ***3 Pipe Problem Plugs and Dottles***, January & February 2008 (**The Nashville Scholars of the Three Pipe Problem**, Kay Blocker, 5017 Maywood Drive, Nashville, TN 37211, USA pkblocker@comcast.net) *[*a welcome return after an unexpected long hiatus*]*.

And ***Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press***, February 2008 and March 2008 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; blau7103@comcast.net).

Roger Johnson

The DISTRICT MESSENGER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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no. 282 30th April 2008

You can receive the DM electronically free of charge, as a PDF attachment or as plain text. Please contact me by e-mail. For a postal subscription, send 12 stamped, self-addressed envelopes or (overseas) send 12 International Reply Coupons or £6.00 or US$15.00 for 12 issues (dollar checks payable to Jean Upton, sterling cheques to me). Dollar prices quoted without qualification refer to US dollars.

With *The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes II* (Naxos AudioBooks, 2nd Floor, 40A High Street, Welwyn, Herts. AL6 9EQ; £16.99) **David Timson** completes his reading of the complete Holmes Canon, ten years after the release of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes I*. It's a task he's fulfilled with dedication, erudition, panache and wit, proving himself to be one of the great 'voice men'. He may not be as famous as, say, Martin Jarvis, but he really ought to be. He makes every character a distinct individual, without resorting to exaggerated mannerisms — except, of course, for those flamboyant types for whom exaggeration is a part of their personality. Mr Timson's collaboration with Nicolas Soames, who has overseen the project from the start (though *The Valley of Fear* was produced by Roy McMillan) ensures that the pacing is just right. Listening to these familiar tales you can appreciate how sure-footed Arthur Conan Doyle's storytelling is, for the most part — and how an excellent reading can improve a poor story, such as 'The Lion's Mane' or 'The Three Gables'. Mr Timson's recording of the Canon is a triumphant achievement. This final instalment includes as a light-hearted bonus 'The Adventure of the Wonderful Toy' written (and very well written) by David Timson himself, a new story with, as he says, just a hint of parody: it concerns the introduction of the phonograph to Baker Street, an aspiring American actor, and an alleged peculiarity of Queen Victoria. Like other Naxos recordings, *The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes II* can be downloaded at www.naxosaudiobooks.com.

Sherlock Holmes long ago became fixed in our minds as the archetype of the detective, especially the Victorian detective. Can you imagine a book called *The Rivals of C August Dupin*? No. But there have been two separate series entitled *The Rivals of Sherlock Holmes* (and a equally splendid collection called *Shadows of Sherlock Holmes*) and now Nick Rennison, author of the exceptionally clever *Sherlock Holmes: An Unauthorized Biography*, has compiled another volume with the same name, subtitled *An Anthology of Crime Stories 1890-1914* (No Exit Press, PO Box 394, Harpenden, Herts. AL5 1XJ; £9.99). I suppose it was inevitable that there should be some overlap with Sir Hugh Greene's classic series for Penguin, since both editors have chosen what they believe to be the best chronicles of the Thinking Machine and Carnacki the Ghost Finder, but it's good to see that Mr Rennison has also selected some rarer pieces — and rarer detectives, such as November Joe, Sebastian Zambra, Cecil Thorold and Lois Cayley. Some of the authors are well known for their mystery stories (Jacques Futrelle, G K Chesterton, Guy Boothby, Fergus Hume, Arthur B Reeve), some are more familiar in other fields (Arnold Bennett, Grant Allen, William Hope Hodgson, Hesketh Prichard), and some are almost unknown to me (Headon Hill, Rodrigues Ottolengui). The fifteen stories, and their protagonists, all have the virtue of individuality, even those most obviously influenced by Sherlock Holmes, such as Professor Van Dusen, 'the Thinking Machine' — but then Van Dusen's creator, Jacques Futrelle, was a deviser of jaw-droppingly ingenious plots. You may well find that some of these sleuths really do qualify as rivals of Sherlock Holmes (Father Brown surely does!) and in any case it's good to be reminded that Holmes was not a completely isolated phenomenon.

You don't need me to tell you that Raffles 'the Amateur Cracksman' was created by Arthur Conan Doyle's brother-in-law E W Hornung to be the antithesis of Sherlock Holmes. I've never particularly liked Hornung's stories, finding it hard to accept the idea that it's morally offensive for Raffles to earn his living honestly as a professional cricketer but perfectly acceptable to steal from those whose hospitality he accepts. However, I am greatly enjoying *Raffles and the Match-Fixing Syndicate* by Adam Corres (Grosvenor House Publishing, Crossweys, 28 -30 High Street, Guildford GU1 3HY; £15.99), which gives us Raffles and Bunny up-to-date. Rather than relocating Hornung's characters to the 21st century, with all their baggage of class and empire, Mr Corres has comprehensively re-imagined the gentleman crook and his rather unwilling sidekick and faced them with problems such as on-line betting and the 'Rainbow Nation'. *This* Raffles actually *is* a professional cricketer, with a fund of tactics that Stephen Potter would have acknowledged as Gamesmanship of the highest order, and a very cynical view of modern Britain. This Bunny is naïve but likable, intelligent and far from uncritical of his friend. *Raffles and the Match-Fixing Syndicate* is exciting and wickedly funny. It's available from www.amazon.co.uk.

Oscar Wilde and the Ring of Death, the second detective story in **Gyles Brandreth's** deservedly well-received series, will be published on 15 May (John Murray [Publishers], 338 Euston Road, London NW1 3BH; £14.99). Bram Stoker features in this one, as well as Arthur Conan Doyle. Mr Brandreth was photographed in the Baker Street study at the *Sherlock Holmes* pub for a forthcoming issue of *Waterstone's Books Quarterly*: photos of Wilde and Stoker can be seen on the mantelpiece.

Brian Pugh & **Paul Spiring's** admirable book *On the Trail of Arthur Conan Doyle: An Illustrated Devon Tour* is now available in a German edition, as *Auf der Spur von Arthur Conan Doyle: Eine Rundreise durch Devon* (Dryas Verlag, www.dryas.de; €12.95). *[*I understand that other translations are due, but I don't yet have details.*]*

It's been pointed out to me that Wordsworth Editions don't sell their books direct, but Bibliophile Books provides a full mail-order service at 5 Thomas Road, London E14 7BN (020 7515 9222; orders@bibliophilebooks.com). The Wordsworth list includes *The Game's Afoot*, an anthology of new Sherlock Holmes stories edited by David Stuart Davies, David's own novels *The Tangled Skein* and *The Hentzau Affair*, and Arthur Conan Doyle's *Memories and Adventures*.

The File on Colonel Moran: The Lure of Moriarty by our member **Vernon Mealor** will be published in late August by the Clyvedon Press (95 Maes-y-Sarn, Pentyrch, Cardiff CF15 9QR). This collection of three stories will be followed next year by *The File on Colonel Moran: Sherlock Holmes Takes a Hand*. More on this as it reaches me.

Philip Brown of Göttingen, Germany, is working on an English translation of the long-running series of *Groschenhefte* ('penny dreadfuls') called *Aus dem Geheimakten des Weldetektivs* — completely unauthorised adventures of Sherlock Holmes and his young assistant Harry Taxon. Watch this space!

The copy of *Beeton's Christmas Annual* for 1887, constituting the first edition of *A Study in Scarlet*, as mentioned in DM 281, will be sold on behalf of Oxfam at **Bonhams** in Oxford (39 Park End Street, Oxford OX1 1JD; 020 7468 8351; www.bonhams.com/books) on 20 May, as Lot 67. 'Some staining to pages 1 and 16/17, bookplate of George Arthur Hodgson, bound with 4 other Christmas special issues in contemporary half-morocco, spine gilt (lettered "Christmas Annuals"), without original wrappers and advertisements, front hinge split, contents working loose.' Randall Stock gives more information at

members.aol.com/shbest/ref/bonhams-2008-beetons.htm#description. The auctioneers' estimate is £7000-£9000.

The Old Court Radio Theatre Company has recorded two more of M J Elliott's scripts, in collaboration with the Sherlock Holmes Society of London and Hosiprog Productions. Jim Crozier and Dave Hawkes return as Holmes and Watson in *Shoscombe Old Place* and *The Five Orange Pips*. This fourth brace of plays will shortly be available to download free of charge from the Society's website at www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk/world/radio.php — or you can order them on CD from me for: UK £5.00; Europe £6.00 or 9.00 Euros; elsewhere £9.00 or US$12.00. (Please make sterling cheques payable to Roger Johnson and US dollar checks to Jean Upton. Euros in cash only, please.)

At www.sherlock-holmes.com is the April issue of the *Sherlockian E-Times*, the catalogue-newsletter from **Classic Specialties** (PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH, 45219, USA; sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com). And check www.cafepress.com/sherlockholmes2 too. Classic Specialties is *the* specialist dealer in Holmesian books and collectibles.

Roger Llewellyn's schedule for the next two months in David Stuart Davies's *The Death and Life of Sherlock Holmes* is: 4 May **Bowhill Theatre**, Selkirk (01750 222 04; www.bowhilllittletheatre.org); 14 & 15 May **McCarthy Studio**, **Stephen Joseph Theatre**, Scarborough (01723 370541; tickets@sjt.uk.com); 17 May **Number 8 Community Arts Centre**, Pershore (01386 555488); 21 & 22 May **Nightingale Theatre**, Brighton (01273 709709; www.brightonticketshop.com); 25 May **Jermyn Street Theatre**, London (SHSL private booking); 27 May **Cramphorn Theatre**, Chelmsford (01245 606505; www.chelmsford.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=14684); 5 June **Arts Centre**, Darlington (01325 486555; www.darlington.gov.uk); 12 June **Ashcroft Arts Centre**, Fareham (01329 223100; www.ashcroft.org.uk); 18 June **The Castle**, Wellingborough (01933 270007; www.thecastle.org.uk); 19 June **artsdepot**, Finchley (0208 369 5454; www.artsdepot.co.uk); 29 June **Guildhall Theatre**, Derby (01332 255800; www.assemblyrooms-derby.co.uk).

At Roger's website at www.makinprojects.co.uk/page31.html you can see video excerpts *from Sherlock Holmes – The Last Act!*

Stuart Kaminsky's play *The Final Toast*, featuring Holmes, Watson and, er, Charles Chaplin, will have its world premiere at **Discovering New Mysteries**, the second International Mystery Writers' Festival, at Owensboro, Kentucky, 12-22 June, along with the US premiere of Agatha Christie's play *Chimneys*. See www.newmysteries.org/.

Joseph J Eckrich has some very early *Sherlock Holmes Journals* for sale: Autumn 1957, Summer 1958, Spring 1959 (Conan Doyle Centenary Issue), Winter 1959 and Winter 1966. Contact Joe at jeckrich@sbcglobal.net if you're interested. The condition is very good, except that the Centenary issue has a tear at the base of the spine. (Joe is also selling Holmesiana on eBay as 'eckrich221', though he has nothing there at the moment.)

The Case of the Influential Illustrator: Sidney Paget's Sherlock Holmes finishes on 5 May. It's at **Church Farmhouse Museum** (Greyhound Hill, Hendon, London NW4 4JR; www.barnet.gov.uk/index/leisure-culture/museums-galleries/current-exhibitions.htm) and it's the first ever exhibition devoted to the artist.

Paul Spiring notes that Baskerville Carriages and BFRonline.biz will shortly offer **The Baskerville Weekend**, combining elements from The Baskerville Dining Experience and *On the Trail of Arthur Conan Doyle*. The cost will be about £299 a head. Information is available at www.bfronline.biz/index.php?option=com_content&task=section&id=11&Itemid=47, though I don't see anything yet on the Baskerville Carriages' site at www.baskervillecarriages.co.uk.

BFRonline.biz at www.bfronline.biz is mainly devoted to **Bertram Fletcher Robinson**, and naturally has a great deal of interest relating to Conan Doyle, Sherlock Holmes and *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.

Next year marks Arthur Conan Doyle's 150th birthday, but it looks as if Edinburgh will celebrate by removing the statue that marks his birthplace in Picardy Place. The house itself was destroyed in 1969 to make way for the eastern link road. Now it's planned to put the statue (of Sherlock Holmes, not Conan Doyle) into storage for up to two years while a new tram system is set up.

Nine miles from central Edinburgh is Mauricewood House at Penicuik, the home from 1890 to 1911 of **Dr Joseph Bell**, to whom Conan Doyle wrote in 1892, 'It is certainly to you that I owe Sherlock Holmes.' The lovely seven-bedroom house comes with 3.26 acres. Bids in excess of £1,100,000 are invited. You can download the brochure at www.savills.co.uk/quickSearchDetail.aspx?ID=210002#.

Kathleen Bragg, who was the treasurer, or Finback Whale, of The Harpooners of the Sea Unicorn of St Charles, Missouri, lost her fight against cancer on 31 March, and is deeply missed by her husband Michael and their fellow-Harpooners.

Charlton Heston, who died on 5 April aged eighty-three, will always be remembered as the actor who played Moses, Ben-Hur, and El Cid — and the astronaut in *Planet of the Apes*. His many rôles also included Dr Watson's hero General Gordon, and in 1980 he played Sherlock Holmes in Paul Giovanni's melodrama *The Crucifer of Blood*, with Jeremy Brett as Watson. In 1991 Heston took the part again when his son Fraser filmed the play, with Richard Johnson as Watson.

To my generation, growing up in the 1950s, **Willoughby Goddard** was the wicked Landburgher Gessler, doomed to humiliation each week in the television series *The Adventures of William Tell*, but of course that was just one aspect of his dramatic versatility. In 1997 he attended our annual dinner, as the guest of his godson Richard Lancelyn Green, and he was, I think, pleased when I complimented him on his performance as Zeal-of-the-Land Busy in *Bartholomew Fair* for the Royal Shakespeare Company. His only Holmesian rôle was in 1953, as Colonel Moran in *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* at Bromley. Willoughby Goddard died on 11 April, aged eighty-three.

Bill Barnes informs me of the death on 20 April of **Lionel Fredman**, founding president of The Sydney Passengers. Dr Fredman was certainly a member of our Society from 1976 to 2000, and Bill adds: 'Along with Alan Olding in Adelaide and Douglas Sutherland-Bruce in Perth, Lionel was one of the elder statesmen of the Sherlockian movement in Australia. Thinking for years that he was the only Australian member of the SHSL, he formed a society of one in Sydney some time in the 1950s (exact date unknown) called "The Friends of Mary Fraser".'

A reminder that the 2008 **Annual Victorian Cricket Match** between the Gentlemen of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London and the Gentlemen of the P G Wodehouse Society will be held on Sunday 22 June at West Wycombe Cricket Ground. These events are quite delightful — and free! All are welcome, and Victorian costume and appurtenances are encouraged. The game is played to laws of 1895, which those seriously interested can consult on our Society's website at www.sherlockholmes.org.uk/pdf/laws1895msw.pdf.

Periodicals received. ***The Baker Street Bugle***, 1 March 2008 (**The Deerstalkers of Welshpool**, Joan & Roy Upton-Holder, Baskerville, 146 Little Henfaes Drive, Welshpool, Powys SY21 7BA). ***The Baker Street Journal***, Spring 2008 (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). ***The Formulary***, March 2008 (**The Friends of Dr Watson**, Nino Cirone, Highcroft Cottage, 14 Totteridge Common, Totteridge, London N20 8NL). ***The Illustrious Clients News***, April 2008 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T Doyle, 9 Calumet Court, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). ***Ineffable Twaddle***, May/June 2008 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). ***Mayday Mayday***, April 2008 (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardcarn Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). ***The Petrel Flyer***, Spring 2008 and Special *The Master's Dinner* Edition 15 March 2008 (**The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia**, Len Haffenden, 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7P 3C6). ***Prescott's Press***, March 2008 (**The Three Garridebs**, Warren Randall, 15 Fawn Lane West, South Setauket, NY 11720-1346, USA). ***Sherlockiana***, nr. 1, 2008 (**Sherlock Holmes Klubben i Danmark**, Bjarne Rother Jensen, Højbovangen 24, 9200 Aalborg SV, Denmark). ***The Whaling News***, March 2008 and April 2008 (**The Harpooners of the Sea Unicorn**, Michael E Bragg, PO Box 256, St Charles, MO 63302-0256, USA).

Roger Johnson

The DISTRICT MESSENGER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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no. 283 31st May 2008

You can receive the DM electronically free of charge, as a PDF attachment or as plain text. Please contact me by e-mail. For a postal subscription, send 12 stamped, self-addressed envelopes or (overseas) send 12 International Reply Coupons or £6.00 or US$15.00 for 12 issues (dollar checks payable to Jean Upton, sterling cheques to me). Dollar prices quoted without qualification refer to US dollars.

Oscar Wilde and the Ring of Death (John Murray [Publishers], 338 Euston Road, London NW1 3BH; £14.99) is the eagerly-awaited second volume in Gyles Brandreth's series of detective stories, and it doesn't disappoint. In 1892, at a meeting of his dining club at the Cadogan Hotel, Wilde introduces a game of 'Murder': each member and guest anonymously names a person to be disposed of, and everyone tries to identify which would-be assassin chose which putative victim. Those present include Wilde's friends Arthur Conan Doyle, Bram Stoker, Walter Sickert, Lord Alfred Douglas, Edward Heron-Allen and Robert Sherard, as well as Douglas's brother Lord Drumlanrig, Doyle's friend Willie Hornung, and Stoker's guest Charles Brookfield. There are fourteen in all. Next day, the first named victim is found dead… and the list includes two of the guests at the dinner. And Sherlock Holmes. And Oscar and Constance Wilde… That curious, uneasy shadowland of late Victorian London, where Society, Art and Popular Entertainment overlap, is richly evoked, and the details of Wilde's life are mentioned by Sherard, the narrator, in a perfectly natural, convincing manner: the man he presents to us is both the authentic Oscar and the authentic amateur sleuth. He isn't Sherlock Holmes, of course, but we are invited to consider the possibility that he is the inspiration for Mycroft Holmes. The dining club is named after Socrates, and it isn't a vast leap from there to Diogenes. Three final points — First: were Elizabeth Scott-Rivers' eyes open or closed? Second: it's commendably bold of Mr Brandreth to choose his own middle name, Daubeny, as the surname for the least attractive character in the story. And third: yes, Charles Brookfield was the first actor to play Sherlock Holmes on stage, in a spoof called *Under the Clock*, with Seymour Hicks as Watson.

Believe it or not, my copy of *The Baker Street Journal Christmas Annual 2007* reached me just a couple of weeks ago. The BSI knew that the subject would be popular, but they hadn't expected the entire print run to sell out before all the orders were filled! You won't be able to buy a copy now, but I'll tell you a little about it anyway. The title of this annual is *Rathbone Returns! A Misadventure called* ***Sherlock Holmes***, and it's an authoritative account, by S E Dahlinger and Glen Miranker, of what should have been a triumph for Basil Rathbone, returning to his most famous rôle in a spectacular Broadway production. In fact, it was a disaster. Almost unbelievably, the try-out in Boston attracted hardly any audience. True, the play itself, written by the star's wife, Ouida Rathbone, was clumsy and overblown. True, they'd had to settle for a young publicist instead of an experienced producer. True, Nigel Bruce was dead, and the less famous Jack Raine was cast as Watson. Still, you'd have thought that the chance to see Rathbone as Holmes, live on stage, would be irresistible — after all, this was 1953, only seven years after Rathbone's final appearance as Holmes on film and on radio! The citizens of Boston resisted it, though, and on Broadway the play closed after just three performances. Basil Rathbone's career never regained the heights, and Bill Doll never produced another play. I've long known the basics of the story, but I'm greatly indebted to Ms Dahlinger and Mr Miranker for telling us what really happened. It must be gratifying to know that so many people snapped up *Rathbone Returns!* but I do think the BSI should consider reprinting.

Baring-Gould, Bell, Blakeney, Brend, Butters, Christ, Dakin, Folsom, Hall, Thomson, Zeisler… and now there's a new, comprehensive and closely reasoned chronology to add to the list. Actually, *Holmes and Watson: A New Chronology of Their Adventures* by **Vincent Delay** has been around since 2004, but only in French. At our AGM last weekend an excellent English translation by Margaret Owens was launched, and Vincent was there to sign copies. It's published by the Sherlock Holmes Society of London as an attractive A4 paperback, and is available from the Society's Merchandising Officer, Judi Ellis, at 13 Crofton Avenue, Orpington, Kent BR6 8DU; rjandje@aol.com. (The price at the AGM was £10.00. Judi can give you dollar and euro equivalents, and tell you the cost of postage.)

It's nearly a year since the last newsletter from **The Conan Doyle Collection: Richard Lancelyn Green Bequest**, though I'm told that another is due very shortly. Meanwhile, there's a booklet, *A Study in Sherlock: Uncovering the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection* by Neil McCaw, available for £3.50 from the City Museum & Records Office, Museum Road, Portsmouth PO1 2LF or online from http://www.portsmouthmuseumsshop.co.uk/acatalog/Arthur_Conan_Doyle.html. The website at www.conandoylecollection.co.uk is worth a look.

I'm fascinated to learn from Randall Stock's invaluable website at www.members.aol.com/_ht_a/shbest/ref/sidney-paget-original-art.htm that the Collection includes an unpublished portrait of Sherlock Holmes by Sidney Paget, signed and dated October 1904.

I found reference on a German website to a 'very amusing and (in parts) very angry and overly didactic book about the event of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London'. The book, *Very British! Unterwegs in England, Irland, Schottland*, is written by **Elsemarie Maletzke**, whom many of us know as an enthusiastic and delightful participant in more than one of the Society's Swiss pilgrimages. Obviously it covers more than just our Society and Sherlock Holmes, but my limited German would be just too limited to appreciate it. It's published by Taschenbuch, and is available at €6.00 from www.amazon.de.

Due in July, at $20.00 plus postage, is *The Sherlock Holmes Stories of Edward D Hoch*, with an afterword by Gary Lovisi (Gryphon Books, PO Box 209, Brooklyn, NY 11228, USA; http://gryphonbooks.com). And in August comes *The Shadow of Reichenbach Falls* by John R King, in which it's revealed that there was another witness to the fatal struggle — a young ghost-hunter named Thomas Carnacki (Forge, 175 Fifth Avenue. New York, NY 10010, USA; $26.95). The provisional date for *Bertram Fletcher Robinson: A Footnote to The Hound of the Baskervilles* by Brian W Pugh and Paul R Spiring is 1 September (MX Publishing, 10 Kingfisher Close, Stanstead Abbotts, Herts. SG12 8LQ; www.mxpublishing.co.uk); the book is dedicated to the memory of Richard Lancelyn Green.

The May 2008 issue of the *Sherlockian E-Times*, the catalogue-newsletter, with lots of Holmesian books and collectibles, from **Classic Specialties** (PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH, 45219, USA; sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com) is online at www.sherlock-holmes.com. Check www.cafepress.com/sherlockholmes2 too.

Congratulations to **Charles Foley, Jon Lellenberg and Daniel Stashower**! *Arthur Conan Doyle: A Life in Letters* has won both the MWA's Edgar Award for the best critical/biographical book and the Malice Domestic Agatha Award for the best non-fiction, and is nominated for Bouchercon's Anthony Award for best critical work. Congrats also to Jeff Falkingham, whose novel *Sherlock Holmes and*

the County Courthouse Caper was shortlisted for the 2008 Next Generation Indie Book Awards in the Young Adult section.

A Life in Letters is will shortly be published in paperback. Meanwhile, so Jonathan McCafferty tells me, the hardback is available at just £5.99 from Bookcase London (268 Chiswick High Road, London W4 1PD; bookcaselondon@yahoo.co.uk).

The leading article in June's *Book and Magazine Collector* (Room 101, 140 Wales Farm Road, London W3 6UG; £3.50) is 'Conan Doyle in *The Strand*' by Mike Ashley. W H Smith still had this issue on the shelf yesterday.

On 20 May a copy of *Beeton's Christmas Annual* for 1887, containing the first publication of *A Study in Scarlet*, was auctioned at Bonhams in Oxford, on behalf of Oxfam. The auctioneers' estimate was £7,000-£9,000. The hammer price was actually £15,500 (with commission, it came to £18,600). The purchaser, who was present in the saleroom, is apparently a private collector from the north-west of England.

Peter Blau notes: 'If you would like to read one of the textbooks Conan Doyle studied before he took his medical degree in 1881, Peter Wood has discovered Joseph Bell's *A Manual of the Operations of Surgery for the Use of Senior Students, House Surgeons, and Junior Practitioners* on the internet at websites that include www.gutenberg.org/files/24564/24564-h/24564-h.html. Bell wrote the book in 1866, and Project Gutenberg has the fifth edition (revised and enlarged) published in 1883.'

Also from Peter: 'Philip K Jones has compiled (and continues to compile) an excellent database for Sherlockian pastiches. There are 6,875 entries (and more to come, of course), and it's available on the internet at the Illustrious Clients' website at http://www.illustriousclients.org/index.php?name=Content&pid=5.'

One of the lots offered in the Entertainment Memorabilia sale at Bonhams in Knightsbridge on 18 June is 'A Victorian style dinner jacket from *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, 1939, as worn by **Nigel Bruce** as Dr. Watson, *Estimate: £800 - l,200*'. The provenance seems impeccable. I'll be interested to see what it fetches. A photograph and details are in the online catalogue at http://www.bonhams.com/cgi-bin/public.sh/pubweb/publicSite.r?sContinent=EUR&screen=lotdetailsNoFlash&iSaleItemNo=3621423&iSaleNo=15801&iSaleSectionNo=1.

If you fancy owning some **Baskerville** family property, contact Bigwood Auctioneers (The Old School, Tiddington, Stratford upon Avon, Warwickshire, CV37 7AW; 01789 269415) or Martin Heath (01743 243186; mobile 07963 524704). On 27 June Bigwood's will sell a 40-piece silver cutlery set that Mr Heath found while valuing the contents of Clyro Court near Hay-on-Wye. The house was built in 1839 for the Mynors-Baskerville family, whose guests apparently included Arthur Conan Doyle; in recent years it has been renamed Baskerville Hall Hotel. Every piece of cutlery bears the Baskerville crest: a hound's head with a broken spear through its jaw. *[*Confusingly, the local hound legend appears to be connected with the Vaughan family of nearby Hergest Court in Herefordshire.*]* Details of the sale and photos of the silverware are online at www.bigwoodauctioneers.co.uk.

Nicholas Utechin will present a three-hour special on the digital radio channel BBC7 on 19 July. *The Game's Afoot* will include the earliest known recording of a BBC Holmes production, *The Speckled Band*, dramatised by John Dickson Carr and starring Cedric Hardwicke & Finlay Currie (17 May 1945), as well as John Gielgud & Ralph Richardson in *The Red-Headed League* (19 October 1954), Carleton Hobbs & Norman Shelley in *The Boscombe Valley Mystery* (12 December 1966), Clive Merrison & Michael Williams in *The Solitary Cyclist* (17 March 1993), and Clive Merrison & Andrew Sachs in *The Abergavenny Murder* (18 May 2004). There's also an interview with Bert Coules, who introduces *The Solitary Cyclist*.

And Bert Coules is completing the scripts for a third series of *The Further Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, with Merrison & Sachs reprising their rôles for Radio 4.

Not long after the death of our member Mimi Langley comes the news that her cousin **David Galerstein** died on 29 April at the age of eighty-six. Scott Monty notes that Dave Galerstein was a former principal of the New York City Board of Education 'and was always interested in educating those around him'. His manner was friendly and lively, and his contributions to Sherlockian literature included co-editing *A Singular Set of People* and *a Singular Sense of Humor*. In 1972 he was invested into the Baker Street Irregulars as 'Bert Stevens'.

Bernard Archard, who died on 1 May aged ninety-one, became a television star in 1959 in the curiously Holmes-like rôle of Colonel Oreste Pinto in *Spycatcher*, based on the wartime memoirs of the man General Eisenhower called 'the greatest living expert in security'. Twenty years ago, Richard Carpenter wanted to cast Archard as the elderly Sherlock Holmes in a proposed, but never made, TV series. He did finally get to play the part in a BBC radio production of G K Chesterton's story *The Absence of Mr Glass*, with Andrew Sachs as Father Brown. Archard's character, Dr Orion Hood, is very obviously the retired Sherlock Holmes.

Alan Olding, founder in 1978 of the Sherlock Holmes Society of Australia, died on 6 May, having contracted asbestosis decades before while building his own house after he and his wife Olive moved from England. Alan and Olive were occasional visitors to the northern hemisphere — I first met them on our Society's Dartmoor weekend in 1979. Their daughter Alex Threlfall told me, 'Dad was delighted that his youngest grand-daughter, Laura, is to marry later in the year, and her new surname will be… Holmes.' Alan received the BSI investiture 'Cooee' in 1988.

Lynne Godden has informed me of the death on 8 May, after a long illness, of the painter **Douglas West**, some of whose lovely watercolours graced our Society's Christmas cards for several years, while others were reproduced as prints for framing.

The American cartoonist **Will Elder**, perhaps best known for 'Little Annie Fanny' in *Playboy*, was one of the original artists for *Mad Magazine*, usually credited as Bill Elder. His astonishing talent for reproducing other cartoonists' styles didn't overshadow his own original work, which included several spoofs of the great detective, including in the 1950s 'Shermlock Shomes' and 'The Hound of the Basketballs'. He died on 14 May aged eighty-six.

Margot Boyd worked on stage with Bernard Shaw, Michael Redgrave and Noel Coward, but most of her acting career was on BBC radio. She'll forever be remembered as the formidable Marjorie Antrobus in *The Archers*, but of course she played many other parts, including 'Ma'am' in *Conan Doyle and the Edalji Case* in 1987, and Mrs Hudson in *Sherlock's Last Case* by Charles Marowitz in 1989. She died on 20 May at the age of ninety-four.

Periodicals received. ***Arthur Conan Doyle Newsletter and Birthday File XV***, 22 May 2008 (**The Conan Doyle [Crowborough] Establishment**, Brian Pugh, 20 Clare Road, Lewes, Sussex BN7 1PN). ***For the Sake of the Trust***, Spring 2008 (**The Baker Street Irregulars Trust**, Julie McKuras, 13512 Granada Avenue, Apple Valley, MN 55124, USA). ***The Camden House Journal***, April 2008 & May 2008 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, Debbie Tinsley, PO Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). ***Communication***, no. 280 (**The Pleasant Places of Florida**, Wanda & Jeff Dow, 1737 Santa Anna Drive, Dunedin, FL 34698, USA). ***Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections***, March 2008 (Suite 111, Elmer L Andersen Library, University of Minnesota, 222 21st Avenue S, Minneapolis, MN 55455, USA). ***The Passengers' Log***, January 6 and May 22 2008 (**The Sydney Passengers**, Rosane McNamara, 4/2a Merlin Street, Neutral Bay, NSW 2089, Australia). ***The Petrel Flyer***, May/June 2008 (**The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia**, Len Haffenden, 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7P 3C6). ***The Scion***, Spring 2008 (**The Musgraves**, Anne Jordan, Hallas Lodge, Greenside Lane, Cullingworth, Bradford BD13 5AP). ***The Torr***, Spring 2008 (**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***, April 2008 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; blau7103@comcast.net).

Roger Johnson

The DISTRICT MESSENGER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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no. 284 2nd July 2008

You can receive the DM electronically free of charge, as a PDF attachment or as plain text. Please contact me by e-mail. For a postal subscription, send 12 stamped, self-addressed envelopes or (overseas) send 12 International Reply Coupons or £6.00 or US$15.00 for 12 issues (dollar checks payable to Jean Upton, sterling cheques to me). Dollar prices quoted without qualification refer to US dollars.

Sherlock Holmes Mystery Magazine no. 1 (Wildside Press, 9710 Traville Gateway Drive #234, Rockville, MD 20850, USA) is not a pictorial like the much-missed *Sherlock*, but, as the name suggests, a digest-sized volume in the tradition of the similarly-titled publications that bear the names of Ellery Queen and Alfred Hitchcock. The editor is Marvin Kaye, whose work I've enjoyed since reading his chapbook *The Histrionic Holmes* in 1971 (though he and I differ in our assessment of Ellery Queen's novel *A Study in Terror*). The non-fiction in this first issue understandably focuses mainly on Holmes. Kim Newman reviews *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes* and *Sherlock Holmes: The Hidden Years*: Lenny Picker explains why there has yet to be a satisfactory film of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*; there's a jokey 'answers to correspondents' column called 'Ask Mrs Hudson'. But there's also an interview with the prolific Ron Goulart, who contributes a new tale about his series character Harry Challenge. The six new stories include just one Holmes adventure – a good one, 'The Strange Case of the Haunted Freighter' by Carole Buggé. The other stories, also good, are by Marc Bilgrey, Hal Charles, the late Jean Paiva and the late Edward D Hoch. And the issue concludes appropriately with a reprint of Sherlock Holmes's first case, 'The Gloria Scott'. Wildside's website is at www.wildsidepress.com, but I don't see any mention of the magazine there yet. It is available, though, from www.amazon.com and www.amazon.co.uk.

Next Monday Harper Perennial (HarperCollins*Publishers*, 77-85 Fulham Palace Road, Hammersmith, London W6 8JB) will publish the paperback edition of *Arthur Conan Doyle: A Life in Letters*, edited by Jon Lellenberg, Daniel Stashower & Charles Foley. It's a satisfyingly solid book of 710 pages, not-unreasonably priced at £12.99, and it's essential reading for everyone who wants to understand the man who created Sherlock Holmes.

At www.artintheblood.com you'll find information about the new Goode Press chapbook, *The Final Problem*, and a link to Lulu, where you can buy a copy. L M Goode has coloured Sidney Paget's illustrations (and one of Arthur Twidle's) with delicacy and taste – as Leslie Klinger said of the first chapbook, 'It certainly demonstrates the world's loss because the *Strand Magazine* only appeared in black-and-white! The illustrations have never looked better.' Extras include a new portrait of Paget himself by Pablo Carreño, and one of Paget and Conan Doyle by Philip Cornell. There are only 222 copies, and, though it would be exaggerating to call this edition of *The Final Problem* essential, it is a delightful thing to have!

Peter Blau recommends *There's No Place like Holmes: Exploring Sense of Place Through Crime Fiction* by Derham Groves, BSI (Black Jack Press, Michael Jorgensen, 392 Station Street, Carlton North, Victoria 3054, Australia; mickjorg@alphalink.co.au; $41.00 postpaid by airmail or $36.00 by surface).

For over a century writers have imagined encounters between Holmes and other famous people, real and fictional. Moonstone Books (www.moonstonebooks.com/) are publishing a series of graphic novels, written by Joe Gentile and illustrated by Carlos Magno & Andy Bennett, featuring Holmes and Kolchak the Night Stalker. Rather refreshingly, the two don't meet. Rather they 'try to untangle the same mystery… one hundred years apart from each other'. *[*I enjoyed the Kolchak films and TV series, much more so than* ***The X Files****. These new stories sound promising.*]*

The File on Colonel Moran – Vol. I: The Lure of Moriarty by our member V A (Vernon) Mealor will be published at the end of August by The Clyvedon Press (95 Maes-y-Sarn, Pentyrch, Cardiff CF15 9QR; no price yet). This collection of three stories will be followed next year by *The File on Colonel Moran – Vol. II: Sherlock Holmes Takes a Hand.*

The hardback edition of *Bertram Fletcher Robinson: A Footnote to The Hound of the Baskervilles* by Brian W Pugh and Paul R Spiring, priced at £18.99/$28.95, is due on 1 September, and the paperback, priced at £12.99/$19.95, on 17 October (MX Publishing, 10 Kingfisher Close, Stanstead Abbotts, Herts. SG12 8LQ; www.mxpublishing.co.uk). The book is dedicated to the memory of Richard Lancelyn Green, and I'm pleased to say that I've contributed a foreword.

Les Klinger's work in editing and annotating the Holmesian Canon is justly appreciated. Since completing *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes* he's been hard at work on *The New Annotated Dracula*, which is due from W W Norton & Co. (500 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10110-0017, USA) in October, with an introduction by fellow-BSI Neil Gaiman.

Debbie Haynes has some Holmes books, old and new, available to the first claimants for the cost of postage. Various editions of the Canon, plus Michael Hardwick's *Complete Guide to Sherlock Holmes*, Charles Viney's *The Authentic World of Sherlock Holmes*, a BBC Radio two-cassette set, a programme and some flyers for *The Secret of Sherlock Holmes* (Brett & Hardwicke) and Charles Merriman's *Tourist Guide to the London of Sherlock Holmes*. You can contact Debbie at debbie.symons@hotmail.co.uk.

Ray Pinfold is obliged to sell his Holmesian library, which is much more extensive and varied. I shan't attempt to list the items here. Please contact him at 47 St Margarets Road, Ward End, Birmingham B8 2BB (phone 0121 327 2319, after 6.30 pm).

The most expensive of many items at the 2008 **Antiquarian Book Fair**, held at Olympia last month, was probably the manuscript of 'The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax', brought from Los Angeles by Mark Hime of Biblioctopus. The price asked was £250,000, but there were no takers.

Lot 21 at Sotheby's auction on 17 July at Bond Street will interest those who heard E J Wagner's talk to our Society or who have read her book *The Science of Sherlock Holmes*. It's the autopsy case notes of the famous criminal pathologist **Sir Bernard Spilsbury**, comprising nearly 4,000 3" x 5" index cards, each with autograph notes detailing cause of death, sex, date of birth and name of subject, date and place of autopsy, details of external and internal examination, and case history. The catalogue is on-line at www.sothebys.co.uk.

Tomoyuki Tanaka, author of the stimulating 'Holmes is Box; Watson is "James" Cox' in the Winter 2007 SHJ, takes his investigation further in an even more remarkable paper, '*Box and Cox*, the Homeric Sherlock Holmes, and Joyce's *Ulysses*', accessible on-line at http://hjs.ff.cuni.cz/essays/tanaka.htm.

After the Summer School at Marlborough College on 15 July, **Roger Llewellyn** will take a break before resuming his tour with the retitled *Sherlock Holmes… The Death and Life* in the autumn. His website is now up and running at http://www.makinprojects.co.uk/page31.html (not an obvious address to remember but easy to add to one's favourites), where you'll find the touring schedule. 4 Sept: **Brewery**

Arts Centre, Kendal (www.breweryarts.co.uk; 01539 725 133); 6 Sept: **Theatre Royal**, Dumfries (www.theatreroyaldumfries.co.uk; 01387 267894); 11 Sept: **Theatr Mwldan**, Cardigan, (www.mwldan.co.uk; 01239 621 200); 20 Sept: **Underground Theatre**, Eastbourne (www.undergroundtheatre.org.uk; 01323 737677); 24 Sept: **Arts Centre**, Southport (www.seftonarts.co.uk; 01704 540011); 26 Sept: **Library Theatre**, Darwen (www.darwenlibrarytheatre.com; 01254 706 006); 3 Oct: **Torch Theatre**, Milford Haven (www.torchtheatre.co.uk; 01646 695 267); 21 Oct: **Off the Shelf Literature Festival**, Sheffield (www.sheffield.gov.uk); 23 Oct: **Theatre at Headington**, Oxford (www.headington.org/theatre; 01865 759138); 13 Nov: **Arts Centre,** Bridport (www.bridport-arts.com; 01308 424 204); 14 Nov: **The Exchange,** Sturminster Newton (www.stur-exchange.co.uk; 01258 475 137); 21 Nov:, **Old Town Hall Arts Centre,** Hemel Hempstead; (www.dacorum.gov.uk/arts; 01442 228091); 25 – 29 Nov: **The Tabard Theatre,** London (www.tabardtheatre.co.uk; 08448 472 264); 5 Dec: **The Hall for Cornwall**, Truro (www.hallforcornwall.co.uk; 01872 262466); 13 Dec: **Norden Farm Arts Centre**, Maidenhead, (www.nordenfarm.org; 01628 788 997).

Peter Blau reports that *Faeries*, a new musical about the Cottingley fairies by Stephen Langston & Wendy McPike, will be produced at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in August. There's information at http://www.edfringe.com/.

Shortly after the last DM it was announced that **Guy Ritchie**, director of *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* and husband of Madonna, will direct an as-yet untitled Sherlock Holmes film, for release by Warner in 2010. The screenplay, based on an as-yet unpublished graphic novel by Lionel Wigram, will emphasise Holmes's skills as a swordsman and boxer. Neil Marshall was to have directed, from a script by Michael Johnson. Ritchie is apparently rewriting Johnson's script. Current favourite to play Holmes is Robert Downey, Jr.

And today comes news of another film, this one a comedy, written by Etan Cohen and starring **Sacha Baron Cohen** as Holmes with Will Ferrell as Watson. Best known for *Borat* and *Ali G*, Sacha Baron Cohen recently played Pirelli in Tim Burton's film *Sweeney Todd*. He could make a good Holmes. The film, also untitled, will be released by Columbia.

The Hollywood Reporter notes that **Central Partnership**, Russia's top independent film producer, plans 'the country's largest-ever TV series production, a $16 million, 32-episode series based on Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories. The shooting will begin in summer 2009 and continue through 2010. Half of the episodes will be based on Holmes stories not yet adapted for the screen in Russia.' If the result is as good as the Lenfilms series with Vasily Livanov and Vitaly Solomin, it will be outstanding.

Richard Taylor reports that the December 2007 issue of the popular railway history magazine *Backtrack* features a six-page article by Nigel Digby, 'The Railway Journeys of Sherlock Holmes'. Despite some niggles, Richard says that the piece is well written and well illustrated, with appropriate photographs and with Paget drawings. Back issues of *Backtrack* are available from Pendragon Publishing (PO Box 3, Easingwold, York YO61 3YS) for £4.40, postpaid within the UK. There's a website at www.pendragonpublishing.co.uk.

According to an article in today's *Independent* scientists have finally discovered why Stradivarius and Guarnerius violins are superior to any made since. 'A study has found that the secret may be explained by the consistent density of the two wooden panels used to make its body, rather than anything to do with the instrument's overall contours, varnish, angle of the neck, fingerboard or strings.'

The Museum in Docklands, a branch of the Museum of London, currently hosts an exhibition on *Jack the Ripper and the East End*. Naturally, Holmes gets a mention among the innumerable fictional treatments of the Whitechapel murders, but the real interest is in the dual emphasis on life in the slums of 1888 and on the criminology – in the widest sense. The brochure says, 'Like the Whitechapel murders, recent "Ripper" murders have forced us to acknowledge the vulnerability of women who work as prostitutes. The endless obsession with Jack the Ripper glamorises serial murderers and trivialises violence against women.' The statements seem to contradict each other, but they're both true. People have always been fascinated by murder, and these still-unsolved atrocities, like the chronicles of Sherlock Holmes, can serve to open our eyes to aspects of late Victorian life that we might not otherwise have considered. *Jack the Ripper and the East End* can be seen until 2 November at the Museum in Docklands, West India Quay, Canary Wharf, London E14 4AL. See the website at www.museumindocklands.org.uk/jacktheripper.

Dr Jeanne Youngson, founder and President of The Vampire Empire, the world's oldest Dracula society, informs me that there's now a branch for Sherlockian members, called **The Sherlock Holmes Auxiliary**. The Empire's website is at http://wiki.benecke.com/index.php?title=2007-07-23_The_Vampire_Empire (e-mail vampirempire146@hotmail.com).

A reminder that **Charles Hall** (12 Paisley Terrace, Edinburgh EH8 7JW) has a variety of distinctive Sherlock Holmes collectibles for sale: caricature bookmarks, postcards, greeting cards, international postage stamps, play scripts and flyers, and, perhaps most importantly, the two books that Charles wrote with Peter Blythe: *On Stage Sherlock Holmes* (reviews of plays and musicals around the world) and *Sherlock Holmes and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in Edinburgh*. *[*Edinburgh City Council should consider a new edition for ACD's 150th anniversary next year.*]*

Scott Monty passes on news of the death of **Bruce Montgomery** on 21 June, the day after his eighty-first birthday. 'He was, for many years, the voice and spirit of the Baker Street Irregulars annual dinner in New York, where he would invariably sing the BSI's unofficial anthem, "Aunt Clara." Monty … picked up where his father, James Montgomery, BSI ("The Red Circle") left off. The elder Montgomery was also a gifted tenor and provided musical entertainment during the BSI's early years.' Unlike his father, Bruce did not, I think, contribute to the literature of Holmes, but he became a national authority on Gilbert & Sullivan, director of the Gilbert & Sullivan Players of Philadelphia and director of musical studies at the University of Pennsylvania. In 1994 he too received the BSI investiture 'The Red Circle'.

Steve Duke informs me that **The Elementary Victorians**, one of two Holmesian Societies in the Australian state of Victoria, will celebrate its (their?) twentieth anniversary on 5 August. Congratulations! You can contact the Victorians at redman.duke@gmail.com, or write to: The Elementary Victorians, Steve Duke (President), P.O. Box 340, Reservoir, VIC 3073, Australia.

Periodicals received. ***The Arthur Conan Doyle Collection Lancelyn Green Bequest,*** Spring/Summer 2008 (The Conan Doyle Collection, Arts & Cultural Development Service, 2nd Floor, The Guildhall, Portsmouth PO1 2AJ; lancelyngreencollection@portsmouthcc.gov.uk; the website is at www.conandoylecollection.co.uk). ***The Camden House Journal***, June 2008 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, Debbie Tinsley, PO Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). ***Communication***, no. 281 (**The Pleasant Places of Florida**, Wanda & Jeff Dow, 1737 Santa Anna Drive, Dunedin, FL 34698, USA). ***The Illustrious Clients News***, June 2008 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T Doyle, 9 Calumet Court, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). ***The Pipe Smoker's Thing***, Spring 2008 (Albert Mendez, 142-35 38th Avenue, Flushing, NY 11354, USA) *[*includes an account of The Holmesian Society, founded in 1966 and now down to one member!*]*. ***Practice Notes,*** June 2008 (**The Friends of Dr Watson**, Nino Cirone, Highcroft Cottage, 14 Totteridge Common, London N20 8NL). ***Prescott's Press***, June 2008 (**The Three Garridebs**, Warren Randall, 15 Fawn Lane West, South Setauket, NY 11720-1346, USA). ***The School Report***, Summer 2008 (**The Priory Scholars**, Horace L Coates, 21 Butcombe Road, Leicester LE4 0FY). ***The Serpentine Muse***, Summer 2008 (**The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes**, Evelyn Herzog, 301 Warren Ave, #203, Baltimore, MD 21203, USA). ***Tonga Times***, Spring 2008 (**The Mini-Tonga Scion Society**, Jay Pearlman, 1656 E 19th Street, #2-E, Brooklyn, NY 11229, USA; minitongasociety@aol.com) *[*Welcome back, Mini-Tonga!*]*.

And ***Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press***, May 2008 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; blau7103@comcast.net).

Roger Johnson

The DISTRICT MESSENGER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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no. 285 5th August 2008

You can receive the DM electronically free of charge, as a PDF attachment or as plain text. Please contact me by e-mail. For a postal subscription, send 12 stamped, self-addressed envelopes or (overseas) send 12 International Reply Coupons or £6.00 or US$15.00 for 12 issues (dollar checks payable to Jean Upton, sterling cheques to me). Dollar prices quoted without qualification refer to US dollars.

Humphrey Carpenter, who died in 2005 aged fifty-eight, was a jazz musician, a writer of children's books, and a radio producer and presenter – he fronted *The Secret History of Conan Doyle* during Radio 4's Conan Doyle Week in July 2000. He was also a perceptive, scrupulous and thoroughly engaging biographer, whose subjects included JRR Tolkien, Ezra Pound, Benjamin Britten and Spike Milligan. His last book, completed posthumously by Candida Brazil and James Hamilton, is *The Seven Lives of John Murray: The Story of a Publishing Dynasty, 1768-2002*, published, most appropriately, by John Murray (338 Euston Road, London NW1 3BH) at £25.00. At the time of its sale to Hodder Headline, Murray's was Britain's oldest and most respected independent publishing house, having been run for 234 years by seven generations of John Murrays. Their authors included Jane Austen, Walter Scott, Charles Darwin, David Livingstone, Washington Irving, Freya Stark, Patrick Leigh Fermor, Osbert Lancaster, John Betjeman, Françoise Sagan, Kenneth Clark… and, most notably, Lord Byron. Oh, and Queen Victoria. And Arthur Conan Doyle, whose publisher, Smith Elder, was taken over just before the Great War. John Murray VI ('Jock') remembered: 'During one of my holidays from school, when my grandfather [John Murray IV, then in his last years] was ill, Conan Doyle called in with new stories, which we published as *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes* in 1927. He treated me with such courtesy as though I was a grown-up… that I fell under his spell. If this is an author, I said to myself, what fun to be a publisher!' A later memory was of Adrian Conan Doyle, 'turning up at Albemarle Street dressed in chainmail, demanding the pistols owned by Sir John Moore, the hero of the Battle of Corunna, which had come into the possession of John Murray II'… I in turn remember Jock Murray as a regular attender at our Society's annual dinners in the early 1970s, the guest, I think, of Lord Donegall. *The Seven Lives of John Murray* is a fascinating account of the people who made the firm and maintained it during its centuries as a family concern. It's also evidence in itself that the qualities instilled by seven generations of Murrays still flourish.

Just out from Breese Books (Baker Street Studios Ltd, Endeavour House, 170 Woodland Road, Sawston, Cambridge CB22 3DX) is *The Three Poisoned Pawns*, a triad of stories edited by Antony J Richards. In 'Sherlock Holmes and the Mystery of *Hamlet*', Emanuel E Garcia has Holmes reveal, in almost Freudian fashion, who is really responsible for the destruction of Prince Hamlet and the end of his dynasty. Naturally not a tale of action, the narrative is set in 1938, when the detective and the doctor are well advanced in years, and there's a curious and, to me, slightly distasteful coda. "Sherlock Holmes and the Belgravian Letter" by Roger Jaynes takes us back to the iconic year 1895. The Principal Private Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, has been murdered and certain important – and compromising – documents are missing, but there are deeper matters still to be uncovered. Eddie Maguire, in 'Sherlock Holmes and the Highcliffe Invitation', brings Holmes and Watson to a house-party in 1907, where the principal guest, Kaiser Wilhelm II, is the victim of a strange theft and an assassination attempt. (Mention of a newspaper called *The Clarion* sent me to my reference shelves, because there really was a paper of that name – but it would never have promoted the Kaiser as 'a great friend of our country'. It was a socialist weekly, much influenced by the philosophy of William Morris.) All three stories in *Three Poisoned Pawns* are ingenious and entertaining. Copies can be bought direct from the publisher for: UK £7.50; Europe €12.50; elsewhere $18.50. Prices include postage. Make cheques payable to Baker Street Studios.

I've received but haven't yet had time to read what appears to be an unusually interesting novel, *Wilde about Holmes* by Milo Yelesiyevich (Comic Masque, UPS Store #1052, PMB199 Zeckendorff Towers, 111 East 14th Street, New York, NY 10003, USA; 10 October 2008; $19.95). 'Sherlock Holmes, in the absence of Dr Watson, presses Oscar Wilde into his service to help protect candidate Grover Cleveland from a sexual scandal in the 1884 US presidential election, but everything goes wrong. Oscar Wilde proves to be Holmes' intellectual equal; Professor Moriarty is the villain; and Lillie Langtry is the woman at the bottom of it all. Can Sherlock Holmes redeem himself and solve the story's mystery – perhaps even the mystery of himself?' You can pre-order *Wilde about Holmes* on Amazon.com. I'll review it in the next DM.

A correction: *The File on Colonel Moran – Vol. I: The Lure of Moriarty* by our member V A Mealor will be published in September, and not in August, as I noted in the last issue. The publisher is The Clyvedon Press (95 Maes-y-Sarn, Pentyrch, Cardiff CF15 9QR; no price yet).

Also due in September is another biography: *The Adventures of Arthur Conan Doyle* by Russell Miller (Harvill Secker, Random House, 20 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW1V 2SA; £20.00). Mr Miller tells me, 'I started research around the same time as Andrew Lycett but delayed publication so that I could get full access to the Richard Lancelyn Green archive in Portsmouth – a veritable treasure trove, now largely indexed and catalogued. I have also managed to secure the agreement of the Conan Doyle estate to make unlimited use of Conan Doyle's letters, journals and diaries.' It sounds distinctly promising!

Francophone readers may enjoy *Le Fantôme de Baker Street* by Fabrice Bourland. In 1932, detectives Andrew Singleton and James Trelawney are requested by Lady Conan Doyle to investigate a possible haunting at a house in Baker Street – which has recently been assigned the number 221… (Editions 10/18, 12 avenue d'Italie, 75013 Paris, France; €7.00.)

The final volume in John Gardner's *Moriarty* trilogy will be published in November by Quercus Publishing (21 Bloomsbury Square, London WC1A 2NS; £12.99). *The Return of Moriarty*, which established the ex-professor as a sort of Victorian Vito Corleone, appeared in 1974 and *The Revenge of Moriarty* the following year. The new book is called simply *Moriarty*. John Gardner died just a year ago.

The distinguished detective story writer **June Thomson** was Guest of Honour at our Society's annual dinner this year. Besides her novels about Inspector Finch of the Essex CID, she has written five volumes of first-rate new Sherlock Holmes stories, and a biographical study, *Holmes & Watson*, which ranks among the great contributions to Holmesian scholarship. She told me recently, 'I have begun another collection of Holmes short stories which I'm working on rather slowly at the moment.'

Speaking of scholarship, in October our Society will publish *Holmes and Watson Country: Travels in Search of Solutions*, a two-volume set comprising all the best Holmesian writings of Bernard Davies. There are few books published these days that I regard as essential, but this is definitely one of them!

The same month Pierre Bayard's *L'Affaire du Chien des Baskerville* will appear in English as *Sherlock Holmes Was Wrong: Reopening the Case of the Hound of the Baskervilles* (Bloomsbury Press, 175 Fifth Avenue

8th Floor New York, NY 10010, USA; $20.00). The erudite, intelligent and mischievous M. Bayard has already made a name for himself with *Who Killed Roger Ackroyd?* And *How to Talk about Books You Haven't Read*. You can pre-order *Sherlock Holmes Was Wrong* from Amazon.co.uk for £9.06.

And Peter Blau reports that *In Spite of Myself: A Memoir* by Christopher Plummer will be published in October by Knopf, at $29.95. Plummer played Sherlock Holmes in HTV's 1977 production of *Silver Blaze* and in the 1979 feature film *Murder by Decree*.

The July 2008 issue of the *Sherlockian E-Times*, is online at www.sherlock-holmes.com. This is the catalogue-newsletter from **Classic Specialties** (PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH, 45219, USA; sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com), with an amazing variety of Holmesian books and collectibles. See also www.cafepress.com/sherlockholmes2.

Alistair Duncan, whose stimulating *Eliminate the Impossible* was reviewed in DM 280, reports that he's working on a new book 'about the history and connections of real-life locations to the Sherlock Holmes stories'. Finding that South Norwood has very little to show for Conan Doyle's years of residence, he's working with the owners of the *William Stanley* in the High Street to prepare a small display in the pub.

Following his report that the December 2007 issue of *Backtrack* features Nigel Digby's article 'The Railway Journeys of Sherlock Holmes', Richard Taylor notes that back issues now cost £5.00 postpaid within the UK (not £4.40) from Pendragon Publishing (PO Box 3, Easingwold, York YO61 3YS; website www.pendragonpublishing.co.uk).

For more years than I can remember, Geoff Bradley's magazine *CADS* has been a sort of criminous and detectival equivalent of the *Times Literary Supplement* – as erudite and informative, and considerably more entertaining. The latest issue is *CADS 54*, and I can't recommend it strongly enough. It costs £5.50 from Geoff at 9 Vicarage Hill, South Benfleet, Essex SS7 1PA (e-mail Geoffcads@aol.com).

Peter Blau notes that Mark Hime of Biblioctopus, who brought the manuscript of 'Lady Frances Carfax' to the London Antiquarian Book Fair in June and failed to find a buyer at £250,000, also failed to sell the (incomplete) MS of 'His Last Bow' at Sotheby's in New York on 19 June, where it was estimated at $150,000-$200,000.

In July, Doug Warwick's play *Sherlock Holmes & the First English Gentleman* returned to Toronto, where it was first produced in 2000. The 'gentleman' of the title is inspired by the Piltdown Man – but you don't need to guess how Holmes's investigation develops, as Mr Warwick has made the script available, along with a video clip from last month's production, at www.seventeensteps.com.

You may just be in time to catch Brian Clemens' play *Holmes and the Ripper* at the **Theatre Royal** in Nottingham, which finishes on Saturday 9 August. The box office number is 0115 989 5555. See the website at http://www.royalcentre-nottingham.co.uk/. Playing Holmes is Nicholas Briggs, currently famous as the voice of the Daleks in *Doctor Who*.

Illyria's highly entertaining four-handed production of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* is touring open-air venues again this summer. This month: 5-16 **CToo**, Edinburgh Fringe Festival (0845 260 1234); 17 **Gibside**, Newcastle upon Tyne (01670 773939); 19 **Duff House**, Banff (01261 818181); 20 **Haddo House**, Aberdeen (0844 493 2179); 21 **Walton Hall Gardens**, Warrington (01925 442345); 22 **Belton House**, Grantham (01476 566116); 23 **Fountains Abbey**, Ripon (01670 773939); 24 **The Temple Garden, Wanstead Park** (07806 766993); 26 **Watton Fields, Theatr Brycheiniog**, Brecon (01874 611622); 27 **Cockington Court**, Torquay (01803 606035); 28 **Brading Roman Villa**, Isle of Wight (01983 406223); 29 **Fulham Palace** (020 7736 3233); 30 **Brockswood Animal Sanctuary**, Dudley (07521 194403); 31 **Sherborne Castle** (01935 813182). And in early September: 3 **Castle Fraser**, Inverurie (01330 833463); 6 **Ness Botanic Gardens**, Nesston, Wirral (0151 353 0123); 7 **Thornton Abbey**, Barton upon Humber (01652 660380). Full details are on the Illyria website at http://www.illyria.uk.com/Current/Hound/index.htm.

You can hardly have missed the fact that **Robert Downey Jr** is now definitely signed up for the title rôle in Guy Ritchie's film *Sherlock Holmes*. Shooting begins in October.

The One Voice Recordings website (the voice is that of the versatile actor David Ian Davies) is offering a Sherlock Holmes pen, based on cartoons by the famous *Mad Magazine* artist **Tom Richmond**. You'll find details at http://onevoicerecordings.com/PenPage.html. At present, curiously, there seems to be no way to place an order, except to e-mail Mr Davies at DDavies858@aol.com.

Interested members of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London are invited to the First General Meeting of **The Eccentric Club (UK)** at Pushkin House, 5A Bloomsbury Square, London WC1A 2TA, at 6.00pm on 29 August. The aim is 'to restore and re-establish The Eccentric Club – once an important social and cultural institution [whose] charitable and cultural achievements should not be forgotten. On the contrary, they should be renewed and continued in a manner of a proud tradition.' The proposal is supported by, among others, Lord Montagu, the last Chairman of the original Eccentric Club. If you are interested, check the website at www.eccentricclub.co.uk or contact the Secretary, Mr Imants von Wenden, at 27 Old Gloucester Street, London WC1N 3AX.

One of the oddest things I've come across lately is 'The Sherlock Holmes Way of Exceptional Living', a brief lifestyle guide by Alex Shalman, 'creator of the Practical Personal Development Blog'. You'll find it at www.dumblittleman.com/2008/07/sherlock-holmes-way-of-exceptional.html, a website called *Dumb Little Man: Tips for Life*.

At www.circuloholmes.org.es/cholmes/ you'll find the website of the Spanish Sherlockian Society **Circulo Holmes**, whose Vice-President Miguel Ojeda has recently joined the Sherlock Holmes Society of London. And our good friend Maria Hayzen has joined Circulo Holmes!

We've just learned that **Raymond Mitchell** of Exeter, who was a member of our Society for more than thirty years, died on 22 June. He was also an early and enthusiastic supporter of this newsletter.

Spotted by Nicholas Utechin in last Friday's *Times*, the announcement that **James (Jim) Moriarty** 'passed away peacefully on Friday 25 July, aged 88'. He had been married to 'Vi' *[*surely Violet*]* for nearly sixty years.

Peter Blau notes the death on 23 April of **David Atkins**, whose long career as a supporting actor included playing Mordecai Smith in the 1987 Granada Television production of *The Sign of Four*.

Periodicals received. ***The Camden House Journal***, July 2008 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, Debbie Tinsley, PO Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). ***Communication***, no. 282 (**The Pleasant Places of Florida**, Wanda & Jeff Dow, 1737 Santa Anna Drive, Dunedin, FL 34698, USA) *[*yet more eccentricity – this issue of* ***Communication*** *consists entirely of Dr Seuss parodies!*]*. ***Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections***, June 2008 (Suite 111, Elmer L Andersen Library, University of Minnesota, 222 21st Avenue S, Minneapolis, MN 55455, USA). ***The Illustrious Clients News***, July 2008 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T Doyle, 9 Calumet Court, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). ***Ineffable Twaddle***, July 2008 and August 2008 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA).

The Magic Door, Summer 2008 (**The Friends of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection**, Doug Wrigglesworth, 16 Sunset Street, Holland Landing, Ontario, Canada L9N 1H4) *[*Doug has stepped down as Chairman after ten years, succeeded by Cliff Goldfarb, but he continues as Chair Emeritus, publisher of* ***The Magic Door****, and will be no less busy than he was before! Cliff meanwhile is preparing the 1980s volume in the Baker Street Irregulars History Project…*]*. ***The Petrel Flyer***, Summer 2008 (**The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia**, Len Haffenden, 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7P 3C6). *The Vampire Empire Quarterly*, Summer 2008 (**The Vampire Empire**, 29 Washington Square West, Penthouse North, New York, NY 10011-9180, USA) *[*As mentioned in DM 284, the Vampire Empire now has a branch called the Sherlock Holmes Auxiliary.*]*

And ***Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press***, June 2008 and July 2008 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; blau7103@comcast.net).

Roger Johnson

The DISTRICT MESSENGER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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no. 286 12th September 2008

A Tangled Skein (*The Baker Street Journal*, PO Box 465, Hanover, PA 17331, USA; $21.95) was edited by Leslie S Klinger to accompany the **Baker Street Irregulars'** trip to the Country of the Saints. The 'Mormon episode' of *A Study in Scarlet* tends to be dismissed as a mushily romantic, geographically absurd, and historically inaccurate appendage to the main body of the novel – all criticisms that are deserved to some extent, but as Will Bagley demonstrates, the totalitarian theocracy described by Conan Doyle was not imaginary. Things had changed when he visited Utah in the 1920s, and they have changed more since then, but the Church of the Latter Day Saints still seems reluctant to be open about the darker episodes in its history. Marshall S Berdan reveals that 'The Country of the Saints' reads like sober fact compared to the fantasy that undoubtedly influenced it, 'The Story of the Destroying Angel', from *The Dynamiter: More New Arabian Nights* by Robert Louis Stevenson & Fanny van de Grift Stevenson. And then there's Conan Doyle's (thankfully) unproduced play *Angels of Darkness*, which tells essentially the same story as 'The Country of the Saints' but ends with Lucy embraced by, er, Dr Watson… The play appears, as Peter Blau notes, to postdate the novel. *A Tangled Skein* is full of good things – Steven Doyle on *Beeton's Christmas Annual*, Donald Pollock on Sir Richard Burton's visit to Salt Lake City, Ben Vizoskie on the Danites' sign and counter-sign, Steve Hockensmith on Holmes out west, Greg Darak on reconciling the novel and the play. And more! I do wonder what connection the 'Dorando affair' at the 1908 London Olympics has with *A Study in Scarlet*, but I'm glad to have Clifford Goldfarb's essay, which scotches the suggestions that Conan Doyle assisted Dorando Pietri across the finishing line of the marathon. *A Tangled Skein* can be ordered online at www.bakerstreetjournal.com.

For the **Sherlock Holmes Society of London's** visit to Portsmouth, Bob Ellis and Guy Marriott edited *I Proceeded to Portsmouth*, a collection of new articles and reprints. The latter include Percy Metcalfe's discovery that the *Orontes* brought invalids from the Afghan War to Portsmouth on just one occasion, establishing the true date of *A Study in Scarlet*, Geoffrey Stavert's essays on First World War espionage (the real German spies were less efficient than Von Bork) and on the influence of Southsea on the Holmes Canon, and Yasha Beresiner's examination of Freemasonry in the life of Conan Doyle. Derek Hinrich considers a tragic-comedy of espionage. Grant Eustace and Guy Marriott examine the early days of the submarine, and the place of the Bruce-Partington. Guy also looks at the great military hospital at Netley, and at the Doyle family graves in Hampshire. Edward Lacey tells a little about the Richard Lancelyn Green Bequest and how the City of Portsmouth is progressing with the immense task of cataloguing and processing every item. And, in contrast to the BSI's book, *I Proceeded to Portsmouth* is well illustrated, both with photographs, including three rescued by Andrew Palacio from a rubbish bin at Netley, and with five new drawings by José-Luis Errazquin. *I Proceeded to Portsmouth* is available at £7.50 plus postage from Judi Ellis at 13 Crofton Avenue, Orpington, Kent BR6 8DU; 01689 811314; e-mail SHSL221b@aol.com. (Judi also has copies of *To Keep the Memory Green: Reflections on the Life of Richard Lancelyn Green, 1953-2004*, priced at £17.50 postpaid within the UK, £20.00 or €30.00 to Europe, £22.50 or $45.00 elsewhere.)

Sherlock Holmes on the Stage: A Chronological Encyclopedia of Plays Featuring the Great Detective by Amnon Kabatchnik (Scarecrow Press, c/o Book Network Int'l Ltd, Estover Road, Plymouth PL6 7PY; £36.00) was published in May, though I learned of it just recently. Author and publisher being American, it's understandably oriented towards North American plays, but it's nice to see, for instance, good coverage of *The Secret of Sherlock Holmes* and *Sherlock Holmes – The Last Act!* The chronology goes up to 2006, though nothing is listed between *Murder in Baker Street* (2002) and *Clash of the Vampires* (2006) and there's no mention of the phenomenally popular *Sherlock Holmes: The Final Adventure*. Inevitably in a book of just over 200 pages some plays are given just a brief glance, but it seems odd that one of them should be the hugely successful *The Crucifer of Blood*, with no reference to the fine London production. This useful and interesting volume is not, alas, flawless. When we read that 'Doyle wrote sixty tales and three novels (the third was *The Valley of Fear*, 1915) featuring Holmes and his chronicler, Dr John H Watson,' we may wonder just how reliable the book is. Sir Arthur's reply to William Gillette's enquiry, 'May I marry Holmes?' was possibly rapid, but surely not 'rabid'. Seymour Hicks, who died in 1949, was knighted in 1935, not in 1953… But my main reservation is that there's simply not enough here to justify the very high price. Mr Kabatchnik's book complements Charles Hall & Peter Blythe's 1997 *On Stage: Sherlock Holmes: Comedy, Drama and Musicals*, but we're still waiting for the definitive book on Holmesian plays.

Paul Spiring reports that the Diocese of Exeter has rejected Rodger Garrick-Steele's claim that Arthur Conan Doyle murdered his friend Bertram Fletcher Robinson, and has refused to allow Robinson's body to be exhumed (see today's *Western Morning News*). Now, with impeccable timing, comes *Bertram Fletcher Robinson: A Footnote to The Hound of the Baskervilles* by Brian W Pugh and Paul R Spiring (MX Publishing Ltd, 335 Princess Park Manor, Royal Drive, London N11 3GX; £18.99 or $28.95). It's not as bulky or as profound as the best lives of Conan Doyle: although Robinson achieved a good deal in his thirty-six years there probably isn't enough primary material extant to justify anything on that scale. What we have is a well illustrated, handsomely presented, and very readable account of his life as journalist, novelist and sportsman, with, naturally, particular emphasis on his part in the genesis of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. 'Bobbles', as his friends called him, seems to have been, as Conan Doyle said, a 'fine fellow', and it's no wonder that the two men liked each other. Amazon.co.uk has *Bertram Fletcher Robinson* at £12.34. A paperback edition is due next month.

You may know that Basil Rathbone was awarded the Military Cross for exemplary gallantry while serving on the Western Front in summer 1918. You may know that Nigel Bruce was so severely wounded by machine-gun fire that he was discharged from the army in 1915 as no longer fit for service – and the next year he enlisted again… *Famous 1914-1918* by Richard van Emden & Victor Puik (Pen & Sword Military, 47 Church Street, Barnsley, South Yorks. S70 2AS; £25.00) tells their stories, and those of nineteen other British soldiers who served in the trenches and survived to become famous – or, in the case of John Reginald Halliday Christie, notorious. It's a fascinating book that shows a different side to such men as Ralph Vaughan Williams, Dennis Wheatley, Alexander Fleming, CS Lewis, Harold Macmillan and Arnold Ridley.

In 1999 Michael Mallory introduced Amelia Watson in *The Adventures of the Second Mrs Watson*, which I called 'a very neat idea stylishly executed. Sherlock Holmes knew where he stood with Mary, the first Mrs Watson, but he thinks that the doctor's spirited second wife Amelia takes up too much of his friend's time. She has a different view on the matter, and as she is pretty much the detective's match in ingenuity, intelligence and stubbornness the relationship is not exactly smooth.' *The Exploits of the Second Mrs Watson* (Top Publications Ltd, 3100 Independence Parkway, Suite 311-349, Plano, TX 75075, USA; £14.95) is no less entertaining.

Wilde about Holmes by Milo Yelesiyevich (Comic Masque, UPS Store #1052, PMB199 Zeckendorff Towers, 111 East 14th Street, New York, NY 10003, USA; 10 October 2008; $19.95) is an intriguing blend of literary art, parody, political satire, historical mystery, and probably other

things as well. In New York, Sherlock Holmes enlists Oscar Wilde's aid in protecting candidate Grover Cleveland from a sexual scandal in the 1884 US presidential election. Lillie Langtry is the woman at the bottom of it all, and Professor Moriarty is the villain. Alternate chapters are narrated by Wilde and by Holmes, presenting the reader on occasion with contrasting views of the same event. The continental practice of introducing direct speech with a dash is a constant indication that English is not the author's first language (besides, I don't think 'bollix' thus spelt was used as a verb a century ago, and anyway I doubt very much that Holmes would have used it in recounting a case). But that doesn't really matter. Mr Yelesiyevich writes excellent English, tricked out here with Wildeisms and with sentences from the Holmesian Canon (and from Wittgenstein and others) adapted to circumstance. I'm about half-way through the book and enjoying it very much.

The de Vere Papers by Michael Langford (Parapress, The Basement, 9 Frant Road, Tunbridge Wells TN2 5SD; £7.99) is set in Cambridge, London and Castle Hedingham in 1868. Those familiar with the debate over whether Shakespeare wrote Shakespeare will have guessed that the novel has to do, in part, with the claim that the poet and playwright was really Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford. Add the murder of a college librarian, the theft of valuable documents, and a legendary monastic treasure, and you have a truly singular case for young Dr Simon Weatherspoon to investigate. Professor Langford writes with easy knowledge of time, place and subject, and he juggles the pieces of the complex puzzle in masterly fashion.

Russell Miller's new biography *The Adventures of Arthur Conan Doyle* (Harvill Secker, 20 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW1V 2SA; £20.00) will be published on 2 October. I've received a proof copy, but it deserves more time than I've been able to give, so I'll review it in the next issue. Meanwhile, Andrew Lycett's highly recommended *Conan Doyle: The Man Who Created Sherlock Holmes* is now out in paperback from Phoenix (Orion House, 5 Upper St Martin's Lane, London WC2H 9EA; £10.99). Of the making of many books there is no end…

Holmes and Watson Country: Travels in Search of Solutions, the *magnum opus* of **Bernard Davies**, will be launched at our Society's meeting on 14 October in a limited edition of 200 copies, at £30.00. The book consists of two large hardback volumes, illustrated with more than fifty maps. There is also a special collectors' edition of 25 copies, the two volumes in an attractive slipcase, and both signed by the author, at £50.00. The special edition will be available on a first-come first-serve basis and will be limited to one per applicant. Advance orders are welcome particularly for the special collectors' editions. (Judi Ellis, 13 Crofton Avenue, Orpington, Kent BR6 8DU; 01689 811314; e-mail SHSL221b@aol.com). In view of the high cost of postage, members may arrange to collect their copies at the Society's meetings if they wish.

Anna Smyth wishes to sell her late husband Fraser's complete run of *The Sherlock Holmes Journal* from 1952 to 1990, and she is keen that it should stay within the UK. Offers are invited (think in the region of £1,000) at anna.smyth@ntlworld.com.

The August 2008 issue of the *Sherlockian E-Times*, the catalogue-newsletter from **Classic Specialties** (PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH, 45219, USA) is online at www.sherlock-holmes.com, with a great variety of Holmesian books and collectibles, See also www.cafepress.com/sherlockholmes2.

The One Voice Recordings website (the voice is that of the versatile actor David Ian Davies) is offering a Sherlock Holmes pen, based on cartoons by the famous *Mad Magazine* artist **Tom Richmond**. You can order direct at http://onevoicerecordings.com/PenPage.html.

David Palmer, artist in stained glass, has created a panel called *Spirit of Place*, which evokes Arthur Conan Doyle's presence amidst his former haunts in Mr Palmer's native city, Portsmouth. It's on display at the The Cochrane Theatre Gallery, Southampton Row, London WC1 till 28 November 2008, and from January 2009 at the Stained Glass Museum at Ely Cathedral. You can see an image of the panel at http://www.crimsonmonkey.co.uk/leading/.

First Edition Audio Books at www.firsteditionaudiobooks.com/ offers more than 110 Sherlock Holmes titles, from the BBC and other publishers, for instant download, from as little as £1.19.

Bert Coules reports that the third series of *The Further Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, with Clive Merrison and Andrew Sachs, will consist of four plays to be broadcast on Friday afternoons beginning on 26 December. BBC Worldwide plans a four-disc set comprising the two unreleased plays from series 1 and 2 plus two from the new series.

On 23 August *Television and Radio Industry News* reported that **Steven Moffat** and **Mark Gatiss** are writing an updated Sherlock Holmes drama serial for Hartswood Films. When he was Guest of Honour at our Society's annual dinner, Mark Gatiss mentioned that he had an ambition to do something like this.

Richard Arnell: Ballet Music (Dutton Vocalion, PO Box 609, Watford, WD18 7YA) is a new recording, by the BBC Concert Orchestra conducted by Martin Yates, of Arnell's lively music for Kenneth Macmillan's 1953 ballet *The Great Detective*, together with *The Angels*.

From 23 to 25 October, at the **Wilde Theatre** in Bracknell (box office 01344 484123), TableNine Productions will repeat their well-reviewed play *The Extraordinary Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. See the website at www.tablenine.ik.com.

Peter Egan and Philip Franks take to the road again next month in Clive Francis' stunning play *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. They'll be at the **Theatre Royal**, Plymouth (01752 267222) 7-11 October; **Theatre Royal**, Bath (01225 448844) 13-18 October; **Richmond Theatre**, Richmond, Surrey (0870 060 6651) 20-25 October; and **Royal & Derngate Theatre**, Northampton (01604 624811) 3-8 November.

It appears that Russell Crowe will not be Watson to Robert Downey Jr's Holmes in **Guy Ritchie's** forthcoming film, but he may still be in the cast, as may Sienna Miller. Mark Strong *has* been signed up, to play a character named Blackwood,

The magazine *Around the Wolds and North Yorkshire* featured good Holmesian articles by **Rafe McGregor** in issue 113 ('Yorkshire's Greatest Detective') and issue 121 ('Sherlock Holmes in Whitby'). Rafe has copies available at £2.50 plus postage from rafeg@aol.com.

Peter Blau reports the death on 29 July of **Larry Townsend**, author of *The Sexual Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* – homosexual pornography, written with considerable knowledge of the Canon. **Terence Rigby**, who died on 10 August aged seventy-one, excelled in the plays of Harold Pinter but is likely to be remembered for his rôles as policemen and crooks on film and television. His Watson to Tom Baker's Holmes in BBC TV's 1982 *The Hound of the Baskervilles* was under-rated at the time, not least by me, and although he played Inspector Layton *[*sic*]* in *The Sign of Four* for Mapleton in 1983 it might have been better had he swapped with David Healy, who was Watson. Ted Schulz reports that **John Ruyle**, 'bookman, author, poet, printer, artist and Sherlockian', creator of the cherishable Turlock Loams parodies, died on 15 August. He was invested into the BSI as 'Baron Dowson' in 1983. **Ken Campbell**, a true maverick of the theatre, was famous for both intimate one-man shows and epic productions such as the eight-hour trilogy *Illuminatus!* He was a memorable James Ryder in Granada TV's *The Blue Carbuncle* in 1984. The *Scarlet Street* message board reports the recent death of **Gertan Klauber**, whose long career included small rôles in *The Boscombe Valley Mystery* (BBC TV, 1968), *The Seven-per-cent Solution* (1976) and *Sherlock Holmes and the Leading Lady* (1992).

Periodicals received. ***The Baker Street Journal***, Summer 2008 (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). ***The Illustrious Clients News***, September 2008 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T Doyle, 9 Calumet Court, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). ***Ineffable Twaddle***, September 2008 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). ***Mayday Mayday*** and *The Look Out*, September 2008, (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardcarn Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). ***The Petrel Flyer***, Fall 2008 (**The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia**, Len Haffenden, 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7P 3C6). ***The School Report***, Autumn 2008 (**The Priory Scholars**, Horace L Coates, 21 Butcombe Road, Leicester LE4 0FY).

And ***Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press***, August 2008 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; blau7103@comcast.net).

Roger Johnson

The DISTRICT MESSENGER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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It's been a long time in the making, but *Holmes and Watson Country: Travels in Search of Solutions* by **Bernard Davies** (The Sherlock Holmes Society of London, Judi Ellis, 13 Crofton Avenue, Orpington, Kent BR6 8DU; SHSL221b@aol.com) was worth waiting for. As editor and, with Bob Ellis, designer, I'm biased, but the fact is that this, the Society's most ambitious publication yet, is a beautiful production. Two hardback volumes, 8½" x 12", in pictorial dustwrappers, containing more than 400 pages of text and maps, plus frontispiece photographs, an introduction by Leslie S Klinger, and a foreword to each volume… The twenty-seven essays, written over a period of more than fifty years, are, as the book's title indicates, mostly topographical investigations, in which Bernard Davies guides us gently but firmly around those parts of England, and especially London, that we may call Holmes and Watson Country. From the true site of 221B Baker Street, to Baskerville Hall, Donnithorpe, the Abbey Grange, the Priory School, Charlington Hall – even Josiah Amberley's house of horror, The Haven at Lewisham – his research is meticulous, his conclusions revelatory, and his presentation witty, enthusiastic and thoroughly engaging. *Holmes and Watson Country* is published in a limited edition of 200 copies at £30.00 (including postage: UK £39.00, Europe £45.00/€60.00, elsewhere £58.00/$116.00). There's also a special collectors' edition of twenty-five copies, signed and numbered, in an attractive slipcase, at £50.00 (including postage: UK £59.00, Europe £65.00/€80.00, elsewhere £78.00/$156.00). The two volumes aren't available separately.

A year after *Conan Doyle: The Man Who Created Sherlock Holmes* comes *The Adventures of Arthur Conan Doyle* by **Russell Miller** (Harvill Secker, Random House, 20 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London S1V 2SA; £20.00) – prompting the question: Do we really need another biography of Conan Doyle? Well, yes, I think we do – specifically because Russell Miller has had free access to the material that Richard Lancelyn Green bequeathed to the Conan Doyle Collection at Portsmouth and to all Sir Arthur's known surviving letters. Like Andrew Lycett, Mr Miller is an experienced biographer, and, like John Dickson Carr, he's an accomplished storyteller. His book is intensely readable, and, though I'm pretty sure that he likes Conan Doyle and would like to have known him, he maintains his objectivity, in recalling some of his subject's less loveable and less admirable traits. There's the odd error. The frontispiece to the 1887 *Beeton's Christmas Annual* doesn't portray Holmes 'as an anonymous figure stooped over a corpse' (that comes later): instead it shows Holmes, Watson, Gregson and Lestrade examining the word 'Rache'; and it was established long ago that Dame Jean Conan Doyle was christened Jean Lena Annette, and not 'Lina Jean'. There are some curious opinions too. In the portrait Sidney Paget, we're told, Sir Arthur looks 'more like a Victorian banker than a writer' – but is there really a standard model for writers? (What does Russell Miller look like, I wonder?) And there are several descriptions of ACD as 'unsmiling' in paintings and photographs, as if that was unusual, which it wasn't. But these are quibbles. This biography combines information and entertainment to a commendable degree.

In 1997 Oakmagic Publications issued the first of four booklets that would make up *Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective* by **Kelvin I Jones**. Had it been published in book form, this life of the great detective would, I think, have been acclaimed as a major contribution to Holmesian scholarship. Instead, it has remained largely unknown. I hope this year's new edition will remedy that, but I'd be more confident if the work had been made available as a single well-designed volume, rather than newly typeset versions of the original booklets. Eleven years on, *Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective, Volume One: The Early Years* (Oakmagic Publications, 1 Sir Williams Lane, Aylsham, Norwich NR11 6AW; £3.99) is set in Times Roman, which is certainly an improvement on the Courier of the original edition, but the design is, frankly, clumsy – a shame, because the content is really good. Unlike Rennison and Baring-Gould, Mr Jones doesn't invent characters and events. He speculates, but the speculation is in the best tradition, based on reasoning from a sound premise. Not that his conclusions are always incontestable: a reading of Bernard Davies's 'Vacations and Stations' might convince him that Holmes attended Oxford University rather than Cambridge. But that's one of the joys of our great game! Mr Jones's estimable biography is re-published in an edition of just 100 signed copies.

Unsurprisingly, many of those who devise new exploits for Sherlock Holmes like to imagine him visiting their own corner of the world. **John S Fitzpatrick** was perhaps inspired by the success of Larry Millett, who had already brought Holmes and Watson to Minnesota in five books. At any rate, in *Sherlock Holmes: The Montana Chronicles* Mr Fitzpatrick brings the duo to 'Rodgersburg' (a lightly disguised Anaconda, Montana) after the events of Mr Millett's novel *Sherlock Holmes and the Ice Palace Murders*. The four stories are ingenious and engagingly told, though the style is not Dr Watson's. Mr Fitzpatrick justifies the Americanisms by the fact that the text is 'edited' by an American, but for the British reader that's perhaps stretching credibility rather far. At all events, *Sherlock Holmes: The Montana Chronicles* (Riverbend Publishing, PO Box 5833, Helena, MT 59604, USA; $12.95) is great fun to read, not least as an introduction to life in Montana a century ago.

The New Annotated Dracula by Bram Stoker, edited and annotated by **Leslie S Klinger** (W.W. Norton & Company Ltd, Castle House, 75-76 Wells Street, London W1T 3QT; £22.50) has a surprising amount of Holmesian content, and if you've read and enjoyed *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes* – and if not, why not? – then you'll probably appreciate Leslie Klinger's new *magnum opus*, in which he applies the same outstanding level of knowledge, research, literacy and enthusiasm to Bram Stoker's gothic masterpiece. Mr Klinger is one of only two scholars to be granted access to the original manuscript, as well as the author's notes, enabling him to solve many of the problems implicit in the novel – and to pose a few more. This beautifully presented annotated edition of *Dracula* easily supersedes its predecessors.

Two new novels have just reached me: *Moriarty* by **John Gardner** (Quercus Publishing Plc, 21 Bloomsbury Square, London WC1A 2NS; £14.99) the posthumous final volume in the trilogy that began with *The Return of Moriarty* and *The Revenge of Moriarty*; and *The File on Colonel Moran, Volume One: The Lure of Moriarty* by **Vernon Mealor** (The Clyvedon Press, 95 Maes-y-Sarn, Pentyrch, Cardiff CF15 9QR; £10.00). I'll review these in the next issue.

New books that haven't yet come my way include *Gaslight Grimoire: Dark Tales of Sherlock Holmes* edited by **Jeff Campbell** & **Charles Prepolec** (EDGE Science Fiction and Fantasy Publishing, Inc., PO Box 1714, Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2P 2L7; £16.95); and *The Shadow of Reichenbach Falls* by **John R King** (Forge, Tom Doherty Associates LLC, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010, USA; £17.99).

Due on 28 October is *Sherlock Holmes Was Wrong: Reopening the Case of the Hound of the Baskervilles* by **Pierre Bayard** (Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 36 Soho Square, London W1D 3QY; £13.60); and on 31 October comes *The Chronicles of Sherlock Holmes* by **Paul D Gilbert** (Robert Hale Ltd, Clerkenwell House, 45–47 Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0HT; £18.99).

On www.amazon.co.uk you can pre-order *Close to Holmes: A Look at the Connections Between Historical London, Sherlock Holmes and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle* by Alistair Duncan, due on 1 February 2009 from MX Publishing (10 Kingfisher Close, Stanstead Abbotts, Herts. SG12 8LQ) for £6.59. The publisher's price is £9.99.

Paul Spiring will be at Cottage Books in Bovey Tracey from 10am to 11am on 25 October to sign copies of *On the Trail of Arthur Conan Doyle* and *Bertram Fletcher Robinson*. Co-author **Brian Pugh** will join him at Waterstone's in Newton Abbot from 11am to 12 noon on 1 November, and at Borders in Cardiff from 1pm to 2pm on 3 November.

Alfred Weiner wants to sell his collection of Sherlock Holmes books, magazines and recordings. Items are available individually, and you can get details from Mr Weiner at 4105 Marietta Drive, Vestal, NY 13850, USA (e-mail almar@stny.rr.com).

Derek Hinrich spotted that the October/November issue of *The Chap* (£3.25 postpaid from Mrs Porter, 17 Ardmere Road, London SE13 6EL; www.thechap.net/index.html) features an article on **Bartitsu**, with original photographs from *Pearson's Magazine*.

At http://www.sherlock-holmes.com/index.html is the September issue of *The Sherlockian E-Times*, the catalogue-newsletter from **Classic Specialties** (PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH, 45219, USA; sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com), with many Holmesian collectibles and books, including a new CD transcription of the long-deleted cassette *Favourite Music of Sherlock Holmes*, featuring works by Mendelssohn, Weber, Brahms, and others ($12.95). The theme of Classic Specialties' 2009 calendar, available shortly, is *Sherlock Holmes in the Movies*.

The International Crime Writing Hall of Fame was inaugurated on 3 October at the first ITV3 Crime & Thriller Awards, when Arthur Conan Doyle, Agatha Christie and PD James were the first authors to be inducted. Ian Rankin was named Author of the Year, and Colin Dexter won the ITV3 Writer's Award for Classic TV Drama.

Thanks to writer Bert Coules and producer Patrick Rayner, I recently attended the recording of one of the four plays in BBC Radio 4's forthcoming third series of *The Further Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, starring Clive Merrison and Andrew Sachs as Holmes and Watson. The plays will be broadcast on Friday afternoons beginning 26 December, and on 22 January BBC Audiobooks (St James House, The Square, Lower Bristol Road, Bath BA2 3BH) will release a 4-CD set containing the two unreleased recordings from the previous series plus two from the new series. *[*A curious decision, but there you are…*]*

Guy Ritchie's Sherlock Holmes film now has a title, *Sherlock Holmes*, and a cast. Robert Downey Jr is Holmes, with Jude Law as Watson, Rachel McAdams as Irene Adler, Kelly Reilly as Mary Morstan, and Mark Strong as Blackwood. Filming began this month in London, at St Paul's Cathedral and Freemasons' Hall in Great Queen Street. You can see photos here: http://justjared.buzznet.com/2008/10/12/dr-watson-jude-law/ and here: http://justjared.buzznet.com/2008/10/10/robert-downey-jr-as-sherlock-holmes-first-pictures/. The release date for the film has been set for 20 November 2009.

Roger Llewellyn's tour with the newly retitled *Sherlock Holmes – The Death and Life!* by David Stuart Davies takes him to these venues: 13 Nov: **Bridport Arts Centre** (01308 424204; www.bridport-arts.com); 14 Nov: **The Exchange**, Sturminster Newton (01258 475137; www.stur-exchange.co.uk); 21 Nov: **Old Town Hall Arts Centre**, Hemel Hempstead (01442 228091; www.dacorum.gov.uk/arts); 24-29 Nov: **Tabard Theatre**, Bedford Park, London (08448 472264; www.tabardtheatre.co.uk); 5 Dec: **The Hall for Cornwall**, Truro (01872 262466; www.hallforcornwall.co.uk); 13 Dec: **Norden Farm Arts Centre**, Maidenhead (01628 788997; www.nordenfarm.org).

According to *Variety*, comic actor **Steve Carell** has been signed for the title role in a forthcoming film *The Adventures of Brigadier Gerard*.

The Sherlock Holmes Pen, based on the cartoons of *Mad Magazine* artist **Tom Richmond**, can be bought for $10.95 from David Ian Davies's website at www.onevoicerecordings.com/p/shp. It would make a very nice stocking-filler for Christmas. Take a look at Mr Davies's Sherlock Holmes recordings too – including my own play *The Great Detective*.

The distinguished illustrator **Eric Kincaid** is selling some of his original artwork, including paintings from the Brimax edition of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, examples of which can be seen on the Society's website at www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk/press_cutting.php?id=147. If you're interested, please contact Sophie Woods on 07890 974068, or at sophieewoods@googlemail.com. The guide price of £1000 reflects the high quality of Mr Kincaid's work.

Geoff Budd recommends **Vision Enhancers Ltd** (PO Box 548, Stockbridge, Hants. SO20 6WJ; www.visionenhancers.co.uk) as a source of magnifying glasses.

Showsaku Mashimo of the **Japan Sherlock Holmes Club** has kindly sent some material relating to Maizuru City's Sherlock Holmes and Conan Doyle Exhibition, which can be seen from 18 October to 30 November at Maizuru City Tie Gura (Red Brick House Pavilion). Maizuru, near Kyoto, is twinned with Portsmouth, and the exhibition features material from the Lancelyn Green Bequest, with information in Japanese by Akiko Sato. Each Saturday there is a mystery tour of the city, and on 8 November there'll be Sherlock Holmes's Symposium (admission free) from 1.30pm to 4pm.

From 10am to 1pm on 8 November in the Wheeler Auditorium at the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore, MD, **The Six Napoleons of Baltimore**, **Watson's Tin Box of Ellicott City**, and **The Carlton Club** present the twenty-ninth annual Saturday with Sherlock Holmes: *Art in the Blood: Sherlock Holmes and the Arts*. Admission is free. For details phone 410 396 5494.

Kenneth Ross, who has been diligently videoing our Society's events, offers a 61-minute DVD recording of the recent weekend in Portsmouth. Copies cost £3.50 plus postage from Ken at: 4 Fennels Farm Road, Flackwell Heath, High Wycombe, Bucks. HP10 9BS; phone 01628 522600; email kiross@tiscali.co.uk. Also available are DVDs of visits to Truro, 1998; Gloucester, 1999; Norwich, 2000; the Baltic cruise, 2001, and separate DVD of the Russian Treaty; Dartmoor, 2002; and the Sussex Downs, 2004.

Michael Cox reports the death of **Celia Gregory** on 8 September, aged fifty-eight. In 1991 she gave an impassioned performance as Maria Gibson in *The Problem of Thor Bridge*, one of the last top-class productions in the Granada TV series. Early in his long career, **Peter Copley**, who died on 7 October aged ninety-three, appeared twice in the 1954 *Sherlock Holmes* television series, playing John Winthrop in *The Case of the Winthrop Legend* and Lord Beryl in *The Case of Lady Beryl.*

Periodicals received. ***The Camden House Journal***, August 2008 and September 2008 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, Debbie Tinsley, PO Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). ***Communication***, no. 282 and no. 283 (**The Pleasant Places of Florida**, Wanda & Jeff Dow, 1737 Santa Anna Drive, Dunedin, FL 34698, USA) *[*the earlier Dr Seuss issue was also numbered 282…*]*. ***The Formulary***, September 2008 (**The Friends of Dr Watson**, Nino Cirone, Highcroft Cottage, 14 Totteridge Common, Totteridge, London N20 8NL). ***Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections***, September 2008 (Suite 111, Elmer L Andersen Library, University of Minnesota, 222 21st Avenue S, Minneapolis, MN 55455, USA). ***The Illustrious Clients News***, October 2008 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T Doyle, 9 Calumet Court, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). ***Ineffable Twaddle***, October 2008 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). ***Irregular Newsletter***, October 2008 (**The Conan Doyle [Crowborough] Establishment**, Brian Pugh, 20 Clare Road, Lewes, Sussex BN7 1PN).

Mayday Mayday, October 2008, (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardcarn Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). ***The Passengers' Log***, 7 August 2008 (**The Sydney Passengers**, Rosane McNamara, 4/2a Merlin Street, Neutral Bay, NSW 2089, Australia). ***Prescott's Press***, September 2008 (**The Three Garridebs**, Warren Randall, 15 Fawn Lane West, South Setauket, NY 11720-1346, USA). ***The Scion***, Autumn 2008 (**The Musgraves**, Anne Jordan, Hallas Lodge, Greenside Lane, Cullingworth, Bradford BD13 5AP). ***The Serpentine Muse***, Fall 2008 (**The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes**, Evelyn Herzog, 301 Warren Ave, #203, Baltimore, MD 21203, USA). ***Sherlockiana***, nr. 2-3, 2008 (**Sherlock Holmes Klubben i Danmark**, Bjarne Rother Jensen, Højbovangen 24, 9200 Aalborg SV, Denmark). ***Studies of the Nippon Sherlock Holmes Club***, 1 August 2008 (**The Sherlock Holmes Research Committee**, Mr Saburoh Hiraga, 3-6-24 Uenohigashi, Toyonaka City, Osaka 560-0013, Japan).

And ***Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press***, September 2008 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; blau7103@comcast.net).

Roger Johnson

The DISTRICT MESSENGER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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no. 288 30th November 2008

John Gardner, BSI is likely to be remembered as the author of a dozen or so authorised novels about James Bond. That's a pity, because he did much more and much better than that. In 1974 he published *The Return of Moriarty* followed a year later by *The Revenge of Moriarty*, in which he placed the Napoleon of Crime firmly in the real, violent and squalid world of late Victorian crime, revealing him as a sort of nineteenth century Godfather. The place and time are scrupulously researched and excitingly portrayed, but above all it's the characters that stay in the reader's mind — in particular Moriarty himself, his criminal 'family', and his enemy Inspector Angus Crow. The third volume of the Moriarty Journals was not completed until shortly before John Gardner died in 2007, but it's as richly atmospheric, as breathtakingly violent, as startlingly authentic as the first two. In *Moriarty* (Quercus Publishing plc, 21 Bloomsbury Square, London WC1A 2NS; £14.99) the Professor returns to London from America to find that control of his organisation is threatened by a gentlemanly villain named Jack Idell, known ironically as 'Idle Jack'. The story of Moriarty's reclamation of the London underworld is the sort that grabs the reader by the lapels and won't let go. The unexpected ending even suggests a sequel, but that must wait for another chronicler.

The File on Colonel Moran: Volume One: The Lure of Moriarty by **Vernon Mealor** (The Clyvedon Press, 95 Maes-y-Sarn, Pentyrch, Cardiff CF15 9QR; £10.00) is shorter, but just as exciting. It begins with Moran's own account of the events at the Reichenbach Falls and at Camden House, Baker Street. There are welcome echoes of Harry Flashman here, and, as you might expect, the Colonel's story differs rather from Sherlock Holmes's. Then we come to 'a weekly series of exciting adventures' published in *The Daily News*, 'related by our reporter Mr Mark Jordan following exclusive interviews with the Colonel'. The interviews take place in a prison cell, and I have the feeling that Mr Jordan is not quite what he appears to be. The stories are clever, suspenseful and atmospheric. You can buy this nice hardback postpaid from the publisher at £13.00 (UK & Europe) or £14.70 (rest of world). Sterling cheques only, payable to The Clyvedon Press Ltd, or use PayPal, via the PayPal user name clyvedon.press@tiscali.co.uk.

I've just received *Sherlock Holmes at the Raffles Hotel*, the latest new Holmes novel by **John Hall** (Breese Books, Baker Street Studios Ltd, Endeavour House, 170 Woodland Road, Sawston, Cambridge CB22 3DX; £7.50), which I'll review in the next issue. John Hall, as most will be aware, is a most engaging storyteller and one of today's leading Holmesian scholars. It's a powerful combination!

Due on 8 January from Faber & Faber Ltd (3 Queen Square, London WC1N 3AU; £14.99) is *And Then There Was No One* by **Gilbert Adair**, which concludes the short series that began with *The Act of Roger Murgatroyd* and *A Mysterious Affair of Style*. As the titles suggest, the main object of Mr Adair's homage — and target of his humour — is the work of Agatha Christie, and this final novel has as many surprises as any by Dame Agatha. Unlike its predecessors, it's set in the future rather than the past. In 2011 Gilbert Adair is a guest speaker at a literary festival held to mark the twentieth anniversary of the Sherlock Holmes Museum at Meiringen, in the course of which he relates his own recently published Holmes pastiche, 'The Giant Rat of Sumatra' (it's a good one). And that's where the planned events are overtaken by the unplanned ones. Evadne Mount, whose name and character he had appropriated for the amateur sleuth in the earlier novels, appears at the festival, and she seems to have incorporated something of her fictional alter ego into her own life. Worse, the star guest, who appears to have gone out of way to antagonise just about everyone, is found dead in the Sherlock Holmes Museum, with an arrow in his heart. I don't say it's impossible for the reader to solve the mystery, but a good deal more than lateral thinking is needed. *And Then There Was No One* fizzes with literary erudition, very good writing, a dark wit, affection for classic detective fiction, and a bold imagination. 'Metafiction', I think, is the word.

New to the November issue of *The Sherlockian E-Times*, the catalogue-newsletter from **Classic Specialties** at http://www.sherlock-holmes.com/index.html are the 2009 Sherlockian Calendar ($19.95) and Tracy Revels' collection *Sherlock Holmes: Mostly Parodies*. The theme of the Calendar is *Sherlock Holmes in the Movies*; rather than simply selecting twelve stills of Rathbone, Wontner, Norwood and others, the creators have chosen to give an idea of the development of Sherlockian cinema. The graphic design is unusual and attractive, and the overall quality is, of course, very high. (Classic Specialties, PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH, 45219, USA; sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com.)

Recently published by the History Press Ltd (The Mill, Brimscombe Port, Stroud, Glos. GL5 2QG; £19.99) is *Maiwand: The Last Stand of the 66th (Berkshire) Regiment in Afghanistan, 1880* by Richard J Stacpoole-Ryding. There have been other accounts of the battle, notably Leigh Maxwell's *My God – Maiwand!*, but this is the first to concentrate specifically on the fate of Watson's own regiment. **Richard Stacpoole-Ryding,** founder and Dresser Emeritus of **The Friends of Dr Watson**, is a recognised authority on Victorian battles. Signed copies of *Maiwand* are available for £17.50 each from The Rifles (Berkshire & Wiltshire) Museum, The Wardrobe, 58 The Close, Salisbury SP1 2EX; www.thewardrobe.org.uk.

On 31 December Robert Hale Ltd (Clerkenwell House, 45-47 Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0HT) will publish *Sherlock Holmes in Russia* edited and translated by Alex Auswaks. Publisher's price is £18.99, but at www.halebooks.com/index.asp?TAG=&CID you can pre-order the book for £13.29. Enter the title in the search box.

A reminder of the lovely facsimile editions of guidebooks and maps published by **Old House Books**, (The Old Police Station, Pound Street, Moretonhampstead, Devon TQ13 8PA; www.OldHouseBooks.co.uk). Prime examples of immediate interest to the Holmesian include *Baedeker's Great Britain 1890: A Handbook for Travellers* (£15.99), *Baedeker's London & Its Environs 1900* (£14.99), *Murray's Modern London 1860* (£13.99), *Bacon's up to date Map of London 1902* (£9.99), *London Railways Map 1897* (£9.99), *Dickens's Dictionary of London 1888* (£12.99)… not to mention *The Lady's Dressing-Room 1892* (£12.99) and *Enquire Within upon Everything 1890* (£14.99).

From Gwyneth Hanson via Guy Marriott comes the link to www.wowio.com/index.asp, where you can read all sorts of books online for nothing or download them at a reasonable price. There's a good amount of Sherlock Holmes there, and not only the Canon.

Congratulations to Jon Lellenberg, Daniel Stashower and Charles Foley! At this year's Bouchercon, they received the 'Anthony' award to add to the 'Edgar' and the 'Agatha' for *Arthur Conan Doyle: A Life in Letters*.

Russell Miller tells me that Dame Jean Conan Doyle was registered at birth as 'Lina Jean' and not 'Jean Lena Annette', as I said in my review of his biography *The Adventures of Arthur Conan Doyle*. My apologies.

The latest recording from the **Old Court Radio Theatre Company** will be up on the Society's website shortly, at www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk, where you'll be able to listen to and download *'The Gloria Scott' and 'Wisteria Lodge'*, both dramatised by MJ Elliott. Jim Crozier and Dave Hawkes are Holmes and Watson, impeccably supported by Ivor Jevons, Mark Preston, Vince Webb, Cyril Bagshaw, Lindsay Lloyd and others. The two plays are also available from me on a CD. The price post-paid is: UK £5.00; Europe £6.00 or 9.00 Euros; elsewhere £9.00 or US$12.00.

Sterling cheques should be payable to Roger Johnson and US dollar checks to Jean Upton; Euros in cash only, please.

On Boxing Day Clive Merrison and Andrew Sachs begin a third series of *The Further Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* in four plays written by **Bert Coules** and broadcast at 2.15pm on Fridays. Titles are 'The Eyes of Horus', 'The Thirteen Watches', 'The Remarkable Performance of Mr Frederick Merridew', and 'The Ferrers Documents'. Stephen Thorne returns as Lestrade, Malcolm Tierney is Stamford, Hugh Bonneville is Merridew, Stuart Milligan is Harkness, and Nigel Anthony is Sir Gregory Backwater. Capital!

At http://classicradioworld.com you can listen to old time radio dramatisations of Sherlock Holmes. Don't expect great sound quality.

Bruce Holmes (3170 Joseph Howe Drive #7, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada B3I 4G1; ebh221b@eastlink.ca) offers Sherlockian postage stamps and stamp-related items. An example: '*ILLUSTRATED SHERLOCK HOLMES STORY: I will select quotations from* your *favourite of the 56* short *stories and illustrate these quotations with genuine postage stamps. In effect I will be customizing* your *story. The layout of the sheet will be a minimum of 5 stamps vertical on the left side of the 8.5" x 11" sheet, with the quotation to the right of the stamps. The price for this unique illustration is only $25.00 US.*' If you'd like to see what Bruce's work looks like, e-mail me and I'll send you his catalogue.

More unusual Holmesian goodies are available from **Charles Hall** (12 Paisley Terrace, Edinburgh EH8 7JW), including a variety of postage stamps, caricature postcards, bookmarks and Christmas cards, resin medallions *[*the one depicting Laurel & Hardy as Holmes & Watson is a knockout*]*, and the two excellent books that Charles wrote with Peter Blythe: *On Stage Sherlock Holmes* (£4.00 plus postage) and *Sherlock Holmes and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in Edinburgh* (£3.25 plus postage). Write to Charles for a catalogue, or e-mail me.

London's only specialist audiobook dealer has moved from Wigmore Street to Baker Street, next door to the site of the Empty House (see 'The Mews of Marylebone' by Bernard Davies). And of course **The Talking Bookshop** stocks pretty much the entire range of Holmes and Conan Doyle material. (The Talking Bookshop, 36 Baker Street, London W1U 3EU; www.talkingbooks.co.uk.)

Oscar Ross has kindly provided the October issue of *The Dalesman* (Country Publications Ltd, The Water Mill, Broughton Hall, Skipton, North Yorks. BD23 3AG) featuring an interesting though elementary article by Martin Hickes: 'On the Trail of the Hound of the Baskervilles'.

The 2 December issue of *The Lady* (39-40 Bedford Street, London WC2E 9ER) will include a piece by **Katherine Karlson**, ASH, BSI on Sherlock Holmes's women. Kate Karlson is co-editor of *Ladies, Ladies: The Women in the Life of Sherlock Holmes* (see DM 275).

On 24 November the Eastern Daily Press carried an article entitled 'Solved! Holmes Story Riddle'. At a recent Norwich book fair, Gerry Fuller bought an autograph album, which, though neither he nor the dealer realised it at the time, contains not only Arthur Conan Doyle's signature, dated 'May 1903, Happisburgh', but those of six-year-old Gilbert John Cubitt and Edith Alice Cubitt. After his name Gilbert wrote 'HASBORO, 1902' in animated letters, and Edith drew 'A Musical Tragedy' played out by stick figures based on musical notes. Gilbert's father was landlord of the Hill House hotel at Happisburgh (pronounced approximately 'Haisborra') where Conan Doyle stayed in 1903, and where he was inspired by the boy's use of stick figures as letters of the alphabet to write 'The Dancing Men' and to name its principal character Hilton Cubitt. You can read the story and see the 'dancing men' here: http://new.edp24.co.uk/content/news/story.aspx?brand=EDPOnline&category=News&tBrand=edponline&tCategory=news&itemid=NOED24%20Nov%202008%2007%3A58%3A38%3A923.

Aziz bin Adam has alerted me to *The Lost Cases of Sherlock Holmes* (JoWood Productions Software AG, Richard-Steinhuber-Strasse 10a/TOP 9, A-8940 Liezen, Austria, which claims to be 'the first computer game officially licensed by the Conan Doyle Estate'. You can play or download the game at various sites, such as http://www.legacygames.com/download_games/394/the_lost_cases_of_sherlock_holmes/, or buy it on CD-ROM. It features '16 unique cases of forgery, espionage, theft, murder and more. Investigate hundreds of potentially relevant clues and lively characters in each mysterious story. Explore 40 historically accurate locations around London, as you track down suspects and evidence.'

The Sherlock Holmes pub, the Sherlock Holmes Museum… and now London has a third re-creation of the famous sitting-room at 221B. The Museum of the Moving Image closed several years ago, but earlier this year **The Movieum** opened at County Hall, opposite the Houses of Parliament, and it houses, among much else, the Granada Suite, which 'includes artefacts from the actual set made famous by the hugely popular Granada TV/Film series of Sherlock Holmes… The study set from the popular series has been faithfully re-created using all of the original set pieces, furniture and props, courtesy of the Sherlock Holmes Company, with a gallery of photographs and posters…' See http://wwww.themovieum.com/Latest/sherlock-holmes-comes-to-the-movieum.html. Entrance to the Movieum *[*at least it's a memorable name*]* is £15.00 for adults; £9.00 for children of five to fifteen, students, and concessions; and £40.00 for a family of two adults and two children.

Earlier this month Novosti, the Russian News & Information Agency, reported that marble statuettes of Sherlock Holmes had been presented to the sixteen best police officers in the Novgorod Region. The awards were made on 10 November, the fourteenth annual Police Officers' Day.

Our Webmaster, Charles Markham, and our Website Editor, Robert Graham, are looking to move on, and the Council would like to hear from any members who think they have the knowledge, the skill and the enthusiasm to take over, preferably combining the posts. The new Webmaster will manage one of the most prestigious Sherlockian sites and have contact with enthusiasts worldwide. The workload fluctuates, but two hours a week should suffice to keep the website reviewed and updated. Ideally the Webmaster will be able to attend the (approximately quarterly) Council meetings in London. The site is written in PHP and MySQL, but in terms of both is pretty basic! For more information, please contact Robert Graham r.mgraham@btinternet.com.

Dancer, singer and actor **Peter Gordeno** died on 18 October, aged sixty-nine. In 2005 he directed and choreographed Teddy Hayes' musical *The Baskerville Beast* at the Questors Theatre, Ealing.

I was looking forward to meeting **Paul Churchill** at the BSI dinner in January, as I've long admired the 'genuine faux documents' he created over the years, such as Dr Watson's commission, the patent for the Bruce-Partington plans, and John Clayton's hackney carriage licence. That privilege won't be mine now, as Paul Churchill died on 7 November, aged sixty-three. His BSI investiture was 'Corot'.

Periodicals received. ***The Baker Street Journal***, Autumn 2008 (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). ***Communication***, no. 284 (**The Pleasant Places of Florida**, Wanda & Jeff Dow, 1737 Santa Anna Drive, Dunedin, FL 34698, USA). ***Ineffable Twaddle***, November 2008 and December 2008 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). ***The Magic Door***, Autumn 2008 (**The Friends of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection**, Doug Wrigglesworth, 16 Sunset Street, Holland Landing, Ontario, Canada L9N 1H4). ***Mayday Mayday,*** November 2008, and ***The Log***, volume 1 number 2, 2008 (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardcarn Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). ***The Morning Post***, November 2008 (**The Noble Bachelors of St Louis**, Randy Getz, 7456 Cornell Avenue, University City, MO 63130, USA). ***The Petrel Flyer***, Nov./Dec. 2008 (**The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia**, Len Haffenden, 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7P 3C6). ***The School Report***, Winter 2008 (**The Priory Scholars**, Horace L Coates, 21 Butcombe Road, Leicester LE4 0FY). ***Tonga Times***, Fall 2008 (**The Mini-Tonga Scion Society**, Jay Pearlman, 1656 E 19th Street, #2-E, Brooklyn, NY 11229, USA; minitongasociety@aol.com). ***The Whaling News***, June 2008, July 2008, August 2008, September 2008, October 2008 and November 2008 (**The Harpooners of the Sea Unicorn**, Michael E Bragg, PO Box 256, St Charles, MO 63302-0256, USA).

And ***Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press***, October 2008 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; blau7103@comcast.net).

Roger Johnson

The DISTRICT MESSENGER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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no. 289 20th December 2008

Sherlock Holmes at the Raffles Hotel is the new short novel by **John Hall** (Breese Books, Baker Street Studios Ltd, Endeavour House, 170 Woodland Road, Sawston, Cambridge CB22 3DX; £7.50). A year or two after the detective's retirement to Sussex, his old friend, recently widowed and himself at a low ebb, finds the detective a victim of melancholic *ennui*. An unexpected encounter with an old friend provides Watson with the perfect excuse to get both of them away from an English winter to the tropical paradise of Singapore, for the friend in question is Arshak Sarkies, one of the four Armenian brothers who established a chain of luxury hotels in south-east Asia. Their destination is the most famous of them all — possibly the most famous hotel in the world — but what Dr Watson intends as a rest cure quickly becomes a real criminal investigation. They are greeted by Arshak's brother Tigran, manager of the hotel, with the news that a visiting English lady has been murdered. Of course, this, rather than relaxation in the sun, is what Holmes needs. Mr Hall is a good writer and an artful storyteller; moreover he knows his subject — or rather, subjects. His depiction of Singapore in Edwardian days is both enticing and convincing, and of course he is renowned as a Holmesian scholar. *Sherlock Holmes at the Raffles Hotel* is a grand read.

The Chronicles of Sherlock Holmes (Robert Hale Ltd, Clerkenwell House, 45-47 Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0HT; £18.99) is the second collection of new Holmes stories by **Paul D Gilbert**, and, like the first (*The Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes*) it's an attempt to relate some of the tales that are merely referred to in the Canon. Here we have the cases of Baron Maupertuis, Mr James Phillimore, the aluminium crutch, Ricoletti and his abominable wife, the cutter *Alicia*, the red leech, and Isadora Persano. *[*The first name of the well-known journalist and duellist was undoubtedly Isadore. 'Isadora' must be a misprint that has been perpetuated over the decades.*]* The plotting is clever — neater than in the first volume — and the characterisation is acceptable, though the writing can be a trifle clumsy, and the real Dr Watson would surely not have referred to 'Lord Lynton's veritable tome *The Last Days of Pompeii*'. 'Lynton' for 'Lytton' is a simple and silly typographical error, but it leads one to suspect that 'veritable' ought to be 'venerable', since the novel was written in 1834… But I think Mr Gilbert means only that it's a big book, as most Victorian novels were — though they were often published in three volumes, unlike today's airport blockbusters. As for the notion that the Holborn (where Watson and Stamford lunched, you'll remember, before going on to meet Holmes at Bart's) was a club, a very little research would reveal that the Holborn was a famous restaurant, opened in 1874 and closed in 1955. See, for instance, Lee Jackson's website at www.victorianlondon.org/food/holbornrestaurant.htm. Perhaps I'm being a trifle harsh on Mr Gilbert's book, but it does make rather disappointing reading after *Sherlock Holmes at the Raffles Hotel*.

Sherlock Holmes in Russia, edited and translated by **Alex Auswaks** (Robert Hale Ltd; £18.99) is something altogether different. We've long known that there was once a considerable industry in Germany and elsewhere, dedicated to creating more and increasingly outlandish adventures for Sherlock Holmes, all without the consent, and possibly without the knowledge, of Arthur Conan Doyle. What many of us didn't know is that the same sort of thing was going on in Russia in the early years of the twentieth century, but whereas the tales of the King of Detectives that were so abundantly available in Scandinavia, France, Spain and other countries were mostly translated from the German, the Russian stories were original and relevant to that mighty nation. They were also, to judge by the selection in this book, much better written, and frequently had a political point to them. In his introduction, George Piliev tells us a good deal about the popularity of Conan Doyle's creation in Russia — as great, apparently, as among English-speaking readers — and how these apocryphal chronicles came to be written and published during the last fifteen years of Tsarist rule, but he can't tell us, for instance, just how many such tales were published and how many writers contributed to the series, because, perhaps unsurprisingly, most of the original records no longer exist. There are two stories here by P Orlovetz and five by P Nikitin, all actually set in Russia, and all narrated by Dr Watson. So we're in a place, or a series of places (St Petersburg, Vladivostok and points between) that the authors knew well, but seen through the eyes of an intelligent and educated foreigner. It's a device that also enables the writers to mention economic and political anomalies without seeming to comment on them directly; it must have been widely used in those pre-revolutionary times. The style of the translated text is not really Watson's, but somehow that doesn't matter. It's clear and crisp, without anachronisms, and it's well suited to these exciting and ingenious accounts of Russian mysteries solved by an English detective.

New from Baskerville Bücher (Michael Ross, Hermeskeiler Platz 14, 50935 Köln, Germany) is the first comprehensive listing of German-language audio productions: *Sherlock Holmes für die Ohren: Hörspiele und Hörbücher im deutschsprachigen Raum* by **Uwe Jacobs** and **Nicole Glücklich**. The nearest English equivalent is the relevant section of Ronald De Waal's *The Universal Sherlock Holmes*, but this sturdy, attractive 260-page paperback is much more portable. Also it has a twelve-page section of full-colour illustrations; I like that! The book is listed on www.amazon.de for €19.95.

Francophones, meanwhile, will benefit from *Dictionnaire Sherlock Holmes* by **Lucien-Jean Bord** (Le Cherche midi, 23 rue du Cherche-Midi, 75006, Paris, France; €21.00). The author is a respected historian and philologist. He is also a Benedictine monk.

Philip J Attwell has kindly provided a copy of *Holmes: Haydn's Head*, a graphic novel by **Omaha Perez** (AiT/Planet Lar, 2034 47th Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94116, USA; $12.95). It's the first of the series that I'd come across, and although I enjoyed it, I confess that the pleasure was rather mixed. Mr Perez says that he 'is actually a great fan of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle', but his depiction of Holmes and Watson may be the most subversive yet. The detective is incompetent, violent, devious — not to say deviant — and pretty much permanently stoned. The doctor is equally violent, and so blindly loyal that he misreports just about everything, including murder, in his friend's favour. Part of the fun is in the contrast between Watson's narrative and the outrageous activity we see in the panels.

Peter Blau reports: '**Len Deighton**'s "Sherlock Holmes and the Titanic Swindle" is the first short story he has written in more than 30 years (and imaginatively Sherlockian rather than a pastiche), and it's one of the 17 stories in *The Verdict of Us All: Stories by the Detection Club for H R F Keating*, edited by Peter Lovesey (Norfolk: Crippen & Landru, 2006; 223pp, $43.00 cloth or $20.00 paper); the special cloth edition is signed by the editor and has an additional story in a separate pamphlet. Box 9315, Norfolk, VA 23505 (877-622-6656) www.crippenlandru.com. Douglas G Greene, the proprietor of Crippen & Landru, does an excellent job of finding interesting short stories, old and new, for his anthologies and collections.'

Peter also recommends **Christopher Plummer**'s autobiography, *In Spite of Myself: A Memoir* (Knopf Canada, Random House of Canada Ltd, 1 Toronto Street, Unit 300, Toronto, Ontario M5C 2V6, Canada; Cn$37.00/US$29.95). 'He explains that he got along like a house afire with Basil Rathbone (they acted together in the play *J.B.*), and he

enjoyed playing Holmes with James Mason ('who turned in the best Watson I've ever seen.').

Due next month from Gasogene Books (Wessex Press, PO Box 68308, Indianapolis, IN 46268, USA) is the tenth volume in the *Sherlock Holmes Reference Library*, edited and annotated by **Leslie S Klinger**. *The Apocrypha of Sherlock Holmes* ($19.95) will, I expect, overlap considerably with Jack Tracy's *Sherlock Holmes: The Published Apocrypha*, Richard Lancelyn Green's *The Uncollected Sherlock Holmes* and Peter Haining's *The Final Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, but Les Klinger's annotations will make the new book essential.

Richard James's play *Sherlock Holmes and the Mystery of Mallen Hall* has been well received in Berkshire and Lancashire. You can read the script, and buy it for production, at http://www.lazybeescripts.co.uk/cgi-bin/Search_Results.asp?sPa=mallen. Or write to Lazy Bee Scripts, 2 Wood Road, Ashurst, Southampton SO40 7BD.

There are lots of potential seasonal purchases in the December *Sherlockian E-Times* at http://sherlock-holmes.com/e_times08-12.htm. (**Classic Specialties**, PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH, 45219, USA; sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com.)

In February the cities of Edinburgh, Glasgow, Bristol, Portsmouth, and Westminster will join other authorities in **The Lost World Read 2009**, a campaign to promote a) reading, b) Charles Darwin's 200th birthday, and c) Arthur Conan Doyle's 150th birthday. Events will include free copies of (what else?) *The Lost World*, with an exclusive cover designed by Aardman Animations and featuring Wallace and Gromit. The books will be distributed through libraries, schools and other partner organisations. Enter "Lost World Read 2009" into Google for leads.

Next month the BBC will begin filming the updated Sherlock Holmes script by **Steven Moffat** and **Mark Gatiss**. If the one-off production, apparently entitled *Sherlock*, is successful there will be a series. Benedict Cumberbatch and Martin Freeman will play Holmes and Watson, with Rupert Graves as Lestrade. The setting is London, but filming will be done in Wales, where *Doctor Who* and *Torchwood* are made. Yesterday's Daily Telegraph quotes Steven Moffat: 'Everything that matters about Holmes and Watson is the same. Conan Doyle's original stories were never about frock coats and gaslight. They're about brilliant detection, dreadful villains and blood-curdling crimes — and, frankly, the hell with the crinoline.'

CSA WORD (www.csaword.co.uk; 6A Archway Mews, London SW15 2PE) has released on CD *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes: v. 1* read by **Edward Hardwicke:** six fine readings ('The Empty House', 'The Devil's Foot', 'The Abbey Grange', 'The Cardboard Box', 'The Man with the Twisted Lip' and 'The Bruce-Partington Plans') first released on cassette. Volume 2 follows on 12 January.

On 21 January BBC Audiobooks (St James House, The Square, Lower Bristol Road, Bath BA2 3BH) will release *The Further Adventures of Sherlock Holmes vol. 3* — four plays by **Bert Coules**, starring Clive Merrison and Andrew Sachs: 'The Peculiar Persecution of Mr John Vincent Harden' from the first series, 'The Striking Success of Miss Franny Blossom' from the second, and 'The Thirteen Watches' and 'The Ferrers Documents' from the third, which begins transmission on Boxing Day.

As noted in DM 274, the famous **Café Royal** in Regent Street is to close — on Monday, in fact. On 28 November, *West End Extra* reported: 'To the bohemians of Victorian England, the Café Royal was an oasis of French charm — the reason why it became so beloved by Oscar Wilde and his friends. It was the backdrop to so many dramatic events in his life including his decision to sue the Marquess of Queensbury.' And of course there are Holmesian connections, including a dinner or two of our Society. The entire contents are to be sold at Bonhams in Knightsbridge on 20 January: 'Up for grabs are everything from humidors to brandy caskets, Venetian chandeliers to a whole boxing ring — the scene of many a bruising black-tie bout.' www.bonhams.com/cgi-bin/public.sh/pubweb/publicSite.r?sContinent=EUR&screen=furnitureSELL.

A few websites worth looking at. Our own Society's is at www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk. Chris Redmond's Sherlockian.net is, naturally, at www.sherlockian.net. Willis Frick's Sherlocktron is at http://members.cox.net/sherlock1/Sherlocktron.html. Randall Stock's Best of Sherlock Holmes is at www.bestofsherlock.com. Then there are *The Baker Street Journal* at www.bakerstreetjournal.com, the Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes at www.ash-nyc.com, and the Sydney Passengers at www.sherlock.on.net. The University of Minnesota Sherlock Holmes Collections is (are?) at http://special.lib.umn.edu/rare/holmes.phtml, Portsmouth's Arthur Conan Doyle Collection is at www.conandoylecollection.co.uk, and Marylebone Library's Sherlock Holmes Collection at www.westminster.gov.uk/libraries/special/sherlock.cfm. David Stuart Davies, crimewriter and Holmesian scholar, is at www.davidstuartdavies.com/, his partner in The Mystery Men, Matthew Booth, at www.matthew-booth.com, and the Mystery Men's site at www.mysterymen.info/.

The Park Plaza Sherlock Holmes at 108 Baker Street (to you and me, the **Sherlock Holmes Hotel**) has been in discussions with *Guinness World Records* regarding an attempt to break the world record for the most people dressed as Sherlock Holmes in one place and at one time. The last we heard the hotel management were awaiting word from Guinness as to whether it would be recognised as an official records category. If you'd like to know more, contact Megan McIntyre (Account Manager) at megan.mcintyre@rooster.co.uk.

Michael Harper has sent information about a course to be held on 21 March, from 10.30 to 4.30, at City Lit, Keeley Street, Covent Garden (London WC2B 4BA). The tutor is Geoff Doel, and the course is **Sherlock Holmes and his Creator**. The standard cost is £31.00 (senior fee £19.00, concessionary fee £10.00). You can enrol by post, in person, online at www.citylit.ac.uk, or by phone on 020 7831 7831.

John Ringham, who died on 20 October aged eighty, was a prolific and versatile actor. His last performances were in the detective series *Wallander*, with Kenneth Branagh, and the daytime soap *Doctors*. In 1985 he memorably played Inspector Lanner in Granada TV's production of *The Resident Patient*, with Jeremy Brett and David Burke.

Periodicals received. ***The Camden House Journal***, October 2008, November 2008 and December 2008 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, Debbie Tinsley, PO Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). ***The Illustrious Clients News***, November 2008 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T Doyle, 9 Calumet Court, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). ***Mayday Mayday,*** December 2008, and ***C-Extra***, December 2008 (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardcarn Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). ***The Passengers' Log***, 8 October 2008 (**The Sydney Passengers**, Rosane McNamara, 4/2a Merlin Street, Neutral Bay, NSW 2089, Australia).

The Pipe Smoker's Thing, Autumn 2008 (Albert Mendez, 142-35 38th Avenue, Flushing, NY 11354, USA) *[*much Sherlockian interest in this issue, though John Hall's new story is actually about the aristocratic 1920s sleuth Freddie Darnborough; Mr Mendez corrects an error in DM 284:* ***The Holmesian Society*** *has a dozen or so active members, though he is the only survivor of the founder-members*]*. ***The Rats' Annual Telegraph***, December 5 1898 *[*sic*]* (**The Giant Rats of Sumatra**, Joe Highfill, 480 Northwood Street, Parsons, TN 38363-2211, USA). ***The Sherlock Holmes Journal***, Winter 2008 *[*I trust you won't actually need to be reminded of our own Society's journal…*]*. ***Sherlockiana***, nr. 4, 2008 (**Sherlock Holmes Klubben i Danmark**, Bjarne Rother Jensen, Højbovangen 24, 9200 Aalborg SV, Denmark). ***The Torr***, Autumn 2008 (**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***, November 2008 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; blau7103@comcast.net).

Postal subscribers may not receive this till after Christmas, but in any case I'll wish everybody

The Compliments of the Season.

Roger Johnson

The DISTRICT MESSENGER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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no. 290 1st February 2009

At the 75th anniversary dinner of **The Baker Street Irregulars** on 9 January, Wiggins awarded twelve investitures: **Bill Barnes** ('The *Gloria Scott*'), **Susan Dahlinger** ('The Bruce-Partington Plans'), **Robert Ellis** ('The Illustrious Client'), **Walter Jaffee** ('The Resident Patient'), **Allan Devitt** ('The Dancing Men'), **Greg Darak** ('The Engineer's Thumb'), **Jeff Bradway** ('A Case of Identity'), **Michael Pollak** ('The Blue Carbuncle'), **Sebastien le Page** ('The Six Napoleons'), **Jens Byskov Jensen** ('The Blanched Soldier'), **Joel Schwartz** ('The Three Students'), and **Barbara Rusch** ('The Mazarin Stone'). **Dan Posnansky** received the Two-Shilling Award, and Editors' Medals were presented to **Hirayama Yuichi**, **Doug Elliott**, **Bill Barnes**, **John Bergquist**, **Susan Rice** and **Nicholas Utechin**.

At our Society's annual dinner on 17 January, Freda Howlett presented the Tony Howlett Award to **Anna Smyth**.

The Baker Street Journal Christmas Annual 2008 is called *Reading the Signs: Some Observations and Aperçus on Film and Television Adaptations of The Sign of The Four* by **David Morrill** (The Baker Street Irregulars, Michael H Kean, 3040 Sloat Road, Pebble Beach, CA 93953-2837, USA; www.bakerstreetjournal.com/; US $11.00 postpaid; elsewhere $12.00 postpaid). Mr Morrill's expert knowledge of Sherlockian film is evident throughout this very informative and readable 68-page monograph, which covers all the English-language screen productions since the introduction of sound. The Granada TV film, I think, has yet to be equalled as a screen adaptation of a Canonical story. Mr Morrill is less impressed, and his enthusiasm for the Mapleton production persuades me that I should watch it again.

Australia and Sherlock Holmes edited by **Doug Elliott** and **Bill Barnes** is the third volume in the BSI International Series (address & website as above; US $43.90 postpaid; elsewhere $52.90 postpaid). An introductory account of Sherlockians in Australia is followed by two essays on Conan Doyle's 1921 tour of Australia — one by Alec Chisholm, whose memories are of the man rather than the Spiritualist mission. Arthur Williams, Richard Hughes and Dick Hughes look more closely at the Holmesian phenomenon in Australia. Hughes Senior was a lifelong devotee, who applied the Master's methods to remarkable effect in a career that stretched well beyond his ostensible profession as a journalist. Then there are papers on specifically Australian aspects of the Canon. Philip Cornell's identification of the snake in 'The Speckled Band' seems to me definitive, and Rosane McNamara's solution to the chronological paradox of 'The *Gloria Scott*' almost so. Finally there are ten less geographically restricted articles by Australian scholars – among them Mark Doyle, Michael Duke, James Eedle, Kerry Murphy, Alan Olding, Robert Veld and Bill Barnes – which prove that Holmesian scholarship is alive and well Down Under. The many illustrations include a plentiful scattering of Philip Cornell's delightful cartoons.

In *'Certain Rites, and Also Certain Duties': Unexpected Sources of Baker Street Irregularity*, Volume Seven of the BSI Archival Histories, (Hazelbaker & Lellenberg, 211 East Delaware Place, suite 605, Chicago, IL 60611, USA; jonlellenberg@gmail.com; US $14.00, Canada $15.00, UK & Europe $19.50 – prices in US dollars, postpaid) **Jon Lellenberg** looks at Christ Cella's speakeasy on East 45th Street, where the BSI was conceived; at that great journalist Elmer Holmes Davis and the curious origin of the Constitution and Buy Laws (*sic*) that are his lasting contribution to the Irregulars; at Frank Morley, devisor of the crossword puzzle whose solving his brother Christopher lightly adopted as the criterion for Irregularity; and at Basil Davenport, Edgar W Smith, Ronald Mansbridge, and James Ramsay Hunt Jr – all, I think, mentioned in earlier volumes in the series, but all deserving of further study, both as Sherlockians and as remarkable men (the information, far from complete, about Smith's formative years has only recently come to light). A bitterly funny account of the problems caused for Doubleday & Co in 1959 by Adrian Conan Doyle's insistence on a US edition of the Conan Doyle Centenary Album, a very expensive vanity project, is followed by 'The BSI at Seventy-Five' a passionate but well-balanced summary of the state of the society today. The BSI history series makes for fascinating reading, largely because of the excellence of the editors and writers who contribute to it, but also because of what the BSI is – and it's very different from the Sherlock Holmes Society of London! These books help us to understand and to enjoy the difference.

The tenth volume in the Sherlock Holmes Reference Library, *The Apocrypha of Sherlock Holmes* by Arthur Conan Doyle, edited and annotated by **Leslie S Klinger** (Gasogene Books, Wessex Press LLC, PO Box 68308, Indianapolis, IN 46268, USA; www.wessexpress.com; $19.95), contains two self-parodies, 'The Field Bazaar' and 'How Watson Learned the Trick'; two possible Holmes cases, 'The Man with the Watches' and 'The Lost Special' (the former the basis for one of *The Further Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* in Bert Coules' recent BBC Radio 4 series); three plays, *The Stonor Case* (Jack Tracy had a slightly different version, *The Speckled Band*, in his 1980 volume *Sherlock Holmes: The Published Apocrypha*), *The Crown Diamond* and *Angels of Darkness*; and a plot outline called 'The Tall Man'. The decision to play the great Holmesian game with these writings results in a book that's somehow less satisfactory than the others in the series, particularly when it comes to *Angels of Darkness*, a tale so wildly different from the events of *A Study in Scarlet* that suspension of disbelief is impossible. *The Stonor Case* is an exciting melodrama. *The Crown Diamond* is an efficient short thriller. *Angels of Darkness* is a sprawling mess, full of racial and cultural stereotypes and unspeakable dialogue; it's a curiosity that shouldn't be considered alongside the true Canon. That said, we're indebted to Mr Klinger for the light he throws on these addenda to the Canon; his scholarship is exemplary (though it should be mentioned that county cricket matches were amateur fixtures; there were professional cricketers, but they were very much looked down on, as the chronicles of A J Raffles show). Volumes One to Nine of the Sherlock Holmes Reference Library are, to the scholar and researcher, essential, but Volume Ten is only very desirable.

Also from Wessex Press is *Voices from Baker Street* ($18.95), all four LP recordings, most of them made by Bill Rabe between the early 1950s and the late 1970s, digitally remastered and released on two CDs. For the first time in decades, we can hear Vincent Starrett reciting his poem '221B', Felix Morley recalling his brother Christopher, James Montgomery singing 'We Never Mention Aunt Clara'… plus the voices of Rex Stout, Edgar W Smith, John Bennett Shaw, Anthony Boucher, Basil Davenport, Julian Wolff, Isaac Asimov, Nathan Bengis, Basil Rathbone and a cast of what seems like hundreds. Newly recorded introductions by Mark Gagen put each recording in its context. It's an entertainment and a scholarly resource.

Each year since 1983 the USA's most north-westerly group has published a journal of scholarship and frivolity. *The Best of The Sound of the Baskervilles' Beaten's Christmas Annual: Our First Quarter Century* (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA; $19.95 plus postage) is a fine chunky 296-page collection that exemplifies just those qualities. Most of the contents run to no more than a couple of pages, but they prove that Sherlockian commentary can be both brief and valuable: random instances are Terri Haugen on Eille Norwood, Stu Shiffman on Sexton Blake, Jean Macdonald on Dorothy L Sayers, and Lloyd Hedberg on the nature of Sherlockians. The dozen or so pastiches vary in quality, most being helped by a slightly skewed approach. The humour embraces parody, jokes, comic verse and all sorts: I particularly like David

Haugen's lampoons of the old radio plays. There are recipes and essays on Victorian food and drink, and finally a section headed 'Miscellany', which is definitely *le mot juste*! Just out is *Beaten's Christmas Annual* for 2008 – 42 pages of the same, for $10.00.

Many authors, ignoring Holmes's remark, 'No ghosts need apply,' have set him face to face with the supernatural. There have been several anthologies of such stories, but few, I think, as good as *Gaslight Grimoire: Dark Tales of Sherlock Holmes* edited by **J R Campbell** & **Charles Prepolec** (EDGE Science Fiction and Fantasy Publishing, Inc., PO Box 1714, Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2P 2L7; $16.95), which contains eleven of the most ingenious, imaginative and inspired exploits yet committed to paper. Holmes meets vampires, revenants, demons and things less definable. He accompanies Professor Challenger to the Lost World, and collaborates with two celebrated ghost-hunters. He even meets Peter Pan! But the best is 'The Red Planet League' by Kim Newman, a tale inspired by the work of H G Wells, whose protagonist is not Holmes but Moriarty. It's a dazzlingly clever and beautifully written demonic joke.

Jeff Falkingham's Sherlock *Holmes: In Search of the Source* (Xlibris, International Plaza II, Suite 410, Philadelphia, PA 19113-1513, USA; www2.xlibris.com/bookstore; $29.99 hardback, $19.99 paperback) takes Holmes back to Minnesota, ten years after the events of *Sherlock Holmes and the County Courthouse Caper*. Where Holmes goes there will be crime, of course. Murder is universal, but this particular murder arises directly from the story of the city of St Paul – a story conveyed with an easy and natural authority. The narrator Peter Smith, as likable at twenty-two as he was at twelve, is an amiable, intelligent and enthusiastic narrator, who shares Dr Watson's talent for telling a story in English that's literate without being in the least precious.

Seventy-six issues of that excellent journal *Baker Street Miscellanea* were published between 1975 and 1993, rivalling the BSJ and the SHJ. The complete run is now available on CD as fully searchable PDF files for $40.00 from Donald Pollock (521 College Avenue, Niagara Falls, NY 14305, USA). E-mail donaldkpollock@gmail.com for details of payment by PayPal.

Three titles from Black Coat Press (Hollywood Comics.com LLC, PO Box 17270, Encino, CA 91416, USA; www.blackcoatpress.com) must wait till the next issue for review: *Sherlock Holmes vs Fantômas* by **Pierre de Wattyne** & **Yorrill Walter**, adapted by Frank J Morlock (£10.99); *Sherlock Holmes: The Vampires of Eternity* by **Brian Stableford** (£16.99); *Tales of the Shadowmen: The Vampires of Paris* edited by **Jean-Marc** & **Randy Lofficier** (£14.99). So must *Great British Fictional Detectives* by **Russell James** (Remember When, Pen & Sword Books Ltd, 47 Church Street, Barnsley S70 2AS; £19.99).

Arthur Conan Doyle: Sherlock Holmes et au-delà by Marianne Stjepanovic-Pauly is published by Éditions du Jasmin (4 rue Valiton, 92 110 Clichy, France; €16.00). *Aside Arthur Conan Doyle: Twenty Original Tales* by **Bertram Fletcher Robinson**, compiled by Paul Spiring, is due from MX Publishing (10 Kingfisher Close, Stanstead Abbotts, Herts. SG12 8LQ; £12.99). *Dust and Shadow* by **Lyndsay Faye**, pitting Holmes and Watson against Jack the Ripper, has attracted exceptional prepublication notices (Simon & Schuster, 1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020, USA; 28 April 2009; $25.00). On 25 June comes *The Penguin Book of Gaslight Crime: Con Artists, Burglars, Rogues, and Scoundrels from the Time of Sherlock Holmes* edited by **Michael Sims** (80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL; £9.99).

Paul Spiring will be at Waterstone's Bookshop in Plymouth on 21 February from noon to 2.00pm to sign copies of *On the Trail of Arthur Conan Doyle: An Illustrated Devon Tour*, and at 7.00pm on 23 February he'll be at Plymouth Central Library to talk about *Aside Arthur Conan Doyle* (for details of both events phone 01752 256699).

Hugo Koch has kindly sent me four copies of his latest booklet *The Adventures of John Wilkes Holmes*, which are free to the first four applicants within the UK (a 'large letter' stamp would be appreciated).

As always, there's lots of interest in the January *Sherlockian E-Times* at http://www.sherlock-holmes.com/e_times09-1.htm. (**Classic Specialties**, PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH, 45219, USA; sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com.)

From 11 to 28 February the **Pentameters Theatre** (Oriel Place, 28 Heath Street, Hampstead NW3 6TE; 020 7435 3648) will stage *Sherlock Holmes and the Hound of the Baskervilles* by Harry Meacher, who also plays Holmes. Judi Bowker and Roger Sansom are also in the cast.

The Diamond Murders is yet another Sherlock Holmes film, based on *The Sign of Four* – but Holmes is not the principal sleuth. Ashoke Viswanathan is directing it in India, and most of the dialogue is in Hindi. Holmes, played by **Simon Wilson**, British Deputy High Commissioner in Calcutta, appears briefly to advise the detective Prasant Sehgal, played by Rajat Kapoor.

On 16 February the Stamp Issuing Office of the Principality of Monaco will issue a €0.85 stamp to mark the 150th anniversary of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's birth and a €1.70 stamp to mark the 200th anniversary of Edgar Allan Poe's birth. Details are at http://www.oetp-monaco.com/webkit/jsp/actu02.jsp?idCateg=0&idActu=141&langue=EN.

The Original London Walks offers *In the Footsteps of Sherlock Holmes*, which starts every Friday at 2.00pm, regardless of the weather, at Embankment Underground Station, and lasting about two hours. The regular guides are Corinna and Richard (our member **Richard Burnip**). The normal adult price is £7.00, but if you take along a copy of *The District Messenger* you'll pay only £5.00. The website at www.londonwalks.com is well worth a look.

So is **Rafe McGregor's** site at www.rafemcgregor.co.uk. On his blog at www.rafemcgregor.blogspot.com you can enter a free competition to win a hamper of signed Sherlockian and weird fiction.

On 30 December that highly dubious source *The Daily Star* reported that Guy Ritchie is buying the *Sherlock Holmes* pub in Edmonton, Alberta for Jude Law – Dr Watson in his film *Sherlock Holmes*.

The Nobel laureate **Harold Pinter**, who died on 24 December aged seventy-eight, was a noted actor as well as a dramatist. Dominic Dromgoole, Artistic Director of Shakespeare's Globe, reported that in 1958, under the name David Baron, he appeared with Carleton Hobbs and Norman Shelley in the serial *The Hound of the Baskervilles* on BBC Radio. The producer was Dominic's father Patrick Dromgoole. **Kathleen Byron** died 18 January aged eighty-eight, after an acting career that included the neurotic Sister Ruth in *Black Narcissus* and old Mrs Ryan in *Saving Private Ryan*. In Granada TV's 1994 production of *The Golden Pince-Nez*, she played Mrs Marker.

Periodicals received. ***The Baker Street Journal***, Winter 2008 (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). ***The Camden House Journal***, January 2009 & February 2009 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, Debbie Tinsley, PO Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). ***Communication***, no. 285 and no. 286 (**The Pleasant Places of Florida**, Wanda & Jeff Dow, 1737 Santa Anna Drive, Dunedin, FL 34698, USA). ***For the Sake of the Trust***, Fall 2008 (**The Baker Street Irregulars Trust**, Julie McKuras, 13512 Granada Avenue, Apple Valley, MN 55124, USA). ***Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections***, December 2008 (Suite 111, Elmer L Andersen Library, University of Minnesota, 222 21st Avenue S, Minneapolis, MN 55455, USA). ***Ineffable Twaddle***, January 2009 and February 2009 (**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***, December 1908 (**Société Sherlock Holmes de France**, Thierry Saint-Joanis, 15 rue Grande, 03370 Saint-Sauvier, France). ***Practice Notes,*** December 2008 (**The Friends of Dr Watson**, Nino Cirone, Highcroft Cottage, 14 Totteridge Common, London N20 8NL). *The Moor:* ***Magasin för Sherlockianer***, December 2008 (**The Baskerville Hall Club of Sweden**, Anders Wiggström, Byggmästarvägen 29, 169 Bromma, Sweden). ***Prescott's Press***, December 2008 (**The Three Garridebs**, Warren Randall, 15 Fawn Lane West, South Setauket, NY 11720-1346, USA). ***The Scion***, Winter 2008 (**The Musgraves**, Anne Jordan, Hallas Lodge, Greenside Lane, Cullingworth, Bradford BD13 5AP). ***The Serpentine Muse***, Winter 2008 (**The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes**, Evelyn Herzog, 301 Warren Ave, #203, Baltimore, MD 21203, USA).

And ***Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press***, December 2008 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; blau7103@comcast.net).

Roger Johnson

The DISTRICT MESSENGER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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no. 291 6th March 2009

To renew your subscription, send 12 stamped, self-addressed envelopes or (overseas) send 12 International Reply Coupons or £6.00 or US$15.00 for 12 issues (dollar checks payable to Jean Upton, sterling cheques to me). You can receive the DM electronically free of charge, as a Word attachment or as plain text.

I naïvely expected the flood of new Holmesian books to diminish rather as we got into February, but happily I was wrong. Four more arrived in this morning's post – one being the eagerly awaited *Stage Whispers: The Memoirs* by **Douglas Wilmer**, who to many of us was the definitive Sherlock Holmes of the mid-twentieth century (Porter Press International, PO Box 2, Tenbury Wells, WR5 8XX; standard edition £19.99; special edition £45.00). The publishers appear to have done him proud! There's a website at www.porterpress.co.uk. The US distributor is SNG Barratt USA (92 Londonderry Turnpike, Manchester, NH 03104, USA; www.sngbarratt.com. At our Society's meeting on 24 March, Mr Wilmer will talk about his life and career.

Of the dozen or so guides to Holmesian London, there are two that I recommend to visitors: Arthur Alexander's *Hot on the Scent* and Tom Wheeler's *Finding Sherlock's London*. Nothing stands still for long, though. **Thomas Bruce Wheeler** has revised and expanded his book, and *The New Finding Sherlock's London* (iUniverse, 1663 Liberty Drive, Bloomington, IN 47403, USA: $22.95) is a guide to more than 300 sites, each of whose significance is clearly and pithily stated. The book can be used in various ways. You can visit the locations of a specific adventure. You can explore the sites near each of ninety-nine railway or Underground stations. Or you can take any of six walking tours in the footsteps of Holmes and Watson. I said of the original edition that it was an excellent traveller's tool. *The New Finding Sherlock's London* is that and much more.

Now there's a third book to recommend. *Close to Holmes: A Look at the Connections between Historical London, Sherlock Holmes and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle* by **Alistair Duncan** (MX Publishing, 335 Princess Park Manor, Royal Drive, London N11 3GX; £9.99 or $19.95) is, I think, the first to give equal consideration to the places associated with Conan Doyle. Reading it, we feel that we're in the company of a knowledgeable, enthusiastic and witty friend. I should mention that I contributed the foreword; I did so because the book is both valuable and a pleasure to read. As much a historical and literary exploration as a travel guide, *Close to Holmes* doesn't compete with *The New Finding Sherlock's London*; instead, the two complement each other. On 14 March Alistair Duncan will be signing copies of his book at Waterstone's in the Whitgift Centre, Croydon, from noon to 2.00pm.

Christopher Redmond has published a slightly enlarged edition of his entertaining 52-page booklet *Quotations from Baker Street* (Chris Redmond, 523 Westfield Drive, Waterloo, Ontario N2T 2E1, Canada; cost including postage outside North America £8.00 or €9.00 or $12.00). Unlike similarly titled collections, this one contains witty, poignant, enlightening and sometimes simply odd quotations about Sherlock Holmes. Many of us will recognise ourselves in Eden Searles' remark: 'My deep love for the dusty stacks of second-hand bookshops is directly attributable to Sherlock Holmes.'

The most easily accessible account of the 'fatal battle' was Leigh Maxwell's excellent *My God – Maiwand*. Now we also have *Maiwand: The Last Stand of the 66th (Berkshire) Regiment in Afghanistan, 1880* by **Richard J Stacpoole-Ryding** (The History Press, The Mill, Brimscombe Port, Stroud, Glos. GL5 2QG; £19.99), which for the first time, I think, looks at the Battle of Maiwand specifically in relation to Dr Watson's regiment. This scrupulously researched and engagingly written book follows the Berkshires from Ireland to India in 1870, and takes us briefly through the next decade, so that when the cataclysmic battle breaks out we feel we know the men who fought against Ayub Khan's army. Thanks to the remarkable archive of official and personal papers held at The Rifles (Berkshire and Wiltshire) Museum, the author is able to present the officers and men as living human beings, not merely as fighting units, both in the main text and more fully in an appendix of biographical sketches. Other appendices look briefly at connections with Rudyard Kipling and with John H Watson. Mr Stacpoole-Ryding founded the Friends of Dr Watson, and he proves to be a fine storyteller himself, describing the Berkshires' heroic stand vividly and clearly. The link to the Canon is a bonus. Signed copies are, I understand, available direct from The Rifles (Berkshire and Wiltshire) Museum at The Wardrobe, 58 The Close, Salisbury SP1 2EX; www.thewardrobe.org.uk. (Less than two weeks ago three soldiers of the 1st Battalion The Rifles were killed in Helmand province, not very far from Maiwand…)

The Norwegian Explorers' *Christmas Annual 2008*, subtitled *The Non-English Sherlock Holmes*, includes most interesting articles on the Canon in Yiddish, pastiche in French, the 1954 television series that was filmed in Paris, and more, including an 1894 parody (in English) from Wales! This nice 58-page chapbook costs $8.00 postpaid from John Bergquist (3665 Ashbury Road, Eagan, MN 55122, USA; checks payable to The Norwegian Explorers).

There are echoes of 'His Last Bow' in *Sherlock Holmes & the Morphine Gambit* by **Jason Cooke** (Breese Books, Baker Street Studios Ltd, Endeavour House, 170 Woodland Road, Sawston, Cambridge CB22 3DX; 23 March; £7.50 or €12.00 or $18.50, postpaid). In February 1912 Mycroft Holmes calls on his brother to investigate a burglary at a house on the Norfolk coast, belonging to a German-born businessman and philanthropist, Sir Edward Muster. Relations between Britain and Germany are strained after the previous month's International Opium Convention, at which the Germans urged a ban on the opium trade (which would damage the British economy) and the British demanded a ban on the cocaine trade (which would damage the German economy). The novel is inspired by the story of the Rt Hon Sir Edgar Speyer, who fell victim to anti-German hysteria when war broke out. *The Morphine Gambit* is an exciting story, adequately well-written, though there are a few disconcertingly anachronistic phrases, such as 'safe house' and 'real ale', and Mr Cooke apparently thinks that the First Lord of the Admiralty is the same as the First Sea Lord. Not so. In February 1912 Winston Churchill, MP held the former post, and Admiral Sir Francis Bridgeman the latter.

I've received no fewer than four new Sherlockian titles from Black Coat Press (Hollywood Comics.com LLC, PO Box 17270, Encino, CA 91416, USA; www.blackcoatpress.com). *Sherlock Holmes vs Fantômas* by Pierre de Wattyne & Yorril Walter ($16.95 or £10.99) has been translated and adapted by **Frank J Morlock** from a 1914 play, *La Mort de Herlock Sholmès, ou Bandits en Habit Noir*. A very different character from, say, Arsène Lupin, Fantomâs, it's said, is a key figure in crime fiction as he represents a transition from Gothic novel villains of the 1800s to modern-day serial killers. The play inevitably takes some liberties with the received image of Sherlock Holmes, but in Frank Morlock's version it's a heart-clutching thriller.

Brian Stableford is both a distinguished writer of science fiction and a notable translator of French SF. His novel *Sherlock Holmes and the Vampires of Eternity* ($24.95 or £16.99) envisions, through drug-induced 'timeshadowing', the story of the cosmos over the next twelve

million years and the question of its ultimate fate. Sherlock Holmes is only one of the many characters who become observers of, and sometimes participants in, the continuing struggle between Humanity, the Vampires of eternity, and whatever it is that lurks at the end of time. His fellow-shadows include William Hope Hodgson, H G Wells, Oscar Wilde, Camille Flammarion, Alfred Jarry – and Count Dracula. *Sherlock Holmes and the Vampires of Eternity* is a fascinating apocalyptic mixture of wild imagination and serious scientific speculation.

In *Tales of the Shadowmen, Volume 5: The Vampires of Paris* ($22.95 or £14.99) **Jean-Marc & Randy Lofficier** have gathered more new stories of the heroes and villains of French pulp fiction, from authors including Scott Eckert, John Peel, Rick Lai, Xavier Mauméjean and Brian Stableford. As in the earlier volumes, we find the likes of Fantômas, Arsène Lupin, Joseph Rouletabille and Edmond Dantès sharing adventures with an increasingly wide range of other characters from popular literature – Ernst Stavro Blofeld, Count Zaroff, Frankenstein's monster, Hercule Poirot… even Bertie Wooster and Astérix the Gaul! Sherlock Holmes is there, of course, with Rouletabille and Tevye, in Stuart Schiffman's 'The Milkman Cometh', and with the Time Traveller and Professor Cavor in 'A Matter Without Gravity' by Alain le Bussy. Professor Moriarty, meanwhile, meets Dr Omega and Zepherin Xyrdal in 'The Dynamics of an Asteroid' by John Peel. It's all pretty crazy, and deliriously exciting.

The three novellas in *Sherlock Holmes: The Circle of Blood* by **Steve Leadley** ($20.95 or £12.99) promise to be rather more down-to-earth, but as the book's only just arrived I can't say much more than that. (Opening at random, however, I find the irritatingly ungrammatical phrase 'different than', and a reference to a building in 'the gothic revival style known as "Queen Anne"…' The British nineteenth century 'Queen Anne' style is very different from the highly decorated American style of that name, though not much closer to the architecture popular in the reign of Queen Anne, 1702-1714.)

The most unexpected new book to reach me is *Blast to Oblivion*, a Black Horse Western by **Chap O'Keefe** (Robert Hale, Clerkenwell House, 45-47 Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0HT; £12.99). In fact the cover painting of a cowboy on a bucking bronco is misleading. The opening quotation, 'The old wheel turns and the same spoke comes up. It's all been done before, and will be again,' as good as tells the reader that Mr O'Keefe has reworked the plot of a Sherlock Holmes story as an exploit of his ex-Pinkerton protagonist Joshua Dillard. The result is clever, atmospheric and exciting. Chap O'Keefe writes about the novel's debt to Conan Doyle at www.blackhorsewesterns.com.

Sherlock Holmes gets five pages in *Great British Fictional Detectives* by **Russell James** (Remember When, Pen & Sword Books Ltd, 47 Church Street, Barnsley, South Yorks. S70 2AS; £19.99). Mr James is a former Chairman of the Crime Writers Association, and knows far more than I do about the subject. He writes entertainingly, and the book is very handsomely presented. But when I read that 'within Doyle's own works we glean that Holmes was born in Yorkshire on 6 January 1854, the third son of a country squire' and was 'educated at Christ Church, Oxford', I wonder whether Russell James has really done his homework. And while I welcome the inclusion of television and radio detectives, I'm surprised that one of the very best, Jonathan Creek, is excluded, though a place is allocated to, er, Dixon of Dock Green. This is by no means a bad book, but I do feel that it could have been much better.

Aside Arthur Conan Doyle: Twenty Original Tales is the curious title of a rather splendid selection of stories by **Bertram Fletcher Robinson**, compiled by Paul R Spiring (MX Publishing, 335 Princess Park Manor, Royal Drive, London N11 3GX; £12.99 or $22.95). The six Chronicles of Addington Peace, the six episodes of *The Trail of the Dead*, and eight other tales are reproduced in facsimile from the original magazine publication between 1899 and 1907. You can understand why Conan Doyle lamented Robinson's death that year as 'a loss to the world'.

Mémoires et Documents 2008 (Société d'études Holmesiennes de la Suisse Romande) is called *Tout ce que vous avez toujours voulu savoir sur le sitting-room de Baker Street sans jamais l'avoir visite*, by **Jean-Pierre Crauser**. It's in French, but even I found it easy to follow.

Next time I'll review *Stage Whispers: The Memoirs* by **Douglas Wilmer**, *The Architect of Murder* by **Rafe McGregor** (Robert Hale, Clerkenwell House, 45-47 Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0HT; £18.99), *Carter's Occult Casebook* by **Kelvin I Jones** (Oakmagic Publications, 1 Sir Williams Lane, Aylsham, Norwich NR11 6AW; £7.99), and *Sherlock Holmes: Some Unpublished Cases* by **Robert A Kisch** (Institution of Diagnostic Engineers, 7 Weir Road, Kibworth, Leicester LE8 0LQ; £9.99).

Murder One, London's last specialist crime fiction bookshop, closed on 31 January, but the business continues at www.murderone.co.uk. The February issue of *The Sherlockian E-Times* is at http://www.sherlock-holmes.com/e_times09-1.htm. (**Classic Specialties**, PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH, 45219, USA; sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com.) There's also lots of Holmesian material at George Vanderburgh's Battered Silicon Dispatch Box site at www.batteredbox.com.

There probably isn't much about Sherlock Holmes in *The Wine of Certitude: A Literary Biography of Ronald Knox* by **David Rooney** (Ignatius Press, PO Box 1339, Fort Collins, CO 80522, USA; $17.95).

On 30 March, Naxos Audiobooks (2nd Floor, 40A High Street, Welwyn, Herts. AL6 9EQ) will launch *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, a luxury 60-CD set of all sixty stories read unabridged by **David Timson**. It's a magnificent feat by Mr Timson and his producer Nicolas Soames.

At **Greenwich Theatre** on 29 April there'll be a rehearsed reading of *Summerland*, a new play about Houdini and Conan Doyle by Jon Armstrong & Jennifer Porteous. Tickets are £5.00 from 020 8858 7755 or www.greenwichtheatre.org.uk. The full production will be staged at Greenwich in October, followed by a national tour.

A conference entitled *The Cultural Afterlives of Arthur Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes* will be held on 4 July in the Derwent Building at the University Hull. Get details from the Department of English, L276/L280, Larkin Building, University of Hull, Cottingham Road, Hull. HU6 7RX; or e-mail g.e.cowper@hull.ac.uk.

The Priory Scholars hold monthly and quarterly meetings, the next being on 14 March, 29 March and 18 April. Contact Horace L Coates for information at 21 Butcombe Road, Leicester LE4 0FY (0116 299 3173). A world away, **The Elementary Victorians**, despite the bush fires that have devastated parts of their home state, will meet on 4 April. Steve Duke has the details at PO Box 340, Reservoir 3073, Australia (redman.duke@gmail.com or stirlingsteve@aim.com). As with most such societies, visiting Holmesians are welcome.

The distinguished and prolific Irish playwright **Hugh Leonard** died on 12 February, aged eighty-two. In 1968 he dramatised *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Hound of the Baskervilles* – the latter probably the best screen adaptation of the novel – for the BBC TV series with Peter Cushing and Nigel Stock. His 1985 play *the Mask of Moriarty* has had successful productions on both sides of the ocean.

The science fiction novelist **Philip Jose Farmer**, who died on 25 February, aged ninety-one, was a keen Sherlockian. He loved to use Holmes as a character in stories such as *The Adventure of the Peerless Peer* and *The Other Log of Phileas Fogg*. In 1977 he was one of the founders of The Hansoms of John Clayton.

Periodicals received. ***Bohemian Newsletter***, no. 96 (**České společnost Sherlocka Holmese**, Aleš Kolodrubec, Milešovská 1, 130 00 Praha 3, Czech Republic). ***The Illustrious Clients News***, December 2008 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T Doyle, 9 Calumet Court, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). ***Ineffable Twaddle***, March 2009 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). ***The Serpentine Muse***, Fall 2008 (**The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes**, Evelyn Herzog, 301 Warren Ave, #203, Baltimore, MD 21203, USA).

And ***Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press***, January 2009 and February 2009 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; blau7103@comcast.net).

Roger Johnson

The DISTRICT MESSENGER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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A year ago I hailed the completion of **David Timson's** ambitious project, to record the entire Canon for Naxos AudioBooks (2nd Floor, 40A High Street, Welwyn, Herts. AL6 9EQ). Last month, in the author's sesquicentennial year, Naxos launched *The Complete Sherlock Holmes* as a boxed set, priced at £180.00 (but we're negotiating a special offer for members of the Society with the Audiobook Store at 36 Baker Street, London W1U 3EU – watch this space!). I've reviewed the individual releases over a period of ten years, and I'm happy to bang the drum for the set. David Timson, quite simply, is one of our great voice actors. His characterisations are distinct and precise, his pacing is masterly, and his feeling for the stories is palpable. The production by Nicolas Soames and Roy McMillan is likewise excellent.

Also from Naxos, and likewise thoroughly recommended is *The Essential Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*, comprising *A Life of Arthur Conan Doyle* (abridged) by Hesketh Pearson, read by Tim Pigott-Smith; 'The Speckled Band' and an extract from *The White Company* read by David Timson; 'Lot no. 249' and 'The Sealed Room' read by Carl Rigg; 'How the Brigadier Slew the Fox' read by Rupert Degas; extracts from *The Lost World* read by Glen McCready, and 'Danger!' read by Jonathan Oliver; the poem 'The Inner Room' and extracts from *The Vital Message* and *The Cottingley Fairies* read by Crawford Logan; with introductions by David Timson and an eight-minute recording of Conan Doyle himself. Six CDs, for just £19.99!

Nine years ago **Brian Pugh**, Curator of the Conan Doyle (Crowborough) Establishment, self-published a useful list of the dates in Arthur Conan Doyle's life. The latest version, *A Chronology of the Life of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, 22nd May 1859 to 7th July 1930* (MX Publishing, 335 Princess Park Manor, Royal Drive, London N11 3GX; £13.99 or $22.95), runs to more than 200 A4 pages, and includes twelve pages of significant dates between Conan Doyle's death in 1930 and the memorial service for his daughter Dame Jean in 1998, as well as lists of his residences, of his family's burial sites, and of relevant plaques and statues, and a chronological list of his writings. It's not a book to read from cover to cover, but for many of us it will quickly become an essential part of our reference libraries. *[*I can add just one event to the chronology. On 22 May 1994, as well as the plaque at 2 Upper Wimpole Street, Dame Jean unveiled Jean Upton's portrait of Sir Arthur at the Sherlock Holmes pub in London.*]*

Stage Whispers: The Memoirs by **Douglas Wilmer** (Porter Press International, PO Box 2, Tenbury Wells, WR5 8XX; standard edition £19.99; special edition £45.00; www.porterpress.co.uk) was launched at our Society's meeting in March. Don't expect a full autobiography. Other people feature in the book almost as much as the author does. He says, 'It has been my lot to have encountered many people in my long lifetime who still, it appears, arouse enough interest to warrant inclusion in my memoirs.' They do indeed! Among them were Olivier, Gielgud, Richardson and Redgrave, Vivien Leigh, Charlton Heston, Sophia Loren, Richard Harris, Marilyn Monroe… There is, of course, a chapter on 'Sherlock and the BBC', but that was only a part of a career that's included *Richard III*, *El Cid*, *Cleopatra*, *Patton*, *The Pink Panther* and *Octopussy*. Douglas Wilmer's book is chatty, sometimes frank, sometimes discreet, always entertaining and, despite an idiosyncratic frequency of italics and some persistent errors with names ('Cedric Hardwick', 'Yakima Knut' and others), thoroughly readable. The US distributor is SNG Barratt USA (92 Londonderry Turnpike, Manchester, NH 03104, USA; www.sngbarratt.com.) *[*If you can find a copy, the Franco-Midland Hardware Company's 1990 booklet* ***Under the Deerstalker and Other Hats: Conversations with Douglas Wilmer*** *is well worth reading.*]*

Pitkin Publishing (Healey House, Dene Road, Andover, Hants. SP10 2AA) is well known for handsome full-colour souvenir guides to places of interest – and to popular literary classics, the latest being *The World of Sherlock Holmes* by **Peter Brimacombe**. £4.99 gets you thirty-two pages of elementary but well-chosen, splendidly illustrated information. Visitors to London will be snapping it up, and quite right too.

Back in 1995, *Sherlock Holmes: Some Unpublished Cases* by **Robert A Kisch** was published in a limited edition by the Institution of Diagnostic Engineers (7 Weir Road, Kibworth, Leicester LE8 0LQ; admin@diagnosticengineers.org; £9.99). For some reason it didn't come my way at the time, but the publishers have recently uncovered a box or two and sent me a copy. The eight cases are set mostly in the years between 1900 and 1930, the year of Arthur Conan Doyle's death. As you might expect, aspects of engineering feature more noticeably here than in Conan Doyle's own stories – indeed, one of the major characters is a diagnostic engineer – but not to an extent that might disconcert the non-specialist. The intertwined plots are intelligent and exciting, involving, as they do, espionage, murder, counterfeiting and more, and the narrative rattles along at a cracking pace. The period is pleasantly evoked, Holmes and Watson are on good form, the canonical style is acceptably reproduced, and, in sum, *Sherlock Holmes: Some Unpublished Cases* is a very enjoyable read.

The first full-length novel by **Rafe McGregor,** *The Architect of Murder* (Robert Hale, Clerkenwell House, 45-47 Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0HT; £18.99), only just misses being a thriller of the first water. Just before the end of the Boer War, Alec Marshall VC receives news from London of his sister's death. Within hours of his arrival in England he learns that she may have been murdered – and then he's recruited by Scotland Yard's Special Branch to help investigate matters concerning the will of Cecil Rhodes, recently deceased. A witness to the will is found murdered, and as Marshall and his reluctant colleague Truegood dig deeper they find disturbing evidence of a conspiracy that could change Britain and the Empire. Probably not a good thing, with King Edward's coronation imminent. Twenty-five years earlier, Rhodes had described his dream of creating a Secret Society whose aim would be the extension of British rule throughout the world. Now it looks as if that Society actually exists and may have been responsible for killing Ellen Marshall. Rafe McGregor expertly weaves verifiable events and real people into his suspenseful mystery. The book is let down only by a few annoyingly anachronistic phrases (a 'celebrity veterinary surgeon' suggests a reality TV show) and occasional use of the F-word, which actually makes the story seem less, rather than more, real. Not because it's offensive but because it's incongruous in a story supposedly told at a time long before that word could legally be published.

Like many devotees of Sherlock Holmes, **Kelvin I Jones** also enjoys ghost stories. He writes them too. *Carter's Occult Casebook* (Oakmagic Publications, 1 Sir Williams Lane, Aylsham, Norwich NR11 6AW; £7.99) collects the eight adventures of his Edwardian ghost-hunter John Carter. Carter has more than a touch of Holmes about him, despite the great detective's scornful dismissal of the supernatural ('No ghosts need apply!'), and these tales, narrated by his colleague Rigden, fit satisfyingly within the tradition set by Carnacki and Flaxman Low. Ten splendid illustrations and a full-colour dustwrapper by Douglas Walters more than compensate for the occasionally uneven typesetting.

For *The Penguin Book of Gaslight Crime: Con Artists, Rogues and Scoundrels from the Time of Sherlock Holmes* (Penguin Books Ltd, 80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL; £9.99 or $15.00) **Michael Sims** has trawled through the magazines that flourished in the Victorian and Edwardian era – *The Strand* was in competition with *Pearson's*, *The*

Pall Mall, *The Windsor* and numerous others. He was not looking for detectives but for criminals – rivals, if you like, of Raffles and Arsène Lupin. In fact Mr Sims was inspired to compile this fascinating volume by the success of *Arsène Lupin, Gentleman Thief*, his selection of Maurice Leblanc's best stories about that most daring and imaginative of rascals. Here are tales of Colonel Clay, Simon Carne, Captain Gault and Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford, alongside stories by Edgar Wallace, O Henry, Arnold Bennett and Sinclair Lewis. It's a rich mixture, and a varied one, well worth reading.

One of the great crooks of the period, Guy Boothby's Dr Nikola, doesn't feature in Michael Sims' book, but his first two adventures make up *Dr Nikola, Master Criminal*, edited by **David Stuart Davies** (Wordsworth Editions, 8B East Street, Ware, Herts. SG12 9HJ; £2.99). David, as many know, oversees Wordsworth's excellent 'Mystery and Supernatural' series, whose recent additions include *The Ghost Stories of Edith Wharton*, *Tales of Mystery and the Macabre* by Elizabeth Gaskell, and *The Casebook of Sexton Blake* (each £2.99).

David has also provided a perceptive afterword for a lovely pocket-sized hardback edition of **John Buchan's** unsurpassed thriller *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (Collector's Library, CRW Publishing Ltd, 69 Gloucester Crescent, London NW1 7EG; £7.99). 'By God!' says one of the characters, 'it is all pure Rider Haggard and Conan Doyle.' The modern espionage novel was effectively created by Erskine Childers in 1903 with *The Riddle of the Sands*, but Buchan refined and perfected it in *The Thirty-Nine Steps*.

Last June Kessinger Publishing (PO Box 1404, Whitefish, MT 59937, USA), who specialise in reprints of hard-to-find books, published a new edition of *Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson: A Textbook of Friendship* by **Christopher Morley**. If you go through the website at http://www.kessinger.net you can buy it from Amazon for $24.78, whereas if you go direct to www.amazon.com it's $37.20. Odd!

The Trial of Sherlock Holmes, due in May from Dynamite Entertainment (155 E 9th Ave, Suite B, Runnemede, NJ 08078-1158, USA; $3.50) is the first of a series of five graphic novels written by **Leah Moore** and **John Reppion** and drawn by Aaron Campbell.

The Conan Doyle Estate has authorised a series of novels about the boyhood of the great detective. The first, *The Colossal Schemes of Baron Maupertuis* by **Andrew Lane**, is due next spring from Macmillan Children's Books (Pan Macmillan Publishers, 20 New Wharf Road, London N1 9RR). Among much else, Andrew Lane has written some of the best *Doctor Who* and *Torchwood* novels, including *All-Consuming Fire*, in which the Doctor and Holmes battle forces from the Cthulhu Mythos of H P Lovecraft.

The April issue of the admirable *Sherlockian E-Times* is accessible at http://www.sherlock-holmes.com/e_times09-4.htm. (**Classic Specialties**, PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH, 45219, USA; sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com.) It's a magazine as well as a catalogue, and full of interest. Lots of good stuff there, too, in **Bjarne Nielsen's** new catalogue at http://www.sherlockiana.dk/hjemmesider/antikvariat/kataloger/katalog%20marts%202009.htm. And a dealer new to me is **Sherlock Holmes Online** (37 Norman Close, Maidstone, Kent ME14 5HT) at www.sherlockholmesonline.co.uk.

Ray Pinfold is obliged to sell his extensive and varied Holmesian library. Please e-mail for details to rpinfold@btinternet.com, or write to Mr Pinfold at 47 St Margarets Road, Ward End, Birmingham B8 2BB (phone 0121 327 2319, after 6.30 pm).

Maria Veiga Garcia is another member who needs to find good homes for an interesting Sherlock Holmes collection. Besides books and Society artefacts, they include a maquette of John Doubleday's statue of Holmes at Meiringen, and an archive of her late husband James Hayzen's superb photographs. Please contact me for a basic list.

Talks set for Westminster Libraries as part of **The Lost World Read 2009** are *Lost Worlds and Fantastic Beasts: Dinosaurs at the Time of Conan Doyle* by Dr Paul M Barrett (Marylebone Library, 21 May) and *Conan Doyle's Double-Coded Dinosaurs: The Lost World and the Art of Popular Fiction* by Nils Clausson (Mayfair Library, 15 June). Details are at www.westminster.gov.uk/libraries/news.

Jon Lellenberg tells of yet another Sherlock Holmes film to be released next winter, this one starring, er, Tom & Jerry!

In May **Roger Llewellyn** takes David Stuart Davies's play *Sherlock Holmes – The Death and Life!* to: **Haymarket Theatre**, Basingstoke on 14 May (www.anvilarts.org.uk; 01256 844244), **Discovery Centre**, Winchester on 28 May (www.hants.gov.uk; 01962 873603), and *Sherlock Holmes – The Last Act!* to: **The Met**, Bury on 21 May (www.themet.biz; 0161 761 2216), **Southport Arts Centre** on 22 May (www.seftonarts.co.uk 01704 540011).

Arthur Conan Doyle is buried in the churchyard at Minstead in the New Forest. On 22 May, his 150th birthday, **Minstead Players** will stage 'a suitably atmospheric costumed play reading' in the church at 6.30pm. Afterwards, *The Trusty Servant* pub offers a 'Sherlock Holmes themed Victorian dinner'. Tickets for both are available from *The Trusty Servant*, Minstead, Lyndhurst SO43 7FY (023 8081 2137).

Miles Jupp investigates Carrutherses in *By Jove, Carruthers!* on BBC Radio 4, at 11.30am on 12 May. I'll feature briefly, on the subject of Bob Carruthers and 'The Solitary Cyclist'. **Thomas Toughill**, author of *Oscar Slater: The Immortal Case of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle* (Sutton Publishing, £10.99), reports that German radio will broadcast a three-hour special on 22-23 May for Conan Doyle's birthday. German listeners will be able to hear Mr Toughill talking about the Slater case.

www.nashvillescholars.net (**The Nashville Scholars of the Three Pipe Problem**) and thestormypetrels.wordpress.com (**The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia**) are sites worth looking at.

James Bree, who died aged eighty-five on 1 December, had a long career as a character actor. In 1987 he made a notable impression as the Coroner in Granada's production of *The Empty House*, patronising Edward Hardwicke's Dr Watson and fawning on the aristocrats. **Natasha Richardson** came of an outstanding acting dynasty: granddaughter of Michael Redgrave, daughter of Vanessa Redgrave and Tony Richardson, niece of Lynne and Corin Redgrave. She achieved success on film and television, and especially on stage, most notably in New York. She died on 18 March, aged just forty-five, following a skiing accident. Her first major rôle on screen was as Violet Hunter in *The Copper Beeches* for Granada TV in 1985.

Periodicals received. ***The Baker Street Journal***, Spring 2009 (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. 97 (**České společnost Sherlocka Holmese**, Aleš Kolodrubec, Milešovská 1, 130 00 Praha 3, Czech Republic). ***The Camden House Journal***, March 2009 & April 2009 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, Debbie Tinsley, PO Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). ***Canadian Holmes***, Lady Day (March) 2009 **(The Bootmakers of Toronto**, Chris Redmond, 523 Westfield Drive, Waterloo, ON, Canada N2T 2E1) *[*Welcome back after too long a hiatus!*]*. ***Communication***, no. 288 and no. 289 (**The Pleasant Places of Florida**, Wanda & Jeff Dow, 1737 Santa Anna Drive, Dunedin, FL 34698, USA). ***The Formulary***, March 2009 (**The Friends of Dr Watson**, Nino Cirone, Highcroft Cottage, 14 Totteridge Common, Totteridge, London N20 8NL). ***Ineffable Twaddle***, April 2009 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). ***The Magic Door***, Spring 2009 (**The Friends of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection**, Doug Wrigglesworth, 16 Sunset Street, Holland Landing, Ontario, Canada L9N 1H4). ***Mayday Mayday***, March 2009 & April 2009 (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardcarn Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). ***The Passengers' Log***, 6 January 2009 (**The Sydney Passengers**, Rosane McNamara, 4/2a Merlin Street, Neutral Bay, NSW 2089, Australia). ***The Petrel Flyer***, Jan/Feb 2009 and Spring 2009 (**The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia**, Len Haffenden, 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7P 3C6). ***Prescott's Press***, March 2009 (**The Three Garridebs**, Warren Randall, 15 Fawn Lane West, South Setauket, NY 11720-1346, USA). ***The School Report***, Spring 2009 (**The Priory Scholars**, Horace L Coates, 21 Butcombe Road, Leicester LE4 0FY). ***The Serpentine Muse***, Spring 2009 (**The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes**, Evelyn Herzog, 301 Warren Ave, #203, Baltimore, MD 21203, USA).

And ***Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press***, March 2009 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; blau7103@comcast.net).

Roger Johnson

The DISTRICT MESSENGER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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no. 293 2nd June 2009

In 1992 my 48-page chapbook, *'Ready When You Are, Mr Rathbone': A Review of the Universal Holmes Films*, was published by the Northern Musgraves. Brief as it is, for years it was the only substantial study of the twelve Sherlock Holmes pictures that Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce made for Universal. Now Middlesex University Press (The Burroughs, Hendon, London NW4 4BT) is preparing to publish something very much more substantial, *England's Secret Weapon: The Wartime Films of Sherlock Holmes* by our member **Amanda J Field** (30 June, £11.99). By examining them in the context of the time in which they were made, Ms Field is able to show us that Universal's Baker Street Dozen were considerably more than the poor relations of the two cinematic aristocrats that Fox had made in 1939. She works as a volunteer with the Lancelyn Green Bequest at Portsmouth, which gave her access to an extraordinary amount of primary material — scripts, contracts, correspondence with the Conan Doyle brothers — but she has also dug far deeper than any previous Holmes scholar among various archives in Los Angeles. Thanks to Ms Field, we can appreciate how cunningly Rathbone and Bruce are linked to their origin in Victorian England, which American audiences in 1942 saw as a bastion of democracy. She charts the less than straightforward development of the series, from blatant propaganda through gothic murder mystery to the introduction of the *femme fatale*. Despite the book's title, *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* are dealt with in some detail, though *The House of Fear*, *Pursuit to Algiers* and *Terror by Night* receive little attention. I do have some minor quibbles. The Swiss musician at the beginning of *Sherlock Holmes and the Secret Weapon* is playing a hammered dulcimer, or *hackbrett*, not a xylophone. Irene Adler's disguise was as 'a slim youth', not an ostler. The 1959 Hammer film *The Hound of the Baskervilles* does not feature a séance. And I fancy that William Gillette would have been disappointed to be told that he played Sherlock Holmes with an American accent. But, as I said, these are minor matters. *England's Secret Weapon* is a splendid achievement, one of those books that force you to look anew at a subject that had, perhaps, become too familiar.

Gyles Brandreth began his Oscar Wilde Murder Mysteries in grand style. The second book was actually better than the first, and the third, *Oscar Wilde and the Dead Man's Smile* (John Murray, 338 Euston Road, London NW1 3BH; £16.99), consolidates and improves on that achievement. From a prologue in the Chamber of Horrors at Madame Tussaud's we are taken back eight years, to Wilde's tour of the United States in 1882, where he acquires a valet and is saved from robbery or worse by a sharp-shooting gambler. On the voyage back to Europe he falls in with the great actor-manager Edmond La Grange and agrees to assist him in translating *Hamlet* for production at the Théâtre La Grange in Paris. At Liverpool the customs officials find that, instead of books, one of Wilde's cases contains a dead dog. The greater part of the story takes place in Paris, where Oscar Wilde meets his Boswell for the first time, in the person of Robert Sherard, the narrator of these histories. (Sherard, who knew Mr Brandreth's father, actually was a friend of Wilde's, and his first biographer.) When Wilde's valet, now La Grange's dresser, is killed, Sherard takes over his rôle, and witnesses both the triumphant production of Shakespeare's tragedy and the disintegration of the company. La Grange's children, his Hamlet and Ophelia, die suddenly and spectacularly. Finally La Grange himself is killed in his dressing room. In an epilogue, again at Madame Tussaud's, Wilde and Sherard discuss the case with Arthur Conan Doyle, and the truth emerges at last — as does the macabre significance of the book's title. *Oscar Wilde and the Dead Man's Smile* is an exceptionally good detective story (at one stage, I think, Gyles Brandreth borrows inspiration from John Dickson Carr, the greatest writer in the genre). It's also a fascinating historical novel. Paris in 1883, little more than a decade since the Prussian siege, is a mixture of beauty, decadence, high civilisation and deep cruelty — a Jekyll-and-Hyde city that becomes a major character, as alive as Sarah Bernhardt, James Russell Lowell, John Tussaud and the other *dramatis personae*.

Thirty-five years ago **Tim Pigott-Smith** played Dr Watson to John Wood's Holmes in the Royal Shakespeare Company's outstanding production of William Gillette's play *Sherlock Holmes*. Since then he has presented a television documentary about the great detective, recorded Hesketh Pearson's biography of Arthur Conan Doyle, and played Holmes himself, in Roy Apps's fine radio dramatisation of *The Valley of Fear*. In August last year his book *The Dragon Tattoo* (Hodder Children's Books, 338 Euston Road, London NW1 3BH; £5.99) was published — and as it's the first in a series called The Baker Street Mysteries, I'm at a loss as to why I hadn't heard of it before! The basic premise isn't new: at present there are three other series of children's books about the Baker Street irregulars, and they all contradict each other to a degree, which is to be expected as the information in the Canon is minimal. The important thing is that Mr Pigott-Smith handles that premise with great skill. You have to accept that Holmes was still in London in 1893, and still endeavouring to bring Professor Moriarty to justice; also that his band of 'irregulars' didn't come into being until then. Just don't worry about it. Immerse yourself in the breathlessly exciting adventures of young Sam Wiggins in his bid to rescue his friend Ann-Li Chang from Moriarty's henchman Colonel Maltravers (a worthy addition to the gallery of villainous colonels), and of the Baker Street page boy Billy Chizzell in his search for the missing detective. The story is written with an actor's sensibility, in short dramatic scenes, cutting from one situation to another. Philip Pullman, no less, says, 'Anyone writing a new Sherlock Holmes tale needs sharp wits and a keen sense of drama, and Tim Pigott-Smith has those in abundance.' True! I'm looking forward to *The Rose of Africa*, due in August, and *Shadow of Evil* in October.

The latest product of Paul Spiring's researches among the works of **Bertram Fletcher Robinson** is *The World of Vanity Fair* (MX Publishing Ltd, 335 Princess Park Manor, Royal Drive, London N11 3GX; £75.00 or $145.00). In his short life, Robinson was a remarkably prolific journalist, editing *The Daily Express*, *Vanity Fair* and *The World* in addition to his other literary pursuits. *Vanity Fair*, which nothing in common but the name with today's magazine, began in 1868 as a satirical journal — though we would consider the satire very polite. Its most famous feature, from January 1869 until the magazine folded in 1914, was the series of full-colour caricatures of celebrated persons, with humorous text attributed to 'Jehu Junior'. The most prolific artists were Carlo Pellegrini, who signed his work 'Ape', and Leslie Ward, otherwise 'Spy', but there were at least twenty-four others, including James Jacques Tissot and Max Beerbohm. Between 1905 and his death in 1907 Fletcher Robinson contributed fifteen articles to *The Windsor Magazine*, under the title 'Chronicles in Cartoon', in which he reprinted nearly four hundred — about a fifth — of the *Vanity Fair* caricatures published so far, but grouped under headings that began with 'Royalty' and proceeded through 'Politics', 'Music', 'Empire Builders', 'Leaders of Religion' and the like. *The World of Vanity Fair* reprints those fifteen articles, nearly 280 pages of them, in full-colour facsimile. You'll be keen to know, I'm sure, whether Spy's famous portrait of William Gillette is here. Sadly, it isn't, because Robinson died before his project got as far as 'The Stage', but what we do have, thanks to Mr Spiring, is an extraordinarily rich gallery of late Victorian notables — which unfortunately comes at an extraordinarily high price, especially for a paperback.

Just arrived in the post is *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, a Sherlock Holmes Graphic Novel, adapted by **Ian Edginton** and illustrated by **INJ Culbard** (SelfMadeHero, 5 Upper Wimpole Street, London W1G 6BP; £14.99). The address, so close to Conan Doyle's consulting room, inspires confidence, as does the foreword by Daniel Stashower. It's very stylish, and obviously done with affection and intelligence, as the careful floor plan of 221B indicates. Besides, how could anyone resist the advertisements on an omnibus: 'R Stephens & Co', 'Lee Bros', 'Hoffmanstal', 'The Blakely Ballet'…?

Last month's symposium at Harvard University, 'Sir Arthur Conan Doyle: A Sesquicentennial Assessment', coincided with the publication of the latest volume in the BSI Manuscript Series, *So Painful a Scandal* edited by **John Bergquist** ($35.00 plus postage), which reproduces the MS of 'The Three Students' (held at Harvard) together with scholarly essays by, among others, Guy Marriott and Nicholas Utechin. *Papers at an Exhibition* edited by **Peter Accardo** and **Daniel Posnansky** ($35.00 plus postage), will be published in October, as will a signed and limited boxed set of both books, together with the catalogue of the continuing exhibition in the Houghton Library, *Ever Westward: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in American Culture*, edited by **Peter Accardo**. The catalogue is not, apparently, available separately. The limited edition — 75 copies — will cost $195.00 plus postage. See www.bakerstreetjournal.com for full details. Orders should be sent to The Baker Street Irregulars, Michael H Kean, 3040 Sloat Road, Pebble Beach, CA 93953-2837, USA. *[*Naturally I hope to review these books in due course.*]*

Alistair Duncan reports that the **Sherlock Holmes Museum** at 239 Baker Street plans to publish a book of letters to Sherlock Holmes. Such letters have been delivered to the museum since Abbey National left Abbey House, which occupies the address 221 Baker Street.

Alistair also notes that the brass plaque that was installed by the door (unveiled by Jeremy Brett, I think) was removed before the complete rebuilding of Abbey House and has not yet been reinstated. Does anyone know what's become of it?

David Stuart Davies offers a CD recording of his one-woman play *Sherlock Through the Magnifying Glass*, as performed by Mary Wooldridge for the Northern Musgraves in 1992. The performance is excellent, and the 28-minute recording is crisp and clear. (David Stuart Davies, Heaton House, 14 Heaton Road, Gledholt, Huddersfield HD1 4HX; overdale@btinternet.com; £10.00 or $35.00, post-paid.)

Roger Llewellyn has signed with Big Finish (PO Box 3787, Maidenhead, Berkshire, SL6 3TF; www.bigfinish.com), the spoken word company who have the franchises for *Doctor Who*, *Robin Hood*, *Highlander* and other high profile series, to record both of David Stuart Davies's plays. *Sherlock Holmes — The Last Act!* and *Sherlock Holmes — The Death and Life* will probably be available in the autumn.

Roger's tour with *Sherlock Holmes — The Death and Life* continues. On 11 June he'll be at **South Holland Arts Centre** in Spalding (01775 764777; www.southhollandcentre.co.uk); 19 June at **Queens Hall**, Hexham (01434 652477; www.queenshall.co.uk); 21 June at **Grassington Festival**, Grassington (01756 752694; www.grassington-festival.org.uk); on 24 June at **Civic Theatre**, Barnsley (0845 180 0363; www.barnsleycivic.co.uk); and on 30 June at **Guildhall Arts Centre**, Grantham (01476 406158; www.guildhallartscentre.com).

Hound by **John Patrick Bray** will be staged at **Robert Moss Theater** at 440 Lafayette Street in New York's East Village, as part of the Planet Connections Festivity. Performances will be on 17, 20, 22, 23, 24 and 25 June. See www.planetconnectionsfestivity.com/shows.html.

Look out for *John Sergeant's Tourist Trail* on ITV in July. One programme in the 3-part series will feature Sherlock Holmes's Dartmoor. (Thanks to Paul Spiring and Brian Pugh for this.)

Alistair Duncan's campaign to raise awareness of Arthur Conan Doyle in South Norwood has borne fruit. *The William Stanley*, a JD Wetherspoon pub in South Norwood High Street, now houses an attractive display about Sir Arthur and his residence in the area. (Alistair Duncan's book *Close to Holmes: A Look at the Connections between Historical London, Sherlock Holmes and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle* is highly recommended. See DM 291.)

If you've read and enjoyed *Stage Whispers: The Memoirs* by **Douglas Wilmer** — and if not, why not? — I think you'll enjoy Matthew Coniam's interview with him at http://movietone-news.blogspot.com/search/label/Douglas%20Wilmer.

The next major symposium for Conan Doyle's 150th anniversary will be 'The Remarkable Characters of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle', to be held at the Lilly Library at Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana on 26 September. Speakers include Nicholas Meyer, Leslie Klinger, Susan Rice, Clifford Goldfarb, Roy Pilot and Steven Doyle. Information and registration is at http://lillylibraryholmesconference.ning.com/.

Sherlock Holmes Mystery Magazine is published quarterly by Wildside Press LLC (9710 Traville Gateway Drive, #234, Rockville, MD 20850, USA) and edited by **Marvin Kaye**. The second issue features fiction, not all Holmesian, by Ron Goulart, Darrell Schweitzer, Gary Lovisi, MJ Elliott and others, as well as a reprint of 'The Musgrave Ritual', plus reviews by Carol Buggé and Kim Newman, and some amusing trivia. Annual subscriptions are $36.00 in the US and $72.00 elsewhere.

Jon Lellenberg notes that the Estate of Dame Jean Conan Doyle is finally closed, and that the various rights are now registered with **Conan Doyle Estate Ltd**.

Chris Music reports that **The Amateur Mendicant Society of Detroit** is still going strong after sixty-three years. The society's website is at www.amateurmendicant.blogspot.com.

Peter Blau reminds me that **Edward Judd**, whose most important starring rôle was in Val Guest's film *The Day the Earth Caught Fire*, played Barrymore in the 1983 Mapleton film *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, with Ian Richardson as Holmes. Edward Judd died on 24 February at the age of seventy-six.

The music of **Richard Arnell**, who died on 10 April aged ninety-one, is only now receiving its due in the way of recording. His delightful score for Kenneth Macmillan's 1953 ballet *The Great Detective* was released last year on Epoch.

The dramatist **Royce Ryton** died on 14 April aged eighty-four. His greatest success came in 1972 with *Crown Matrimonial*, a play about the abdication crisis. 1981's *To Kill a King*, in which Sherlock Holmes investigates a plot to assassinate Edward VII, was less successful.

Dom DeLuise, the plump baby-faced actor and comedian, died on 4 May aged seventy-five. His performance as the blackmailer Gambetti is one of the best things in Gene Wilder's uneven comedy *The Adventure of Sherlock Holmes' Smarter Brother*.

Joseph J Fink ('Tonga', BSI) died on 9 May. Scott Monty recalls: 'One of the things that always struck me about Joe was that he was such an unassuming, seemingly retiring and quiet man, yet he could bring the house down with a single line. He was a giant in the world of humor.'

Philip Cornell reports the death on 15 May of the Australian actor **Charles Tingwell** at the age of eighty-six, after a career of more than sixty years. In 1968 he played Bob Carruthers in the BBC TV production of *The Solitary Cyclist*, with Peter Cushing — a lost episode.

Periodicals received. ***Arthur Conan Doyle Newsletter and Birthday File XVI***, 22 May 2009 (**The Conan Doyle [Crowborough] Establishment**, Brian Pugh, 20 Clare Road, Lewes, Sussex BN7 1PN). ***The Camden House Journal***, May 2009 & June 2009 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, Debbie Tinsley, PO Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). ***The Illustrious Clients News***, April 2009 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T Doyle, 9 Calumet Court, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). ***Ineffable Twaddle***, May 2009 & June 2009 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). ***The Moor: Magasin för Sherlockianer***, April 2009 (**The Baskerville Hall Club of Sweden**, Anders Wiggström, Byggmästarvägen 29, 168 32 Bromma, Sweden). ***Sherlockiana***, Nr 1 2009 (**Sherlock Holmes Klubben i Danmark**, Bjarne Rother Jensen, Højbovangen 24, 9200 Aalborg SV, Denmark). ***The Torr***, Spring 2009 (**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***, April 2009 and May 2009 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; blau7103@comcast.net).

Roger Johnson

The DISTRICT MESSENGER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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By now it's unlikely that anyone will need telling, but, for the record, **Christopher Lee** received a knighthood in the Queen's Birthday Honours. In Sir Christopher's long and, despite the 'horror' tag, immensely varied career, he has famously portrayed Sherlock Holmes, Mycroft Holmes, and Sir Henry Baskerville, as well as recording seven of the later short stories and a good abridgement of *The Valley of Fear*. His autobiography *Lord of Misrule* is well worth reading.

For *So Painful a Scandal* (The Baker Street Irregulars, Michael H Kean, 3040 Sloat Road, Pebble Beach, CA 93953-2837, USA; $35.00 + postage) **John Bergquist** has assembled half a dozen notable scholars to examine the manuscript of 'The Three Students'. The MS, along with the BSI archive, is at the Houghton Library at Harvard. Phillip Bergem follows the editor's introduction with 'Notes on the Manuscript', actually an essay, preparatory to his annotated transcript. I'm not sure whether the transcript itself is particularly useful, but it serves to anchor the annotations, and they certainly are useful. Few of us can easily consult *The Strand Magazine* and *Collier's*, so it's good to know just how the text differed in its first published versions — quite a lot when it came to punctuation, as Conan Doyle was notably lax there. And I'm fascinated by the possibility that the manuscript's deleted word 'open' was read by the editor of *Collier's*, appropriately for the outer door of Soames's room, as 'oaken'. (But Conan Doyle's 'storey', meaning one floor of a building, is not a misspelling.) Randall Stock relates the wanderings of the MS, which Conan Doyle donated to a Red Cross fund-raising sale in 1917, where it fetched seven guineas. (Mr Stock's website at www.bestofsherlock.com is an invaluable guide to such matters.) Michael Eckman contributes a pleasant short piece about his visits to Oxford and Cambridge. Nicholas Utechin believes 'The Three Students' is by far the weakest of the stories in *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*, and lists no fewer than seventeen stylistic or constructional flaws. Perhaps he tries just that bit too hard with: '*Nowhere else does the author tease so prissily in mentioning that he/Watson might write up an incident (the results of Holmes's researches into those early English charters) as a future adventure: every single other allusion to an unrecorded case refers to an adventure that had actually* occurred.' What Watson says is that the researches 'led to results so striking that they may be the subject of one of my future *narratives*'. The 'results' had indeed actually occurred. But he's spot-on with, for instance: '*The Fortescue Scholarship has nowhere been described as being for students of St Luke's alone. There is no justification — other than to move a slapdash plot — to make Holmes suspect only the three. And — gosh — they are all on the staircase above Soames. You could not make it up…*' Guy Marriott makes a good case for Peterhouse College, Cambridge as the 'real' St Luke's. However, the window which he claims matches the one in Sidney Paget's drawing is actually so low that no one, let alone a six-footer, would need to stand on tiptoe to look through it — and he ignores the fact that the buildings in Old Court are at most three storeys high instead of the required four. Oliver Nicholson makes a good case for St Mary's Hall, Oxford, now part of Oriel College, but he's perhaps too quick to dismiss the definitive evidence for Cambridge: the black clay from the jumping pits. (Mr Nicholson adopts the tone of Monsignor Knox, using terms such as 'the Doylean Redactor' and 'the Watson-Quelle', and introducing me to one or two words that I'm unlikely ever to use, such as 'inconcinnities' and 'obnubilated'.) Finally Andrew Malec contributes an illuminating essay about Frederic Dorr Steele and his illustrations for the story, outstanding among which is the uncompleted picture reproduced on this book's cover. Rejected by *Collier's*, it was acquired from the artist by Gray Chandler Briggs and bought in 1984 by Richard Lancelyn Green. The frontispiece, the Paget illustration already mentioned, is reproduced from the original drawing, now owned by Constantine Rossakis. *So Painful a Scandal* is an important contribution to the scholarship of Sherlock Holmes. I could wish, though, that the manuscript pages had not been reduced from their actual size of 12¾ x 8 inches.

A while back I recommended an unusual and fascinating volume of new stories, *Holmes of the Raj* by **Vithal Rajan**. Now, stimulated by rather worrying echoes of the late 19th century in today's news, Dr Rajan has returned to the Great Detective. *Sherlock Holmes and the Pirates of the Horn* is a play, and a most interesting one (Lazy Bee Scripts, 2 Wood Road, Ashurst, Southampton SO40 7BD). Today, as the author observes, it's America that's ostensibly protecting world trade from Somalian pirates while, it seems, actually protecting its Middle East oil reserves. A hundred and thirty years ago Britain was doing something remarkably similar. The serious threat of piracy had been suppressed decades before, but in 1888 at the Convention of Constantinople, the world's powers reluctantly ceded control of the Suez Canal to Britain. For the purposes of the drama, Dr Rajan supposes that there was a resurgence of piracy, and — since Sherlock Holmes is involved — that the waters are metaphorically as well as actually deep. The action of the play does not stray away from London, apart from a scene at a house party in the country, but it requires a cast of at least fourteen. Having been commissioned by a Greek ship-owner to uncover the truth behind the numerous attacks on vessels off the Horn of Africa, Holmes gets his information from many sources, official and decidedly unofficial. Devotees of Billy Wilder's film *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* may not be surprised to learn that Mycroft Holmes knows more than he lets on. The script makes for stimulating and highly intelligent and literate entertainment (though the word 'hijack' was not, apparently, coined until the 1920s). You can read the whole thing on-line at http://www.lazybeescripts.co.uk/FullLengthPlays/Sherlock_Holmes_and_the_Pirates_of_the_Horn.htm, where you'll also find information about buying and producing the play. I'd love to see it produced!

Forthcoming from HarperCollins India (A-53, Sector 57, Noida, UP 201301, India) is *The Curious Case of 221B: The Secret Notebooks of John H Watson, MD* by **Partha Basu**. 'In this brilliant retelling that turns the Holmesian canon on its head… Partha Basu brings back a host of characters who have captivated generations of readers, except that they are no longer what we had made them out to be.'

Interest in Holmes is as high as ever in the Sub-continent. Take a look at http://in.groups.yahoo.com/group/SherlockHolmesSocietyofIndia/, the discussion group of **The Sherlock Holmes Society of India**. You may be tempted to join in the debates — and why not? ('Sumalsn' is the Society's founder, Sumal Surendranath.)

This morning's post brought a copy of **Lyndsay Faye's** *Dust and Shadow: An Account of the Ripper Killings by Dr John H Watson* (Simon & Schuster, 1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020, USA; $25.00). I'll review it next time.

Following the deserved success of *Eliminate the Impossible* and *Close to Holmes*, **Alistair Duncan** is working on *The Norwood Author: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and the Norwood Years (1891-1894)*, due in March 2010 from MX Publishing Ltd (335 Princess Park Manor, Royal Drive, London N11 3GX). Amazon.co.uk is taking pre-orders now.

In November comes *A Study in Survival: Conan Doyle Solves the Final Problem* by **Roger Straughan** (O Books, The Bothy, Deershot Lodge, Park Lane, Ropley, Hants. SO24 OBE; office1@o-books.net). We're told: 'Dame Jean Conan Doyle was clearly convinced of Dr Straughan's unusual powers of communication with her father,' and: 'A donation will be made from sales of this book to the Undershaw Appeal.'

Check the BSI Publications website at www.bakerstreetjournal.com, where a new regular feature is the 'Deal Table'. The first 'deal' is on *The Hound of the Baskervilles: A Facsimile of the Original Manuscript of Chapter XI. by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle along with Commentary on the Story*, reduced from $35.00 to $25.00 (plus postage).

Nick Utechin reports that he still has a dozen or so copies of *'The Sometimes Elusive Quarry'*, his 2008 Richard Lancelyn Green Lecture. The Society printed 200 for our own annual dinner and 200 for the BSI dinner. They're available for the cost of postage (a cheque for £1.50 payable to N Utechin for UK addresses or a $5.00 bill for US addresses) from Nick at Highfield Farm, 23 Highfield Avenue, Headington, Oxford OX3 7LR — e-mail highfieldfarmhouse@yahoo.co.uk. **Gerald Zwirn** offers two copies of the *Catalogue of the Collection* of the Sherlock Holmes pub, published by Whitbread: a first edition from 1857 and a later one from 1963. This attractive and desirable 54-page book contains essays by H Douglas Thomson, John Dickson Carr and A Lloyd-Taylor, plus thirteen plates and several line drawings, as well as the catalogue. Mr Zwirn invites offers for each at gz@myconnection.co.za.

At http://www.sherlock-holmes.com/e_times09-6.htm is the June issue of *The Sherlockian E-Times* (**Classic Specialties**, PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH, 45219, USA; sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com.)

You can stay overnight, and cheaply, at Holdernesse Hall! **Ilam Hall**, the splendid gothic mansion which Jonathan McCafferty identifies as the Duke's mansion, is a Youth Hostel. E-mail ilam@yha.org.uk. Or see the YHA website at http://www.yha.org.uk/find-accommodation/peak-district-sherwood/hostels/Ilam/index.aspx.

Aleš Kolodrubec, President of the Czech Society of Sherlock Holmes, reports that Asteroid no. 46722 (1997 RA1), discovered by Lenka Šarounová and Petr Pravec at the Ondřejov Observatory on 2 September 1997 has been officially named **Ireneadler**. You'll find the citation at http://scully.cfa.harvard.edu/~cgi/ShowCitation.COM?num=046722.

News from Paul Spiring: Ipplepen Parish Council has placed a bench outside Caunter's Close in the village, as a memorial to Arthur Conan Doyle's friend **Bertram Fletcher Robinson**, who inspired the writing of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.

The Royal Mail will mark ten of this year's anniversaries with its **Eminent Britons** 1st Class stamp set on 8 October. Fred Perry, Henry Purcell, Matt Busby, WE Gladstone, Mary Wollstonecraft, Arthur Conan Doyle, Donald Campbell, Judy Fryd, Samuel Johnson and Martin Ryle feature. www.norvic-philatelics.co.uk/2009/10a-eminent_britons.htm has a good preview of the stamps and the first day cover.

John Addy reminds me that there's a huge amount of Holmesian and Doylean material freely available at www.archive.org/index.php — plus much else, of course: scans of hard-to-find books and lots of vintage radio recordings.

In October, at the Cockpit Theatre in Gateforth Street, near Lisson Grove, our member **Sandy Easton** will play Dr Watson in his own play *The Matter of the Cardinal Jewel*, a production of the Venturers Drama Group of the Visually impaired. Sandy himself is blind. Holmes will be played by Lee Innel, a sighted actor. The rest of the cast is mainly blind and partially-sighted. There's no further information yet on the website at www.venturersdramagroup.org.uk.

On 7 July the restored and remastered version of the 1922 film *Sherlock Holmes*, starring **John Barrymore**, will be released on Region 1 DVD by Kino International (333 W. 39th Street, Suite 503, New York, NY 10018, USA). It will also be available as one of a 4-disc set, *The John Barrymore Collection*. You can order it from Amazon.com or from http://www.kino.com/video, but make sure your DVD player can cope!

We're still waiting for the BBC to do the decent thing and release the 1965 *Sherlock Holmes* series on DVD. Meanwhile, Network Fulfilment (Sony DADC, 6 Solar Way, Innova Park, Mollison Avenue, Enfield EN3 7XY) has just issued the first series of *The Rivals of Sherlock Holmes* as a 4-DVD set. These thirteen plays, inspired by Hugh Greene's first anthology, feature the likes of John Neville, Robert Stephens, Roy Dotrice, Donald Pleasance and Donald Sinden. You can buy the set on-line at shop@networkdvd.net. And on 6 July Acorn Media UK (16 Welmar Mews, London SW4 7DD) will release the BBC series *The Edwardians* as a DVD boxed set. Nigel Davenport is Arthur Conan Doyle, Timothy West is Horatio Bottomley, Anthony Hopkins is Lloyd George, Ron Moody is Baden-Powell… Eight plays in all.

Anyone heading toward Connecticut should, of course, visit Gillette Castle, the gloriously eccentric mansion that William Gillette had built at East Haddam. For years our good friends **Harold and Theodora Niver** have taken on the personae of William and Helen Gillette, at the Castle and elsewhere. The testimonials on the website explain why Harold and Teddie are so successful: www.sherlockholmesct.com.

Simon Hall advises me that The Baker Street Fellowship is now called **The Sherlock Holmes Society of Nottinghamshire**. You can get more information from Simon, who founded the Society six years ago, at sdehall2000@yahoo.co.uk.

Hawthorne Race Course at Cicero, Illinois will see a unique Sherlockian double on 31 October: the **Watsonians'** 50th Annual Silver Blaze and the **Baker Street Irregulars'** Triennial Silver Blaze. Details can be had from Susan Diamond at szdiamond@comcast.net. (For non-cognoscenti: the name of the horse has for decades been applied to a race — or, rather, to more than one race. The definitive guide is Wayne Swift's *History of The Silver Blaze*, published as *The Baker Street Journal 2000 Christmas Annual*, and long out of print.)

Do take a look — a frequent look — at www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk, where **Jonny Hough** is keeping our Society's website up to date and alive. Also check www.flickr.com/shsl, where many photos of our events are now shown to great advantage.

Peter Blau reports the death at the age of eighty-two of **Edward S Lauterbach** on 3 June. A professor of English and a long-time member of The Illustrious Clients of Indianapolis, he effectively succeeded his late father Charles Edward Lauterbach as the poet laureate of the Baker Street Irregulars. He was invested into the BSI as 'Thorneycroft Huxtable, MA, PhD, etc.' in 1965.

Tenniel Evans, who died on 10 June aged eighty-three, gave a memorable performance as Hilton Cubitt in the 1984 Granada TV production of *The Dancing Men*. His acting career encompassed far more over a period of nearly sixty years, but he's likely to be best remembered as the bolshie and very Welsh Able Seaman Taffy Goldstein in the long-running BBC radio comedy *The Navy Lark*. On his father's side he was related to George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans), and on his mother's to John Tenniel, after whom he was named.

As far as I know, the musician and broadcaster **Steve Race** had no particular connections with the world of Sherlock Holmes… except that forty or so years ago he occasionally attended our Society's annual dinners. He was the guest, I think, of Lord Donegall, a notable jazz enthusiast. Steve Race died on 22 June, aged eighty-eight.

Steve Duke of the Sherlock Holmes Society of Victoria reports the recent death of **J Michael Chisholm**, a founder-member of the Society and a long-time stalwart of Sherlockian activity in Australia.

*[*In the last DM I said that the late **Joe Fink** held the BSI investiture of 'Tonga'. That was actually his ASH investiture. In the BSI he was 'The Martyrdom of Man'. My apologies.*]*

Periodicals received. ***Canadian Holmes***, Victoria Day (May) 2009 **(The Bootmakers of Toronto**, Chris Redmond, 523 Westfield Drive, Waterloo, ON, Canada N2T 2E1). ***The Illustrious Clients News***, June 2009 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T Doyle, 9 Calumet Court, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). ***Ineffable Twaddle***, July 2009 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). ***The Morning Echo***, 15 June 2009 (**The Sherlock Holmes Society of Victoria**, Steve Duke, PO Box 340, Reservoir, Victoria 3073, Australia). ***Prescott's Press***, June 2009 (**The Three Garridebs**, Warren Randall, 15 Fawn Lane West, South Setauket, NY 11720-1346, USA). ***The School Report***, Summer 2009 (**The Priory Scholars**, Horace L Coates, 21 Butcombe Road, Leicester LE4 0FY). ***The Scion***, Spring 2009 (**The Musgraves**, Anne Jordan, Hallas Lodge, Greenside Lane, Cullingworth, Bradford BD13 5AP). ***The Serpentine Muse***, Summer 2009 (**The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes**, Evelyn Herzog, 301 Warren Ave, #203, Baltimore, MD 21203, USA).

And ***Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press***, June 2009 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; blau7103@comcast.net).

Roger Johnson

The DISTRICT MESSENGER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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no. 295 13th August 2009

Lyndsay Faye's *Dust and Shadow: An Account of the Ripper Killings by Dr John H Watson* (Simon & Schuster, 1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020, USA; $25.00) is commended by the Conan Doyle Estate and praised by Caleb Carr, Daniel Stashower and Leslie Klinger. And it is very good. Ms Faye knows her two subjects, the Holmesian Canon and the Whitechapel murders of 1888, disturbingly well. There have been other attempts to link the great detective with the butcher of Whitechapel, but *Dust and Shadow* is the first I can recall in which just about every detail is accurate. Rather boldly, the author gives us a very broad hint as to the murderer's identity right at the beginning, so that we can watch the clues as they arise and see how Holmes deals with them. The numerous historical characters are presented very fairly, and they are all people who actually had a connection with the crimes or their investigation. No members of the royal family, no distinguished surgeons, no psychics. (I'm glad to meet, so to speak, George Lusk, head of the Whitechapel Vigilance Committee, whose grandson was an early subscriber to this newsletter.) All the *dramatis personae* are memorable, a result, perhaps, of Ms Faye's theatrical training, and everyone behaves in character. The identity of the killer is perfectly plausible, as is the reason for his success in evading suspicion. He is, in a way, like GK Chesterton's Invisible Man. Though he has a different name, he is based on an actual person, but it's impossible now to know just what the real man was like. Lyndsay Faye captures the flavour of Dr Watson's style very acceptably, though there are a few sentences that could profitably be trimmed (Dr Watson was hardly ever verbose) and there are minor niggles such as references to 'the Baron' (technically correct, but he would be 'Lord Ramsden' or 'his Lordship'), 'the London Royal Mail' (just 'the Royal Mail' or even 'the Post Office') and 'St Bart's' (just 'Bart's') – but they're very minor indeed compared to the book's many triumphs. Ms Faye gives us the real Holmes and Watson, and the real squalid violent Whitechapel of 1888. She gives us atmosphere, excitement, suspense and terror. And she makes us think.

Some while back I recommended *Watson's First Drafts*, in which Jim Goehmann 'reconstructs' what he claims to be the suppressed or altered facts of various cases from the Canon. **Partha Basu** does something similar in *The Curious Case of 221B: The Secret Notebooks of John H Watson, MD* (HarperCollins *Publishers* India Ltd, A-53, Sector 57, Noida, Uttar Pradesh 201301, India; 299 Rupees), though his approach and, I suspect, his intentions are very different. The notebooks were given by the elderly Dr Watson to his young Indian friends Kumar and Nellie, with the warning that these accounts 'will no doubt invalidate a number of the great man's affirmed achievements, and greatly affect the popular view'. On their tragic deaths, with which the book begins, the papers come, unopened, into the possession of Kumar and Nellie's son Jit, who rather reluctantly begins to read them. As Watson explains in his accompanying notes, with additional notes by his stepdaughter Emma Hudson, each case was different. In one instance he was persuaded to alter a single important fact in the published account ('The Invisible Client'). In another, the principals inform him, but not Holmes, of the truth only after his account has appeared in print ('Blunder in Bohemia'). In a third, Holmes and Watson learn the truth long after publication, and force one party to make reparation to another ('The Tale of the Sad Cyclist'). One narrative, 'The Missing Courier', is an admitted work of fiction, supposedly written by one Seamus Hyde and purporting to tell the story of Mr James Phillimore. It strikes an unexpected and false note, but the other tales are refreshingly bold, presenting a notably fallible Holmes and an intelligent, spirited Watson. I cheered when I read his unspoken response to Holmes's accusation of incompetence in the Lady Frances Carfax case*: 'It was I who tracked Lady Frances; it was I who discovered the Shlessingers, and their hold on her and the fact that they spirited her away to London. I did not raise any alarm with the Shlessingers or with Lady Frances because they had already left the Continent when I happened onto their trail. You, on the other hand, ignored my accurate deduction that the three were in London and not in Montpellier where you landed up in your ludicrous disguise…*' But *The Curious Case of 221B* is far from being a mere debunking of the great detective. The last story, 'Judgement at the Abbey Grange", sees him investigating a notorious racially motivated miscarriage of justice. The book has its flaws. Dr Watson's name is frequently given as James, for no evident reason. Maiwand is consistently spelled as 'Mainwad', Altamont as 'Altamount' and Von Bork as 'Van Bork'. There are many anachronistic expressions: Kitty Winter is 'feisty', Holmes's mistrust of women is 'chauvinism', Philip Green is a 'stalker', Gemma Gold is 'aka' Violet Smith, and a character gets his 'comeuppance'. But I can't improve on a comment in *The Asian Age*: Partha Basu's book is 'blasphemously and deliciously audacious'.

The latest fruits of Paul Spiring's research are found in *Bobbles and Plum: Four Satirical Playlets* by **Bertram Fletcher Robinson** and **P G Wodehouse** (MX Publishing Ltd, 335 Princess Park Manor, Royal Drive, London N11 1JN; £9.99 or $16.95). The plays, never intended for performance, appeared variously in the Daily Express, *Vanity Fair* and *The World* between 1903 and 1907. They're part of the tradition of satire that continues today, and though they date from a more respectful era they aim some pretty sharp darts at the politicians. Moreover, they're clever, well-written, and funny. The full annotations help us appreciate just how clever they are, and how harmoniously the two authors worked together. Wodehouse was just starting a career that would last another seventy years. Robinson's career was about to be cut short. Who can say what he might have achieved?

I recently recommended *The Dragon Tattoo*, the first of **Tim Pigott-Smith's** Baker Street Mysteries. The second is just out – *The Rose of Africa* (Hodder Children's Books, 338 Euston Road, London NW1 3BH; £5.99) – and I'm very much looking forward to reading it. Meanwhile *The Haunted Horrors*, the sixth of **Anthony Read's** chronicles of the Baker Street Boys (Walker Books Ltd, 87 Vauxhall Walk, London SE11 5HJ; £4.99) was published last month and also promises to be great fun.

The Pandora Plague, a well-received 1981 novel about Holmes, Watson and Houdini by **Lee A Matthias**, is now available in a revised and annotated edition from BookSurge (www.booksurge.com; $16.99). It is available on www.amazon.com. So is a great deal more Sherlockian pastiche, most of which I've not encountered elsewhere, including *Sherlock Holmes, Consulting Detective Vol. One* edited by **Ron Fortier** (Cornerstone Book Publishers, 1937 Veterans Blvd, Suite 334 - Metairie, LA 70005, USA; $21.95) a collection of five new adventures.

Due in November from EDGE Science Fiction and Fantasy Publishing, Inc (PO Box 1714, Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2P 2L7; $16.95) is *Gaslight Grotesque: Nightmare Tales of Sherlock Holmes* edited by **J R Campbell** & **Charles Prepolec**. This is a follow-up to the very successful *Gaslight Grimoire* (see DM 290).

Antony Richards reports that in November Breese Books (Baker Street Studios Limited, Endeavour House, 170 Woodland Road, Sawston, Cambridgeshire CB22 3DX; £7.50) will issue a new edition of *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab* by **Fergus Hume**, with an introduction by H R F Keating. First published in 1886, Hume's novel was phenomenally successful but fell out of favour with the rise of Sherlock Holmes. It's literate, ingenious and gripping, and deserves to be rediscovered.

Vithal Rajan tells me that a revised edition of *Holmes of the Raj* – his grand collection of stories, favourably reviewed in DM 266 – will be published next summer by Random House India (MindMill Corporate Tower, 2nd Floor, Plot No. 24A, Sector 16 A, Noida 201301, India).

Brian Pugh, via Oscar Ross, recommends *Reflections on the Cottingley Fairies* by **Frances Griffiths** (JMJ Publications, 1 Thornhill, Malone, Belfast BT6 6SS; orders@cottingleyreflections.com; £8.99 plus postage). Frances and her cousin Elsie Wright were the two girls who claimed to have photographed fairies at Cottingley near Bradford. She died in 1986. Last year, her daughter Christine Lynch took her manuscript to the Antiques Roadshow in Belfast, and Paul Atterbury advised her to publish it as the only first-hand account of the affair.

At http://www.sherlock-holmes.com/e_times09-7.htm is the July issue of *The Sherlockian E-Times*, full of tempting goodies, as always (**Classic Specialties**, PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH, 45219, USA; sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com).

With *Nursing Holmes* **Cenarth Fox** completes his trilogy of plays about the great detective. About to leave Baker Street for the last time, Sherlock Holmes is astounded to learn that Mrs Hudson has been commissioned by *The Strand Magazine* to write her memoirs – *The Landlady of Sherlock Holmes*. As she says, 'The world knows of your cases but nothing of your private life.' But even her promise not to divulge any of his *really* unpleasant habits does not reconcile him to the idea. Nor does her intention of correcting the many mistakes made by Holmes and Watson. The ensuing conversation moves from the farcical to the profound, as each comes to understand and appreciate the other – and there's a final astonishing and very funny twist. Like the first two, *The Real Sherlock Holmes* and *Sherlock, Stock and Barrel*, the play has been very successfully adapted for audio and is now available as a CD for £13.50 post-free from Fox Plays at sales@foxplays.com. (All three CDs can be had for £30.00 post-free.) I haven't seen Kirk Alexander and Eileen Nelson play Holmes and Mrs Hudson on stage but they're superb in sound alone, doing full justice to Cen Fox's excellent script.

Last year Naxos AudioBooks (2nd Floor, 40A High Street, Welwyn, Herts. AL6 9EQ; www.naxosaudiobooks.com) released a superb unabridged recording of *The Lost World*, read by **Glen McReady**. Now we have an equally striking reading of *The Poison Belt*, the second chronicle of Professor Challenger, which tells how the earth comes into contact with a vast deadly cloud floating in the aether. The idea of a superfine substance that fills the space between all the particles of the universe was rapidly losing ground when Conan Doyle wrote *The Poison Belt*, but he wrote with such conviction that we can easily suspend disbelief. Besides, this is not a tale of adventure, like *The Lost World*, but a tale of wonder and a depiction of character. Mr McReady makes each personality distinct, without any hint of caricature – Challenger's justified egotism, Professor Summerlee's waspish scepticism, Lord John Roxton's tolerant wisdom, Edward Malone's healthy practicality, even Mrs Challenger's devotion – so that we can appreciate the effect on each of the knowledge that their world is coming to an end. The science may be doubtful, but Conan Doyle's description of the dead land, beautifully rendered by Glen McReady, is as good as anything in H G Wells. And I'm now convinced that Summerlee, not Challenger, ought to have been the focal character in *The Land of Mist…* This three-CD set can also be downloaded from the website.

A CD that had completely passed me by is the original cast recording of *The Baskerville Beast*, **Teddy Hayes'** musical version of you know what. It's available from Dress Circle (57-59 Monmouth Street, London WC2H 9DG; www.dresscircle.co.uk) at £9.99. **John Elnaugh** told me about the CD. He played Holmes in *The Baskerville Beast* and will shortly reprise the character in *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* by Donald Thomas at the **Manor Pavilion Theatre** in Sidmouth, from 24 to 30 September (www.manorpavilion.com; phone 01395 514413).

This week **Nicholas Briggs** plays Holmes in his own dramatisation of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* at the **Theatre Royal**, Nottingham (phone 0115 989 5555). At **The Space@Venue 45** at the Edinburgh Fringe until 22 August is *Broken Holmes* by Robin Johnson (0845 508 8387). Members of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London can buy tickets at £5.50 – a reduction of £2.00. See www.brokenholmes.co.uk. You can see *Sherlock Holmes & the Curse of the Werewolf* by Jonathan & Julian Kaufman in the garden of **The Dolphin** pub in Sydenham on 18, 19, 20, 25, 26 and 27 August. Tickets from Kirkdale Bookshop, 272 Kirkdale, Sydenham, London SE26 4RS (phone 020 8778 4701). See www.spontaneousproductions.co.uk. On 16 September, at the **Quay Theatre**, Sudbury, Suffolk, **Robert Crighton** will read *A Study in Scarlet*, followed by *The Sign of Four* on 23 September, and all twelve *Adventures* between 7 October and 2 December, concluding with *The Hound of the Baskervilles* on 9 September (01787 374745, or e-mail boxoffice@quaytheatre.org.uk). See www.quaytheatre.org.uk.

Oliver Bruhns offers a humorous Christmas cartoon-postcard (Toby the dog enjoys his festive season at the expense of Holmes and Watson). A set of twelve, post-paid, is €15.00 within Europe or $25.00 to the USA, from Baltica Verlag, Oliver Bruhns, Waldstr. 6, 24960 Glücksburg, Germany. Please send money in cash to avoid bank charges.

At 6.00pm on 14 September, at Charing Cross Library, **Laurie R King** will read from her latest Mary Russell/Sherlock Holmes novel *The Language of Bees* and answer questions about her books. Admission is free. See www.westminster.gov.uk/services/libraries/news/chxevents/.

See www.ipetitions.com/petition/undershaw/?e to learn about the campaign to restore Conan Doyle's house **Undershaw** and enable public access and public use. An awareness day and fund raiser will be held on 27 August from 2.00pm with the opportunity to view the building in its current sad state. Entertainment, raffle, auction and murder-mystery at the Devil's Punchbowl Hotel will all form part of the day, with a light evening meal. Contact **Lynn Gale** on lynn2shirley@hotmail.co.uk for details. Philip Attwell points out that BBC Radio 4's *You and Yours* (midday, 21 August) will feature the sad state of Undershaw.

Norfolk-based Holmesian **Kelvin Jones** will run a one-day course on short story writing at Fakenham Community Centre on 5 September. Get information from cunningman@hotmail.co.uk or phone 07976 507954.

The Reichenbach Irregulars last met in Meiringen in 2000. This summer four members – Vincent Delay, Marcus Geisser, Guy Marriott and Michael A Meer – decided to revive the Irregulars. On Sunday 27 September they will celebrate the revival with a meeting in Lucerne, including a cruise in a century-old paddle steamer and a visit to the Hôtel de l'Europe, where Arthur Conan Doyle stayed. If you'd like to join in, contact Marcus at the.reichenbach.irregulars@googlemail.com.

The Irish-born actor **Harry Towb** died on 24 July, three days before his eighty-fourth birthday. In the early 1950s he took two or three rôles in Sheldon Reynolds' *Sherlock Holmes* television series, and in 1974 was a memorable Forman to John Wood's Holmes in the RSC production of William Gillette's play, in the West End and on Broadway.

Periodicals received. ***The Baker Street Journal***, Summer 2009 (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). ***The Camden House Journal***, July 2009 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, Debbie Tinsley, PO Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). ***Canadian Holmes***, Canada Day (July) 2009 **(The Bootmakers of Toronto**, Chris Redmond, 523 Westfield Drive, Waterloo, ON, Canada N2T 2E1). ***Communication***, no. 290/291 (**The Pleasant Places of Florida**, Wanda & Jeff Dow, 1737 Santa Anna Drive, Dunedin, FL 34698, USA). ***Ineffable Twaddle***, August 2009 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). ***Irregular Newsletter***, August 2009 (**The Conan Doyle [Crowborough] Establishment**, Brian Pugh, 20 Clare Road, Lewes, Sussex BN7 1PN). ***The Moor: Magasin för Sherlockianer***, Juli 2009 (**The Baskerville Hall Club of Sweden**, Anders Wiggström, Byggmästarvägen 29, 168 32 Bromma, Sweden). ***The Petrel Flyer***, May/June 2009 and Summer 2009 (**The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia**, Len Haffenden, 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7P 3C6). ***Sherlockiana***, Nr 2-3 2009 (**Sherlock Holmes Klubben i Danmark**, Bjarne Rother Jensen, Højbovangen 24, 9200 Aalborg SV, Denmark).

And ***Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press***, July 2009 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; blau7103@comcast.net).

Roger Johnson

The DISTRICT MESSENGER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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no. 296 7th September 2009

On 30 August 1889, J M Stoddart, editor of the Philadelphia-based *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*, invited Oscar Wilde and Arthur Conan Doyle to dinner at the **Langham Hotel** in London. That evening he commissioned a novel from each of them: *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *The Sign of the Four* respectively. The Sherlock Holmes Society of London, in collaboration with the Oscar Wilde Society, the Langham Hotel and the City of Westminster, has commissioned a plaque to commemorate that remarkable event, which will be unveiled at the Langham on 19 November, at 11.30 am, by **Gyles Brandreth**, whose Oscar Wilde Murder Mysteries have been enthusiastically reviewed world-wide.

2009 sees the 120th anniversary of that dinner, Conan Doyle's 150th birthday, Wilde's 155th birthday, the release of Oliver Parker's film *Dorian Gray*, the release of Guy Ritchie's film *Sherlock Holmes*, and a good deal more besides. *The Valley of Fear* will feature in Gyles Brandreth's series (in BBC 1's *The One Show*) on places that have inspired famous works of fiction. *The Hound of the Baskervilles* will feature in *John Sergeant's Tourist Trail*, an ITV 1 series, in which Sergeant accompanies overseas visitors to Britain. STV is preparing a documentary, *The Search for Sherlock Holmes*, to be presented by David Hayman, and a series *The Greatest Scot*, which will include Arthur Conan Doyle. All these programmes will have some input from members of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London.

The Rose of Africa (Hodder Children's Books, 338 Euston Road, London NW1 3BH; £5.99), second of the Baker Street Mysteries by **Tim Pigott-Smith**, is as exciting as the first (*The Dragon Tattoo* — see DM 293). Sam Wiggins, Titch Simpson, Edie, Potts and Billy the page-boy must take matters into their own hands when Potts's uncle is accused of theft and murder. Sherlock Holmes has an urgent summons to the Continent, and Inspector Lestrade and Dr Watson aren't keen on the idea of children investigating crime. But the Irregulars don't give up easily. As Holmes himself said, they can go everywhere, see everything, overhear everyone, and they discover that the tangled trail of the missing diamond leads to an old adversary of the great detective, a cold-hearted criminal named Irene Adler… This is a very different view of *the* woman from the romantic image that has long been popular among Holmesians, particularly in America, but it's not actually new (see, for instance, the 2007 TV film *Sherlock Holmes and the Baker Street Irregulars*) and in Tim Pigott-Smith's gripping story this *belle dame sans merci* raises the tension several notches. Wiggins and co. are thoroughly engaging characters. I'm looking forward keenly to their next adventure!

Tim Pigott-Smith will be at the **Bath Festival of Children's Literature** on 27 September, discussing the Baker Street Mysteries (Box office: 01225 463362).

Aimed at a slightly younger readership, I think, is *The Case of the Haunted Horrors* (Walker Books Ltd, 87 Vauxhall Walk, London SE11 5HJ; £4.99), the sixth chronicle of The Baker Street Boys by **Anthony Read**. (There is actually a seventh book, technically the first: *The Baker Street Boys* by Brian Ball, published in 1983, and based on two of the scripts for Anthony Read's television series broadcast that year. What makes matters more complicated is that one of them is *The Captive Clairvoyant*, which Mr Read himself later adapted as the second of his own books. However…) These Baker Street Irregulars are not the same young people as Mr Pigott-Smith's Irregulars. Billy the page-boy is definitely not one of their number. And in any case they prefer to call themselves the Baker Street Boys, even though three of them are girls. But any confusion is quite extraneous to the thrilling exploits of Arnold Wiggins, Beaver, Shiner, Queenie, Sparrow, Rosie and Gertie, as a haunting at Madame Dupont's Waxworks uncovers a murder and entangles the youngsters with a group of Russian dissidents. I wish all Holmesian pastiche could be as honest, as knowledgeable, as enthusiastic and as well-written — in short, as good — as these children's books.

In the early 1980s Webb & Bower published three Sherlock Holmes Murder Dossiers, compiled by Simon Goodenough to tell the cases of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, *The Sign of Four* and *The Hound of the Baskervilles* through cleverly designed 'original' documents (and other items, such as Lucy Ferrier's wedding ring). Now we have *The Case Notes of Sherlock Holmes* by **Guy Adams** (André Deutsch, 20 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JW; £19.99), which claims to be a facsimile of Dr Watson's notes for *The Hound* and five short stories: 'A Scandal in Bohemia', 'The Red-Headed League', 'The Boscombe Valley Mystery', 'The Dancing Men' and 'The Final Problem'. It's understandable that Mr Adams has used computer fonts, where Mr Goodenough's handwritten texts actually were reproduced from handwriting — I've done the same myself — but only two or three of them are convincing, and it doesn't take a detective to see that the note 'The Red-Headed League is dissolved' and Hilton Cubitt's letters were apparently written by the same person. All the newspaper cuttings are in the same modern typeface, and none of them looks like newsprint of the period. I could overlook this sort of thing, perhaps, but there's rank carelessness elsewhere. The supposed marriage certificate of Irene Adler and Godfrey Norton is the sort of fancy-schmancy document that would more probably certify 'Highly Commended' at a village flower show. John Turner's confession is taken on an official Metropolitan Police form by Inspector Lestrade — from whom Holmes and Watson promised to keep it secret. Abe Slaney's confession is taken by Inspector Martin of the Norfolk Constabulary — on an official Metropolitan Police form. Dr Mortimer's drawing of the Hound's footprints shows them to have been only two inches across, and someone has appended a note: 'Smaller feet than anticipated'… (The point of that simply baffles me.) Guy Adams claims to have been the youngest actor to play Sherlock Holmes on the professional stage. That he's now a full-time writer is rather disturbing, given such horrors as: 'Wilson — like I — had no knowledge of the league' and 'That last sentence beared up to rereading.' *The Case Notes of Sherlock Holmes* is 'officially endorsed by the Administrator of the Conan Doyle Copyrights'. Oh, dear. The book could, and should, have been very good indeed — what a wasted opportunity!

Fortunately *The Sherlock Holmes Companion: An Elementary Guide* by **Daniel Smith** (Aurum, 7 Greenland Street, London NW1 0ND; 29 October; £20.00) actually is very good indeed! Like others with similar titles, this book neatly summarises each of the sixty stories — without giving away the endings. But it also contains well-researched and well-written profiles of Conan Doyle, Holmes, Watson, Mrs Hudson, Scotland Yard, Joseph Bell, Professor Moriarty, *The Strand Magazine* and Sidney Paget. And equally good essays on Holmes as a scientific detective, Holmes's pleasures, the literary lineage, women in Holmes's life, Holmes's politics, Holmes's legacy, and Holmes on stage screen and radio. Plus (a real bonus, this) interviews with Roger Llewellyn, Philip Franks, Douglas Wilmer, Caleb Carr, David Burke, Bert Coules, Catherine Cooke, and Edward Hardwicke. And *The Sherlock Holmes Companion* is exceptionally well illustrated. The inevitable sprinkling of Pagets and Steeles is leavened with depictions by other artists, old (W H Hyde, A Gilbert) and new (Nis Jessen, Barry Moser), book jackets, posters, period pictures of places and people, photos of the contributors, and more, including one of Eric Conklin's beautiful Sherlock Holmes Mystery paintings. It's a book I'm happy to recommend.

On 8 October comes *A Study in Scarlet*, the second Sherlock Holmes Graphic Novel adapted by **Ian Edginton** and illustrated by **INJ Culbard** (SelfMadeHero, 5 Upper Wimpole Street, London W1G 6BP; £14.99). *Sherlock Holmes for Dummies* by **David A Crowder** is due on 16 October from John Wiley & Sons (The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex PO19 8SQ), priced at £14.99. On 30 October Robert Hale Ltd (Clerkenwell House, 45-47 Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0HT) will publish *Sherlock Holmes's London* by **David Sinclair**, at £16.99 — it can be pre-ordered at www.halebooks.com for £11.99.

Ruth Rendell will be Guest of Honour at our Society's annual dinner next January. She has written the introduction to a new edition of *The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes*, due on 5 November, in hardback at £30.00 from Viking and in paperback at £18.99 from Penguin (both at 80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL). There's also a new edition of **Christopher Redmond's** excellent *Sherlock Holmes Handbook*, to be published on 23 November from Natural Heritage Books (Gazelle Book Services Ltd, White Cross Mills, High Town, Lancaster LA1 4XS) at £14.00. And on 29 November IDW Publishing (5080 Santa Fe, San Diego, CA 92109, USA) will publish *A Study in Scarlet*, illustrated by **Ashley Wood**, in their Graphic Classics series at £12.99.

Aziz Bin Adam reports the publication by PTS Publications (No 12 & 12A, Jalan DBP, Dolomite Business Park, 68100 Batu Caves, Selangor, Malaysia) of *Sherlock Holmes: Wira Kota London* ('Sherlock Holmes, Saviour of London City'), the third translation from the Canon into Malay. Details at http://pts.com.my/index.php/buku/sherlock_holmes_-_wira_kota_london/.

The August issue of *The Sherlockian E-Times*, full of good things, is at http://www.sherlock-holmes.com/e_times09-8.htm (**Classic Specialties**, PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH, 45219, USA; sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com).

See havantlitfest.org.uk for information about the **Havant Literary Festival**, running from 25 September to 4 October. In this anniversary year, Arthur Conan Doyle features largely, with an exhibition at the Meridian Centre of material on loan from Portsmouth Museum's Conan Doyle Collection, and talks by Michael Gunton, Amanda Field, Madeleine Selby, Russell Miller and Sam North. Tickets are available from Havant Arts Centre on 023 9247 2700.

Conan Doyle and Joseph Bell is the title of an exhibition that can be seen at the **Royal Society of Medicine** (1 Wimpole Street, London W1G 0AE) until 29 January. Entry to the exhibition, staged in collaboration with the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, is free. Also free is a public meeting, *Sherlock Holmes, Forensic Medicine and Fictional Crime Fighters*, to be held at the RSM on 29 October at 2.00pm. Speakers include Andrew Lycett and Anthony Horowitz. In the chair will be Emilia Fox, star of *Silent Witness*. To view the full programme and to book a free place, see www.rsm.sc.uk/sherlock.

At the Bishopsgate Institute near Liverpool Street Station on 10 November, **Dr Esme Miskimmin** will give a talk on *Fictional London: Investigating the City: London in Detective Fiction from the Victorian Era to the 'Golden Age'*. Tickets are £7.00 (concessions £5.00) from www.wegottickets.com or 020 7392 9220. The talk starts at 7.30 pm.

Olaf Maurer announces the first issue of *Sherlock Holmes Magazin*, a full-colour 28-page Sherlockian magazine in German, available to all interested parties. (Members of **221b-Deutscher-Sherlock-Holmes-Club** will receive a supplement, 'Baker Street News.) For information about subscribing, contact Olaf at Kerschensteinerstr. 48, D-67071 Ludwigshafen, Germany (info@221b-DSHC.de).

Besides his humorous Christmas cartoon-postcard (Toby the dog enjoys his festive season at the expense of Holmes and Watson) **Oliver Bruhns** offers the same amusing design on a coffee mug. See www.baltica-verlag.de. A set of twelve cards is €15.00 (Europe), US$ 25.00 (USA and overseas). The mug is €20.00 (Europe), US$ 35.00 (USA and overseas). Prices include postage. Please send orders to info@baltica-verlag.de.

Our member **José Luis Errazquin** has designed a rather splendid Tarot deck. See http://www.sshf.com/index.php3?file=news&num=697. More details from Juan Requena, C/Rios Rosas, 52-28003 Madrid, Spain. (Thanks to our friends in **La Société Sherlock Holmes de France**.)

Thierry Saint-Joanis reports the discovery in the basement of a Polish church of a copy of *Der Hund von Baskerville*, the last Sherlock Holmes film of the silent era, and long considered lost. The German-British production was made in Berlin in 1929 by Richard Oswald, with Carlyle Blackwell as Holmes and Georges Seroff as Watson. This copy was one of a collection of old movies, often subtitled or dubbed in Czech, that had belonged to the former pastor of Sosnowiec, Father Jerzy Barszcz, who died in 2004.

It now seems that any attempt to develop **Undershaw**, Conan Doyle's house at Hindhead, for any use that would enable public access will fail, purely on economic grounds. All praise to those who fought for so long! The house is saved from dereliction, which is the essential thing.

On 8 October the Royal Mail will issue its set of ten **Eminent Britons** stamps, which naturally include Arthur Conan Doyle. The Royal Mail Online Shop is at www.royalmail.com — or phone 08457 641 641 (overseas +44 131 316 7483). On 29 October the island of Alderney will issue a set of six **Sherlock Holmes** stamps. Guernsey Philatelic Bureau (Envoy House, La Vrangue, St Peter Port, Guernsey, Channel Islands GY1 1AB; phone 01481 716486; philatelic@guernseypost.com) will sell the set of six at £3.97, First Day Cover at £3.97, Presentation Pack at £3.97, and a Sherlock Holmes Mystery Pack at £9.99.

Roger Llewellyn is touring again with David Stuart Davies's splendid play *Sherlock Holmes — The Death and Life*. His schedule for the next six weeks is: 17–20 September **Ellen Terry Barn Theatre,** Tenterden (www.ellenterrybarntheatre.co.uk; 01424 440484); 24 September **Arts Depot** North Finchley, (www.artsdepot.co.uk; 020 83695454)*; 26 September **Island Arts Centre**, Lisburn (www.islandartscentre.com; 028 92 509254); 30 September **Cramphorn Theatre**, Chelmsford, (www.chelmsford.gov.uk/theatres; 01245 606505)*; 15 October **Off the Shelf Festival**, Sheffield (www.offtheshelf.org.uk; 0114 2734716 / 4400); 16 October **Town Hall**, Loughborough, (www.loughboroughtownhall.co.uk; 01509 231914); 25 October **Memorial Theatre**, Broadstairs (www.sarahthorne-theatreclub.co.uk; 0845 2626263); 30 October **Cornerstone**, Didcot (www.cornerstone-arts.org; 01235 515144). (*At these theatres the play is *Sherlock Holmes — The Last Act!*)

A Gallery of Rogues: The Adversaries of Sherlock Holmes is the title of the thirtieth annual Saturday with Sherlock Holmes, presented at the Enoch Pratt Central Library in Baltimore, Maryland, by **The Six Napoleons of Baltimore**, **The Carlton Club** and **Watson's Tin Box of Ellicott City**. Speakers include John Pforr, Evelyn Herzog, John Baesch, Andrew Lee Solberg and William Hyder. The event begins at 10.00 am on 7 November, and admission is free. Phone for details to 410 396 5494 or 410 997 9114.

Producer and writer **Harry Alan Towers** died on 31 July, aged eighty-eight, after a career distinguished for its length and prolificity. In 1954 he produced a memorable Sherlock Holmes radio series, with John Gielgud and Ralph Richardson, and returned to Baker Street in the TV films *Sherlock Holmes and the Leading Lady* and *Incident at Victoria Falls*, with Christopher Lee and Patrick Macnee.

Periodicals received. ***The Baker Street Bugle***, 1 July 2009 (**The Deerstalkers of Welshpool**, Roy Upton-Holder, Baskerville, 146 Little Henfaes Drive, Welshpool, Powys SY21 7BA *[*a notable issue — number 50A!*]*. ***The Camden House Journal***, August 2009 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, Debbie Tinsley, PO Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). ***Communication***, no. 292/293 (**The Pleasant Places of Florida**, Wanda & Jeff Dow, 1737 Santa Anna Drive, Dunedin, FL 34698, USA). ***Ineffable Twaddle***, September 2009 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). ***Mayday Mayday***, September 2009 (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardcarn Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). ***The Passengers' Log***, 22 May/7 August 2009 (**The Sydney Passengers**, Rosane McNamara, 4/2a Merlin Street, Neutral Bay, NSW 2089, Australia).

And ***Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press***, August 2009 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; blau7103@comcast.net).

Roger Johnson

The DISTRICT MESSENGER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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no. 297 16th October 2009

A Taste for Honey by **H F Heard** (Blue Dolphin Publishing Inc., PO Box 8, Nevada City, CA 95959, USA; $16.95) is a welcome new edition of an unusual and rather brilliant detective novel, first published in 1941. When Mrs Heregrove dies after being stung by her unpleasant husband's bees, Mr Sydney Silchester, reserved and fussy, resolves to buy his honey elsewhere. At the far end of the village, he discovers another beekeeper, a tall, thin gentleman who calls himself Mr Mycroft — and who already suspects that Mrs Heregrove's death was not natural. Very clearly, this is Sherlock Holmes, guarding his privacy in his rural retirement. Eventually he admits: 'Mycroft is only one of my family names.' But one of the delights of the novel is that Sydney Silchester is not John H Watson; even if he knew who Watson was, he would have no wish to emulate him. On learning his new acquaintance's real name, he says, with devastating frankness, 'I have to own I have never heard of you before.' And when he comes to write an account of their curious investigation he can remember only that the name 'was something like Mycroft — Mycroft and then another word, a short one, I think.' (Early British editions of *A Taste for Honey*, published as by Gerald Heard, call the detective 'Mr Bowcross', to avoid trouble with the Conan Doyle estate.) Silchester's opinion of Mycroft in some ways reflects Watson's view of Holmes — 'I was nettled by his absorbed interest in his own wretched bees and then in Heregrove's supposed motives,' he writes — but his style and character are refreshingly different. As in some of the canonical short stories, the criminal's identity is evident almost from the beginning, and his motive and *modus operandi* are easily discovered. Mr Mycroft's task is to bring the crime home to its perpetrator and stop him killing again. It's a task that requires formidable intelligence, obscure knowledge and a nimble brain. The nice new edition, the first in 'The Mr Mycroft Commemorative Series', includes an entertaining foreword by Stacy Gillis and a most interesting afterword by Heard's literary executor, John Roger Barrie.

In a satisfyingly chunky 450-page anthology entitled *The Improbable Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (Night Shade Books, 1423 33rd Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94122, USA; $15.95), **John Joseph Adams** has gathered twenty-eight curious accounts by a remarkable array of authors. Amy Myers rubs shoulders with Michael Moorcock, Stephen King with Anne Perry, Edward D Hoch with Laurie R King, Tanith Lee with Peter Tremayne. The contributors seem to be drawn equally from the worlds of crime fiction and science-fantasy, so it's no real surprise to discover that the problems facing the great detective range from the rationally explicable to the frankly irrational. Sometimes, as Mr Adams says, you can't eliminate the impossible. What all these tales have in common is improbability, and we can't say we weren't warned. On a literary level, Anthony Burgess's 'Murder to Music' and Neil Gaiman's 'A Study in Emerald', completely different otherwise, are superb. It's a grand collection altogether. My only reservation is that half of these stories are reprinted from anthologies that are still easily available.

In *Murder at Oakwood Grange* (New Generation Publishing; £7.99) **Avril Field-Taylor** reveals the story of the politician, the lighthouse and the trained cormorant. The book is available from amazon.co.uk and other online sources. I hope to review it in the next DM.

On 23 October Titan Books (144 Southwark Street, London SE1 0UP) will publish the first four in its series 'The Further Adventures of Sherlock Holmes', reprinting some of the best Holmes pastiches. They begin with *The Ectoplasmic Man* by **Daniel Stashower**, *The War of the Worlds* by **Manly Wade Wellman** and **Wade Wellman**, and *The Veiled Detective* and *The Scroll of the Dead*, both by **David Stuart Davies**. All are priced at £7.99. Future titles include *The Man from Hell* by **Barrie Roberts** and *The Stalwart Companions* by **H Paul Jeffers**.

Michael Lawrence wishes to sell his collection of Sherlock Holmes books. This could be your chance to buy some of the older and rarer titles. If you're interested, please e-mail Mr Lawrence for a list at MWLawrence99@aol.com.

At www.sherlock-holmes.com/e_times09-9.htm you'll find the September issue of *The Sherlockian E-Times*, the catalogue-magazine of **Classic Specialties** (PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH, 45219, USA; sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com). Also worth investigating is the special catalogue for Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's 150th anniversary issued by **Preston Book Company** (68 Friargate, Preston, Lancs. PR1 2ED; 01772 252613; prestonrarebooks@halewood221b.freeserve.co.uk).

A reminder of the lovely facsimile editions of guidebooks and maps published by **Old House Books**, (The Old Police Station, Pound Street, Moretonhampstead, Devon TQ13 8PA; www.OldHouseBooks.co.uk). Titles of interest to the Holmesian include *Baedeker's Great Britain 1890: A Handbook for Travellers* (£15.99), *Baedeker's London & Its Environs 1900* (£14.99), *Murray's Modern London 1860* (£13.99), *Bacon's up to date Map of London 1902* (£9.99), *London Railways Map 1897* (£9.99), and *Dickens's Dictionary of London 1888* (£12.99).

It's 120 years since J M Stoddart, editor of the Philadelphia-based *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*, invited Oscar Wilde and Arthur Conan Doyle to dinner at the Langham Hotel in London. That evening he commissioned a novel from each of them: *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *The Sign of the Four* respectively. To mark that anniversary, and Oscar Wilde's 155th birthday, Naxos AudioBooks have released an unabridged reading of Wilde's story by **Greg Wise** (2nd Floor, 40A High Street, Welwyn, Herts. AL6 9EQ; £19.99). *Dorian Gray* is one of the quartet of great nineteenth century novels of terror, and it shares with *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* the distinction of being a highly moral work of literature, so superbly written that it never seems in the least sanctimonious. Conan Doyle was more perceptive than the many critics who attacked the book, absurdly, as 'immoral'. (Perhaps they were repelled in part by the apparent cynicism of the epigrams that sparkle amid the horrors of Dorian Gray's descent into vice, seeming, as Gary Mead puts it in his notes to this recording, 'like diamonds scattered in a coal cellar'.) Wilde replied to the younger author's admiring letter: 'I am really delighted that you think my treatment subtle and artistically good.' Greg Wise's voice is pleasing, and his pacing immaculate. I confess I'd like to have some more obvious differences between the voices of the different characters, but after all those performances in Jane Austen, Wilkie Collins and the like, there's no doubt that Mr Wise sounds thoroughly at home in nineteenth century Society. As usual, the recording is enhanced by appropriate music from the Naxos archive — in this case, works by Schumann, Chabrier, and (a composer new to me) Léon Boëllmann. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is an admirable addition to the Naxos AudioBooks catalogue.

Roger Llewellyn has recorded both of David Stuart Davies's plays for **Big Finish** (PO Box 3787, Maidenhead, Berkshire, SL6 3TF), who have gained a considerable reputation, initially for their *Doctor Who* audio plays. *Sherlock Holmes – The Last Act!* will be released in November, and *Sherlock Holmes – The Death and Life* in December. Both can be pre-ordered at www.bigfinish.com/ranges/Sherlock-Holmes,m as can *Holmes and the Ripper* by Brian Clemens, with **Nicholas Briggs** as Holmes, due in January.

Roger continues touring with *Sherlock Holmes – The Death and Life*. Dates for the rest of 2009 are: 25 October: **Memorial Theatre**, Broadstairs (0845 2626263; www.sarahthorne-theatreclub.co.uk); 30 October **Cornerstone**, Didcot (01235 515144; www.cornerstone-arts.org); 2 November: **Arts Centre**, Paisley (0141 8871010;

www.renfrewshire.gov.uk); 6 November: **Bowhill Theatre**, Selkirk (the play is *Sherlock Holmes – The Last Act!*) (01750 22204; www.bowhill.org); 8 November: **The Maltings**, Berwick upon Tweed (01289 330999; www.maltingsberwick.co.uk); 11 November: **The Clocktower,** Croydon (020 8253 1030; www.croydonclocktower.org.uk); 13 November: **Quarterhouse**, Folkestone (01303 858500; www.quarterhouse.co.uk); 20 November **Waterside**, Sale (0161 9125616; www.watersideartscentre.co.uk); 4 December: **The Ropery Hall**, Barton on Humber (01652 660380; www.the-ropewalk.co.uk); 18 December: **Borough Theatre**, Abergavenny (01873 850805; www.boroughtheatreabergavenny.co.uk); 24–28 December: **Tabard** London (08448 472264; www.tabardtheatre.co.uk).

On 28, 29 & 30 October, at the Cockpit Theatre in Gateforth Street, near Lisson Grove, our member **Sandy Easton** will play Dr Watson in his own play *The Matter of the Cardinal Jewel*, a production of the Venturers Drama Group for the Visually impaired. Sandy himself is blind. Holmes will be played by Lee Innel, a sighted actor. The rest of the cast is mainly blind and partially-sighted. Doors open at 6:30 pm for a 7:30 pm start. Tickets can be purchased at the Box Office on the day for £5.00. See http://www.venturersdramagroup.org.uk/.

Nearly thirty years ago **Christopher Lee** and **Patrick Macnee** played Holmes and Watson in two television films for a company called Harmony Gold. Made in Luxembourg, with excursions to South Africa, *Sherlock Holmes and the Leading Lady* and *Sherlock Holmes: Incident at Victoria Falls* show the detective and the doctor in the years before the Great War, investigating plots that threaten the stability of Europe and the Empire. It doesn't really matter that the actors were ten years too old, though the casting of Morgan Fairchild, three decades younger than Lee, as Irene Adler, the Leading Lady, doesn't help. Jenny Seagrove also was too young to play Lillie Langtry in *Victoria Falls*, but there were some very felicitous choices, particularly in the latter film, such as Richard Todd as Lord Roberts and Claude Akins as Teddy Roosevelt. On the other hand, Jerome Willis was physically quite wrong for Mycroft Holmes… At three hours each, the stories are stretched rather too much, especially *The Leading Lady*, but the films are certainly visually attractive, and they move along at a reasonable pace. Christopher Lee, of course, is always worth watching. The executive producer was the late Harry Alan Towers, who had made a memorable Sherlock Holmes radio series in 1954, with John Gielgud and Ralph Richardson. More bizarrely, Silvio Berlusconi was involved in the production of these films! Neither qualifies as a classic, rather as a sort of guilty pleasure. It's nice to know that they'll be released as a double-DVD set on 2 November by Revelation Films (Barn House, 38, Meadow Way, Ruislip, Middlesex HA4 8SY; £19.99).

Peter Wood, MBt, BSI reports that he has donated his own reference collection of Holmesian and Doylean books to the Rare Books Library at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, where they will form part of the first such special collection on the West Coast of North America. (WAC Bennett Library, 8888 University Drive, Burnaby, BC, Canada V5A 1S6; www.lib.sfu.ca/special/).

Besides Guy Ritchie's film *Sherlock Holmes*, to be released on Boxing Day, and the series of films for BBC TV created by Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss, which will start transmission early next year, we can look forward to a 90-minute movie, also entitled *Sherlock Holmes*, from an American company called **The Asylum**. This one, featuring Ben Snyder and Gareth David-Lloyd as Holmes and Watson, is due for DVD release, probably in Region 1 only, on 26 January. Dominic Keating plays Thorpe, alias Spring-Heeled Jack. There's some information, including photos, at www.theasylum.cc/product.php?id=164.

From Peter Blau: Randall Stock notes that the typescript for 'A Chat with Conan Doyle' is now on-line. This is the script of the recording that ACD made for HMV on 14 May 1930, released as *Conan Doyle Speaking*. The first page is titled (apparently in his own handwriting) 'A Chat "with" Conan Doyle'. It's at www.tinyurl.com/lrre95e.

The Royal Mail marked ten of this year's anniversaries with its **Eminent Britons** First Class stamp set on 8 October, featuring Fred Perry, Henry Purcell, Matt Busby, WE Gladstone, Mary Wollstonecraft, Arthur Conan Doyle, Donald Campbell, Judy Fryd, Samuel Johnson and Martin Ryle. On 29 October Alderney will issue a set of six **Sherlock Holmes** stamps, which will be available from the Guernsey Philatelic Bureau (Envoy House, La Vrangue, St. Peter Port, Guernsey, Channel Islands GY1 1AB; www.guernseystamps.com). The Republic of San Marino got there first with its three stamps honouring Conan Doyle, Edgar Allan Poe and Raymond Chandler — issued back in June.

Martin Hickes' website *The Equinoctial Gales* is worth a look — http://sites.google.com/site/martinhickes/.

In the Beeton Auditorium at Toronto Reference Library (789 Yonge Street, Toronto) on 7 November at 1.00 pm **The Friends of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection** will present *Arthur Conan Doyle Among the Fairies*, a free afternoon programme including a discussion of faerie folklore, a talk on the Doyle family's penchant for fairies, and the film *Fairytale: A True Story*. See www.acdfriends.org. The same day at 10.00 am **The Six Napoleons of Baltimore**, **The Carlton Club** and **Watson's Tin Box of Ellicott City** will present *A Gallery of Rogues: The Adversaries of Sherlock Holmes*, also a free event, at the Enoch Pratt Central Library in Baltimore, Maryland. Phone for details to 410 396 5494 or 410 997 9114.

The Baker Street Irregulars will mark the centenary of Ronald Knox's seminal essay 'Studies in the Literature of Sherlock Holmes' with a competition open to all Sherlockians who are not Irregulars. It calls for essays 'that demonstrate originality in approaching unanswered canonical questions or in resolving those issues that have been unsatisfactorily addressed heretofore'. The deadline is 1 October 2010. The winner will deliver his or her paper as a guest at the January 2011 BSI Annual Dinner. Details are at www.bakerstreetjournal.com.

Iain Cuthbertson died on 4 September aged seventy-nine. Probably best remembered as the gangster Charlie Endell in the 1970s television series *Budgie*, or as 'Father' in Lionel Jeffries' film *The Railway Children*, he played several real people on film and television: Dr Louis Leakey, Lord Hailsham, Sir David Maxwell-Fyfe — and Arthur Conan Doyle, in a 1985 series called *Stamp of Greatness*. There's a curious tradition of casting the wrong actors as Conan Doyle, but the tall, imposing and Scottish Cuthbertson was excellent in the rôle.

Peter Blau reports the death of **Richard S Warner** ('High Tor', BSI) on 19 September. He was responsible for naming Holmes Peak in Osage, Oklahoma, the only officially recognised American geographical feature named after Sherlock Holmes.

Periodicals received. ***The Baker Street Bugle***, 1 July 2009 (**The Deerstalkers of Welshpool**, Roy Upton-Holder, Baskerville, 146 Little Henfaes Drive, Welshpool, Powys SY21 7BA) *[*this one is number 50B*]*. ***The Camden House Journal***, September 2009 & October 2009 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, Debbie Tinsley, PO Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). ***Communication***, no. 294 (**The Pleasant Places of Florida**, Wanda & Jeff Dow, 1737 Santa Anna Drive, Dunedin, FL 34698, USA). ***The Formulary***, September 2009 (**The Friends of Dr Watson**, Nino Cirone, Highcroft Cottage, 14 Totteridge Common, Totteridge, London N20 8NL). ***The Illustrious Clients News***, September 2009 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T Doyle, 9 Calumet Court, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). ***Ineffable Twaddle***, October 2009 (**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***, August 1909 *[*sic*]* (**La Société Sherlock Holmes de France**, Thierry Saint-Joanis, 15 rue Grande, 03370 Saint-Sauvier, France). ***The Magic Door***, Summer 2009 (**The Friends of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection**, Doug Wrigglesworth, 16 Sunset Street, Holland Landing, Ontario, Canada L9N 1H4). ***Mayday Mayday***, October 2009 (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardcarn Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). ***Prescott's Press***, September 2009 (**The Three Garridebs**, Warren Randall, 15 Fawn Lane West, South Setauket, NY 11720-1346, USA). ***The School Report***, Autumn 2009 (**The Priory Scholars**, Horace L Coates, 21 Butcombe Road, Leicester LE4 0FY). ***The Scion***, Autumn 2009 (**The Musgraves**, Anne Jordan, Hallas Lodge, Greenside Lane, Cullingworth, Bradford BD13 5AP). ***The Serpentine Muse***, Fall 2009 (**The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes**, Evelyn Herzog, 301 Warren Ave, #203, Baltimore, MD 21203, USA) *[*the hundredth issue — I look forward to many more!*]*.

And ***Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press***, September 2009 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; blau7103@comcast.net).

Roger Johnson

The DISTRICT MESSENGER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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no. 298 17th November 2009

Owing to circumstances beyond our control (the manufacturers can't come up with the goods in time) the unveiling by Gyles Brandreth of a plaque at the **Langham Hotel**, commemorating the dinner at which both *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *The Sign of the Four*, has had to be postponed. It was originally scheduled for Thursday 19th November, but we're now looking towards a date early in 2010.

*[*Gyles Brandreth's latest book, **Something Sensational to Read in the Train: The Diary of A Lifetime** (John Murray, 338 Euston Road, London NW1 3BH; £25.00), is funny, touching, and intensely readable – and, yes, Sherlock Holmes does feature.*]*

Titan Books (144 Southwark Street, London SE1 0UP) has issued new editions of four good non-canonical novels, under the rather unoriginal series title *The Further Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. All are priced at £7.99 (US$9.95, Cdn$12.95).

In *The War of the Worlds*, first published in 1975 as *Sherlock Holmes's War of the Worlds*, **Manly Wade Wellman**, with his son **Wade Wellman**, pits Holmes, Watson and Professor Challenger against H G Wells's Martian invaders. In this version, the aliens are not native to Mars, and their defeat owes much to the resourcefulness and courage of our heroes. It's intelligent, exciting and literate – as you'd expect from a multi-award-winning science-fiction writer who was also a Baker Street Irregular. The suggestion that Holmes and Mrs Hudson are conducting a clandestine love affair stretches belief to its limits, however. **Daniel Stashower**, BSI is as well known for his biographical studies of Arthur Conan Doyle as for his fiction. *The Ectoplasmic Man*, his first mystery novel, originally published in 1985, is set in London in 1910. Harry Houdini has escaped from a police cell, and even moved the occupants of the other cells around (he actually did accomplish this feat, I believe). When he is arrested for a robbery that appears to have been committed by someone able to walk through walls, it's clear to Sherlock Holmes that Houdini has been framed. The story of how Holmes, Watson and Houdini solve the mystery and save a very illustrious client is thrilling, ingenious and very funny. Dan Stashower went on to write four more detective novels featuring Houdini, all highly recommended.

In *The Scroll of the Dead* by **David Stuart Davies**, BSI, Sherlock Holmes begins by exposing a fraudulent medium, but soon finds himself pursuing a ruthless fanatic who will not stop at murder to obtain the scroll which is the key to immortality. A decadent dandy, a vicious sprig of the aristocracy and the hot-headed daughter of an archæologist lead Holmes and Watson to adventure in rural Norfolk and to mortal peril amid the lakes and mountains of Cumberland. I hailed the book on its first publication in 1998 as a rattling good yarn, and a re-reading confirms that description. The fourth novel is also DSD's work, but it's very different. *The Veiled Detective* (2004) requires us to accept that much of what we know from the Canon is wrong. For a start, Dr Watson is actually Dr Walker, and he was cashiered from his regiment rather than honourably invalided out. Walker's predicament leads plausibly to his recruitment by Professor Moriarty to infiltrate Sherlock Holmes's household, and the result, for the reader, is a remarkable tension between the familiar investigations and the hitherto unrevealed machinations of the arch-criminal through his reluctant underling. The novel gives us a uniquely intelligent, thought-provoking and fresh view of one of the great friendships in all literature, without diminishing the stature of either Holmes or Watson.

Avril Field-Taylor, whose first novel *Dearly Ransomed Soul* has been well received, has a crack at the perennial enigma of the politician, the lighthouse and the trained cormorant in *Murder at Oakwood Grange* (New Generation; www.newgenerationpublishing.info/home/buy-new-generation-publishing-books.html; £7.99 – also available from Amazon.co.uk). In the summer of 1889, the threat of death hangs over Laurence Applegarth, MP and his daughter Celia, as they're accused of murdering the vile Sir Walter Hardwick at his country house. But Sherlock Holmes, with the invaluable assistance of Dr Watson and the Baker Street irregulars, gradually uncovers a plot that threatens the very highest in the land. Only one man is capable of such villainy: ex-Professor Moriarty of mathematical fame, whose weapon, smuggled into the Royal household, is ingenious and deadly. Holmes and Watson need all their intelligence, courage and stamina to defeat him. In fairness I should point out that the book reads like a first draft, with a few disconcerting inconsistencies. We're told first of all that Mr Applegarth's constituency of Seale Green is in Devon, and then that it's near Winchester. Halfway through the story Holmes, in disguise, encounters Moriarty, yet towards the end he says that he has no idea what Moriarty looks like. Well, these matters are easily put right. Meanwhile, the period setting, the characters and the language all strike the authentic note. *Murder at Oakwood Grange* is a real page-turner.

New from Black Coat Press (Hollywood Comics.com, LLC, PO Box 17270, Encino, CA 91416, USA) is *Harry Dickson: The American Sherlock Holmes – The Heir of Dracula* adapted by **Jean-Marc & Randy Lofficier** (£12.99/$20.95). Harry Dickson's adventures began as unauthorised Sherlock Holmes pastiches published in Germany, but with the change of name became an immensely popular and long-running series in France, Belgium and Holland. The nearest British equivalent was probably Sexton Blake, but his chronicles were aimed at a juvenile readership. In these four tales Dickson and his sidekick Tom Wills do battle with a vampire, a woman who can turn men to stone, and the denizens of a fantastic subterranean temple, where hideous sacrifices take place – but all is not what it seems. Harry Dickson is no Houdini, but he always manages to provide a rational, though not always credible, explanation for the apparently supernatural horrors. The narrative pounds along at a cracking pace, the plots are ingenious, and the stories are very engaging. Jean-Marc Lofficier provides an excellent introductory account of the Harry Dickson phenomenon.

Michael Gilbert, who died in 2006, was one of the giants of crime and detective fiction. His story 'The Two Footmen' is one of the best in Greenberg & Waugh's 1987 collection *The New Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, and in 1980 he was a drily witty and erudite speaker at our Society's annual dinner. BBC Radio 7 is currently broadcasting a series of plays based on his tales of DI Patrick Petrella, and now Robert Hale (Clerkenwell House, Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0HT) has published a final collection of his stories, *The Murder of Diana Devon, and Other Mysteries*, edited by John Cooper (£18.99). There's no Petrella here, and no Holmes, but these sixteen pieces, written over a period of some forty years, demonstrate the lasting worth of intelligent, humane, civilised crime writing. The book is well worth seeking out.

Back in 1994 I greeted *A Sherlock Holmes Handbook* by **Christopher Redmond**: 'This really is something special. In 250 pages, without apparent strain, Chris Redmond covers the whole Holmes phenomenon with a light but authoritative touch. The Canon, the author, the background, the literary and social impact - it's all here.' Now, as Chris Redmond says, 'It's more than time for a new edition, catching up on new films and books (a few with a hint of the supernatural) and the advent of the Internet, which has spread Sherlock Holmes's fame and Sherlockian fun even farther worldwide. These years have brought three multi-volume editions of the Holmes stories, with hundreds of footnotes providing new insight and amusement. They have also seen Holmes appear repeatedly on the amateur and professional stages . . . and there have been changes to everything from copyright law and library collections to booksellers and audio recordings.' The new edition, called

simply *Sherlock Holmes Handbook* and published by Dundurn Press (3 Church Street, Suite 500, Toronto, ON, M5E 1M2, Canada) at £19.00 or Cdn $32.00, is the finest overview of the world of Holmes and the Holmesian that we're ever likely to see.

The Sherlock Holmes Handbook: The Methods and Mysteries of the World's Greatest Detective by **Ransom Riggs** (Quirk Books, 215 Church Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106, USA; $16.95) is a more elementary affair altogether – but a very clever and attractive one. Mr Riggs has compiled a remarkably sound basic guide to understanding why Holmes is a great detective and an immortal character, under such headings as 'How to Question a Suspect', 'How to Fake Your Own Death', and 'How to Stage a Dramatic Entrance'. This very nice 220-page hardback is embellished with excellent black and white illustrations by Eugene Smith.

From Japan comes *The Holmes Monowakari Jiten (The Encyclopaedia Sherlockiana)*, written and edited by **Saburoh Hiraga** and members of the Japan Sherlock Holmes Club (Mr Saburoh Hiraga, Chairman of the Kansai Branch of the JSHC, 3-6-24 Ueno-higashi, Toyonaka-shi, Osaka, 560-0013, Japan; JZB04100@nifty.ne.jp). Alas, my ignorance of the language doesn't allow me to comment with any authority on this attractive 250-page book, but Mr Showsaku Mashimo, who sent me a copy, says that the number of items – 101 – represents Holmes's address, 221(b) minus the 120 years since Watson's wedding to Mary Morstan. Mr Mashimo himself has contributed articles on the 2008 Holmes and Conan Doyle Exhibition in Maizuru, Scotland Yard, Richard Lancelyn Green, and Inspector G Lestrade.

Just received are *A Trick of the Light*, the third Inspector McLevy mystery by **David Ashton** (Birlinn Ltd, West Newington House, 10 Newington Road, Edinburgh EH9 1QS; £9.99), and *Sherlock Holmes's London* by **David Sinclair** (Robert Hale Ltd, Clerkenwell House, 45-47 Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0HT; £17.99). I'll review them in the next issue.

Forthcoming from Breese Books (Baker Street Studios Limited, Endeavour House, 170 Woodland Road, Sawston, Cambridgeshire CB22 3DX) are *The Case of the Missing Stradivarius* by **Emanuel E Garcia** and *In the Dead of Winter*, a new edition of the first Myrl Adler Norton mystery by **Abbey Penn Baker**.

Mike Ripley tells me that Ostara Publishing has issued a new edition of *The Case of the Philosopher's Ring* by **Randall Collins**, in which Sherlock Holmes is engaged by Bertrand Russell 'to investigate the theft of a uniquely precious treasure – the mind of Ludwig Wittgenstein' (ostara@ostarapublishing.co.uk; £10.99).

The classic biography *Doctor Joe Bell: Model for Sherlock Holmes* by **Ely Liebow** is about to be published in French by Editions Baker Street (2 Rue Christine, 75006 Paris 06, France; €21.00) as *L'homme Qui Était Sherlock Holmes: une biographie de Dr Joe Bell*, with an introduction by Thierry Saint-Joanis.

Nicholas Utechin (highfieldfarmhouse@yahoo.co.uk) may still have a few copies left of his 2008 Richard Lancelyn Green Lecture, *The Sometimes Elusive Quarry*. Few of us – perhaps none of us – could hope to achieve what Richard Lancelyn Green did as a collector, but Nick Utechin shows what intelligence and application can achieve on a more limited budget. You may never get to own a *Beeton's* or a first edition of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* in its dust-wrapper, but there are still prizes to be had by the dedicated collector.

The October issue of *The Sherlockian E-Times*, the catalogue-magazine of **Classic Specialties** (PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH, 45219, USA; sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com), which you'll find at www.sherlock-holmes.com/e_times09-10.htm, offers a delightful 2010 calendar. It's illustrated with photographs by Richard Ray Green Jr of his son Joshua and friends recreating scenes from the Canon. (We printed some of Richard's charming photos recently in *The Sherlock Holmes Journal*.)

You've been gripped by **Roger Llewellyn's** performances as the great detective in the two one-man plays written for him by David Stuart Davies. Now, thanks to Big Finish (PO Box 3787, Maidenhead, Berkshire, SL6 3TF), you can own those performances. *Sherlock Holmes – The Last Act!* is released this month at £14.99 as a double-CD set, with a superb cover design. The play itself – exciting, funny, tragic, poignant – works beautifully as an audio production, thanks to superlative writing and acting. Just to listen to Roger Llewellyn speak is a pleasure, and the recording gives him the chance to create a dozen personalities through his voice alone, though, as he says in the interview that follows the play, it's not Roger Llewellyn playing these other characters, but Sherlock Holmes, recreating them as he reminisces. Now I'm looking forward to *Sherlock Holmes – The Death and Life*, released in December!

Thanks to **Nicholas Briggs**, who directed the two plays for Big Finish (and who plays the detective himself in the forthcoming *Holmes and the Ripper* by Brian Clemens), I can offer two copies of *Sherlock Holmes – The Last Act!* as prizes in a little competition. Just tell me which part Roger Llewellyn played in *Sherlock Holmes: The Musical*, when Ron Moody was Holmes. Send answers to me by 1 December, and the two correct answers drawn from the hat will win the CDs.

The long-awaited series *John Sergeant on the Tourist Trail* is currently being broadcast on ITV at 8.00pm on Tuesdays. The third programme, to be shown on 24 November, will feature Marcus Geisser, Thierry Saint-Joanis and other Holmesian visitors to Dartmoor, on the trail of the Hound of the Baskervilles.

The ramifications of Guy Ritchie's forthcoming film *Sherlock Holmes* include what looks like an intriguing on-line game, or what the publicity people call an on-line experience: **221B** (not to be confused with the board game of the same name). You'll find it at www.221b.sh/.

Paul Conway (pnc.2@virgin.net) offers a single page from *The Sphere*, December 1901, with a fine illustration of the confrontation of Holmes and Moriarty in William Gillette's play, then running at the Lyceum. He asks £20.00, which includes postage in a strong cardboard tube.

The fight for **Undershaw** is not over. Take a look at Lynn Gale's blog at http://Undershawhelp.blogspot.com.

John Addy passes on this charming oddity: 'To celebrate the fact that Conan Doyle was a founder member of the Portsmouth Football Association Club in 1884, and, apparently, was the team's goalkeeper for a while, CONAN DOYLE no 1 football shirts at currently on sale at http://www.philosophyfootball.com/view_item.php?pid=557.'

I was sorry to learn of the death on 26 August of **Robert Pepperday**, not long past his sixty-fifth birthday. Robert was one of the most active and reliable contributors to the Priory Scholars of Leicester, as writer, cartoonist, and, I think, speaker.

Edward Woodward, who died yesterday aged seventy-nine, will probably be remembered as the British Intelligence hitman in the TV series *Callan* or as a similar character in a later American series, *The Equalizer*. His best rôle may have been in the film *Breaker Morant*, though one could argue for his appearances in *The Wicker Man* and *A Christmas Carol*. His Dr Watson in John Kane's play *Murder, Dear Watson* in 1983 was well received, but his Sherlock Holmes in the dire 1990 TV movie *Hands of a Murderer* was not in the same league.

Periodicals received. ***Canadian Holmes***, Michaelmas (Autumn) 2009 (**The Bootmakers of Toronto**, Chris Redmond, 523 Westfield Drive, Waterloo, ON, Canada N2T 2E1). ***Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections***, September 2009 (Suite 111, Elmer L Andersen Library, University of Minnesota, 222 21st Avenue S, Minneapolis, MN 55455, USA). ***The Illustrious Clients News***, October 2009 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T Doyle, 9 Calumet Court, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). ***Ineffable Twaddle***, November 2009 (**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***, September 1909 *[*sic*]* (**La Société Sherlock Holmes de France**, Thierry Saint-Joanis, 15 rue Grande, 03370 Saint-Sauvier, France). ***Mayday Mayday***, November 2009 (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardcarn Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). ***The Petrel Flyer***, Autumn 2009 and Nov/Dec 2009 (**The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia**, Len Haffenden, 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7P 3C6). ***The School Report***, Winter 2009 (**The Priory Scholars**, Horace L Coates, 21 Butcombe Road, Leicester LE4 0FY). ***The Soft-Nosed Bullet-in & Striking (T)Rifles***, Sommer 2009 (**Von Herder Airguns Ltd**, Jan Kipping, Schürbeker Str. 2, 22087 Hamburg, Germany).

And ***Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press***, October 2009 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; blau7103@comcast.net).

Roger Johnson

The DISTRICT MESSENGER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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Sherlock Holmes's London by **David Sinclair** (Robert Hale Ltd, Clerkenwell House, 45-47 Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0HT; £17.99) is a handsomely illustrated addition to the select library of topographical studies of the Canon. Mr Sinclair comes to the topic without the benefit – or possibly encumbrance – of long association with Holmesian devotees and their writings, but he knows his London and his Sherlock Holmes. He's delved into the street directories of the period and studied the large-scale maps. He's tramped the streets of London, comparing and contrasting. The result is a fresh and attractive look at the city in which Holmes lived and worked. He traces the journey that Holmes, Watson and Miss Morstan took on a foggy evening from the Lyceum Theatre to Norwood, pointing out sites of interest and noting Holmes's, or Watson's, lapses. (He can't place Thaddeus Sholto's house or Pondicherry Lodge precisely, but then it took Bernard Davies some forty years to identify them.) From Pondicherry Lodge, he follows Holmes, Watson and Toby on the trail of the wooden-legged man. Devoting the first chapter to this longest detailed trek through London sets the scene very nicely. The identification of the site of 221B at the present 25 Baker Street is well-reasoned, but the charm of this particular exercise, as of much of the book, is in the incidental detail. Is it coincidence that in 1877, when Holmes was lodging in Montague Street, a Dr John Watson had rooms nearby in what is now Southampton Place? Subsequent sections cover pretty much all the metropolitan locations, mostly within a mile or so of Baker Street but some as far out as Harrow, Croydon and Norbury. A rare lapse is the claim that the Museum Tavern must be the Alpha Inn because it bears the double letter A above its first floor windows: I agree with the identification, but the device is in fact the letter M. The final chapter, 'Following the Trails', directs the reader to some of the surviving locations from the Canon. *Sherlock Holmes's London* is an attractive, intelligent and entertaining book.

In *The Chicago Silver Blaze 1960-2009* **Susan Z Diamond** relates something of the joys and frustrations of organising the world's oldest annual 'Silver Blaze' still running. In 1952 Tom Stix Sr had instituted what was then called the Silver Blaze Purse at Jamaica racecourse in New York. Six years later, after a joint meeting of the newly revived Hounds of the Baskerville (sic) and Hugo's Companions, Bob Hahn arranged the first Chicago Silver Blaze at Arlington Park. Since 1992 the race has been an essential part of the annual Watsonian Weekend; this handsome booklet is published by the Watsonians. The fiftieth race held on 31 October at Hawthorne racecourse, was also the BSI's Triennial Silver Blaze. The history, the companion collection of congratulatory messages, and a commemorative pin cost $18.00 postpaid. Checks should be payable to The Watsonians and sent to Susan Diamond at 16W603 3rd Avenue, Bensenville, IL 60106-2327, USA. Peter Blau notes: 'The race also was the occasion for the publication of *Two Celebrations: The Fiftieth Annual Running of the Chicago Silver Blaze and the Triennial Silver Blaze of the Baker Street Irregulars* edited by **Candace Lewis**. The 56-page book includes 14 black-and-white and color photographs and is available for $12.95 (plus shipping) from www.bakerstreetjournal.com.'

*[****The Pleasant Places of Florida*** *will sponsor the twentieth Florida Wessex Cup Weekend at Tampa Bay Downs racetrack on 12-14 February. Our Society has not yet sponsored a race – but the idea is under consideration.*]*

Inspector James McLevy was a celebrated character in mid-Victorian Edinburgh. He entered the city's police force in 1830, becoming a detective three years later. It was the start of a thirty-year career that he was to draw on for a series of exciting and illuminating memoirs. (*McLevy, the Edinburgh Detective* is currently in print from Birlinn Ltd, West Newington House, 10 Newington Road, Edinburgh EH9 1QS.) Since 1999 BBC Radio 4 has broadcast six series of plays by **David Ashton** in which Brian Cox plays Inspector McLevy, and Mr Ashton has also written three novels, the latest being *A Trick of the Light* (Birlinn, £9.99). Arthur Conan Doyle, Edinburgh-born in 1859, was probably familiar with the exploits of the real McLevy. In *A Trick of the Light* he meets and even assists the inspector. How so? Well, David Ashton's McLevy isn't quite the McLevy of history. Mr Ashton has moved him forward three decades, and made him a native Scot instead of an Irish immigrant. The real and the fictional detectives are alike, though, in being sardonic, dogged and intelligent. Echoes of a violent death in 1864 awake with the arrival of the beautiful American spiritualist medium Sophia Adler, but McLevy never has the chance to concentrate on just one case. The recently widowed Muriel Grierson's house is burgled, and her friend Mrs Doyle's son is keen to assist in the investigation. And, as always, there's trouble with Jean Brash, proprietress of the Just Land, a high class 'bawdy hoose'. David Ashton, like Robert Louis Stevenson or Ian Rankin, is inspired by the beauty-and-beast nature of Edinburgh. His interpretation of James McLevy is worthy of the original man.

The Shadow of Evil, the third of the Baker Street Mysteries by **Tim Pigott-Smith**, was published in October by Hodder Children's Books (338 Euston Road, London NW1 3BH) at £5.99. The people at Hodder seem uninterested in promoting Mr Pigott-Smith's books, and they should be ashamed of themselves. These tales of Sam Wiggins and the Baker Street Irregulars are first-rate reading for all ages.

The indefatigable **Brian Pugh** and **Paul Spiring** have collaborated with Devon historian **Sadru Bhanji** on *Arthur Conan Doyle, Sherlock Holmes and Devon: A Complete Tour Guide and Companion*, due on 15 June by MX Publishing (10 Kingfisher Close, Stanstead Abbotts, Herts. SG12 8LQ) at £9.99. On 16 February MX will publish a new edition of *Rugby Football* by **Bertram Fletcher Robinson**, edited by Paul Spiring and retitled *Rugby Football During the Nineteenth Century* (£14.99). You can pre-order both books from www.amazon.co.uk.

Recently titles from Dover Publications (31 East 2nd Street, Mineola, NY 11501-3582) include *Sherlock Holmes Paper Dolls* by **Tom Tierney** ($9.99) and *Sherlock Holmes Activity Book* by **David Schimmel** ($4.99). The Dover Bookshop (18 Earlham Street, London WC2H 9LG) has a website at www.doverbooks.co.uk/.

Amanda Field reports that Middlesex University Press will close at the end of the year. The good news is that her book *England's Secret Weapon: The Wartime Films of Sherlock Holmes* (£11.99) can still be ordered through bookshops or from www.amazon.co.uk. Signed copies are available from the author at amandafield@ntlworld.com.

M C Black notes that Bibliophile Ltd (Unit 5 Datapoint, South Crescent, London E16 4TL; www.bibliophilebooks.com) currently offers *The Man Who Created Sherlock Holmes: the Life and Times of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle* by **Andrew Lycett** at £8.00, and *Conan Doyle: Detective* by **Peter Costello** at £4.50. Please quote reference 1045 if you order.

The December issue of *The Sherlockian E-Times*, the catalogue-magazine of **Classic Specialties** (PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH, 45219, USA; sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com), which you'll find at www.sherlock-holmes.com/e_times09-12.htm, offers *For the Record: My Name Is Hammer*, the latest book from **David Hammer**, BSI, which 'contains dozens of brief, interesting, amusing and true-life anecdotes arising from his life as a practicing attorney in Dubuque' ($20.00).

At http://vook.com you'll find *The Sherlock Holmes Experience*, 'a revolutionary new way to read about the exploits of Arthur Conan Doyle's legendary creation: Sherlock Holmes. The vook features two classic stories by Doyle – *The Man with the Twisted Lip* and *The Adventure of the Speckled Band* – and enhances them with videos that

delve into the history and legend surrounding the character of Holmes.' **Catherine Cooke** and **Nicholas Utechin** provide the Holmesian expertise, and the whole thing is very nicely done. You can buy the 'vook' as an iPhone application or buy access to it online. It's cheap either way at $2.99.

This month Big Finish (PO Box 3787, Maidenhead, Berkshire, SL6 3TF) release *Sherlock Holmes – The Death and Life*, **Roger Llewellyn's** second audio recording of a play by David Stuart Davies. Thanks to **Nicholas Briggs**, who directed the two plays for Big Finish (and who plays the detective himself in the forthcoming *Holmes and the Ripper* by Brian Clemens), I can offer two copies as prizes. Just tell me in which story Dr Watson's wife apparently refers to him as 'James'. Send answers to me by 14 January, and the two correct answers drawn from the hat will win the CDs. The winners of the *Sherlock Holmes – The Last Act!* CDs were Philip J Attwell and Michael Cox. Congratulations!

Walter Campbell tells us that he's producing, in instalments, an audio play entitled *The Man Who Would Be Sherlock Holmes*. You'll find it at http://itunes.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewPodcast?id=343705134, where it's accessible free of charge.

Two more plays recorded by **The Old Court Radio Theatre Company** can now be heard or downloaded free on the Society's website at www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk. This time M J Elliott's splendid scripts venture into apocryphal territory in 'The Man with the Watches' and 'The Lost Special'. The two plays are available from me on CD for £5.00, €9.00 or $12.00, postpaid (sterling cheques payable to me, US dollar checks to Jean Upton; Euros in cash, please).

On the Guardian website at www.guardian.co.uk/sherlock-holmes-the-movie/the-real-sherlock-holmes you can download, also free, a four-part *Sherlock Holmes Audiowalk*, taking in the Whitehall-Northumberland Avenue area and ending appropriately at the Sherlock Holmes pub.

Two years ago **Peter Egan** and **Philip Franks** toured in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. In February they'll start touring again, this time with *The Secret of Sherlock Holmes*, the play that **Jeremy Paul** wrote for Jeremy Brett and Edward Hardwicke. The venues are: 8–20 February: **Mercury Theatre**, Colchester (01206 573948); 22-27 February: **Theatre Royal**, Windsor (01753 853888); 1-6 March: **Richmond Theatre**, Richmond (0844 871 7651); 8-13 March: **Theatre Royal**, Bath (01225 448844); 15-20 March: **Yvonne Arnaud Theatre**, Guildford (01483 440000); 22-27 March: **Theatre Royal**, York (01904 623568); 29 March – 3 April: **Kings Theatre**, Edinburgh (0131 529 6000); 5-10 April: **Malvern Theatres**, Malvern (01684 892277); 12-17 April: **Palace Theatre**, Westcliff on Sea (01702 351135); 19-24 April: **Arts Theatre**, Cambridge (01223 503333).

The five surviving episodes from the 1968 BBC series with **Peter Cushing** and **Nigel Stock** as Holmes and Watson have at last been released in America, by A&E Home Video (http://store.aetv.com/) at $29.95. It was an uneven series, but *The Hound of the Baskervilles* in particular is superb, and North American viewers get a bonus documentary, *The Great Detective*, denied to the British.

John Addy reminds me that Billy Wilder and I A L Diamond's script for *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* is accessible free of charge at www.imsdb.com/scripts/Private-Life-of-Sherlock-Holmes,-The.html.

Our member **Richard Burnip** leads the regular 'Footsteps of Sherlock Holmes' walk for the excellent London Walks, which starts every Friday except Christmas Day from Embankment Underground station at 2.00pm. On Sunday 10 January he'll conduct two special walks: 'What Ho, Jeeves! The London of P G Wodehouse' (Marble Arch Underground, exit 2, 10.45am) and 'The Arthur Conan Doyle Walk: The Adventures of Sherlock's Creator' (Piccadilly Circus, by the Eros statue, 2.30pm). If you take along a copy of the DM you'll be entitled to the student rate of £5.00 for Richard's walks. More information is on the website at www.walks.com, or e-mail richardburnip@yahoo.co.uk.

Thanks to the publicity generated by and for Guy Ritchie's film *Sherlock Holmes*, the great detective has returned to **Madame Tussauds** after an absence of some fifty years. The likeness is, naturally, of Robert Downey Jr. The wax museum's original London home was in Baker Street, where it was visited by the young Arthur Conan Doyle (in those days they knew how to spell 'Tussaud's' correctly). The present premises in Marylebone Road opened in 1894.

Aleš Kolodrubec reports that **Prague Municipal Library** has launched at http://www.sherlockholmes.cz/index2.php?page=aktuality its *Sherlock Holmes On-line* project. Besides most of the Canon, there's an obituary of Conan Doyle written by Karel Čapek, a biography of Conan Doyle, Sherlock Holmes comics for children written by Rudolf Cechura – and more to come. It's all in Czech, of course.

John Daw has contacted us: 'The **Sporebook Project** is an organisation for the promotion of classical literature in electronic form. A forum for Sir Arthur Conan Doyle/Sherlock Holmes is now available at www.sporebook.org/forums. There is no charge for using this forum.'

Visitors to the late lamented Sherlock Holmes Memorabilia Company will probably have seen artwork by our member **Christopher Jones**. He now has his own website at www.sherlockholmespage.co.uk/ and hopes to offer prints for sale in the New Year.

Timothy Bateson, who died on 16 September aged eighty-three, was a versatile, reliable and prolific character actor, whose professional career began in 1947, as Lord Frederick Verisopht in Cavalcanti's film *Nicholas Nickleby*. Fifty years later he played White Mason in Bert Coules' radio play *The Valley of Fear*.

In 1980 **Denys Hawthorne** played Holmes in Michael Hardwick's *The Man Who Was Sherlock Holmes*, broadcast on BBC Radio 4 to mark the fiftieth anniversary of Conan Doyle's death. In 1984 he was James Barclay in the Granada TV production of *The Crooked Man*, and in 1993 he returned to Radio 4 as Hilton Soames in his own dramatisation of *The Three Students*. He died on 16 October aged seventy-seven.

In the 1962 film *The Longest Day*, **Richard Todd**, who had served in the Parachute Regiment and helped secure Pegasus Bridge, had the curious experience of playing his own commanding officer. He'll be best remembered for playing another war hero, Wing Commander Guy Gibson, in *The Dam Busters*. In 1992 he was Field Marshal Lord Roberts in the television film *Sherlock Holmes: Incident at Victoria Falls*. He died on 3 December, at the age of ninety.

The Cimbrian Friends of Baker Street will celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of their society on 17 July 2010. *Til lykke!*

E J Wagner will chair *The Sherlock Holmes Effect: How the Arthur Conan Doyle Classics Influence Contemporary Mysteries*, organised by the New York Chapter of the Mystery Writers of America at Mid-Manhattan Library on the evening of 26 January. The panellists include **Lyndsay Faye** and **Andrew Peck**. Phone 212 340 0837 for details.

Periodicals received. ***The Baker Street Journal***, Autumn 2009 (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). ***Communication***, no. 295 (**The Pleasant Places of Florida**, Wanda & Jeff Dow, 1737 Santa Anna Drive, Dunedin, FL 34698, USA). ***The Illustrious Clients News***, November 2009 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T Doyle, 9 Calumet Court, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). ***Ineffable Twaddle***, December 2009 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). ***The Magic Door***, Fall 2009 (**The Friends of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection**, Doug Wrigglesworth, 16 Sunset Street, Holland Landing, Ontario, Canada L9N 1H4). ***Mayday Mayday***, December 2009, *C-Extra* no. 1, and *The Log of the SS May Day* vol. 1 no. 3 (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardcarn Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). ***The Moor: Magasin för Sherlockianer***, November 2009 (**The Baskerville Hall Club of Sweden**, Anders Wiggström, Byggmästarvägen 29, 168 32 Bromma, Sweden). ***The Torr***, Autumn 2009 (**The Poor Folk Upon The Moors**, Reggie Musgrave, Drummond Cottage, Old Tavern Yard, Westbourne, Chichester, West Sussex PO10 8TA). ***The Vermissa Herald*** vol. 8 no. 1 **(The Scowrers and Molly Maguires of San Francisco**, Carol Russell, 314 Laurel Court, Cloverdale, CA 95425, USA).

And ***Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press***, November 2009 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; blau7103@comcast.net).

The Compliments of the Season

Roger Johnson