The DISTRICT MESSENGER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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Welcome to the 300th issue! Thanks to **Nicholas Briggs** and his colleagues at Big Finish (PO Box 3787, Maidenhead, Berkshire, SL6 3TF; http://www.bigfinish.com/ranges/sherlock-holmes) we can mark this anniversary with yet another prize competition. Two of you can win a copy of the third Big Finish Sherlock Holmes CD set, *Holmes and the Ripper* by Brian Clemens, with Mr Briggs himself as the great detective. (He had a very successful run in the same play a year ago at the Theatre Royal, Nottingham.) Just name two films in which Sherlock Holmes investigates the Ripper murders. Send answers to me by 1 March, and the two correct answers drawn from the hat will win the CDs. *Holmes and the Ripper* will be released in March, at £14.99.

The *Sherlock Holmes – The Death and Life* CDs were won by MC Black and Geoff Jeffery, who will receive them direct from Big Finish.

The first award presented at the **Baker Street Irregulars**' Annual Dinner on 15 January was a unique crystal bowl, bearing the images of Queen Victoria and Sherlock Holmes and a personal dedication to the recipient, our own ex-President and Honorary Member **Freda Howlett**, attending the BSI dinner for the first time. Wiggins awarded nine investitures: **Tom Cynkin** ('Lord Bellinger'), **Pj Doyle** ('Ettie Shafter'), **Sir Christopher Frayling** ('Vernet'), **Patricia Guy** ('Imperial Tokay'), **Laurie R King** ('The Red Circle'), **Sarah Montague** ('Violet Smith'), **Daniel Polvere** ('Holloway & Steele'), **Sally Sugarman** ('The Three Gables') and **Maria Carmen Veiga Hayzen** ('Isadora Klein'). There were no fewer than three Two-Shilling Awards: to **John Bergquist**, **Bob Coghill** and **Steven Doyle**. Editors' medals went to **Steven Rothman**, **Leslie Klinger**, **John Bergquist**, **Susan Dahlinger**, **Glen Miranker**, **Gianluca Salvatore** and (posthumously) **H Paul Jeffers**.

In my 1950s childhood, my first Holmes and Watson were **Carleton Hobbs and Norman Shelley** on BBC radio, a partnership that lasted for seventeen years, playing the detective and the doctor in all but four of the sixty stories – some of them two or three times. Hobbs's voice immediately indicates wisdom and an incisive mind; equally, Shelley's rich fruity tones tell of an educated, intelligent and utterly reliable friend. Today, perhaps, they appear just a touch staid, but vocally they set the standard by which I judge others. Now, sounding as fresh as when they were first broadcast, we have *The Carleton Hobbs Sherlock Holmes Collection*, a six-CD boxed set from BBC Audiobooks (St James House, The Square, Lower Bristol Road, Bath BA2 3BH; £30.00 – currently offered by www.bbcshop.com/Audio/icat/audio at just £18.00). Nicholas Utechin introduces each play – twelve of them, expertly scripted by Michael Hardwick (apart from *Black Peter* by Alan Wilson). These are not the introductions you may have heard on BBC Radio 7, by the way. If this superb set sells as well as it deserves to, I trust that more of Hobbs and Shelley will be released on CD!

There must be more biographical studies of Arthur Conan Doyle than of any other popular writer of his time – and by 'popular' I mean that people read his work because they want to, not because they have to. Besides fifteen or more biographies there are books devoted to his spiritualist mission, to his campaigns against injustice, and to specific periods of his life. His upbringing in Edinburgh, his years in Southsea, his connection with Devon have all merited volumes of more or less depth. Now, from the industrious **Alistair Duncan**, comes *The Norwood Author: Arthur Conan Doyle & the Norwood Years (1891-1894)* (MX Publishing, 335 Princess Park Manor, Royal Drive, London N11 3GX; £9.99/$16.95/€14.99). Conan Doyle's time in South Norwood has been largely neglected by the major biographers, even though it was then that he became truly famous, thanks to *The Strand Magazine* and *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. He travelled extensively during those three years, but, as Mr Duncan has discovered, he did throw himself into local affairs as well, quickly becoming active in the Upper Norwood Literary & Scientific Society and Norwood Cricket Club. He also, no less significantly, joined the Society for Psychical Research. Alistair Duncan is one of a distinguished little group whose work takes us just a little closer towards a complete portrait of the man who created Sherlock Holmes. He writes well, too. I'm delighted to recommend his book.

MX Publishing has two special offers for members of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London. You can buy all three of Alistair Duncan's books (*Eliminate the Impossible*, *Close to Holmes* and *The Norwood Author*) at a 10% discount on the publisher's price of £29.97 by going through the Society's website. And to celebrate the launch of *Rugby Football in the Nineteenth Century* by Bertram Fletcher Robinson (£14.99) on 16 February, the first fifty members who pre-order through the website will also receive a limited edition hardback of *Bertram Fletcher Robinson* signed by the author Paul R Spiring worth £18.99. Go to www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk and click on *Sherlock Holmes Society January Offer* and *Sherlock Holmes Society Movie Offer*.

Sherlock Holmes; The Painful Predicament of Alice Faulkner, written and illustrated by **Bret M Herholz** (Alterna Comics, www.alternacomics.com; $11.99) is the best Holmesian graphic novel I've come across in a long time. Mr Herholz has very cleverly adapted William Gillette's famous play *Sherlock Holmes*, giving Mycroft Holmes a cameo, and, I think, introducing some dialogue from the 1939 film *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. The lettering within the speech balloons could have been better placed, and the dialogue should have been more thoroughly proof-read ('conscious' appears more than once in place of 'conscience'), but these are minor matters. What makes the book outstanding is the quality of the illustrations. The black and white line drawings, with lots of hatching and grey wash, are strikingly reminiscent of Edward Gorey's work. The thin figures with their suspicious sidelong glances add to the indefinable atmosphere of foreboding. At the end, I confess, I find myself wondering whether this Holmes and this Alice Faulkner, both disturbed and damaged creatures, could truly be happy together – and that, to me, indicates an unusual depth in a graphic novel. I'll just add that I now own an original drawing of Holmes and Alice confronted by Professor Moriarty, which I was very happy to purchase from Bret Herholz.

The Baker Street Journal Christmas Annual 2009 is called '*Did You Notice Nothing Curious About That Advertisement?*' by **Peggy Perdue** (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). Ms Perdue, curator of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection at Toronto Public Library, is in an ideal position to survey the use of Holmes and Watson in advertising, which goes back at least to 1894 and gives every sign of continuing *ad infinitum*. Remembering the interpretation of Holmes in Guy Ritchie's film, I was amused by Conan Doyle's comment on an early proposal: 'The picture would never do. Holmes must preserve his dignity. He looks about five feet high, badly dressed, and with no brains or character, an actor out of a job.' Peggy Perdue's monograph is quite fascinating.

From that lively and intelligent group **The Sound of the Baskervilles** comes *Beaten's Christmas Annual 2009* (Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 98332-8981, USA; $18.00 postpaid). As always, its 48 pages (cerlox-bound, which always sounds somehow appropriate) contain scholarship and entertainment in satisfying proportions, with articles on Moriarty's mathematical skill, Holmes's firearms, beekeeping and Victorian prisons, a decent pastiche concerning a missing diplomat, quizzes, puzzles and more. 'An Estate

Bequest Sheds New Light on an Old Friend' examines the background of the late Sam Fry's fascinating paper about Holmes's influence on twentieth century Arctic exploration. And the cover reproduces a beautiful oil painting by Gayle Holmes (yes, Holmes): it depicts iconic objects – violin, pipe, magnifying glass et al. and is called *Sherlock's*.

Bjarne Nielsen's Sherlock Holmes Museet (Egebjergvej 206, 4500 Nykøbing Sjælland, Denmark; sherlock@sherlockiana.dk) has published *A Study in Green*, a 36-page chapbook by **Michael Skov Lambek**. Inspired by a remark made by the late Richard Lancelyn Green, Mr Lambek draws a convincing parallel between Sherlock Holmes and Robin Hood as heroes in the archetypal mould. The booklet is in English, and costs 60 Kroner.

At 7.00pm on 5 February, at le Musée d'Histoire de la Médecine, at 12 rue de l'École de Médecine in Paris, Editions Baker Street (2 Rue Christine, 75006 Paris 06, France) will launch *L'homme Qui Ètait Sherlock Holmes: une biographie de Dr Joe Bell*, a French translation of the classic biography *Doctor Joe Bell: Model for Sherlock Holmes* by **Ely Liebow**. For details, contact@bakerstreet-editions.com.

On 15 February, Wordsworth Editions (8b East Street, Ware, Herts. SG12 9HJ) publish *Sherlock Holmes: The Shadow of the Rat & The Tangled Skein*, two very good novels by **David Stuart Davies** in one paperback volume at £2.99.

I hope shortly to review *Sherlock Holmes, Conan Doyle and The Bookman*, edited and annotated by **S E Dahlinger** and **Leslie Klinger** (Gasogene Books, Wessex Press, P.O. Box 68308, Indianapolis, IN 46268, USA; $29.95) – all the Holmesian and Doylean material which appeared in *The Bookman* from 1895 to 1933.

Michael Sims invites suggestions for stories, preferably unfamiliar, to be included in a forthcoming anthology he's preparing for Bloomsbury – *The London Train: A Connoisseur's Collection of Victorian Detective Stories*. Contact him at letters@michaelsimsbooks.com.

Following the success of *Gaslight Grimoire* and *Gaslight Grotesque*, **J R Campbell** and **Charles Prepolec** are preparing a third anthology of 'uncanny stories of Sherlock Holmes', called *Gaslight Arcanum*, and they invite submissions, to be sent to charles@bakerstreetdozen.com. The closing date is 1 June.

The February 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_times10-2.htm, is a bit different from the previous ones, being largely devoted to comments made by subscribers about Guy Ritchie's film *Sherlock Holmes*.

Andrew Lycett, author of *Conan Doyle: The Man Who Created Sherlock Holmes*, will give the Lunchtime Lecture at the National Army Museum at 12.30pm on 22 April. The subject is 'Conan Doyle'. Admission is free. The Museum is in Royal Hospital Road, Chelsea. www.national-army-museum.ac.uk. (Thanks to Michael Harper.)

At the **Tivoli Theatre, Wimborne** (phone 01202 885566) on 11, 12 and 13 February, Wimborne Drama will present *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, dramatised by Clive Francis. Full details are online at http://www.wimbornedrama.co.uk/.

Arthur & George, a new play by David Edgar, from Julian Barnes' novel, will be produced at **Birmingham Repertory Theatre** (0121 236 4455, tickets@birmingham-rep.co.uk) from 19 March to 10 April.

Hans Zimmer's splendid score for Guy Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes* is available on CD (Sony Music, 9 Derry Street, London, W8 5HY). *[*Mr Zimmer isn't the first to use a banjo as a lead instrument for a Holmes film. That was John Scott, in his score for **A Study in Terror** in 1965.*]*

Robert Downey Jr won a Golden Globe Award for his portrayal of Sherlock Holmes – only the second actor to receive a major award for playing Holmes on film, the first being Christopher Plummer, who won a Genie Award for *Murder by Decree* in 1980. *Sherlock Holmes* has been Oscar-nominated for best art direction and best original score.

Nicolette Jones sends news of this year's *Sunday Times Oxford Literary Festival*. At 2.00pm on Sunday 21 March in Christ Church, Oxford, **Tim Pigott-Smith**, author of the Baker Street Mysteries, and **Andrew Lane**, author of the forthcoming 'Young Sherlock Holmes' novels, will discuss the detective's enduring appeal. Find details and book tickets at www.oxfordliteraryfestival.com.

The complete Japanese animated series *Sherlock Hound* is currently available from http://hmv.com at £17.99. Holmes, Watson and just about everyone else are cartoon dogs in stories that are occasionally recognisable as having a basis in the Canon. It sounds preposterous but is often very imaginative and charming.

Supermonko has released *Sherlock Holmes Quiz* app, which is now on the App Store at http://get.supermonko.com/sherlockholmes. It's 'a quiz of your detective knowledge' with 'four challenging levels'. You can also get to the app at http://apps.supermonko.com/sherlock-holmes-iphone-app/.

John Daw reports that **The Sporebook Project** (an organisation for the promotion of classical literature in electronic form, where a forum for Sir Arthur Conan Doyle/Sherlock Holmes is now available) is looking for an Honorary Editor to assist with the creation of a new Sporebook based on one of the stories from the Canon. Contact johnd@sporebook.org if you're interested. The Doyle/Holmes forum is at www.sporebook.org/forums. There is no charge for using this forum.

It's become a tradition in our Society to follow the serious business of the AGM with some light-hearted game-playing. At this year's meeting on Thursday 13 May the plan is to stage our own version of the BBC2 quiz *Eggheads*. (You may have seen the programme on 13 January, when our team went down fighting bravely.) The programme's rules will be strictly observed, except that there'll be only four Eggheads (Catherine Cooke, Roger Johnson, Guy Marriott and Heather Owen). The fifth, Nick Utechin, will be the questionmaster – and he will be strictly impartial. We need two teams of four members to challenge the Society's Eggheads. If you fancy your chances, please contact Nick at highfieldfarmhouse@yahoo.co.uk. Remember, there's no charge to attend the AGM unless you choose to dine.

Volunteers are sorting out the Society's quite extensive archives. If you have any objects or documents relating to the Society that you think should be (a) stored in proper conditions and (b) accessible to students and researchers, please contact me in the first instance.

Donal Donnelly, who died on 4 January aged seventy-eight, was probably best known for his performances in classic Irish theatre, but he had considerable success in other sorts of drama. In 1987 he played Dr Watson to Frank Langella's Holmes in a Broadway production of *Sherlock's Last Case* by Charles Marowitz.

Patrick Stewart, whose mighty career has included seven years as Captain Picard in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, was knighted in the New Year Honours. Two of the most interesting *Star Trek* episodes involved Picard in a holodeck simulacrum of Sherlock Holmes's world, with the android Data as Holmes.

Periodicals received. ***The Camden House Journal***, November 2009. December 2009, January 2010 & February 2010 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, Debbie Tinsley, PO Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). ***The Illustrious Clients News***, December 2009 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T Doyle, 9 Calumet Court, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). ***Ineffable Twaddle***, January 2010 & February 2010 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). ***Mayday Mayday***, January 2010 and ***C-Extra*** no. 2 (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardcarn Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). ***Practice Notes,*** December 2009 (**The Friends of Dr Watson**, Nino Cirone, Highcroft Cottage, 14 Totteridge Common, London N20 8NL). ***Studies of the Nippon Sherlock Holmes Club***, 1 November 2009 (**The Sherlock Holmes Research Committee**, Mr Saburoh Hiraga, 3-6-24 Uenohigashi, Toyonaka City, Osaka 560-0013, Japan). ***The Scion***, Winter 2009/2010 (**The Musgraves**, Anne Jordan, Hallas Lodge, Greenside Lane, Cullingworth, Bradford BD13 5AP). ***The Serpentine Muse***, Winter 2009 (**The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes**, Evelyn Herzog, 301 Warren Ave, #203, Baltimore, MD 21203, USA). ***Sherlockiana***, Nr 4 2009 (**Sherlock Holmes Klubben i Danmark**, Bjarne Rother Jensen, Højbovangen 24, 9200 Aalborg SV, Denmark).

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

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We may deal in nostalgia, but we are forward-looking! Thanks to Carrie Chandler and Jonny Hough, there's now a **Sherlock Holmes Society of London Facebook Group**. To join this global virtual community, go to http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=300160368842.

We're still recruiting for the two teams of four to challenge the Society's Eggheads *[*or Eggspoons – 'What ineffable twaddle!'*]* at the AGM on Thursday 13 May. If you fancy your chances, contact **Nick Utechin** at highfieldfarmhouse@yahoo.co.uk, and remember: you'll be up against a team that *lost* to the BBC's Eggheads!

The Big Finish audio production of *Sherlock Holmes – The Death and Life*, written by **David Stuart Davies** and performed by **Roger Llewellyn**, is every bit as good as its predecessor, *Sherlock Holmes – The Last Act!* (Big Finish, PO Box 3787, Maidenhead, Berkshire, SL6 3TF; www.bigfinish.com/ranges/sherlock-holmes). With the subtlest of adjustments, author, actor and producer ensure that the drama is as effective in sound alone as in the theatre. This second play is less overtly realistic and more humorous than the first, but no less sharp. Conan Doyle, as we all know, created Professor Moriarty specifically to rid himself of Sherlock Holmes. But what if Moriarty had a mind of his own and refused to follow the author's intentions? What if he made Holmes aware of their situation…? Conan Doyle's experience with spiritualist mediums hasn't prepared him for this! The production is a tour de force for all concerned. Full details of the CDs are on the Sherlock Holmes site at http://holmesaudios.com/.

The third Holmes recording from Big Finish is due this month. *Holmes and the Ripper* by **Brian Clemens** stars **Nicholas Briggs**, who also adapted the play for audio. The winners of the third Big Finish/District Messenger competition are Tony Medawar and Oscar Ross, whose copies of *Holmes and the Ripper* will be sent direct from Big Finish, to whom our profound thanks!

In *Sherlock Holmes, Conan Doyle and The Bookman* (Gasogene Books, Wessex Press, PO Box 68308, Indianapolis, IN 46268, USA; $29.95) **S E Dahlinger** and **Leslie Klinger** present a cornucopia of material, much of it substantial, from the pages of the magazine that H L Mencken called 'the best literary monthly the United States has ever seen'. From the very start the editors, Harry Thurston Peck and Arthur Bartlett Maurice, were devotees of Holmes and Conan Doyle (Peck appears to have coined the word 'Sherlockian' to describe himself) and their joyful enthusiasm resulted in the many reviews, comments, essays and parodies they published between 1895 and 1933. Besides Peck and Maurice, this wonderful collection features material by Stephen Vincent Benét, Valentine Williams, Vincent Starrett (whose pieces would form the basis of his book *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*), Edmund Pearson (whose 'Sherlock Holmes Among the Illustrators' is an invaluable early survey of the subject), Hugh Kingsmill and other luminaries of early twentieth century literature (including Arthur Conan Doyle, with a 1927 article, 'The Alleged Posthumous Writings of Known Authors'). We know that there were Holmesian scholars before the Baker Street Irregulars and the Sherlock Holmes Society were founded in 1934, but we tend to remember those who became associated with the societies. This lovely book introduces others, equally worthy, who were commenting on the chronicles of Sherlock Holmes as they were first published. Highly recommended!

Last May the BSI marked the 150th birthday of Arthur Conan Doyle with a symposium at Harvard University, whose Houghton Library held an exhibition called 'Ever Westward: Arthur Conan Doyle and American Culture". The fourteen papers delivered that weekend are now published as *Papers at an Exhibition - Arthur Conan Doyle: A Sesquicentennial Assessment*, edited by **Peter X Accardo**, **John Bergquist** and **Dan Posnansky** (The Baker Street Irregulars, Michael H. Kean, 3040 Sloat Road, Pebble Beach, CA 93953-2837, USA; $35.00). Wisely, the programme planners chose a wide range of subject and approach. We have, for instance, Eve Mayer on Conan Doyle's depiction of the Mormons; Charles J Rzepka on a Homeric influence in the Canon, echoed in Conan Doyle's own life; John Bergquist on the process of publishing a Conan Doyle manuscript in facsimile; Andrew Lycett on life as a biographer; Daniel Stashower on the influence of Poe; Randall Stock on compiling a census of Holmesian manuscripts and incunabula; Steven Rothman and Peter Accardo on two fathers of the Sherlockian movement, Christopher Morley and H W Bell; Leslie Klinger on the correspondence between Dr Watson and Dr Conan Doyle… These fourteen articles help to increase our understanding of Arthur Conan Doyle and his greatest literary legacy.

The sixtieth running of the Chicago 'Silver Blaze' on 31 October was a joint venture with the BSI, and the Irregulars have published a very nicely produced sixty-eight-page paperback, *Two Celebrations: The Fiftieth Annual Running of the Chicago Blaze and the Triennial Silver Blaze of the Baker Street Irregulars*, edited by **Candace Lewis** and priced at $12.95. Art Levine recounts the history of the New York Silver Blaze, Roger Donway analyses the story that gave race its name, and Candace Lewis looks at flat-racing in nineteenth century art. Even if you haven't attended a Silver Blaze race you'll find lots of interest here.

The Case of the Missing Stradivarius (Irregular Special Press, Baker Street Studios Ltd, 170 Woodland Road, Sawston, Cambridge CB2 4DX; £15.99) is the second new Sherlock Holmes story by **Emanuel E Garcia**. A quarter of this attractive hardback's 160 pages are taken up with notes on the text, which is unusual but not unwelcome: The story's title gives us the essential situation. It's actually not too hard to work out who stole Donato Del Nero's priceless violin, the 'Medici' Stradivarius, once the property of Paganini himself. The real revelation is not who or how, but *why*, and the answer to that question is intellectually and psychologically satisfying. As fascinating as the narrative is the information about music and musicians – but not all the 'facts' in the story are reliable, which is why the notes are essential to separate clearly the true from the false. Holmes's violin is as integral to his image as the pipe and the magnifying lens, so it's rather surprising that this novel is the first Holmes fiction to concentrate on this aspect of his character. For that alone it would deserve our attention, but it's a jolly good read as well!

Arthur Conan Doyle and **Bertram Fletcher Robinson** shared a passion for sport. Robinson's game was Rugby Union, and his obituary in the Daily Express claimed that he 'only missed an international cap by an accident'. His major contribution was an informative and entertaining book, *Rugby Football*, written by Robinson with contributions from other players, and published by the Isthmian Library in 1896. Long out of print, it's now available again in facsimile as *Rugby Football During the Nineteenth Century*, edited by Paul R Spiring and introduced by Patrick Casey and Hugh Cooke (MX Publishing, 335 Princess Park Manor, Royal Drive, London N11 3GX; www.mxpublishing.co.uk; £9.99/$15.99/€12.99). We didn't play rugger at my school, and Dr Watson's game has long been a mystery to me. Thanks to Messrs Robinson and Spiring the mystery is now less mysterious.

David Grann, author of *The Devil and Sherlock Holmes: Tales of Murder, Madness and Obsession* (Simon & Schuster, 1st Floor, 222 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8HN; £12.99) wrote *The Lost City of Z*, an acclaimed account of the search for Colonel Fawcett, who may have inspired the creation of Professor Challenger. The articles in *The Devil and Sherlock Holmes*, most of which first appeared in *The New Yorker*, concern real-life mysteries, each in its own way as curious as the

disappearance of Percy Fawcett in the Amazon jungle. The first piece, the one that involves Sherlock Holmes, is entitled 'Mysterious Circumstances'. As you may have guessed, it concerns the tragic death of Richard Lancelyn Green, former Chairman of our Society and the world's foremost authority on Arthur Conan Doyle. There's nothing here of the distasteful excesses that Richard's demise provoked in the British press. The circumstances remain mysterious, but Mr Grann's article demolishes the myths and presents the established facts as clearly as possible. The same qualities are evident in the other eleven pieces, on subjects as diverse as the search for the giant squid, the abuse of capital punishment in Texas and the 'sandhogs' – the men who dig the vast system of tunnels beneath New York for the city's water supply.

Dreams of Future Past: The Science Fiction Worlds of Arthur Conan Doyle and H G Wells (Wessex Press; $13.95) contains fifteen insightful and engaging essays by **Dana Martin Batory**, a prolific writer on Holmesian and Doylean matters. I rather wish that Mr Batory had covered more of the two authors' works. I'd like to know, for instance, what he has to say about *The Lost World*, 'The Time Machine', 'The Horror of the Heights' and *The First Men in the Moon.*

Back to the Drawing Board: The Memoirs of a Backbencher (T M Ernest, 88 Lexham Gardens, London W8 5JB; £15.00 + £3.00 postage [UK]; cheques payable to T M Ernest) is the autobiography of our distinguished Honorary Member **Sir Sydney Chapman** – and the Society is mentioned among his political experiences.

Like Michael Hardwick's highly regarded *Prisoner of the Devil*, **Lawrence Fischman**'s *The French Artillery Officer* involves Holmes and Watson in the notorious Dreyfus case. It's available for $24.99 hardback or $14.99 paperback from www.thefrenchartilleryofficer.com/.

Our good friend **Vosper Arthur** wishes to sell his collection of *The Strand Magazine*. He has volumes 1 to 23, 25, 26, 28, and 31 to 34, all in the publisher's blue binding and in average to good condition. Please contact Vosper if you're interested, at Spynishlake, Doddiscombsleigh, Exeter EX6 7PR (phone 01647 252472).

Volume 3 of *Sherlock Holmes Mystery Magazine* is now available from Wildside Press (9710 Traville Gateway Drive #234, Rockville, MD 20850, USA; http://www.wildsidebooks.com/sherlock-holmes-mystery-magazine-3_p_3871.html; $10.00).

Daniel Elton Harmon has had deserved success with his short stories of Harper and MacTavish, separate series about two crime reporters in late nineteenth century South Carolina. Now he offers *The Illustrated Harper & MacTavish Reader*, published quarterly as pdf files. Details are at www.danieleltonharmon.com, and it all looks very attractive.

At http://elisanonline.com/sublibrarians/libraries.html The Sub-Librarians Scion of the BSI provides a useful list of libraries that have Sherlock Holmes and Conan Doyle collections. One of the newest is **The Richard and Joshua Green Sherlock Holmes Collection** at Birmingham Southern College in Birmingham, Alabama. Not yet listed is the collection at the Rare Books Library at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, British Columbia, donated by **Peter H Wood**.

From Florida **Jill Emery** invites offers for the Gasogene *[*actually a seltzogene if I remember correctly*]* that was used as a prop in Martyn Read's play *221B* in which Nigel Stock toured in the mid 1980s. Contact her at emeritus_books@yahoo.com.

On 25 April **Ian Young** will run in the London Marathon, to raise money for Sparks, a charity dedicated to funding research into conditions and illnesses affecting children, babies and expectant mothers. Ian will run dressed as Sherlock Holmes in a bid to break the world record for Fastest Iconic Book Character. You can sponsor him at http://www.justgiving.com/Ian-Young0.

In their sale on 9 March **Cameo Auctioneers** (Kennet Holme Farm, Bath Road, Midgham, Berks. RG7 5UX) will offer costumes worn by Jeremy Brett and Michael Caine as Sherlock Holmes and a tailcoat worn by Nigel Bruce in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Details and photos are at www.cameo-auctioneers.co.uk/2010-03-09/.

The Marlbourne Point Mystery, a two-part adventure of Sherlock Holmes, will be broadcast on BBC Radio 4 on 5 and 6 April. Clive Merrison and Andrew Sachs return as Holmes and Watson, with Pik-Sen Lim, Richard Dillane and James Laurenson, who plays Mycroft Holmes. The writer is **Bert Coules** and the producer is Patrick Rayner. On 8 April BBC Audiobooks will release *The Further Adventures of Sherlock Holmes volume four*, containing the new play together with *The Remarkable Performance of Mr Frederick Merridew* and *The Eyes of Horus*. You can pre-order via www.bertcoules.co.uk/cassette.htm.

LipService – **Maggie Fox** and **Sue Ryding** – are currently touring with their deliciously barmy Holmes spoof *Move Over Moriarty*. Details are on their website at www.lip-service.net/home.php.

The musical *The Baskerville Beast* by **Teddy Hayes** will be staged at The Rose Theatre, Bankside from 24 May to 6 June, in repertory with Mr Hayes' musical *Great Expectations*. John Elnaugh, Paul Engers and John Pyle return as Holmes, Watson and Barrymore. Details are on the theatre website at www.rosetheatre.org.uk, or phone 020 7261 9565.

Fraser Heston's 1991 film *The Crucifer of Blood*, starring his father **Charlton Heston** as Holmes, with Richard Johnson as Watson, will be released on DVD by Warner Home Video on 30 March – but only in the USA, in NTSC format.

Anthony D P Mann, Canadian director and star of a not-terribly-well-regarded short film *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, promises *Sherlock Holmes and the Shadow Watchers* for summer release. See www.sherlockholmesadventures.ca/Main.html.

The Asylum's production *Sherlock Holmes*, starring **Ben Syder** and **Gareth David-Lloyd** as Holmes and Watson, with **Dominic Keating**, will be released on DVD in the UK by Revolver Entertainment (10 Lambton Place, Notting Hill Gate, London W11 2SH). The film is cheaply made, barking mad, and surprisingly entertaining.

There's a current planning application to convert **Undershaw**, Conan Doyle's house at Hindhead, into flats, but it may still be possible to retain the house as a single family home. Information is regularly updated at http://undershawhelp.blogspot.com. Objections to the application can be registered with Waverley Borough Council at http://waverweb.waverley.gov.uk/live/wbc/pwl.nsf/%28RefNoLU%29/WA20100173?OpenDocument.

Donald Pickering had a very good line in cold supercilious types. In 1994 he was Sir Edward Grey in *His Last Bow* on Radio 4, returning in 1995 to play Sir Robert Norberton in *Shoscombe Old Place*, but his good performance as Dr Watson in the 1980 TV series *Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson*, with Geoffrey Whitehead, has never been shown in Britain – and rarely shown elsewhere. He died on 19 December aged seventy-six.

Sir John Dankworth, who died on 6 February aged eighty-two, was one of Britain's few giants of jazz, as alto-saxophonist, bandleader and composer. In 1981 he wrote an oratorio for the City of Birmingham Choir, *The Diamond and the Goose*, with libretto by Benny Green, based on 'The Blue Carbuncle'. He is survived by his wife, Dame Cleo Laine.

Periodicals received. ***Canadian Holmes***, Winter 2009/10 (**The Bootmakers of Toronto**, Mark & JoAnn Alberstat, 46 Kingston Crescent, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, B3A 2M2, Canada). ***Communication***, no. 296 (**The Pleasant Places of Florida**, Wanda & Jeff Dow, 1737 Santa Anna Drive, Dunedin, FL 34698, USA). ***Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections***, December 2009 (Suite 111, Elmer L Andersen Library, University of Minnesota, 222 21st Avenue S, Minneapolis, MN 55455, USA). ***The Illustrious Clients News***, January 2010 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T Doyle, 9 Calumet Court, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). ***Ineffable Twaddle***, March 2010 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). ***Irregular Newsletter***, February 2010 (**The Conan Doyle [Crowborough] Establishment**, Brian Pugh, 20 Clare Road, Lewes, Sussex BN7 1PN). ***Mayday Mayday***, February 2010 (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardcarn Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). ***The Petrel Flyer***, Spring 2010 (**The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia**, Len Haffenden, 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7P 3C6). ***Prescott's Press***, December 2009 (**The Three Garridebs**, Warren Randall, 15 Fawn Lane West, South Setauket, NY 11720-1346, USA). ***The School Report***, Spring 2010 (**The Priory Scholars**, Horace L Coates, 21 Butcombe Road, Leicester LE4 0FY). ***The Serpentine Muse***, Spring 2010 (**The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes**, Evelyn Herzog, 301 Warren Ave, #203, Baltimore, MD 21203, USA).

And ***Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press***, January 2010 and February 2010 (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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'From the start, For Dummies was a simple, yet powerful concept: Relate to the anxiety and frustration that people feel about technology by poking fun at it with books that are insightful and educational and make difficult material interesting and easy. Add a strong dose of personality, a dash of comic relief with entertaining cartoons — .' The range of subjects has expanded since 1991, and now we have *Sherlock Holmes for Dummies* by **Steven Doyle** and **David A Crowder** (John Wiley & Sons, The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester PO19 8SQ; £14.99). Mr Doyle, publisher of *The Baker Street Journal*, is a major player in our Great Game. Mr Crowder is 'the author or co-author of several *For Dummies* titles'; his brief was, presumably, to ensure that the product adhered to the house style. The book is full of information – mostly accurate, all enthusiastically presented – about Holmes, Watson and Conan Doyle, their world and the characters that inhabit it, dramatic adaptations, Sherlockian devotees, and the rest of the extraordinary phenomenon that we delight in. Perhaps too much is made of the Sherlock Holmes Museum at 239 Baker Street, whose owners appear to have fed Mr Doyle some dubious information. The '221B' on the door is not the address: it's permitted only because the proprietors registered a company called 221B. And it was they who put a blue plaque on the front of the house, in imitation of the real commemorative plaques erected by English Heritage. (See, e.g. 'Back to Baker Street' by Jean Upton, in *Baker Street Miscellanea*, Summer 1994.) That's a minor matter. The museum exists and is popular. *Sherlock Holmes for Dummies* is entertaining and informative, the product of a genuine and deep affection for its subject. The one really disappointing aspect of the book is that it's aimed entirely at the American reader. Only one non-American Holmes society is mentioned: the Sherlock Holmes Society of London, which gets just one page compared to the seven devoted to the Baker Street Irregulars – 'the premier Holmes society in the world,' we're told – and its scions. A twelve-page appendix lists only American societies. Nothing there for readers in the many countries outside the USA where the Dummies guides are distributed.

The Strange Return of Sherlock Holmes by **Barry Grant** (Severn House, 9-15 High Street, Sutton, Surrey SM1 1DF; £18.99) starts as a curiosity, quickly becomes an entertaining mystery, and concludes with a powerful revelation of deceit and inhumanity. Film-makers have imagined what might happen if Holmes were to be resuscitated in our time after having been cryogenically preserved. Barry Grant may be the first to write a novel with that premise, and he does it with great skill. James Wilson, looking for a quiet life after his experiences as a war correspondent in Afghanistan, is perhaps a little slow to realise that his new friend Cedric Coombes looks like Sherlock Holmes, and he's understandably reluctant to believe that Coombes actually is Sherlock Holmes – but believe it he does. The tale of the detective's apparent death while on a mission from King George to his cousin the Kaiser is a top-notch thriller in itself, but the main thread of the novel concerns Holmes and Wilson's first investigation together. A stranger came to Hay-on-Wye looking for a woman who doesn't exist. He is found dead, his throat cut, in the bathroom of an empty house. Nearby is a newly published book, *Abu Ghraib: Torture and Betrayal…* It's a fine detective story, and I'm impressed by the way the narrative parallels that of *a Study in Scarlet* without actually imitating it. James Wilson is likable, trustworthy and intelligent; that he comes to accept being addressed as 'Watson' is a tribute to his good nature. Holmes is, well – Holmes. Barry Grant promises more exploits of this engaging partnership, and I'm looking forward to reading them.

In *Sherlock Holmes and the Lyme Regis Horror* (FastPrint Publishing; £8.99) **David Ruffle** has taken on the challenge of writing a short novel in the style of Dr Watson. The story is exciting, and all in all he does pretty well. It's very easy (I speak from experience) to be too stilted or florid or verbose. Mr Ruffle largely avoids the worst stylistic traps, though his Holmes and Watson are a bit too openly emotional, calling each other 'my dear friend'. The punctuation, alas, is decidedly sloppy; a comma is no substitute for a full stop or a semi-colon. Still, it didn't stop me enjoying the story, which, in essence, relocates the plot of a famous late Victorian thriller to the lovely Dorset resort of Lyme Regis. The development isn't identical, and the characters have different names, but if I mention a bloodless corpse, hypnotic seduction, and a nocturnal Transylvanian nobleman you'll get the idea. Mr Ruffle paints a vivid picture of Lyme and its harbour. The characters are distinct individuals: the charming landlady, the insufferable police inspector, Watson's friend the local doctor, and all the others. Six short stories, varying in length and mood, complete the book; 'Christmas with Holmes' is particularly appealing. *Sherlock Holmes and the Lyme Regis Horror* is available from www.fast-print-net/store.php, Amazon.co.uk and other outlets.

On 19 March, after a year of negotiation and simple hard work, **Gyles Brandreth** unveiled a City of Westminster green plaque at the Langham Hotel, commemorating the dinner given by J M Stoddart of *Lippincott's*, at which Oscar Wilde and Arthur Conan Doyle were each commissioned to write a story for the magazine. The result was *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *The Sign of the Four*. Gyles has also contributed a foreword to *'A Golden Day'*, in which **Nicholas Utechin** tells the story of that dinner and its outcome. The Society published two hundred copies of this lovely 28-page booklet as a souvenir of the unveiling. A limited number are available from Bob Ellis (13 Crofton Avenue, Orpington, Kent BR6 8DU) at £5.00 (UK), £5.50 (Europe), $12.00/£6.00 (elsewhere). Prices include postage. Make cheques payable to The Sherlock Holmes Society of London.

New from Irregular Special Press (www.crime4u.com/pressitdow.html) is *In the Dead of Winter: A Myrl Adler Norton Mystery* by **Abbey Pen Baker** (£8.50, €12.50 or $18.50). You can pre-order *The Case of Sherlock Holmes' Secretary* by **Tony Harries** (Lulu Publishing, www.lulu.com) from the author at rhinehart@sky.com for £8.00/$12.00 (pay via PayPal). This is non-fiction, by the way. Mr Harries was employed as Holmes's secretary by Abbey National in 1989-90. Due in December is *The Sherlockian* by **Graham Moore** (Twelve, 3 Center Plaza, Boston, MA 02108, USA; $24.99).

In June, to mark the Centenary of the death of Sir George Newnes, publisher of *The Strand Magazine*, MX Publishing (MX Publishing, 335 Princess Park Manor, Royal Drive, London N11 3GX) will launch an **Arthur Conan Doyle Collection**, comprising *Arthur Conan Doyle, Sherlock Holmes and Devon: A Complete Tour Guide & Companion* by Brian Pugh, Paul Spiring & Sadru Bhanji; Brian Pugh's *Chronology of the Life of Arthur Conan Doyle*; *Bertram Fletcher Robinson: A Footnote to 'The Hound of the Baskervilles'* by Messrs Pugh & Spiring; and *Aside Arthur Conan Doyle: Twenty Original Tales* by Fletcher Robinson. The full price will be £49.96. Members of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London can get a hefty £15.00 discount by ordering before mid June at www.mxpublishing.co.uk/engine/shop/product/ACDPackage/Arthur+Conan+Doyle+Collection. Type 'acdpack' at the shopping basket checkout. Members' orders will be sent out first.

Pam Bennett of Brentwood, Essex invites enquiries and offers for some Holmesian items, including the two-volume Doubleday *Complete Sherlock Holmes*, the BBC Radio Collection cassettes with Clive Merrison and Michael Williams, BBC postcard packs, and the 1993 commemorative stamps. Contact her at pam_bennett@talktalk.com.

You'll find the March issue of *The Sherlockian E-Times*, the catalogue-magazine of **Classic Specialties** (PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH,

45219, USA; sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com), at www.sherlock-holmes.com/e_times10-3.htm. The April issue may be up by the time you read this.

Catherine Cooke sends warning that on 19 April the **Sherlock Holmes Collection** at Marylebone Library will move from the old library building into the Council House, and will be inaccessible for a while.

Michael Procter has devised a very elegant solution to the filing of journal, newspaper clippings and so forth. He even provides printable labels! See www.michael-procter.com/SHLib.pdf.

John Addy has discovered **W Clark Russell's** first novel, publish anonymously in 1867. At http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/ he found a direct reference to *Life's Masquerade* in an interview published in the *Otago Witness*, New Zealand, 27 January 1888. In an on-line copy of the book at www.archive.org/details/lifesmasqueraden01lond, he discovered that volume one carries a dedication to Russell's wife. *Life's Masquerade* is not listed in any bibliography of Clark Russell.

Last year Naxos AudioBooks released a fine unabridged reading by Greg Wise of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Now comes a quite superb recording of *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime, and Other Stories* by **Oscar Wilde** (2nd Floor, 40A High Street, Welwyn, Herts. AL6 9EQ; £16.99). The title story, published in the same year as *A Study in Scarlet*, is a delicious parody of crime fiction. 'The Canterville Ghost' combines high comedy and passages of remarkable beauty as the disreputable spectre is at last allowed to rest. Obsession and fraud are the twin themes of 'The Portrait of Mr W H'. The shorter stories – 'The Model Millionaire', 'The Sphinx Without a Secret' and 'The Birthday of the Infanta' – likewise vary, but all have an underlying profundity that belies the often effervescent tone. The excellent **David Timson** reads 'The Portrait of Mr W H', and his recital of some of Shakespeare's sonnets is a delightful bonus; 'The Birthday of the Infanta' is in the safe hands of **Anthony Donovan**; and all the rest is read by **Rupert Degas**, who makes every character unique, with just the right voice and accent. He has very quickly become one of my favourite narrators.

New from BBC Audiobooks (St James House, The Square, Lower Bristol Road, Bath BA2 3BH) is *The Further Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, volume 4*, written by **Bert Coules** and starring **Clive Merrison** and **Andrew Sachs**. The four-CD set contains *The Eyes of Horus* and *The Remarkable Performance of Mr Frederick Merridew* from the third Radio 4 series, plus last week's two-part serial *The Marlbourne Point Mystery*, which takes Holmes and Watson to the Kent coast, at the request of Mycroft Holmes, to investigate a suicide and a murder – both with the same victim. They uncover exploitation of the innocent and corruption in high places. Bert Coules may just be the best radio dramatist of our time, and he's well served by producer and cast.

There are worthwhile articles on-line at www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/Sherlock-Holmes-London.html, vigilantcitizen.com/?p=3230 and www.publishersweekly.com/article/CA6715287.html?q=sherlock+holmes.

The website of **The Crew of the SS May Day** is up and running at www.thessmayday.org.uk. The Belfast-based Crew is, I think, the only Sherlock Holmes society in Ireland, and one of the liveliest and most interesting in the British Isles.

Olaf Maurer of **221b Deutscher Sherlock Holmes Club** (info@221b-DSHC.de) tells me that the third issue of *Sherlock Holmes Magazin* is out. As you'll see at www.sherlock-holmes-magazin.de, it looks superb.

The Asylum's production *Sherlock Holmes*, starring **Ben Syder** and **Gareth David-Lloyd** as Holmes and Watson, will be released on DVD in the UK by Revolver Entertainment on 26 April, with a new cover design echoing that for Guy Ritchie's film (due 17 May). You can order it now on Amazon.co.uk for just £4.99.

Sherlock Meets His Violin at the **Usher Hall** in Edinburgh on 15 May is a concert to celebrate Arthur Conan Doyle's birthday and to raise funds for the SOS Children's Haiti Orphan Appeal. The highly acclaimed **Ani Batikian** will play the unique *Sherlock* violin (made by Steve Burnett from a tree in the grounds of Liberton Bank House, Conan Doyle's only surviving childhood home) in a programme comprising Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* and a selection of shorter pieces, including the newly composed 'Elsie and Frances' by James Clapperton, interspersed with dramatic excepts by Mike Maran. Tickets for what promises to be a fascinating event are available by phone on 0131 228 1155 or on-line at www.usherhall.co.uk/concerts/?d=1272668400&cat.

On 17 May **Surgeons' Hall** in Edinburgh will host a children's workshop: *Museum Detectives @ Surgeons' Hall: From Sherlock to CSI*. On 22 May there'll be *A Musical Evening at Surgeons' Hall in Celebration of the Life of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*, introduced by Dr Alan Mackaill, author of *Conan Doyle and Joseph Bell: The Real Sherlock Holmes*. Details are at www.museum.rcsed.ac.uk, or phone 0131 527 1649.

Liberton Bank House, now a 'second chance' school run by the Dunedin Trust, is one of sixteen properties entered for the inaugural Scottish Civic Trust My Place Awards, set up to recognise 'good local design and conservation'.

From 22 April to 8 May, David Edgar's well-reviewed play *Arthur and George*, based on Julian Barnes's novel about the case of George Edalji, will be at the **Nottingham Playhouse** (phone 0115 914 9419; website www.nottinghamplayhouse.co.uk/).

On 13 May, **Robert Crighton** will read *A Study in Scarlet* at **Groundlings Theatre** in Portsmouth (to be precise, The Old Beneficial School, 42 Kent Street, Portsea, Hants. PO1 3BT; phone 02392 737370). He'll follow it with *The Sign of Four* on 27 May, and the twelve Adventures in four instalments on 3 June, 17 June, 8 July and 22 July.

Does anyone have details of *Eight Tales and Reminiscences of Sherlock Holmes*, a 1950s radio series broadcast in Australia? I'm at a loss here.

At www.petitiononline.com/JBBAFTA2/ you can add your name, if you wish, to a petition urging the British Academy of Film & Television Arts to make a posthumous award to **Jeremy Brett**.

If you've listened to the dramatisations recorded by the Old Court Radio Theatre Company and posted on our Society's website at www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk, you'll recognise the name of **Dennis Rookard**, whose expertise as producer and technician gave them a professional polish. Someone else must work the magic for future productions, alas, because Dennis died on 2 March aged sixty-eight. He was a radio man through-and-through. Hosiprog, the name under which he made and provided original drama for hospital radio throughout the world, was just one of his many, mostly unpaid, activities. He loved Sherlock Holmes and for several years in the 1980s was a member of our Society. I miss him.

Corin Redgrave, son of Michael Redgrave and Rachel Kempson, brother of Vanessa and Lynn Redgrave, was himself an outstanding actor and director, though he's likely to be remembered at least as much for his socialist campaigning. In 1968 he gave a notable performance as Percy Phelps in the BBC TV production of *The Naval Treaty*, with Dennis Price as Lord Holdhurst. He died on 6 April, aged seventy.

I've learned recently of the passing of three of our members: **Raymond Noel Faulkner**, **Laurence Evans** and **Colin Schultz**.

Periodicals received. ***The Baker Street Bugle***, 1 November 2009, 1 January 2010 & 1 March 2010 (**The Deerstalkers of Welshpool**, Roy Upton-Holder, Baskerville, 146 Little Henfaes Drive, Welshpool, Powys SY21 7BA). ***The Camden House Journal***, March 2010 & April 2010 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, Debbie Tinsley, PO Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). ***Communication***, no. 297 (**The Pleasant Places of Florida**, Wanda & Jeff Dow, 1737 Santa Anna Drive, Dunedin, FL 34698, USA). ***The Formulary***, March 2010 (**The Friends of Dr Watson**, Nino Cirone, Highcroft Cottage, 14 Totteridge Common, Totteridge, London N20 8NL). ***The Illustrious Clients News***, March 2010 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T Doyle, 9 Calumet Court, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). ***Ineffable Twaddle***, April 2010 (**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***, January 1909 & February 1909 *[*sic*]* (**La Société Sherlock Holmes de France**, Thierry Saint-Joanis, 15 rue Grande, 03370 Saint-Sauvier, France). ***Mayday Mayday***, March 2010 & April 2010 (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardcarn Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). ***Sherlockiana***, Nr 1 2010 (**Sherlock Holmes Klubben i Danmark**, Bjarne Rother Jensen, Højbovangen 24, 9200 Aalborg SV, Denmark).

And ***Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press***, March0 2010 (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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Two awards that should have been bestowed at the Society's annual dinner had to be postponed because the beneficiaries were snowed in over the weekend. Fortunately they were present at the March meeting, so, to well-merited applause, the Chairman presented the annual Tony Howlett Award to **Lynne Godden** and conferred Honorary Membership, the Society's highest and rarest tribute, upon **Auberon Redfearn**.

A couple of years ago Dr Redfearn portrayed the great detective in **Alan Stockwell's** murder mystery play, *The Singular Adventure of the Gloved Pianist*. Now the author has published the script, along with a fuller account of the case, as told by Dr Watson, in *Sherlock Holmes and the Singular Adventure of the Gloved Pianist* (Vesper Hawk Publishing, Vesper Cottage, Vesper Hawk Lane, Smarden, Ashford, Kent TN27 8PU; £4.95, $6.95 or €5.95). Always at a loss for a suitable Christmas present for his friend, Dr Watson gives him a subscription to the Baker Street Chamber Music Society, little suspecting that the first recital they attend will be marred by the gruesome murder of Guido Salvato, the celebrated 'gloved pianist'. The suspects include a professional rival and a jilted lover, but Holmes needs all his skill and specialist knowledge to discover the culprit. Watson's narrative includes a less grisly but equally baffling mystery, that of the disappearance of the Hon. Edward Dunstable. As I said of the earlier volume, *The Singular Adventures of Mr Sherlock Holmes* (also available from Vesper Hawk): 'The style is an acceptable simulacrum of Dr Watson's, and Mr Stockwell clearly knows his period and his Canon. He also has an engagingly inventive imagination.' The acting version of *The Gloved Pianist* would be great fun to stage, as the audience has a significant rôle in the drama. There are fuller details at http://mrsherlockholmes.co.uk.

Lawrence Fischman narrates *The French Artillery Officer* (Gram's Group Ltd, 18 Royal Way, Dallas, TX 75229, USA; $24.99 hardback, $14.99 paperback) in the third person, which frees him from the need to reproduce Dr Watson's style in recounting Sherlock Holmes's reluctant investigation of the infamous *Affaire Dreyfus*. In 1894 Captain Alfred Dreyfus was convicted of passing French military secrets to the Germans and was sentenced to life imprisonment on Devil's Island. It soon became evident that Dreyfus was an innocent victim of anti-Semitism. Five years on, his supporters campaign for a re-trial, but powerful forces are determined that the truth must not be discovered. Holmes might resist a request from his brother Mycroft, or even from the Prime Minister, but he can't refuse a personal plea from the Queen. Mycroft's office provides financial support, but makes it clear that if Holmes or Watson fall foul of the French authorities, the British government will deny all knowledge of their mission. Inevitably, they come into contact with some familiar personalities, including Winston Churchill, César Ritz, Alphonse Bertillon, Oscar Wilde and Caroline Otero, but their presence rarely seems forced. *The French Artillery Officer* is a big book, and the proof-reading isn't brilliant, especially of the French phrases, but the story is compelling, and it's well told.

Young Sherlock Holmes: Death Cloud by **Andrew Lane** (Macmillan Children's Books, 20 New Wharf Road, London N1 9RR; 4 June; £6.99) is the first children's book to be commissioned by the Conan Doyle Estate Ltd. (It was a pleasure to see Catherine and Richard Doyle at the book-launch with their families.) This isn't the first attempt to imagine the great detective's boyhood, of course, but Mr Lane plays fair with Victorian history and with the life and character of Sherlock Holmes. Fourteen-year-old Sherlock is removed from his boarding school and sent to live with relations in rural Surrey, where he incurs the disfavour of a sinister housekeeper but earns the friendship of a most unusual tutor, Amyus Crowe, an American tracker and bounty hunter. Crowe's lessons come in useful when Sherlock is faced with the puzzle of a strange and deadly dark cloud. In solving the mystery, he makes enemies as well as friends; I need only say that the ultimate villain has devised colossal schemes… The novel combines ingenuity and breathtaking excitement with a real feeling for character. Future books will take Holmes through to his time at university, and I for one am looking forward to reading them!

The Friends of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection at Toronto Public Library (Clifford Goldfarb, Scotia Plaza, Suite 3100, 40 King Street W, Toronto, Ontario M6C 1T1, Canada) have published the 2008 Cameron Hollyer Memorial Lecture as a nice 32-page booklet. This is *Tincture of Conan Doyle: Christopher Morley on Sherlock Holmes* by **Steven Rothman** (no price given). Steve Rothman is probably the world's leading authority on Morley – who deserves to be remembered for many more achievements than his founding of the Baker Street Irregulars. Later this year the Friends plan to publish the 2009 Lecture, *Arthur Conan Doyle as Essayist and Journalist* by Michael Dirda.

Two stories alternate in *The Magnificent Spilsbury and the case of the Brides in the Bath* by **Jane Robins** (John Murray, 338 Euston Road, London NW1 3BH; £16.99 hardback, £12.99 paperback), told seemingly in parallel until the moment when they merge. We're introduced in turn to three pleasant single ladies, no longer young and seemingly destined to live alone. Into each one's life comes a plausible, charismatic man who proposes marriage. Such is his charm that the lady hardly hesitates, and she seems only too willing to make a will in his favour and to insure her life – and to take a bath when he suggests it… In contrast to these sad little lives, brutally cut short, is the rise to fame of the brilliant forensic pathologist Bernard Spilsbury. He came to public notice as an expert witness at the trial of Dr Crippen, but it was this case that made his name. Jane Robins is both a scrupulous historian and an excellent writer. She tells the extraordinary story with the skill of a major novelist. She paints a vivid picture of lower middle class life in Edwardian England, when marriage was the goal of every woman and a bathroom was a rare luxury. And she brings each individual to life for us: Bessie, Alice and Margaret, the unfortunate victims; the intelligent and determined detective, Arthur Neil; the flamboyant defence counsel, Edward Marshall Hall; the dedicated, even doctrinaire Spilsbury; and the unaccountably attractive psychopath, George Joseph Smith.

The Abbey National used to employ a member of staff at 217-229 Baker Street to answer the letters that arrived addressed to Sherlock Holmes. In 1990 **Tony Harries** toured the USA, with a detour to Toronto, lecturing about his experiences in the post. He kept a diary on his travels, which he's now published as *The Case of Sherlock Holmes' Secretary (and His Tour of America)* (Lulu, www.lulu.com; £7.10 – also available as a file download at £2.50). As a diarist, unfortunately, Mr Harries is no Alan Clark or Gyles Brandreth. His accounts of the people and places he encounters are superficial, and the writing itself curiously flat. He'd have done much better to tell the story in retrospect, using the diary as an *aide mémoire*, fleshing out his descriptions, perhaps providing some photographs, and giving us at least a summary of one of his lectures. The book is mildly entertaining, but that's all.

Arthur, Louise and the True Hound of the Baskervilles by **Margaret Newman Turner** (Logaston Press, Little Logaston, Woonton, Almeley, Herefordshire HR3 6QH; 3 June; £10.00) puts the case for Hergest Court in Herefordshire as the real home of the phantom hound. *The Sign of Fear*, the first novel by **Molly Carr**, is narrated by Mrs Watson (MX Publishing, 335 Princess Park Manor, Royal Drive, London N11 3GX; 15 June; £12.99). In October comes *Baker Street Irregular* by **Jon Lellenberg**, which takes young lawyer Woody Hazelbaker and his fellow-Sherlockians on a journey beneath the surface of American history, from the Great Depression to the Cold War (Arkham House, PO Box 50, RR #4, Eugenia, Ontario N0C 1E0, Canada; $39.95).

A nice-looking addition to the growing number of Holmesian cookery books is *Alimentaire, mon cher Watson!* by **Anne Martinetti**, published on 15 May by Editions du Chêne/EPA Editions (43 Quai de Grenelle, 75905 Paris, France). It's in French, of course, and priced at €35.00. I've also had notice of a three-volume Russian edition of the Holmes Canon, extensively illustrated by **Leonid Kozlov** and published, apparently, by Panda Books (OOO 'Kitoni', 107078 Moscow, Basmanny Lane 5/20, Building 2, Office 36; phone/fax [499] 261 1291).

On 15 July **Sotheby's** in London will auction the 1887 *Beeton's Christmas Annual*, containing the first publication of *A Study in Scarlet*. This is one of only two known copies signed by Arthur Conan Doyle, who wrote in it, 'This is the very first independent book of mine which ever was published.' The inscription is dated January 9, 1914. The estimate is £250,000–£400,000. There'll be public viewing in New York 14-16 June and in London 11-14 July. (Sotheby's Book Department, 34-35 New Bond Street, London W1A 2AA; phone 020 7293 5295; e-mail peter.selley@sotheby's.com.)

The Baker Street Journal at www.bakerstreetjournal.com currently offers a special deal on several of the fascinating BSI History Series – two books for $25.00 plus postage. And newly available is *Doyle At 150: A Sesquicentennial Assessment Music CD*: 'Sherlock Holmes, DT', 'The Amateur Detective', 'Sherlock Holmes Waltzes', 'The Ghost of Sherlock Holmes' and others, performed by **Henry Boote** (www.bakerstreetjournal.com/doyleat150.html).

At www.sherlock-holmes.com/e_times10-4.htm you'll find the April issue of *The Sherlockian E-Times*, the catalogue-magazine of **Classic Specialties** (PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH, 45219, USA; sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com).

Nicholas Briggs plays the lead in The Big Finish audio adaptation of Brian Clemens' play *Holmes and the Ripper* (PO Box 3787, Maidenhead, Berkshire, SL6 3TF; www.bigfinish.com/ranges/sherlock-holmes; £14.99). Like the film *Murder by Decree*, it's based on Stephen Knight's book *Jack the Ripper: The Final Solution*, and takes even greater liberties with the facts. Mr Clemens probably doesn't believe that the Whitechapel murders were orchestrated by Freemasons in a bizarre attempt to preserve the monarchy — but he knows how much we love a conspiracy theory, and by golly that's what he gives us! Nick Briggs has played the rôle on stage, and he's clearly comfortable with the character. He and Richard Earl present a very credible partnership as the doctor and the detective. The third leading character is Katherine Mead, a comely clairvoyant, played by India Fisher — and, despite expectations, it's Holmes, not Watson, who falls for her. *Holmes and the Ripper* is deliriously exciting entertainment. I'm delighted to know that Big Finish plans to record more Sherlock Holmes plays.

BBC Worldwide lists *Sherlock Holmes: The Rediscovered Railway* ('Four more thrilling Sherlock Holmes adventures from **John Taylor**, the creator of *The Unopened Casebook of Sherlock Holmes*, inspired by the original stories by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle') for release on 2 September at £12.99, but you can pre-order a copy for £9.09 at www.bbcshop.com/Drama+Arts/Sherlock-Holmes-The-Rediscovered-Railway/invt/9781408426258.

You can listen or download several original audio dramas by **Scott Strosahl** at www.thewatsonfiles.com. That's Dr Jack Watson, friend and colleague of Mr Spencer Holmes.

The **Asylum's** production *Sherlock Holmes* (Revolver Entertainment, 10 Lambton Place, Notting Hill Gate, London W11 2SH) is far more entertaining than it has any right to be. A treasure ship is attacked at sea by a giant octopus. Whitechapel is terrorised by a velociraptor. London is attacked by a flying mechanical dragon. The warped mind behind all this belongs to a hitherto unknown Holmes brother. Invalided out of the police after being shot in the spine, he's invented an 'Iron Man' suit to overcome paralysis and now he wants revenge on his former colleague Lestrade before assassinating the Queen with a bomb hidden inside a mechanical woman. Gareth David-Lloyd makes a good Watson. Dominic Keating is fine as Thorpe, the villain, but would have been better suited than the mousy Ben Syder to the rôle of Sherlock Holmes. William Huw is a splendid Lestrade, helped by the fact that his clothes actually fit him. The film is completely mad, but it's never dull.

After years of campaigning, the eleven surviving episodes of the classic 1964-65 BBC TV series *Sherlock Holmes*, starring **Douglas Wilmer** and **Nigel Stock** will finally be released on DVD in September – but only in America! www.bbcamericashop.com/dvd/sherlock-holmes-1964-1965-15784.html. Well, we'll carry on lobbying for a British release.

At www.sherlockshorts.com or www.youtube.com/user/sherlockshorts you can watch several brief entertainments made by **Amy Berkley Mantell** in silent movie style and starring **Martha Heller's** fine cloth dolls. The films are charming and very clever.

Guy Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes* was voted best action film at the 2010 National Movie Awards today, a nice addition to its Golden Globe, IFTA and Empire awards.

On 25 April **Ian Young** completed the London Marathon, dressed as Sherlock Holmes, in 4 hr 1 min 47 seconds, breaking the world record for Fastest Iconic Book Character. His main aim, though, was to raise £2,000 for Sparks, a charity dedicated to funding research into conditions and illnesses affecting children, babies and expectant mothers. So far he's made just over half that sum, but you can still donate via PayPal at http://www.justgiving.com/Ian-Young0.

Forbes Gibb sends word that the NHS Tayside Archive at the University of Dundee Archives contains a material from **Sunnyside Royal Asylum**, Montrose, where Charles Altamont Doyle spent his last years. See www.dundee.ac.uk/archives/a-thb.htm.

Lynn Gale tells me that the fate of **Undershaw,** Conan Doyle's former home, will be decided at a meeting on 9 June, which may be online at www.waverley.gov.uk/site/scripts/documents_info.php?documentID=944. You can see the current sad state of the building on video at www.saveundershaw.com. It's hoped that the campaign will feature on BBC 1's *The One Show* at 7.00 pm on 7 June.

The Society needs a team of eight to play the Poor Folk Upon The Moors at **Croquet** on 13 June in Exeter. Friendly accommodation can be arranged with a Moors Person the previous night if required. The plan is to meet for lunch before playing, and enjoy tea & prizes afterwards. The dress code is relaxed, except that Victorian hats are required. £12.00 covers lunch, tea and plasters if things get out of hand. For further details, please contact the Society's Croquet Captain, Charles Miller at charlesnmiller@bigfoot.com.

The conference **Sherlock Holmes: The Man and His Worlds**, presented by the Baker Street Breakfast Club at Bennington College, Bennington, VT from 24 to 27 June, should be great fun. Full details are at www.bakerstreetbreakfastclub.com/conference-and-info.pdf.

Our Canadian member **Patricia Wagner**, like her husband Harry a veteran of the Society's Swiss jaunts, died on 6 April. **Thomas A Stetak**, head of Mrs Hudson's Lodgers of Cleveland, died after a short illness on 12 April. In 1990 Tom Stetak received the BSI investiture 'The Head of the Police at Cleveland'.

Periodicals received. ***The Baker Street Journal***, Spring 2010 (Steven Rothman, 220, West Rittenhouse Square, #15-D, Philadelphia, PA 19103, USA; subscriptions, PO Box 465, Hanover, PA 17331, USA). ***Canadian Holmes***, Spring 2010 (**The Bootmakers of Toronto**, Mark & JoAnn Alberstat, 46 Kingston Crescent, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, B3A 2M2, Canada). ***Communication***, no. 298 (**The Pleasant Places of Florida**, Wanda & Jeff Dow, 1737 Santa Anna Drive, Dunedin, FL 34698, USA). ***Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections***, March 2010 (Suite 111, Elmer L Andersen Library, University of Minnesota, 222 21st Avenue S, Minneapolis, MN 55455, USA). ***Ineffable Twaddle***, May 2010 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). ***Mayday Mayday***, May 2010 and June 2010 (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardcarn Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). ***The Moor: Magasin för Sherlockianer***, July 2010 (**The Baskerville Hall Club of Sweden**, Anders Wiggström, Byggmästarvägen 29, 168 32 Bromma, Sweden). ***The Passengers' Log***, 22 May 2010 (**The Sydney Passengers**, Rosane McNamara, 4/2a Merlin Street, Neutral Bay, NSW 2089, Australia). ***The Petrel Flyer***, Jan/Feb 2010, Spring 2010 and June 2010 (**The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia**, Len Haffenden, 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7P 3C6). ***The Scion***, Spring 2010 (**The Musgraves**, Anne Jordan, Hallas Lodge, Greenside Lane, Cullingworth, Bradford BD13 5AP).

And ***Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press***, April 2010 (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 couple of years ago, **Brian Pugh** and **Paul Spiring** broke new ground with *On the Trail of Arthur Conan Doyle: An Illustrated Devon Tour*, of which their latest book, *Arthur Conan Doyle, Sherlock Holmes and Devon: A Complete Tour Guide and Companion* (MX Publishing, 335 Princess Park Manor, Royal Drive, London N11 3GX; £12.99/ $19.95/ €14.99) is essentially an enlarged and improved version, benefiting greatly from the participation of a distinguished Devon historian, **Sadru Bhanji**. We knew that Conan Doyle was briefly in practice in Plymouth with the volatile Dr George Turnavine Budd, and that he later visited Dartmoor in company with his friend Bertram Fletcher Robinson to research local colour for *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, but Devon can claim another man, no less important to the success of the author and his immortal character – Sir George Newnes, founder and publisher of *The Strand Magazine*. Each man's life and career, and his contribution to the life of the county, are summarised in the first hundred pages, with well-chosen illustrations. Then some 220 pages are devoted to the much-expanded Devon tour. Even without the literary interest the tour would be worth undertaking, as the county is so remarkably varied and beautiful, but the chance to walk in the footsteps of Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes is almost irresistible. The book's easy readability belies the awe-inspiring amount of research that's gone into it.

MX Publishing has compiled a **Fletcher Robinson Collection**, comprising *Bertram Fletcher Robinson: A Footnote to 'The Hound of the Baskervilles'* by Messrs Pugh & Spiring; *Aside Arthur Conan Doyle: Twenty Original Tales* by Robinson; *The World of Vanity Fair* by Robinson; *Bobbles &* Plum, four satirical Playlets by Robinson & P G Wodehouse; and *Rugby Football During the Nineteenth Century* by Robinson. Members of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London can get a hefty £50.00 discount by ordering using the code 'bfr' at www.mxpublishing.co.uk/engine/shop/category/Sherlock+Holmes+Books/Bertram+Fletcher+Robinson+Books.

Last year the German society **Von Herder Airguns Ltd** held a Sherlock Holmes short story competition, and the seven best entries have been published as *Das Giftbuch des Sherlock Holmes* (Baskerville Bücher, Hermeskeiler Platz 14, 50935 Köln, Germany; €19.95). It's a very attractive 120-page hardback, illustrated by Anke and Dirk Seliger. (The society's newsletter is at www.sherlock-holmes-kurier.de.)

Oscar Wilde and Arthur Conan Doyle were acquainted, of course, and several writers have described what might have happened had Wilde and Sherlock Holmes met. The latest such imagining, *The Case of the Ill-Fated Playwright* by **Fred W Edmiston** (CreateSpace; $13.99), is one of the best. Apart from introducing Holmes and Watson, initially to investigate a plausible minor mystery and then a rather more serious one, Mr Edmiston adheres pretty fairly to the facts of Oscar Wilde's life and his fall from grace – a tragedy in the true Aristotelian sense. First-person narrative would have demanded too much obvious artifice, so, unlike most of the Canonical adventures, the story is told in the third person. A gripping story it is, too, and well told. The author has done his homework in British idiom as well as British history. Only a reference to a policeman as 'Officer McConnell' rather than Constable McConnell or PC McConnell broke my concentration. *The Case of the Ill-Fated Playwright* is available from www.amazon.co.uk for about £9.20.

More than one writer has made Mrs Hudson the central character in a novel, but **Barry S Brown**, in *The Unpleasantness at Parkerton Manor* (Sunstone Press, PO Box 2321, Santa Fe, NM 87504-2321, USA; $22.95), is, I think, the first to suggest that she was the true detective genius at 221B Baker Street. This isn't a comedy, along the lines of *Without a Clue*. Holmes and Watson play their parts intelligently, learning on the job, so to speak, and you know that before long they will be quite capable of a successful investigation without Mrs Hudson's supervision. Their enquiry into the unexpected demise of Sir Stanley Parkerton is interrupted by another sudden death and by the flight of Sir Stanley's son and daughter-in-law. It's a gloriously complex and improbable scenario, made even more so by a relationship with one of the most unlikely royal dynasties of the time, the White Rajahs of Sarawak. There's rather too much of the Irene Handl cockney about Mrs Hudson for my taste – a few dropped h's and g's go a long way, and smart quotes will invariably get the apostrophe in Mr 'Olmes the wrong way round. She's a likeable character, though, and disconcertingly credible. The punctuation is poor, but the writing is good, and the occasional misconception can easily be rectified. (To be Sir Stanley, Dr Parkerton would have received a knighthood, a higher honour than the OBE. Nelson, not Drake, fought and died at Trafalgar. And Mr Caldwell's given name would surely be Ernest rather than 'Earnest'.)

Since he vacated the editor's chair at *The Sherlock Holmes Journal*, **Nicholas Utechin** seems to have become more prolific as a writer. Jolly good, say I! His latest essay is *Wycombe Wonders: The Sherlock Holmes Society of London versus The Gold Bats of the PG Wodehouse Society, 2001-2010*, a nicely-produced 32-page booklet, published in just 221B copies for the tenth anniversary match at West Wycombe, played on 20 June. Copies are available at, I think, £3.00 from our Merchandising Officer Bob Ellis (13 Crofton Avenue, Orpington, Kent BR6 8DU; SHSL221B@aol.com). And you can read Nick's account of the match at www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk/press_cutting.php?id=229.

Thanks to Guy Marriott, I've been able to examine the first volume of the three-volume Russian edition of the Canon, published as **ХОЛМС** (*Holmes*). each story is presented in graphic form by **Leonid Kozlov**, whose powerful and distinctive style reminds me of some illustrators of the 1920s and '30s. A commendation from Dame Jean Conan Doyle is reproduced, in which she says, 'My father, coming from a family of artists would have been so interested in the artist's imaginative interpretation. This original idea will entertain Sherlockians all over the world.' (Panda Books, OOO 'Kitoni', 107078 Moscow, Basmanny Lane 5/20, Building 2, Office 36, Russia.)

Lawrence Fischman asks me to mention that his novel *The French Artillery Officer*, favourably reviewed in DM 303, is available through his website at www.TheFrenchArtilleryOfficer.com (case sensitive).

In the next issue I'll review *The File on Colonel Moran: Sherlock Holmes Takes a Hand* by **Vernon Mealor** (weirdbook, c/o 60 Yarnacott, Shoeburyness, Southend-on-Sea SS3 8AP; no price as yet); *The Baker Street Phantom* by **Fabrice Bourland** (Gallic Books, Worlds End Studios, 134 Lots Road, London SW10 0RJ; 5 August; £7.99); and *The Sign of the Four: A Sherlock Holmes Graphic Novel* adapted by **Ian Edginton,** illustrated by **I N J Culbard** (SelfMade Hero, 5 Upper Wimpole Street, London W1G 6BP; 5 August; £14.99).

A revised and expanded edition of *Bending the Willow: Jeremy Brett as Sherlock Holmes* by **David Stuart Davies** is newly out from Calabash Press at £23.00/ Cdn$35.00/ US$35.00 plus postage (PO Box 1360, Ashcroft, BC, Canada V0K 1A0; e-mail ashtree@ash-tree.bc.ca).

On 15 July **Sotheby's** in London will auction the 1887 *Beeton's Christmas Annual*, containing the first publication of *A Study in Scarlet*. This is one of only two known copies signed by Arthur Conan Doyle, who wrote in it, 'This is the very first independent book of mine which ever was published.' The inscription is dated January 9, 1914. The estimate is £250,000–£400,000. There'll be public viewing 11-14 July. The catalogue has four pages devoted to this one lot. What price will it make? Will it reach the reserve? (Sotheby's Book Department, 34-35 New Bond Street, London W1A 2AA; phone 020 7293 5295; e-mail peter.selley@sotheby's.com.)

At 6.00pm that same day **Laurie R King** will be at Heffer's bookshop in **Cambridge**, where she commences a promotional tour for her latest Mary Russell/Sherlock Holmes novel *The God of the Hive*. At 5.30pm on 15 July she'll be at **Marylebone Library**. The tour continues: 17 July: Waterstone's, **Eastbourne** at 11.00am; 18 July: **Portsmouth** Central Library, 2.00pm; 20 July: Castle Bookshop, **Ludlow**, 6.00pm, in conversation with Kate Charles (reserved seating: phone 01584 872562); 22 July: Waterstone's Reading Oracle, **Reading**, 11.00am; 27 July: Bedminster Library, **Bristol**, 2.00pm; 30 July: Blackwell's, **Edinburgh**, 6.00pm (limited seating: phone Ann Landman on 0131 622 8222); 2 August: **Newcastle upon Tyne** Lit & Phil Library, 7.00pm.

Laurie King has created a remarkable phenomenon with the Russell and Holmes series. In January this year she received the Irregular Shilling from the BSI, with the investiture 'The Red Circle'. She's particularly keen to meet fellow-Holmesians during her tour of the UK.

Just out on DVD from Wienerworld (Unit 7, Freetrade House, Lowther Road, Stanmore, Middlesex HA7 1EP) is a documentary, *The Man Who Murdered Sherlock Holmes*, produced by Electric Theatre. Despite the sensational title, it's a thoughtful and entertaining look at the relationship between Arthur Conan Doyle and his most famous literary creation, with contributions from Owen Dudley Edwards, Dr Allan Mackaill, Catherine Cooke, Antony Richards, and, er, me. In Edinburgh and London, writer-presenter **Richard Jones** brings an intelligent, enquiring mind to the problem: why did the author kill off the character who had made him rich and respected? There are more answers to that question than you might think. Well worth a look!

David Timson's recording of the complete Sherlock Holmes canon for Naxos AudioBooks is justly celebrated. Since then Glen McCready has recorded *The Lost World* and *The Poison Belt*, and now **Rupert Degas** brings to life another of Conan Doyle's immortal creations in *The Exploits of Brigadier Gerard* (Naxos AudioBooks, 2nd Floor, 40A High Street, Welwyn, Herts. AL6 9EQ). Gerard, an officer in Napoleon's *Grande Armée*, is brave, handsome, gallant, patriotic – and entirely unaware of how absurd he can be. It's a trait he shares with Charles Pooter and many other comic heroes. The unusual feature of these accounts is that the humour, often arising from Gerard's misunderstanding of foreign mores, is seasoned with genuine excitement. He faces real danger, and he does so with great courage. We don't usually think of Conan Doyle as a satirist, but through the Brigadier he pokes fun at both the English and the French, to charming effect. Rupert Degas employs a French accent that chimes perfectly with the text. The Gerard stories aren't as well known as they should be; I hope that these excellent readings will help to remedy that situation.

I knew that **David Warner** had played Sherlock Holmes in a good radio adaptation of William Gillette's play for California Artists Radio Theatre, but I wasn't aware till recently that he'd also played Mycroft Holmes, in a Bernice Summerfield adventure for Big Finish audio play (PO Box 3787, Maiden-head, Berkshire, SL6 3TF). *The Adventure of the Diogenes Damsel* is written by Jim Smith and stars Lisa Bowerman as the time-travelling Professor Summerfield.

Music featured prominently in last year's Conan Doyle Symposium at Harvard University. Now **Henry Boote**, who has taken on the rôle of music master to the Baker Street Irregulars, has recorded the various songs and tunes that were performed over that weekend. *Doyle at 150: A Sesquicentennial Assessment* includes 'Oh! Mister Sherlock Holmes', '*Sir Nigel* March', 'Sherlock Holmes, DT', 'The Lost World', 'The Amateur Detective', 'Sherlock Holmes Waltzes' and 'The Ghost of Sherlock Holmes'. I'd have liked some informative notes about these pieces, all of which, as far as I can discover, date from about 1895-1914. Even so, it's a real treat to have recordings of these unusual early musical tributes to Sir Arthur, especially when the performances are so good. The CD costs $9.95 plus postage, either online at www.bakerstreetjournal.com/doyleat150.html or from Michael H Kean, The Baker Street Irregulars, 3040 Sloat Road, Pebble Beach, CA 93953-2837, USA.

The lead article in issue 58 of **Geoff Bradley**'s admirable magazine *CADS: Crime and Detective Stories* is 'Sherlock Holmes and the Bankers' by George Bellairs, whose day job, under his real name of Harold Blundell, was as a bank manager. This entertaining piece appeared in the spring 1954 issue of *Martin's Bank Magazine*, and is reprinted for the first time in *CADS* (G H Bradley, 9 Vicarage Hill, South Benfleet, Essex SS7 1PA; Geoffcads@aol.com).

Lee Ann Borgia makes miniature books in approximately 1/12th scale. They're real books, with real tiny print, and they include fifty volumes of the Sherlock Holmes Canon at prices from $11.75 to $19.50 each, or $430.00 for the set. See www.picturetrail.com/sfx/album/view/3194486.

www.slumberland.it/contenuto.php?tipo=albo&id=297&nome=Sherlock_Holmes will take you to a site offering an original painting of Holmes and Watson, done in acrylic on board by the Italian illustrator **Giorgio Trevisan**. The asking price is €5,000 plus postage.

David Rowlands has sent a copy of the summer issue of *Festival Times*, the newsletter/journal of the **Festival of Britain Society**, which contains a good article on the Sherlock Holmes Exhibition mounted at Abbey House in Baker Street. It includes the only photograph I've seen of the designer Michael Weight – also, of course, responsible for the reconstruction of Holmes and Watson's study at the *Sherlock Holmes* pub at 10-11 Northumberland Street, Charing Cross. The website address www.festivalofbritain.org appears to be inactive, but you can access the Society's site at www.whitstablepier.com/fob/index.html.

See www.waverley.gov.uk/site/scripts/news_article.php?newsID=463. As you may know, Waverley Borough Council has granted planning permission for **Undershaw**, the house that Conan Doyle had built at Hindhead in Surrey, to be converted into flats. This move would preserve the building but would entail radical changes to those aspects that make it unique. See also http://undershawhelp.blogspot.com/. The MP for South West Surrey, Jeremy Hunt, is also Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media & Sport, and he's keen that the house should remain a single entity, accessible to the public. If you agree, then please write to Mr Hunt at 2 Royal Parade, Tilford Road, Hindhead, Surrey GU26 6TD, and ask whether the council's decision can be overturned.

On 11 September, while the Sherlock Holmes Society of London explore Surrey and Hampshire, **The Musgraves** will be at the University of Huddersfield for a *Forensic Science Day*. It looks quite fascinating, and at £36.00 each (£30.00 for under-eighteens) is well priced. Places are limited, so if you're interested, write now to Anne Jordan, Hallas Lodge, Greenside Lane, Cullingworth, Bradford BD13 5AP.

Alan Plater, who died on 25 June aged seventy-five, wrote nearly three hundred scripts for theatre, television, film and radio. He's probably best-known as a writer for *Z Cars* and *Softly Softly*, for *The Beiderbecke Affair* and its sequels, and for *Close the Coalhouse Door*. He contributed two excellent scripts to Granada TV's Sherlock Holmes series: *The Solitary Cyclist* and *The Man with the Twisted Lip*.

Periodicals received. ***Canadian Holmes***, Summer 2010 (**The Bootmakers of Toronto**, Mark & JoAnn Alberstat, 46 Kingston Crescent, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, B3A 2M2, Canada). ***Communication***, no. 299 (**The Pleasant Places of Florida**, Wanda & Jeff Dow, 1737 Santa Anna Drive, Dunedin, FL 34698, USA). ***Ineffable Twaddle***, June 2010 and July 2010 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). ***The Morning Echo***, St George's Day number, St Perran's Day special number, Special Unscrupulous Rascal issue, and June Meeting edition (**The Sherlock Holmes Society of Victoria: The Eminent Victorians**, Steve Duke, P.O. Box 340, Reservoir, Victoria 3073, Australia).

Prescott's Press, March 2010 (**The Three Garridebs**, Warren Randall, 15 Fawn Lane West, South Setauket, NY 11720-1346, USA). ***The School Report***, Summer 2010 (**The Priory Scholars**, Horace L Coates, 21 Butcombe Road, Leicester LE4 0FY). ***The Serpentine Muse***, Summer 2010 (**The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes**, Evelyn Herzog, 301 Warren Ave, #203, Baltimore, MD 21203, USA). ***Sherlockiana***, Nr 2 2010 (**Sherlock Holmes Klubben i Danmark**, Bjarne Rother Jensen, Højbovangen 24, 9200 Aalborg SV, Denmark). ***The Torr***, Spring 2010 (**The Poor Folk Upon The Moors**, Reggie Musgrave, Drummond Cottage, Old Tavern Yard, Westbourne, Chichester, West Sussex PO10 8TA). ***The Whaling News***, June 2010 (**The Harpooners of the Sea Unicorn**, Michael E Bragg, PO Box 256, St Charles, MO 63302-0256, USA).

And ***Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press***, May 2010 (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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Jon Lellenberg, whose many responsibilities include that of historian to the Baker Street Irregulars, has created a website for his work on the BSI Archival History. You'll find it at www.bsiarchivalhistory.org. There's an associated blog at http://bsihistoryblog.blogspot.com. Both are fascinating!

In *Arthur, Louise and the True Hound of the Baskervilles* (Logaston Press, Little Logaston, Woonton, Almeley, Herefordshire HR3 6QH; £10.00) **Margaret Newman Turner** provides an useful summary of the legend of the phantom hound of the Vaughans of Hergest Court in the Welsh Marches, and of Arthur Conan Doyle's connection with the Baskervilles of nearby Clyro Court, together with some material from her own family about the hound. The first Lady Conan Doyle, Louise, owned land in the area, though she may never have visited it, but Sir Arthur is believed to have visited Clyro – now renamed Baskerville Hall Hotel – and it seems likely that the ghost-dog of the Vaughan family was an influence on his most famous novel. I'm not convinced that it was the only source, however. The discussions with Fletcher Robinson that gave rise to the novel took place on a golfing holiday at Cromer, where the tale of Black Shuck has persisted since Viking times, the evidence for the Dartmoor legend of Sir Richard Cabell is pretty strong – and it's well-known that the Robinsons' coachman, who drove the two around the moor in search of local colour, was named Baskerville. It seems increasingly likely that there was no one inspiration for *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. (Incidentally, Mrs Turner twice misquotes the inscription in the copy given to the coachman, and attributes it to the wrong person. It actually reads: 'To Harry Baskerville from B. Fletcher Robinson. With apologies for using the name.' There are other errors also that should have been corrected before publication.)

The Cimbrian Friends of Baker Street must be among the smallest and most exclusive Holmesian societies. All members must have a firm connection with the city of Aalborg in northern Denmark, and unless I've miscounted there are currently just four, of whom Aage Rieck Sørensen has been active since the beginning in 1960. Another founder was the great illustrator, cartoonist and writer Henry Lauritzen, who established not one but two annual horse races, the Silver Blaze Sweepstake and the Professor Moriarty Memorial. Now, as if to prove that the society has never been idle, **Jens Byskov Jensen** has published *Fifty Years in Baker Street: A Chronological History of the Oldest and Most Singular Sherlockian Scion Society in Denmark* (The Baker Street Irregulars & The Cimbrian Friends of Baker Street; $11.95 plus postage from www.bakerstreetjournal.com). It's different in many ways from the story of our own Society – different from the BSI, for that matter – but the name includes the words that sum up the essence of our world-wide sodality: Baker Street, of course, and, vitally, *Friends*.

In DM 288 I welcomed the first volume of *The File on Colonel Moran* by **Vernon Mealor**. The second volume, subtitled *Sherlock Holmes Takes a Hand*, has now been published by Weirdbook at £3.62 plus postage (the only source appears to be http://stores.lulu.com/weirdbook). These three exploits continue the series that, we're assured, 'first appeared in *The Daily News* in the spring of 1894': that is, after Moran's arrest for the murder of the Hon Ronald Adair. We learned in the previous book that in January 1881 he rented the basement flat at 221 Baker Street, so it was inevitable that he and Sherlock Holmes would soon meet – and Moran would be ideally placed to spy on Holmes and to feed him such misleading information as Professor Moriarty thought suitable. In these very clever and suspenseful stories we discover how he came to be appointed Moriarty's chief of staff and how Holmes was able to foil two of the professor's most ingenious plans. I hope we shan't have so long to wait for volume three of *The File on Colonel Moran*!

Like Mr Mealor, **R Wolfgang Schramm** is a member of our Society, and his book *The Apocryphal Cases of Sherlock Holmes* also comprises three novellas (Xlibris Corporation, 1663 Liberty Drive, Suite 200, Bloomington, IN 47403, USA; $10.00). In each, Holmes investigates a real mystery – the Turin Shroud, the Loch Ness Monster, and the Tunguska Event – and the suggested explanations are informed by Professor Schramm's specialist scientific knowledge. The science, to a layman like me, is fascinating, and the imitation of Dr Watson's style is brave, though I winced rather at the supposed 'Scots' dialect, and I can't help thinking that the doctor and the detective shouldn't be calling each other 'Sherlock' and 'James' *[*sic*]*. And why would Mycroft Holmes address his brother as 'Holmes'? But this is my specialist field, and perhaps I'm being too picky. The stories are clever and engaging. *The Apocryphal Cases of Sherlock Holmes* is available at $10.00 plus postage from the author at Schramm Studio, PO Box 209, West Liberty, WV 26074, USA.

The Baker Street Phantom by **Fabrice Bourland** (Gallic Books, Worlds End Studios, 134 Lots Road, London SW10 0RJ; 5 August; £7.99) is the most satisfyingly fantastic novel to have come my way in some time – since Gilbert Adair's *And Then There Was No One*, at any rate – but then the French have a genius for this sort of thing. When they set up their detective agency in 1932, Andrew Singleton and James Trelawney could hardly have expected that their first client would be the widow of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, nor that she would commission them to investigate an apparent haunting at the house that had only recently been allocated the number 221 Baker Street. Lady Conan Doyle is desperately concerned to know if there is a link between the disturbances in Baker Street and the brutal murders that have cast a pall of fear over London. M. Bourland is not the first to use the ghost of Sherlock Holmes as the premise of a story, but he has a bolder imagination than most. Holmes isn't the only phantom that our novice detectives must face… *The Baker Street Phantom* is the first Singleton and Trelawney mystery. I look forward to the second!

The Sign of the Four is the third Sherlock Holmes graphic novel to be adapted by **Ian Edginton**, illustrated by **INJ Culbard** and published by SelfMadeHero (5 Upper Wimpole Street, London W1G 6BP; £14.99). Somehow I missed the second, *A Study in Scarlet*, but I shall make a point of seeking it out. Messrs Edginton and Culbard present the stories in an intelligent, almost cinematic way, so it's appropriate that this one should be enthusiastically introduced by Alan Barnes, author of the excellent *Sherlock Holmes on Screen*. It's all rather splendid, and I'm particularly pleased to see that Mr Culbard has based his paintings of Pondicherry Lodge on Kilravock, identified as Major Sholto's house by Bernard Davies in his 1990 paper 'Dr Watson's Deuteronomy'.

Andrew Lycett, author of an outstanding biography of Arthur Conan Doyle, has contributed the introduction to a new edition of *The Lost World* from the Folio Society (44 Eagle Street, London WC1R 4FS; £24.95). As you'd expect from this publisher, the book as an object is beautiful, and it includes all the illustrations, three in colour and the rest in black and white, from the 1912 'large paper' edition. You can join the Folio Society at www.foliosociety.com/book/LWR/lost-world. Or ask Catherine Cooke to introduce you, as she's a member. Her e-mail address is ccooke@westminster.gov.uk.

New from Gasogene Books (Wessex Press, PO Box 68308, Indianapolis, IN 46268, USA) are *Murder in the Vatican: The Church Mysteries of Sherlock Holmes* by **Ann Margaret Lewis** ($18.99), and *Sherlockian Heresies* by **Léo Sauvage**, edited and introduced by Julie McKuras & Susan Vizoskie ($19.95). I hope to review these books shortly.

John Patrick Bray's play *Hound* is now published by Next Stage Press (www.shop.nextstagepress.net/product.sc?productId=68&categoryId=1; $8.00).

Not exactly Holmesian but well worth reading is *Mr Dickens & Master Betty*, the new novel by **Alan Stockwell** (Vesper Hawk Publishing, Vesper Cottage, Vesper Hawk Lane, Smarden, Ashford, Kent TN27 8PU; £7.95, $12.95 or €8.95), enthusiastically commended by both Donald Sinden and Simon Callow. You can find out more at http://vesperhawk.com/MrDickensandMasterBetty.aspx. Look out also for *Dracula's Guest: A Connoisseur's Collection of Victorian Vampire Stories* edited and introduced by **Michael Sims** (Walker & Co, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010, USA; $17.00). A British edition is due from Bloomsbury in October.

On 31 August Robert Hale (Clerkenwell House, 45-47 Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0HT) will publish *Sherlock Holmes and the Giant Rat of Sumatra* by **Paul D Gilbert**. You can order it direct from www.halebooks.com/index.asp?TAG=&CID= for £13.29, a saving of £5.70. Due in October from Hale is *Sherlock Holmes' Tibetan Adventure* by **John F Rice**.

Daniel Corey informs us of an interesting project: a graphic novel entitled *Moriarty: The Dark Chamber*, written by Mr Corey, with art by Anthony Diecidue, letters by Dave Lanphear and inspired by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (DangerKatt Creative Studio). He's looking for financial backing for the book – you can find information at www.kickstarter.com/projects/dangerkatt/moriarty-the-dark-chambera-graphic-adventure, along with an animatic trailer.

The signed copy of *Beeton's Christmas Annual* for 1887, offered at Sotheby's in London on 15 July, failed to reach its reserve price of £250,000. Bidding stopped at £240,000. More accessible to most of us is first edition of *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*, unsigned but in very good condition, at the Penzance Auction House (Alverton, Penzance, Cornwall TR18 4RE) on 17 August. The estimate is £1,000-£2,000.

Mark Ubsdell points out that the DVD documentary *The Man Who Murdered Sherlock Holmes*, reviewed in DM 304, is available direct from the production company, Electric Theatre, for just £10.00 including postage. E-mail mark@electric-theatre.co.uk.

An actor new to me, **Jason Daniel Roberts**, has recorded *The Hound of the Baskervilles* for Coronation Audio, in what's described as a 'fully dramatized' audio book. In fact, Mr Roberts makes a very good job of reading an abridged version of the novel, with appropriately atmospheric music and sound effects. This two-CD set won't replace my copies of the recordings by David Timson or Tony Britton, but it provides a most entertaining couple of hours. I do wonder, though, why Mr Roberts pronounces 'alley' as 'allay'. You can buy *The Hound of the Baskervilles* on CD or as a download at www.coronationaudio.com.

Jim Ballinger reports that you can download free the recording that **Arthur Conan Doyle** made in 1930, talking briefly about Sherlock Holmes and then about spiritualism. Go to the CHARM website at www.charm.kcl.ac.uk/sound/sound_search.html, to the Sound File Search, change the term from Composer to Artist, and look for Conan Doyle, Sir Arthur.

At www.sherlock-holmes.com/e_times10-7.htm you'll find the July issue of *The Sherlockian E-Times*, the catalogue-magazine of **Classic Specialties** (PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH, 45219, USA; sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com).

It's good to see that the Italian periodical *Sherlock Magazine* continues to flourish. See this link: www.sherlockmagazine.it/notizie/4035/ – kindly forwarded by the editor **Luigi Pachi**.

I gave the wrong link last time for **Giorgio Trevisan's** painting of Holmes and Watson. It's actually on offer, for €5,000 plus postage, at ruedutemple@libero.it. There's information about the artist's work at www.slumberland.it/contenuto.php?tipo=albo&id=297&nome=Sherlock_Holmes.

The BBC 1 series *Sherlock*, created by **Steven Moffat** and **Mark Gatiss**, and starring Benedict Cumberbatch and Martin Freeman as Holmes and Watson, far surpassed its inspiration, the Universal films of the 1940s that placed Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce in the mid twentieth century. All three *Sherlock* films, but especially the first and the last, repay watching again and again. Apparently a second series is planned. Meanwhile the first will shortly be released on DVD, with commentaries and, I understand, with the unshown 60-minute pilot.

In the spring Peter Egan and Philip Franks toured in *The Secret of Sherlock Holmes*, the play that **Jeremy Paul** wrote more than twenty years ago for Jeremy Brett and Edward Hardwicke. Robin Herford's production is now at the Duchess Theatre in London, with Peter Egan as Holmes and Robert Daws taking over as Watson. The eight-week run ends on 11 September. You can book tickets on 0844 412 4659 or on-line at www.thesecretofsherlockholmes.com.

Upstairs at the Gatehouse, Highgate until tomorrow, as part of Camden Fringe, is *Sherlock (Abridged)*, written and performed by **Matthew Woodcock** and **Peter Davis**. 'When Holmes and Watson feed the complete works of Arthur Conan Doyle's classic detective novels into a computer, the intrepid duo must solve all of the mysteries at once in what may turn out to be the definitive detective story, *The Case of the Porcelain Tongue*…' Box office: www.camdenfringe.org or phone 0844 477 1000.

'Sherlock Holmes', one of the many dozens of sculptures that added so much colour and humour to London during the **2010 Elephant Parade**, was bought for £9,750. The total raised to help save the Asian elephant from extinction in the wild was more than £4,000,000. *[*I wonder who bought Sherlock Holmes…*]*

Three years ago a giant rat was discovered in Papua. On 27 July this year the Daily Telegraph reported that the remains of an even bigger one that died about 2,000 years ago had been found in a cave in East Timor. We're gradually moving closer to Sumatra.

According to BBC News on 16 July, a 'confidential report suggests that the 200-year-old Dartmoor prison could be closed'. 'The Prison Reform Trust said earlier in July that Dartmoor Prison should eventually be closed because it was too isolated and too old.'

On 9 October at the Yvonne Arnaud Theatre in Guildford, **Kevin J Last** will present *detective Story: An Illustrated History of the Great Fictional Sleuths*. Other contributors are Michael O'Byrne on criminal profiling and, er, me, talking about Sherlock Holmes. Tickets are available from 01483 440000, or on-line at www.yvonne-arnaud.co.uk.

Periodicals received. ***The Arthur Conan Doyle Newsletter and Birthday File XVII***, 22 May 2010 (**The Conan Doyle [Crowborough] Establishment**, Brian Pugh, 20 Clare Road, Lewes, SussexBN7 1PN). ***The Baker Street Journal***, Summer 2010 (Steven Rothman, 220, West Rittenhouse Square, #15-D, Philadelphia, PA 19103, USA; subscriptions, PO Box 465, Hanover, PA 17331, USA). ***The Camden House Journal***, May 2010 and July 2010 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, Debbie Tinsley, PO Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). ***Communication***, no. 300 (**The Pleasant Places of Florida**, Wanda & Jeff Dow, 1737 Santa Anna Drive, Dunedin, FL 34698, USA).

For the Sake of the Trust: The Baker Street Irregulars Trust Newsletter, Spring 2010 (**The BSI Trust**, Marshall S Berdan, 2015 Main Street, Glastonbury, CT 06033, USA). ***Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections***, June 2010 (Suite 111, Elmer L Andersen Library, University of Minnesota, 222 21st Avenue S, Minneapolis, MN 55455, USA). ***The Illustrious Clients News***, June 2010 and July 2010 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T Doyle, 9 Calumet Court, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). ***Ineffable Twaddle***, August 2010 (**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 1910, April 1910, May 1910 and June 1910 *[*yes, 1910*]* (**La Société Sherlock Holmes de France**, Thierry Saint-Joanis, 15 rue Grande, 03370 Saint-Sauvier, France). ***The Magic Door***, Spring 2010 (**The Friends of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection**, Doug Wrigglesworth, 16 Sunset Street, Holland Landing, Ontario, Canada L9N 1H4).

And ***Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press***, June 2010 and July 2010 (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. 306 16 September 2010

Thanks to the publishers, SelfMadeHero (5 Upper Wimpole Street, London W1G 6BP), I can tell you that *A Study in Scarlet*, the second Sherlock Holmes graphic novel written by **Ian Edginton** and illustrated by **I N J Culbard**, is as good as the first and the third. The adaptation is exceptionally well done: the Mormon episode is given no more space than it needs, nor any less. The drawings – or more accurately, paintings – are curiously impressive. The faces are done in a broad and rather cartoonish style, which doesn't seem incongruous on the anatomically realistic bodies. The settings, from Bart's Hospital to the Great Alkali Plain, are beautifully depicted. These books would make an excellent introduction for the reluctant reader, but it will appeal to anyone who appreciates what's so rarely found in adult fiction these days – first-class illustration. *A Study in Scarlet* is priced at £14.99.

Two of our members have new books out from MX Publishing (335 Princess Park Manor, Royal Drive, London N11 3GX). *The Official Papers into the Matter Known as 'The Hound of the Baskervilles'* (£14.99/ $22.95/ €17.99) purports to be the original case files from both Scotland Yard and Devon County Constabulary, all presented in facsimile. In fact this collection of witness statements, medical reports, and police reports is the work of **Kieron Freeburn**, a former member of the Metropolitan Police CID, now living in Devon. There are some careless errors: the post-mortem report on Sir Charles Baskerville has Sir Henry's name on the first page; Mrs Lyons is called 'Miss Lyons' throughout; Selden's name changes from Arthur to Albert; Barrymore once refers to his wife as his sister. Some apparent mistakes may be deliberate departures from the novel, though it seems unlikely: 'Lucy Lyons', 'the Yew Avenue' and 'Merripits House' for Laura Lyons, the Yew Alley and Merripit House. Those quibbles aside, the project is very nicely done, providing a fresh and completely valid view of the investigation. In particular it's good to know how the two police forces regarded the summoning of a Scotland Yard man without reference to the Devon Constabulary!

The Sign of Fear by **Molly Carr** (£12.99/ $19.95/ €16.99) is just as clever. Its subtitle doesn't really indicate the tone of this very entertaining novel: *The adventures of Mrs Watson, with a supporting cast including Sherlock Holmes, Dr Watson and Moriarty*. Other dubious characters include A J Raffles, Bunny Manders, John Clay, Mrs Marple (mother of Jane), and M. Poirot (father of Hercule). Rather like M J Trow's stories of Inspector Lestrade, the book takes a distinctly revisionist approach to the Canon. The former Mary Morstan is a woman with a past, so perhaps it's natural that she should come within the orbit of the Napoleon of Crime. At least we can understand that she should occupy the time during Dr Watson's long absences by doing detective work herself. More surprising is the identity of her partner, a dangerous young woman to whom male costume is nothing new: 'Emily Fanshaw' is actually Mrs Neville St Clair, and still resents the fact that Sherlock Holmes cut short her husband's profitable scam by exposing him as the beggar with the twisted lip… There are more surprises in Mary Watson's memoirs, not least the revelation that John H Watson, who never qualified as a doctor, was born Ormond Sacker and changed his name by deed poll. *The Sign of Fear* is something of a guilty pleasure, perhaps, but a pleasure it certainly is.

Jon Lellenberg, author of *Baker Street Irregular* (Arkham House, Sauk City, WI 53585, USA; $39.95) is a long-standing member of our Society. His scrupulous research, intelligent marshalling of facts, and clear presentation of conclusions have been demonstrated time and again. He worked for the Pentagon for some thirty-five years, and since 1989 has been historian of the Baker Street Irregulars – all of which means that in this, his first novel, he's writing of things he knows intimately. In 1933, towards the end of Prohibition, a young New York lawyer named Woody Hazelbaker is obliged to take on a powerful gangster as a client. Working for Owney Madden, and having to keep the fact secret, opens his eyes to much that's bad in depression-hit America, and to much that's good and useful. Not long afterwards, Woody is introduced to Christopher Morley's fledgling Sherlockian society at Christ Cella's speakeasy, a meeting of kinsprits (Morley's term) that leads to lasting friendship with Basil Davenport, Earle Walbridge, Fletcher Pratt, Elmer Davis, Edgar Smith and other giants of the early BSI. Since Anthony Boucher's *The Case of the Baker Street Irregulars* in 1940, several fine, generally light-hearted detective stories have featured the BSI. There are mysteries in *Baker Street Irregular*, but it's something more than a detective story. Jon Lellenberg shows us, through Woody Hazelbaker's eyes, America's reaction to the rise of Nazi Germany and the outbreak of war. A group of Irregulars helps promote Anglo-American co-operation, in defiance of a strong isolationist movement, and when America enters the war, Woody joins military intelligence in Washington. While he is politically active in one direction, his wife is active in another; he doesn't learn the depth and purpose of her commitment until the end of the war, when the extent of Russian espionage in America is revealed, but his work and his search for the truth have taken him from Washington to London and on to the front line in Germany.

Fact and fiction sit so easily together that it's often hard to tell which is which. Real people, including those early Irregulars, come vividly and credibly to life. And through the sometimes extraordinary experiences of one man, Mr Lellenberg helps us to understand why things in America were as they were. *Baker Street Irregular* is an ambitious novel and a very considerable achievement.

I hope soon to be able to review *Sherlock Alive* by **Vincent Starrett**, compiled and edited by Karen Murdock (The Battered Silicon Dispatch Box, PO Box 50, RR #4, Eugenia, Ontario, Canada N0C 1E0; gav@cablerocket.com; Cdn$35.00). Karen Murdock has extracted the Holmesian content from every one of Starrett's weekly 'Books Alive' columns in the Chicago Sunday Tribune from 1942 to 1967. She says, 'It is as though I discovered a new book about Sherlock Holmes from the pen of Vincent Starrett.' The publisher's website is at www.batteredbox.com/index.html.

Peter Blau notes that the Battered Silicon Dispatch Box has also published *Re Sherlock: A Collection of Observations and Commentaries* by **Hugh T Harrington**, reprinting Harrington's Holmesian writings in magazines and newsletters from 1987 to 1999 ($12.00).

Young Sherlock Holmes: Red Leech, the second in the series of novels by **Andrew Lane**, will be published on 5 November by Macmillan Children's Books (Pan Macmillan, 20 New Wharf Road, London N1 9RR; £6.99). As with the first novel *Death Cloud*, there'll also be an audiobook, priced at £10.99. This is the official series, commissioned by the Conan Doyle Estate Ltd.

On 1 December Markosia Enterprises will publish a graphic novel, *The Young Sherlock Holmes Adventures* by Drew Castalia & Huw-J Davies, illustrated by J L Straw & Owen Jollands (www.markosia.com; £10.95). Due in here next March, but already out in America, is *Muppet Sherlock Holmes no. 1*, written by **Patrick Storck** and illustrated by **Amy Mebberson**, a comic book in which Gonzo and Fozzie take on the rôles of Holmes and Watson (Boom!

Studios, 6310 San Vicente Blvd, Suite 404, Los Angeles, CA 90048, USA; £6.45).

If you've ever wondered where Conan Doyle's original manuscripts are, or how many copies of the 1887 *Beeton's Christmas Annual* are known to exist today, then take a look at **Randall Stock's** excellent website *The Best of Sherlock Holmes* at www.bestofsherlock.com, where you'll find that information and much, much more.

John Addy reports that the funny and deeply sad 'elderly Sherlock Holmes' sketch by David Mitchell and Robert Webb, broadcast in *That Mitchell and Webb Look* on BBC2, 18 August, can be seen on YouTube at www.youtube.com/watch?v=FZKWs7VA0lU.

Coronation Audio, whose recording of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* was favourably reviewed in the last DM, has an interesting programme of classic literature on its website at www.coronationaudio.com. Next year's releases include *The Five Orange Pips* – an unusual and welcome choice – performed, like *The Hound*, by **Jason Daniel Roberts**.

I probably don't need to mention that the BBC's first, hugely successful series of *Sherlock*, created by **Steven Moffat** and **Mark Gatiss**, has been released as a two-DVD set. Extras are commentaries for first and third instalments, a background documentary, and the 60-minute pilot film – made to sell the idea to broadcast companies, despite what you may have read in the Murdoch press. It's fascinating to compare the pilot with the 90-minute broadcast version of *A Study in Pink*. All three films, especially *A Study in Pink* and *The Great Game*, repay watching again – and again. We're assured that the excellent **Benedict Cumberbatch** and **Martin Freeman** will return next year in three more 90-minute films. (I understand that the first series is being shown now in Canada, and will be broadcast in the USA from 24 October.)

The Beeb has set up three very entertaining fictional blogs: Sherlock Holmes's at www.thescienceofdeduction.co.uk, John Watson's at www.johnwatsonblog.co.uk, and Molly Hooper's at www.mollyhooper.co.uk, plus Connie Prince's website (no longer active since her untimely death) at www.connieprince.co.uk.

There's also a very good unofficial site, *Sherlocking* ('A community for fans of *Sherlock*') at www.sherlocking.org, where you'll find much more information (and, of course, opinion) about the series than on the BBC's site at www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00t4pgh. And Oscar Ross points out that *Sherlocking* is running a fan fiction contest, inviting submissions of new short stories – *very* short at 1000 words maximum! Details are at www.sherlocking.org/?page_id=668.

My friend Ruth Jenkins, who works for Waterstone's in Chelmsford, tells me that sales of the Canon and other Holmesian material have greatly increased thanks to the transmission of *Sherlock*. An article in the 12 August issue of *The Bookseller* confirmed that the jump in sales is a national phenomenon. It'll be interesting to see what happens in North America.

Any gent in need of a good vintage-style hat should take a look at www.lairdlondon.co.uk - or, better, call in at one of **Laird London's** shops, either 23 New Row, Covent Garden, London WC2N 4LA or 128 Columbia Road, Shoreditch, London E2 7RG. The quality appears to be consistently good and the prices reasonable.

Kieron Freeburn, author of *The Official Papers into the Matter Known as 'The Hound of the Baskervilles'*, runs the Rolls Royce Picnic Company, which is just what the name implies. Of particular interest to us is **The Baskerville Picnic Experience**, for details of which see www.baskerville-experience.com/, or write to The Rolls Royce Picnic Company, Middle Merryfield, Holsworthy, Devon Ex22 7BN (phone 01409 257101). You can also buy the book through the website.

Calvert Markham reports that **Crowborough Beacon Golf Club** has a website, and that the history page at www.cbgc.co.uk/history.asp discusses Arthur Conan Doyle's connection with the club, as well as that of Bernard Darwin, whose essay 'The Faith of a Fundamentalist' you can read in James Edward Holroyd's 1967 anthology *17 Steps to 221B*.

Despite everything, the fight continues to save **Undershaw**, Conan Doyle's house at Hindhead, from unsympathetic 'development'. Paul Spiring has alerted me to the fact that there's now a good page on Wikipedia at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Undershaw, as well as the Undershaw Preservation Trust's site at www.saveundershaw.com/ and a blog at http://undershawhelp.blogspot.com/. I needn't detail the significance of the house in the life and career of Conan Doyle, but Julian Barnes, author of *Arthur & George*, makes a very important point: 'Apart from Thomas Hardy's house, Undershaw is the only writer's house in England in which the writer played a major part in the design. Given Doyle's enduring popularity it would be not just a shame, but a disgrace if it were now to be lost to development.'

Paul Spiring also passes on news of property in Devon. A nice little two-bedroom stone cottage, 3 Wesley Terrace, Ipplepen, near Newton Abbot, is on the market at a guide price of £210,000. The attraction for the cognoscenti is that it's the former home of **Harry Baskerville**, coachman to **Bertram Fletcher Robinson's** parents. Information and pictures are here: www.vebra.com/property/2946/20979077. Also Park Hill Lodge, the Robinson's former coach house, was recently sold. The asking price was £439,950. See www.primelocation.com/uk-property-for-sale/details/id/CMYJ6440715.

Peter Blau reports that the University of Minnesota has reached its $1,000,000 goal for the E W McDiarmid Fund, enabling it to endow a curator for the Sherlock Holmes Collections – the largest and most comprehensive in the world. The first endowed curator is **Tim Johnson**.

Jens Byskov Jensen points out that in last issue's review of his book *Fifty Years in Baker Street* I carelessly misnamed his society as 'The Cimbrian Friends of Sherlock Holmes'. The correct name is **The Cimbrian Friends of Baker Street**. My apologies to Mr Jensen and to the Friends!

A particularly sad piece of news reached me just too late for the last DM. On 9 August, Jonathan McCafferty wrote: '*Our treasured member of long standing, **Derek Hinrich**, passed away earlier today. He had been ill for some while but had only just been readmitted to his local cottage hospital where he had a heart attack. I spoke to Jessie today as I had been arranging to see Derek and she advised me of what had happened. Jessie was not expecting it. They have been very active members for a long time and for a while Derek was the Associate Members secretary (during which period he personally paid the Subscription for members from Eastern Europe who either could not afford to be members or could not get the money to us). He had been a stalwart member for many years and will be greatly missed.*' I can only echo Jonathan's words, adding that Derek was a very intelligent and entertaining companion. His work for the Society was recognised in 2008 when he became the fifth recipient of the Tony Howlett Award.

Periodicals received. ***The Camden House Journal***, August 2010 and September 2010 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, Debbie Tinsley, PO Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). ***Ineffable Twaddle***, September 2010 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). ***Irregular Newsletter***, August 2010 (**The Conan Doyle [Crowborough] Establishment**, Brian Pugh, 20 Clare Road, Lewes, Sussex BN7 1PN). ***The Moor: Magasin för Sherlockianer***, August 2010 (**The Baskerville Hall Club of Sweden**, Anders Wiggström, Byggmästarvägen 29, 168 32 Bromma, Sweden). ***The Petrel Flyer***, Summer 2010 (**The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia**, Len Haffenden, 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7P 3C6). ***Practice Notes,*** July 2010 (**The Friends of Dr Watson**, Nino Cirone, Highcroft Cottage, 14 Totteridge Common, London N20 8NL). ***Prescott's Press***, June 2010 (**The Three Garridebs**, Warren Randall, 15 Fawn Lane West, South Setauket, NY 11720-1346, USA). ***The School Report***, Autumn 2010 (**The Priory Scholars**, Horace L Coates, 21 Butcombe Road, Leicester LE4 0FY).

And ***Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press***, August 2010 (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. 307 17 October 2010

In August (and I can't do better than to quote the organisers themselves) '**The Norwegian Explorers of Minnesota** and the **Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections at the University of Minnesota** held a well-received conference to explore the many meanings of the word 'spirits' and how they relate to Sherlock Holmes, Arthur Conan Doyle, and the Victorian Era.' It was called *The Spirits of Sherlock Holmes*, which is also the title of the 58-page book, edited by Michael Eckman and given to all who attended. The featured essays are decidedly varied. Robert Brusic considers the most obscure of TS Eliot's three borrowings from Sherlock Holmes; Timothy Reich illuminates the working class characters in *The Sign of Four*; Pj Doyle glances at Conan Doyle's spiritualist faith; Karen Murdock examines repetition as rhetoric in the Canon; Lucy Brusic shows how Edith Meiser, perhaps more than anyone, was responsible for the regrettable but persistent image of Watson as mentally negligible – an excellent piece, this; finally, Michael Eckman's survey of Sherlockian parodies in *Mad* magazine falls rather flat, sadly, because EC wouldn't allow any of the *Mad* illustrations to be reprinted. Copies of this very nice little volume can be ordered from John Bergquist BSI (3556 Ashbury Road, Eagan, MN 55122, USA) for $12.00 post-paid. Checks should be payable to The Norwegian Explorers. *[*Non-US purchasers should perhaps contact John at john.bergquist@gmail.com and ask about foreign postage.*]*

On the other side of the Pacific Ocean, the Kansai Branch of **The Japan Sherlock Holmes Club** has published *The Holmes Nandemo Jiten*, another volume in the Japanese *Encyclopedia Sherlockiana*, written by members of the Club and edited by Saburoh Hiraga. Mr Showasu Mashimo, who kindly sent me a copy of the book, has contributed several articles, on such diverse topics as Bow Street, Portsmouth, Scotland Yard, and Vincent Starrett. As you can see, the 103 essays cover a wide range of subjects, including some distinguished Japanese Holmesians. (I remember that Lord Donegall dubbed Kohki Naganuma "The Tokyo Mentor"…) The book is, of course, in Japanese, so I can't really say much about the contents, but I'm delighted to have a copy! It's available from Mr Saburoh Hiraga (3-6-24 Ueno-higashi, Toyonaka-shi, Osaka, 560-0013, Japan; JZB04100@nifty.ne.jp).

There's an interesting new booklet from the **Société d'études holmesiennes de la Suisse Romande** in its *Mémoires et Documents* series (Vincent Delay, chemin de Valdezia 3, CH-1012 Lausanne, Switzerland). In *Edmond Locard, le Sherlock Holmes Français* Jean-Pierre Crauser gives a good account, in French, of the man who established the essential principle of forensic science, that every contact leaves a trace.

Last year I welcomed *The Strange Return of Sherlock Holmes* by **Barry Grant**. A paperback edition will be out in December from Severn House (9-15 High Street, Sutton, Surrey SM1 1DF; £11.99), who have just published *Sherlock Holmes and the Shakespeare Letter* (£18.99). The letter of the title, which just might end once and for all the controversy over the authorship of Shakespeare's plays, is stolen from a Bond Street auction house. Against Holmes's expectations the theft proves to be connected with a bizarre series of attacks on apparently unrelated people. The weapon in each case is a tiny but powerful bomb. The resurrected Holmes is on excellent form, and his new Boswell, James Wilson, is likeable and highly competent. They need all their skill to deal with a remarkable eccentric family, four beautiful women, an insane scientist, and a brilliant international criminal with links to Al Quaeda! It's a thrilling tale, and in a curious way more light-hearted than its predecessor, though the author's humanity is never far below the surface.

I've just received a copy of *Pursuing Sherlock Holmes* by **Bill Mason** (Xlibris, www.xlibris.com; hardback $29.99; paperback $19.99; e-book $9.99 – prices exclude postage). I'll review this collection of essays in the next DM. Meanwhile, I can tell you that the book has been favourably reviewed in America, and that signed copies are available from the author for $24.00 (hardback) and $16.00 (paperback), postpaid in USA only. Send check or money order to Bill Mason, 2367 Lights Chapel Road, Greenbrier, TN 37073, USA.

Later this month **Dr Vithal Rajan** follows his collection *Holmes of the Raj* and his play *Sherlock Holmes and the Pirates of the Horn* – both unusual and excellent – with a novel, *The Year of High Treason* (Rupa & Co, 7/16, Ansari Road, Darya ganj, New Delhi – 110 002, India). The setting is Delhi in 1911, the year of King George V's Coronation Durbar, and the *dramatis personae* include Holmes and Watson, Winston Churchill, Arsène Lupin, AJ Raffles, Tarzan, Dr Fu-Manchu and Mikhail Strogoff. A heady mixture!

On 29 October, in their Further Adventures of Sherlock Holmes series, Titan Books (144 Southwark Street, London SE1 0UP) will publish new editions of: *Dr Jekyll and Mr Holmes* by **Loren D Estleman** and *The Whitechapel Horrors* by **Edward B Hanna**. Already available are *Séance for a Vampire* by **Fred Saberhagen**, *The Ectoplasmic Man* by **Daniel Stashower**, *The Man from Hell* by **Barrie Roberts**, *The Scroll of the Dead* by **David Stuart Davies**, *The Seventh Bullet* by **Daniel D Victor**, *The Stalwart Companions* by **H Paul Jeffers**, *The Veiled Detective* by **David Stuart Davies**, and *The War of the Worlds* by Manly Wade Wellman and Wade Wellman. All are priced at £7.99.

Due from MX Publishing (335 Princess Park Manor, Royal Drive, London N11 3GX) in November are *A Study in Crimson* by **Molly Carr** (£12.99) and *The Lost Stories of Sherlock Holmes* by **Tony Reynolds**, illustrated by **Chris Coady** (£9.99).

The Baker Street Letters by **Michael Robertson** features brothers Reggie and Nigel Heath, lawyers who rent an office in Baker Street – and start to receive letters addressed to Sherlock Holmes. The hardback got good reviews, and a paperback is due on 26 October (Minotaur, Macmillan, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010, USA). Amazon.co.uk is taking orders at £8.09. The sequel, *Brothers of Baker Street*, will be published in hardback next March.

Thomas Wheeler tells me that he has extensively revised and enlarged his admirable book *Finding Sherlock's London*, and is now looking for a publisher. If you can't wait, Amazon.co.uk has the second edition, *The New Finding Sherlock's London* (2009), at prices from £10.39.

Next spring or summer – they're not sure – *Sherlock Holmes and Conan Doyle Locations* by **Allan Foster** will be published by McFarland (Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640, USA; $35.00). 'It chronicles each man's life by guiding the reader through Scotland and England, with entries arranged by county or unitary authority.' Mr Foster is a writer and tour operator in Edinburgh.

The Science of Sherlock Holmes, the superb survey of forensic science by **EJ Wagner**, is now available as an audiobook from www.audible.com, read by the author and Simon Prebble. Over eight hours for $19.95.

Gael Stahl passes on news of a new DVD. *Sherlock Holmes & the Volcano Horror* is a play by **Hal Glatzer**, inspired by 'The Devil's Foot'. 'In November of 1890, Holmes and Watson were invited to visit the Kingdom of Hawaii. They stayed for several weeks in the hotel at the summit of active Kilauea Volcano, and were there drawn into a maelstrom of madness and murder…' The hotel is now an arts

centre, and the volcano is still active. Information about the play, the performance – recorded in Hilo, Hawaii – and the DVD can be found at http://halglatzer.com/holmes/index.html. Or e-mail Mr Glatzer at hal@halglatzer.com.

You may never be able to own the real thing, but various museums sell reproduction coins, including an 1887 'gold' sovereign, cast in pewter and plated in 22 carat gold by Ancestors of Dover Ltd (Bowles Well Gardens, Dover Road, Folkestone, Kent CT19 6PQ; www.ancestors.co.uk). Another company, Westair Reproductions (17 Seeleys Road, Tyseley Industrial Estate, Birmingham B11 2LQ; www.westair-reproductions.com) makes a Victorian half-sovereign.

This from Mr Anthony Hyde: 'From 23 to 27 November **Radlett Light Opera Society** will present *The Revenge of Sherlock Holmes* at the Radlett Centre (1 Aldenham Avenue, Radlett, Herts. WD7 8HL; phone 01923 859291; e-mail admin@radlettcentre.com). This original musical based on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's characters has as its centrepiece the intellectual cat-and-mouse games between the two larger-than-life figures of Holmes and Moriarty. It will be well worth catching this winning formula of classic Holmesian action and great songs set against the lively background of Victorian London.'

And news from **Lyndsay Faye**: plans are in hand to adapt her fine Holmes-and-the-Ripper novel *Dust and Shadow* into a 'dark musical thriller'. She's working with composer/lyricist Jonathan Reid Gealt, book writer Kasey Marino, and developer/director Jonathan B. Howard. At the moment, she says, it's 'a gleam in the eye of a production team who've signed some paperwork together. But we're thrilled to start!'

The as-yet-untitled sequel to Guy Ritchie's film *Sherlock Holmes* continues to generate news. Robert Downey Jr's illness has delayed shooting. Jared Harris – son of Richard Harris, and a leading actor in *Mad Men* – will apparently play Moriarty. And **Stephen Fry** himself announced, on Danny Baker's BBC Five Live programme, that he has been cast as Mycroft Holmes. I couldn't really imagine him as Sherlock, but Mycroft… I like the sound of that!

On 13 October, *Variety* reported that **Samuel L Jackson** is developing a detective drama for CWTV. '*Hawkshaw* centers on a mysterious man in his 20s who doesn't know his real identity – but believes that he's either a descendant of Sherlock Holmes or is actually the literary sleuth. Hawkshaw's psychiatrist thinks he suffers from Dissociative Identity Disorder – but her sister, a young cop, soon discovers Hawkshaw's British charm and powers of deduction can help her solve crimes. Both sisters soon find themselves drawn to him (and perhaps battling for his affection).'

Ars Praestigium offers a rather handsome cold-cast bronze bust of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle by the British sculptor **Peter Close**, in a signed and numbered edition of 1,000. The introductory price is $390.00 or £246.50, plus $35.20/£22.50 insured shipping. There are photos and full information and order details at www.ArsPraestigium.com.

At the Sherlock Holmes Hotel in Baker Street, on 13 November at 1.00pm, the former British Super-Middleweight Champion boxer, James Cook MBE, will launch a campaign to buy a minibus for **The Pedro Club** in Hackney. Founded in 1929, the club has been through hard times in a very tough area, but it survives as one of the oldest functioning youth clubs in London. Also present will be post-graduate historical analyst/researcher of crime, Pauline Anne Badger – dubbed 'Mrs Sherlock Holmes' by former FBI agent John Douglas.

Peter Blau notes that there's an interesting and amusingly written *Encyclopedia Sherlockia* on the website of **Shahan Cheong**, an Australian graduate student: http://scheong.wordpress.com/the-encyclopedia-sherlockia-a-work-in-progress/. The rest of Mr Cheong's site is worth exploring as well.

The Sherlock Holmes Society of Scotland held its inaugural meeting on 29 September. There hadn't, amazingly, been a Holmes society in his creator's native country since the dissolution of The Dancing Men of Edzell some twenty-five years ago. The new group is the brainchild of Barry Young, owner of Young's Interesting Books in Skirving Street, Glasgow. The first official meeting of the society will be at 7.30pm on Monday, 25 October at the Boswell Hotel in Mansionhouse Road, Glasgow G41 3DN. There's a website at http://sherlockscotland.blogspot.com/, and you can contact the society at sherlockscotland@btinternet.com. (Thanks to Cindy Stevens for alerting me to this new society.)

'When sorrows come, they come not single spies but in battalions.' All too soon after the death of Derek Hinrich, we've lost two more great Holmesians.

Actor, author, and consummate Holmesian scholar **Bernard Davies** died on 21 September, aged eighty-six. In 1941, while waiting for his call-up papers, he worked for several months with Tod Slaughter, playing the classic melodramas. After the war, he went from Stars in Battledress to weekly rep, but his fluency in six languages led to appearances on film and television as German officers and the like. In 1958 he joined the Sherlock Holmes Society of London and quickly made his mark, establishing beyond any reasonable doubt the true location of 221B Baker Street. In all, he wrote about thirty major papers, which were collected in 2008 into two lovely volumes by the Society. *Holmes & Watson Country: Travels in Search of Solutions* deservedly won the first Tony & Freda Howlett Literary Award. Bernard had received the Irregular Shilling in 1984, with the title 'A Study in Scarlet'; that investiture had been the very first given by the BSI, forty years before, when it was conferred upon the great Vincent Starrett. In 1985 he was given our Society's highest honour, honorary membership. His specialism was literary-topographical detection, and he was beyond dispute the Master. Equally important, he was a dear friend and a good companion.

Pilgrims to Switzerland in the 1980s and early '90s will remember the impressive and charming presence of the distinguished psychiatrist **Dr Tsukasa Kobayashi** and his wife Akane Higashiyama, joint founders in 1977 of the Japan Sherlock Holmes Club. Dr Kobayashi died on 27 September, having suffered for some time from myelodysplastic syndrome (a blood disorder caused by changes in the bone marrow). He was eighty-one years old. Most of his numerous Holmesian writings were published only in Japanese, but many of us treasure a copy of *Sherlock Holmes's London: Following the Footsteps of London's Master Detective* (1984), written in collaboration with his wife and featuring the lovely photographs of Masaharu Uemura. In 1989 Dr Kobayashi was invested into the Baker Street Irregulars as 'Baritsu'.

Two more losses should be mentioned. **Kevin McCarthy**, who died on 11 September aged ninety-six, will always be famous for his portrayal of Dr Miles Bennell in Don Siegel's superb 1956 science fiction chiller *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. Of course, he did a great deal more in a long and well-regarded acting career, including half a dozen performances as Sherlock Holmes on CBS Radio Mystery Theater in the 1970s. **Sir Robert Mark** was Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police from 1966 to 1972 and Commissioner until 1977. His greatest achievement, among many, was to eliminate the widespread and deep-rooted corruption within the CID – in effect, to clean up Scotland Yard. In 1974 he was guest of honour at our annual dinner, and his speech was printed in full in the Winter 1973 *Sherlock Holmes Journal*. *[*Yes, 1973. The publication schedule was a trifle erratic that year.*]* Sir Robert died on 30 September at the age of ninety-three.

Periodicals received. ***Communication***, no. 301 (**The Pleasant Places of Florida**, Wanda & Jeff Dow, 1737 Santa Anna Drive, Dunedin, FL 34698, USA). ***Ineffable Twaddle***, October/November 2010 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). ***Mayday Mayday*** and *The Look Out*, September 2010 (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardcarn Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). ***The Passengers' Log***, 7 August & 8 October 2010 (**The Sydney Passengers**, Rosane McNamara, 4/2a Merlin Street, Neutral Bay, NSW 2089, Australia). ***The Scion***, Autumn 2010 (**The Musgraves**, Anne Jordan, Hallas Lodge, Greenside Lane, Cullingworth, Bradford BD13 5AP). ***The Serpentine Muse***, Fall 2010 (**The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes**, Evelyn Herzog, 301 Warren Ave, #203, Baltimore, MD 21203, USA).

And ***Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press***, September 2010 (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. 308 17 December 2010

Pursuing Sherlock Holmes by **Bill Mason** (Xlibris, www.xlibris.com; hardback $29.99; paperback $19.99; e-book $9.99 – prices exclude postage) reminds us that the best Holmesian commentary is not limited to the four essential periodicals – the SHJ (of course), the BSJ, *The Passengers' Log* and *Canadian Holmes*. Most of the essays in this book first appeared in *The Holmes and Watson Report*, which, I'm sorry to say, I know only by name. In style and approach *Pursuing Sherlock Holmes* is refreshingly diverse. Serious examination of the relevance of Horace and Petrarch, the sexual perversion that was the real curse of the Baskervilles, and the true nature of Dr Sterndale's work, is juxtaposed with light verse about Nathan Garrideb, and a very neat account by Mrs Neville St Clair of how she turned Holmes's discovery of her husband's double life to her (and their) advantage. It's a splendid, entertaining and thought-provoking read altogether – attractively presented and properly proof-read. Signed copies are available from the author for $24.00 (hardback) and $16.00 (paperback), postpaid in USA only. Send check or money order to Bill Mason, 2367 Lights Chapel Road, Greenbrier, TN 37073, USA.

I don't know how he does it *[*I do, actually: great talent and damned hard work*]* but **Gyles Brandreth's** Oscar Wilde Murder Mysteries get better and better. *Oscar Wilde and the Nest of Vipers* (John Murray, 338 Euston Road, London NW1 3BH; £17.99) is positively dazzling. In 1893, at a glamorous *soirée* given for the Prince of Wales, Wilde is fascinated by an elegant young stranger, Rex LaSalle, who claims to be a vampire. The next morning he learns that his beautiful hostess, the Duchess of Albemarle, has been found dead, her body beaten and scratched, and with two small but deep incisions in her neck. The Prince commissions him, unofficially, to investigate the death, which he does, with the rather reluctant help of his friends Arthur Conan Doyle and Robert Sherard. The *dramatis personae* also include Bram Stoker (naturally), Antonin Dvorak, Lillie Langtry, Jane Avril, and an ominous police detective named Hugh Boone. Oscar is on sunny form, but the clouds are gathering. Like its central character, *Oscar Wilde and the Nest of Vipers* is both witty and profound. It's also devilishly clever.

Young Sherlock Holmes: Red Leech by **Andrew Lane** (Macmillan Children's Books, 20 New Wharf Road, London N1 9RR; £6.99) is the second in the series commissioned by the Conan Doyle Estate Ltd. The American bounty-hunter Amyus Crowe is still teaching fourteen-year-old Sherlock how to look and how to reason, but Crowe has other matters on his mind. Only three years ago Abraham Lincoln was murdered by John Wilkes Booth, who was shot dead twelve days later by Union soldiers. But Crowe fears that the assassin actually escaped and is now at the heart of a plot to destroy the United States government. Sherlock Holmes, Amyus Crowe, his daughter Virginia, and Sherlock's friend Matty Arnatt pursue the conspirators to New York, where they uncover even worse things. *Young Sherlock Holmes: Red Leech* is an intelligent and desperately exciting read. *[*A couple of odd facts that I don't think Mr Lane mentions: the maiden name of Booth's mother was Holmes, and his escape after killing the President was almost foiled by Major Henry Rathbone…*]*

The Watson/Conan Doyle style is deceptively hard to reproduce well. Among living writers, June Thomson and Denis O Smith have come close to perfection – and now there's **Paul W Nash**, whose collection *The Remains of Sherlock Holmes* (Strawberry Books, 19 Fosseway Drive, Moreton-in-Marsh, Glos. GL56 0DU; £12.00) is the best I've come across in some time. All seven stories are strong, and all seem to derive inspiration from Holmes's remark: 'There is but one step from the grotesque to the horrible.' Here we find an assassin nearly ten feet tall, a ghostly jewel-thief, murder committed by a monkey… 'The Mystery of Dorian Gray' stands out as a very clever attempt to provide a rational explanation for the events of Oscar Wilde's novel, though I prefer the tragedy of 'The Silent Valet' and the ingenious enigma of 'The Camden Rose', which seems to echo another tragedy, that of 'The Musgrave Ritual'. 'The Remains of Sherlock Holmes' is the detective's final case; he solves a tantalising puzzle, but the outcome is not a happy one, especially for Dr Watson. The stories are gratifyingly well-written, the proof-reading is good, and the book – a 230-page hardback – is handsome. *The Remains of Sherlock Holmes* is a winner!

The plotting in *The Lost Stories of Sherlock Holmes* by **Tony Reynolds** (MX Publishing, 335 Princess Park Manor, Royal Drive, London N11 3GX; £9.99) is very good. The truly chilling tale of the Giant Rat of Sumatra is followed by seven more, all clever, atmospheric and engaging. We read of a larcenous fortune teller; an explorer, apparently bled dry by leeches; a benign medium; an aristocratic anarchist; an eccentric collector; a grave-robber… and finally, in a charming comedy, the theft of a ruby necklace. It has to be said that the writing is not of the same quality as Dr Nash's, and the proof-reading is uncertain. However, the book has an outstanding advantage: each tale is enhanced with a superb illustration by **Chris Coady**, done in the style of Sidney Paget. (You can see a couple of the pictures here: http://www.nbillustration.co.uk/index.php?go=q,art:7,4,4556.)

Also from MX comes *A Study in Crimson: The Further Adventures of Mrs Watson and Mrs St Clair, Co-Founders of the Watson-Fanshaw Detective Agency* by **Molly Carr** (£12.99). Like its predecessor *The Sign of Fear* (see DM 306), it's not so much a novel as a collection of short stories with a succession of linking narrative threads. Much of the entertainment is in the clashes between Mary Watson and her cross-dressing partner. Each is a woman with a past, but that past remains largely untold. Mary, Emily and the ever-obliging John Watson (formerly Ormond Sacker) head for New York to investigate the Long Island Cave mystery, and immediately fall foul of the Red Circle when a trusted ally turns out to be no such thing. The gang's plan is to groom Watson to be the next Moriarty – and that's just the beginning. Add the Vatican Cameos, Hercule Poirot's regrettably criminal father and brother, Wilson the notorious canary trainer, A J Raffles, and the old Russian Woman, and you'll see that the Watson-Fanshaw saga is richly entertaining. As the theatre critics used to say, this one will run and run.

The Adventure of the Spanish Drums by **Martin Daley** (Irregular Special Press, Baker Street Studios Ltd, Endeavour House, 170 Woodland Road, Sawston, Cambridge CB22 3DX; £7.50) takes Holmes and Watson to Cumberland, to investigate the theft of a famous battle trophy – the Arroyo Drums, which were captured from the French 34th Regiment at the Battle of Arroyo dos Molinos in 1811 by the British 34th (Cumberland) Regiment, and which may still be seen at Carlisle Castle, in the Border Regiment Museum. Mr Daley's imitation of the Watson style is adequately good, though his punctuation lets him down. But it's an exciting story, with fascinating snippets about the city and the regiment, attractively embellished with period photographs.

The Friends of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection at Toronto Public Library (Clifford Goldfarb, Scotia Plaza, Suite 3100, 40 King Street W, Toronto, Ontario M6C 1T1, Canada) have published the 2009 Cameron Hollyer Memorial Lecture as a nice 32-page booklet. This is *Arthur Conan Doyle as Essayist and Journalist* by **Michael Dirda** (no price given). Mr Dirda is one of North America's most respected literary critics, and a BSI to boot.

My Victorian Fantasy: 25 Years with Her Majesty at the Colne Valley Railway 'by Mr Punch' is a very attractive 52-page booklet of photographs, in full colour, taken at the Colne Valley Railway's 'living history' events from 1986 to the present by actor, author and Punch & Judy Professor **Des Turner**. For more than a decade, Sherlock Holmes

was among the historical figures there, in the person of our late friend Stephen Farrell, and I initially portrayed Dr Watson before moving up the social scale to depict various royal personages. We both feature in the booklet, among a gallimaufry of Victorian characters. (Des Turner, Richmond House, 2 Benington Road, Aston, Stevenage, Herts. SG2 7DX; e-mail: desturner@aol.com; £7.99 plus £1.11 postage. Please make cheques payable to Des Turner.)

Back in the late 1990s, Penguin Audiobooks released six sets of first-rate recordings from the Canon. The reader was our own honorary member **Douglas Wilmer**, and the producers were our former Chairmen, Philip Porter and Richard Lancelyn Green. Four recordings were never released by Penguin, but that curious omission has now been rectified by Porter Press International (Hilltop Farm, Knighton-on-Teme, Tenbury Wells, Worcs. WR15 8LY; phone 01584 781588; sales@porterpress.co.uk). *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*, comprising 'Silver Blaze', 'The Cardboard Box', 'The Yellow Face' and 'The Stock-broker's Clerk', is available as four CDs (£9.99 plus postage) or as audio download (£7.99) from www.porterpress.co.uk. (Porter Press offers Douglas Wilmer's highly entertaining autobiography *Stage Whispers* at the seasonal bargain price of £15.99 plus postage - £2.00 in the UK).

Nearly forty years ago another great Holmes, **Peter Cushing**, recorded an unabridged reading of *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* – but very few of us will have heard it. The recording was made for the Royal National Institute for the Blind and for forty years was available only to registered blind and partially sighted people in the UK. On the 7th February, however, Cosmic Hobo (PO Box 223, Faversham, Kent ME13 7WU) will release Volume One on CD, the first of three, with liner notes by David Stuart Davies, at £19.99. The audio format enabled Peter Cushing, as it did Douglas Wilmer, to display a remarkable range of voices and accents that he rarely had the chance to use on film or television. See the website for details, or to pre-order, at www.cosmichobo.com. (Available now from Cosmic Hobo is Cushing's abridged reading of his second volume of autobiography, *Past Forgetting: Memoirs of the Hammer Years*.)

In 1993 BBC Radio 5 broadcast *The Unopened Casebook of Sherlock Holmes*, six new plays by **John Taylor**, with Simon Callow and Nicky Henson as Holmes and Watson. The stories were then published in narrative form, and very good they are. Now AudioGO, formerly BBC Audiobooks, has released *The Rediscovered Railway Mysteries and other stories* by John Taylor, read by **Benedict Cumberbatch** – four new stories on two CDs for £12.99 (AudioGO, St James House, The Square, Lower Bristol Road, Bath BA2 3BH). Or you can download the recordings for £9.99 at www.audiogo.co.uk/audiobook/30006/. 'The Conundrum of Coach 13' concerns the apparently impossible theft of gold bullion from a secure train, and the mystery of 'The 10.59 Assassin' is solved by an experiment with ballistics. The other two cases, 'An Inscrutable Masquerade' and 'The Trinity Vicarage Larceny', are just as baffling and just as satisfactorily explained. Mr Taylor has a sure touch with the Watson style, and Mr Cumberbatch is a splendid reader.

The latest and most ambitious recording by the Old Court Radio Theatre Company is now accessible on the Society's website at www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk/world/radio.php. This is a new radio adaptation, in two parts, of the classic play *Sherlock Holmes, or The Strange Case of Miss Alice Faulkner* by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and William Gillette. Jim Crozier and Dave Hawkes once again play Holmes and Watson – rôles that they have made very much their own – and Cyril Bagshaw gives a wonderfully sinister performance as Professor Moriarty.

Both **The Sherlock Holmes Society of London** and **The Baker Street Irregulars** have seasonal offers on certain publications. Check www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk/shop.php for the special deal on *To Keep the Memory Green* and *Meet Me in Bohemia*, and www.bakerstreetjournal.com/ for the special deal on *Scandinavia and Sherlock Holmes*. All highly recommended!

Next month the BSI will publish *Bohemian Souls: A facsimile of the original manuscript of 'A Scandal in Bohemia'*, edited and introduced by **Otto Penzler**, *The Grand Game: A celebration of Sherlockian scholarship, Volume One; 1902-1959*, edited by **Laurie King** and **Leslie S Klinger**, and *Italy and Sherlock Holmes*, edited by **Enrico Solito** and **Gianlucca Salvatore**.

At www.sherlock-holmes.com/e_times10-12.htm you'll find 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).

Vincent Delay points out that the booklet *Edmond Locard, le Sherlock Holmes Français* by **Jean-Pierre Crauser** is available from him at Chemin de la Chaumiere 1, 1010 Lausanne, Switzerland, and not at the address I gave in DM 307.

Anthony M Cornish (Arch Cottage, Dolydd Road, Cefn Mawr, Wrexham LL14 3NH; 01978 822227; a.m.cornish@btinternet.com) invites offers for six issues of *The Sherlock Holmes Journal*, all in fine condition: Volume 5 no. 4 to Volume 6 no. 4, plus Volume 7 no. 3.

There's little specifically Holmesian in the latest issue of **Geoff Bradley's** estimable magazine *CADS: Crime and Detective Stories* (Geoff Bradley, 9 Vicarage Hill, South Benfleet, Essex SS7 1PA; email Geoffcads@aol.com), but as always there's lots to interest the detective story devotee, including a detailed look at John Dickson Carr's classic 'locked room' lecture from *The Hollow Man*.

The 'Sherlock Holmes Spy Pocket Watch', now available from eBay, Amazon and other sources is a sophisticated electronic version of the spy cameras made a century and more ago.

The Undershaw Preservation Trust has instructed lawyers start judicial review proceedings to challenge Waverley Borough Council's decision to grant planning permission to convert Conan Doyle's Surrey home into flats. See www.saveundershaw.com, where you can also buy the Trust's lovely Christmas cards.

Actor, writer and director **Mark Gatiss** – co-creator of the BBC TV series *Sherlock* – has accepted the post of Patron and Sponsor of the Undershaw Preservation Trust.

Peter Blau notifies me that **The Red Circle of Washington** now has a website at www.redcircledc.org.

Herbert P Tinning, who died on 7 November, will be remembered with affection by participants in various of our Society's jaunts, especially to Switzerland, for which he adopted the character of the Revd Mr Roundhay, from 'The Devil's Foot'. He ran and, I think, founded the Devil's Foot Society, and his BSI investiture was 'Dr Leon Sterndale'. The rôle was well-chosen, as Herb was in real life a Deacon of the Episcopalian Church.

The masterwork of the director **Roy Ward Baker**, who died on 5 October, aged ninety-three, is certainly *A Night to Remember*, which remains the finest depiction on film of the tragedy of the *Titanic*. His prolific output includes *The October Man*, *The One that Got Away*, *Quatermass and the Pit* and the 1984 television movie *The Masks of Death*, which provided a worthy farewell for Peter Cushing's Sherlock Holmes. He also directed five films in Sheldon Reynolds' little-seen series *Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson*.

Periodicals received. ***The Baker Street Journal***, Autumn 2010 (Steven Rothman, 220, West Rittenhouse Square, #15-D, Philadelphia, PA 19103, USA; subscriptions, PO Box 465, Hanover, PA 17331, USA). ***The Cri Bar Crier***, December 2010 (**The Criterion Bar Association**, Susan Z Diamond, 16W603 3rd Avenue, Bensenville, IL 60106-2327, USA). ***The Log of the SS May Day***, vol 1 no 4 (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardcarn Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). ***The Morning Echo***, Civic Promenade Special Number 2010 (**The Elementary Victorians**, Steve Duke, PO Box 340. Reservoir, Victoria 3073, Australia). ***The Moor: Magasin för Sherlockianer***, Dec. 2010 (**The Baskerville Hall Club of Sweden**, Anders Wiggström, Byggmästarvägen 29, 168 32 Bromma, Sweden). ***Prescott's Press***, September 2010 (**The Three Garridebs**, Warren Randall, 15 Fawn Lane West, South Setauket, NY 11720-1346, USA).

And ***Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press***, October 2010 & November 2010 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; blau7103@comcast.net).

This issue has been held up by personal and seasonal commitments. I apologise for the delay. It's the last *District Messenger* of 2010, so 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. 309 27 January 2011

The thoroughly deserving recipient of this year's Tony Howlett Award, presented at the annual dinner on 15 January, was our former Treasurer, now one of Spain's outstanding Holmesians, **Maria Hayzen**.

At the **Baker Street Irregulars'** annual dinner the week before, Wiggins awarded investitures to **Vinnie Brosnan** ('That Gap on the Second Shelf'), **Lyndsay Faye** ('Kitty Winter'), **David Houle** ('The British Museum'), **Frank Ferry** ('Dr Leon Sterndale'), **Peggy Perdue** ('Violet Westbury') and **Terence Faherty** ('Sir Charles Baskerville').

Sherlock Holmes sometimes broke the law in the course of an investigation. Fortunately his actions were always justified, and he got away with it. But what if he was wrong? What if he was arrested and convicted? That's what happened to Ellis Parker, whose story is powerfully told in *Master Detective: The Life and Crimes of Ellis Parker, America's Real-Life Sherlock Holmes* by **John Reisinger** (Citadel Press, Kensington Publishing Corp., 850 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10022, USA; 2006; $15.95). As a youngster he played for barn dances in rural Pennsylvania, but when his father's horse and cart were stolen, it was Parker who tracked down the thief and the stolen property. He had found his profession. In 1894 he became the first Detective Chief of Burlington County, and over the next forty years was credited with solving 304 murders and more than 1000 other crimes. The comparison with Holmes is inevitable, but his character and methods put me in mind of another fictional sleuth, Lt Columbo. Mr Reisinger makes a telling point: 'Other detectives made people confess. Ellis Parker made people *want* to confess.' The abduction and murder of Charles A Lindbergh's baby son in 1932, the most sensational crime of the decade, happened in the neighbouring county, where Parker had no jurisdiction. Believing that the wrong man had been convicted, he arranged the illegal arrest of his own suspect. The result was tragic. Ellis Parker died in prison, convicted of kidnapping. Had he lived another week he would have been granted a presidential pardon.

Molly Carr takes time out from the exploits of the Watson-Fanshaw Detective Agency to examine the life and character of Sherlock Holmes's biographer. There are good things in *In Search of Doctor Watson: A Sherlockian Investigation* (MX Publishing, 335 Princess Park Manor, Royal Drive, London N11 3GX; www.mxpublishing.co.uk and www.mxpublishing.com; £9.99 / €12.99 / $16.95) including the refutation of Conan Doyle's claims that Watson 'never shows one gleam of humour or makes a single joke'. Here is useful information about medical, military and other matters – though it would be more helpful if it were indexed – and the tone throughout is both perceptive and sensible. (I can't agree, however, that Holmes's attendance at a Sarasate recital proves that he preferred the Spaniard to the Austrian violinist Joachim, thus demonstrating anti-Semitic feelings.) Unfortunately the book cries out for an editor. Edward Hardwicke is confused with David Burke. 'Gaol' is consistently spelt 'goal'. As Vestry Clerk of Clerkenwell, Sidney Paget's father was actually a senior local government officer (the civil vestries became parish councils in 1894). Serpentine Mews in 'A Scandal in Bohemia' is in St John's Wood, not 'near the Serpentine'. Christopher Plummer played Holmes, not Jack the Ripper, in *Murder by Decree… In Search of Doctor Watson* is good, but it could be better.

MX Publishing offers DM readers a £10.00 discount on 'the Dr Watson Collection' (*In Search of Dr Watson, Watson's Afghan Adventure* and *The Lost Stories of Sherlock Holmes*) with the code 'shswatson' at www.mxpublishing.co.uk/engine/shop/product/drwatsoncollection.

Sherlock Alive: Sherlockian Excerpts from VS's 'Books Alive' Column in The Chicago Tribune 1942-1967 by **Vincent Starrett** (The Battered Silicon Dispatch Box, PO Box 50, RR #4, Eugenia, Ontario, Canada N0C 1E0; www.batteredbox.com/index.html; Cdn$35.00) is a thick, handsome paperback volume of 503 pages, the fruit of pensive nights and laborious days on the part of **Karen Murdock**, who extracted, edited and annotated the relevant pieces from twenty-five years of 'Books Alive'. We're familiar – or we should be – with Starrett's book *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* and his sonnet '221B'. Another Holmesian book from that pen is an unexpected and wonderful treat. The hundreds of articles range from illuminating trivia to wise essays. As Susan Rice notes in her introduction, 'This is a bountiful book, first because it gives us some Holmesian musings from the Vincentian pen that few of us now alive have read, but also because it places these jewels and shards into a fine setting.' Highly recommended!

Also highly recommended is *The Grand Game: A Celebration of Sherlockian Scholarship. Volume One: 1902-1959*, edited by **Laurie R King** and **Leslie S Klinger** (The Baker Street Irregulars, Michael H Kean, 3040 Sloat Road, Pebble Beach, CA 93953-2837, USA; www.bakerstreetjournal.com/; $39.95 plus postage in USA, $49.95 plus postage elsewhere). The last such comprehensive anthology, *The Baker Street Reader* in 1984, was only half the size of the new book – and this is only volume one. Sixty-seven essays, mostly American, because far more has been published there, begin with Ronald Knox's 'Studies in the Literature of Sherlock Holmes' and take in Early Criticism, Textual Criticism, Higher Criticism, Radical Criticism (Rex Stout's 'Watson Was a Woman' and Julian Wolff's rebuttal), and *Midrash* – which, as Laurie King explains, is 'a homilectic approach to Biblical interpretation'. (This section includes AA Milne's 'Watson Speaks Out' and James Montgomery's 'Art in the Blood' *inter alia*. Don't worry. It does make sense.) Here are familiar names like Paul Gore-Booth, Dorothy L Sayers and Bernard Davies, alongside near-unknowns such as Pope R Hill, J W Sovine and Leon S Holstein, and a couple of people best known in other fields – Zazu Pitts and Franklin D Roosevelt. *The Grand Game* is a treasure house, full of good things.

'Sometime during the evening of Monday, 13 March 1911. a 23-year-old Probationary Fellow of Trinity College. Oxford, sat down in his room and began reading a paper to 16 members of that college's literary club…' The young man was Ronald Knox, one of four remarkable brothers, and his paper is regarded by many as the very basis of our Great Game. *The Baker Street Journal Christmas Annual 2010* is *From Piff-Pouff to Backnecke: Ronald Knox and 100 Years of 'Studies in the Literature of Sherlock Holmes'* by **Nicholas Utechin** (The Baker Street Irregulars; US $11.00 postpaid; elsewhere $12.00 postpaid). To mark the centenary, our Society will visit Oxford in September, and prospective pilgrims would do well to read Nick Utechin's little book before then – but note that more information came to light while it was being printed, so there'll be a follow-up in the Spring 2011 BSJ!

Two more admirable books from the BSI, *Italy and Sherlock Holmes*, edited by **Enrico Solito** and **Gianluca Salvatori** ($39.95 plus postage) and *Bohemian Souls: A Facsimile of the Original Manuscript of 'A Scandal in Bohemia' by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, with Annotations and Commentary*, edited by **Otto Penzler** ($35.00 plus postage) must await review till the next issue, as must *Watson's Afghan Adventure* by Kieran McMullen (MX Publishing; £9.99) and *Ronald Knox and Sherlock Holmes: The Origins of Sherlockian Studies*, edited by Michael Crowe (Gasogene Books, Wessex Press, PO Box 68308, Indianapolis, IN 46268, USA; $32.95).

For the first time, the handbook of one of our Society's jaunts was published after the event. *Surrey with a Fringe: The Handbook of the Surrey & Hampshire Weekend, 10 to 12 September 2010*, edited by **Jonathan McCafferty** (The Sherlock Holmes Society of London, Bob Ellis, 13 Crofton Avenue, Orpington, Kent BR6 8DU; www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk; UK £10.00; Europe £12.00 / €15.00; elsewhere £14.00 / £28.00) includes an account of our investigation of 'The Solitary Cyclist' and 'The Crooked Man' by David Jones, alongside 'Solitary Locations' by Catherine Cooke, 'Teddy' by Anna Smyth, articles on G F Watts

(dubbed 'England's Michelangelo'), the Spike at Guildford Workhouse, Brooklands, the old Imperial Theatre, and Freeman Wills Crofts, classic essays by Bernard Davies and Geoffrey Stavert, an amusing contrast between the issues of *The Strand Magazine* and *Collier's* that carried the first appearance of 'The Solitary Cyclist', and a typically dazzling poem by Auberon Redfearn, 'Teddy and Tweety'. It's very nicely produced, with splendid illustrations, though I can't help wishing that most of the photos were larger.

From **The Sound of the Baskervilles**, who celebrate their twenty-first anniversary in March, comes *Beaten's Christmas Annual 2010* (Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 98332-8981, USA; $13.00 postpaid in USA, $18.00 postpaid elsewhere – dollar checks, payable to The Sound of the Baskervilles, should be marked 'In US funds'). Topics in these sixty pages include arsenic, Jack the Ripper, J M Stoddart's commissioning of *The Sign of the Four*, the Sherlockian stories of Edward D Hoch, and the parentage of Reginald Jeeves. Here too are parody, pastiche, games and reminiscence. Very enjoyable!

I can't do justice to them, but I welcome the latest volume of *The World of Holmes* from **The Japan Sherlock Holmes Club** and the book *Holmes Seichi Jyunrei no Tabi* by the eminent scholar **Saburoh Hiraga**. Both are available from Mr Hiraga (3-6-24 Ueno-higashi, Toyonaka-shi, Osaka, 560-0013, Japan; JZB04100@nifty.ne.jp).

Thanks to Paul Spiring and Brian Pugh, we know much more about **Bertram Fletcher Robinson** (see www.bfronline.biz/) than we did a few years ago. At his death in 1907 he left a set of notes, which, as he requested, were developed by **Max Pemberton** into a novel, published in 1908. Now *Wheels of Anarchy: The Story of an Assassin*, edited by Hugh Cooke and Paul Spiring, has been reprinted in facsimile by MX Publishing (£14.99 / €17.99 / $24.95). Robinson or Pemberton may have discussed the story with their friend Conan Doyle, but the narrator, Bruce Ingersoll, is no Sherlock Holmes. Like the heroes of those other unputdownable Edwardian thrillers *The Riddle of the Sands* and *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, he's an ordinary, decent, educated man with an adventurous streak. The peril he faces is extraordinary and strikingly modern – international terrorism. It's a gripping tale, grippingly told.

Hugo Koch has kindly sent four copies of his latest booklet, subtitled *Psychoanalytic Hypothesis of Overdeterminism in Literary Productions: Prolegomenon to a de novo Inquiry into the Origins of the Name 'Sherlock Holmes'*. They are free to the first four applicants within the UK (a 'large letter' stamp would be appreciated).

The case of George Edalji is examined in a new book, *Outrage: The Edalji Five and the Shadow of Sherlock Holmes* by **Roger Oldfield**, former head of history at Great Wyrley High School (Vanguard Press, Pegasus Elliot MacKenzie Publishers Ltd, Sheraton House, Castle Park, Cambridge CB3 OAX; £14.99).

At www.sherlock-holmes.com/e_times11-1.htm is the January issue of *The Sherlockian E-Times*, the catalogue-magazine of **Classic Specialties** (PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH, 45219, USA; sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com).

Calabash Press (PO Box 1360, Ashcroft, British Columbia, Canada V0K 1A0; www.ash-tree.bc.ca/Calabash) currently offers eighteen Holmesian and Doylean titles at less than half price, including **Arthur M Alexander's** excellent *Hot on the Scent: A Visitor's Guide to the London of Sherlock Holmes* (now $10.00) and *Out of the Shadows: The Untold Story of Arthur Conan Doyle's First Family* by **Georgina Doyle** (hardback $20.00, paperback $10.00). Not to be missed!

At http://stephengaspar.blogspot.com/ you can read the first chapter of **Stephen Gaspar's** new Sherlock Holmes novel *Cold Hearted Murder*.

Congratulations to **Steven Doyle**, whose *Sherlock Holmes for Dummies* has been nominated for an Edgar Award by the MWA.

'Don't Go Into The Cellar!' is a Birmingham-based theatre company who specialise sensational and spooky drama, often staged in unusual venues (www.dontgointothecellar.com). On 12 March they'll perform *The Singular Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* at The Bear & Ragged Staff in Cumnor, Oxfordshire. Tickets cost £10.00 and can be booked by phone at 01865 862329. (The 'singular adventures' are *The Stonor Case* and *The Crown Diamond* – presumably abridged.)

Earlier this month there was a special screening in Clapham of the *Sherlock* episode *The Great Game*, followed by a question & answer session with **Steven Moffat** and **Mark Gatiss**. Our member Rakshita Patel has written a full report, which you'll find at http://baker-street.org.uk/2011/01/sherlock-screening-and-qa-with-the-creators/. The Baker Street Supper Club at http://baker-street.org.uk is worth a look.

Back in DM 304, I recommended the DVD documentary *The Man Who Murdered Sherlock Holmes* (also favourably reviewed in the Winter SHJ). The producers are offering copies to members of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London at £7.99, post-paid – a generous saving of £5.00 on the regular price. Send orders, and cheques payable to Electric Theatre Co., to 6 Rochester Road, London NW1 9JH.

Admirers of Conan Doyle's second greatest literary creation will welcome *The Adventures of Brigadier Gerard*, the second collection of the bold Frenchman's heroic and often ludicrous deeds, read superbly by **Rupert Degas** (Naxos AudioBooks, 2nd Floor, 40A High Street, Welwyn, Herts. AL6 9EQ). The genius of these stories is in the balance between Etienne Gerard's absurd un-selfconscious vanity, and the admirable courage with which he triumphs over danger in the service of his beloved Emperor Napoleon. These seven tales include 'How the Brigadier Slew the Fox', one of the best things Conan Doyle ever wrote.

Several guided walks of Holmes's London are available. From 16 April to 19 November **Brit Movie Tours** will run a 'three-hour luxury air-conditioned mini coach Sherlock Holmes Tour' of locations from the books and from the recent film and television series. Full details are at http://britmovietours.com/bookings/sherlock-holmes-london-tour/ – or contact Lewis Swan at info@britmovietours.com (07894 454003).

Peter Blau reports the death on 29 November, aged eighty, of **Robert J Mangler**, an eminent lawyer and devoted Sherlockian who in 1960 was responsible for reviving Chicago's two leading Sherlock Holmes societies, Hugo's Companions and The Hounds of the Baskerville (sic). *[*The '(sic)' is actually part of the name.*]* In 1962 he was invested into the Baker Street Irregulars as 'Sir Hugo Baskerville'.

Periodicals received. ***The Baker Street Journal***, Winter 2010 (Steven Rothman, 220, West Rittenhouse Square, #15-D, Philadelphia, PA 19103, USA; subscriptions, PO Box 465, Hanover, PA 17331, USA). ***The Camden House Journal***, December 2010 and January 2011 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, Debbie Tinsley, PO Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). ***Communication***, no. 302 (**The Pleasant Places of Florida**, Wanda & Jeff Dow, 1737 Santa Anna Drive, Dunedin, FL 34698, USA). ***The Formulary***, December 2010 (**The Friends of Dr Watson**, Nino Cirone, Highcroft Cottage, 14 Totteridge Common, Totteridge, London N20 8NL). ***Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections***, December 2010 (Suite 111, Elmer L Andersen Library, University of Minnesota, 222 21st Avenue S, Minneapolis, MN 55455, USA). ***The Illustrious Clients News***, December 2010 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T Doyle, 9 Calumet Court, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). ***Ineffable Twaddle***, January 2011 & February 2011 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). ***Mayday Mayday,*** January 2011 and *C-Extra*, 17 December 2010 (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardcarn Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). ***The Morning Echo***, Twelfth Night Special Number 2010 (**The Elementary Victorians**, Steve Duke, PO Box 340. Reservoir, Victoria 3073, Australia). ***The Morning Post***, December 2010 (**The Noble Bachelors of St Louis**, Randy Getz, 7456 Cornell Avenue, University City, MO 63130, USA). ***The Petrel Flyer***, Jan/Feb 2011 (**The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia**, Len Haffenden, 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7P 3C6). ***QuinCahier***, Été 1910 (**La Société Sherlock Holmes de France**, Thierry Saint-Joanis, 15 rue Grande, 03370 Saint-Sauvier, France). ***The Scion***, Winter 2010 (**The Musgraves**, Anne Jordan, Hallas Lodge, Greenside Lane, Cullingworth, Bradford BD13 5AP). ***The Serpentine Muse***, Winter 2010 (**The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes**, Evelyn Herzog, 301 Warren Ave, #203, Baltimore, MD 21203, USA). ***Sherlockiana***, Nr 3/4 2010 (**Sherlock Holmes Klubben i Danmark**, Bjarne Rother Jensen, Højbovangen 24, 9200 Aalborg SV, Denmark). ***The Torr***, Autumn 2010 (**The Poor Folk Upon The Moors**, Reggie Musgrave, Drummond Cottage, Old Tavern Yard, Westbourne, Chichester, West Sussex PO10 8TA). ***West End Journal***, December 2010 (**Japan Sherlock Holmes Club**, Saburoh Hiraga, 3-6-24 Ueno-higashi, Toyonaka-shi, Osaka, 560-0013, Japan).

And ***Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press***, December 2010 (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 memorial service for our much-missed honorary member **Bernard Davies** will be held at the church of St Lawrence Jewry, Guildhall Yard, London EC2V 5AA, on the afternoon of Thursday 31 March, followed by refreshments in the Guildhall. It's an appropriate location, as Bernard was a Freeman of the City of London. Please check the Society's website at www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk for details, or contact Guy Marriott at guym144@googlemail.com (phone 07770 667603). And please let Guy know if you intend to come.

At the Bafta film awards on 13 February, **Christopher Lee** was made a Fellow of the British Academy of Film & Television Arts. In Sir Christopher's immensely varied career he has played Sherlock Holmes, Mycroft Holmes and Sir Henry Baskerville.

A hundred years ago, as if you needed reminding, **Ronald A Knox** delivered a paper to the Gryphon Club at Trinity College, Oxford. That paper, a parody of what had become known as the Higher Criticism of the Bible – which he called the 'minimising interpretations' of doctrine – applied the same sort of nit-picking critical methods to the chronicles of Sherlock Holmes. Whether or not that approach was appropriate to the Bible, it's entirely suited to Sherlock Holmes, and Knox's essay, subsequently published under the title 'Studies in the Literature of Sherlock Holmes', is regarded by many as the cornerstone of our game. Its satirical origins are evident in the references to fictitious scholars named Sauwosch, Backnecke, Piff-Pouff and the like, and there's at least one glaring error, concerning Gilchrist's pencil, but the essay's lively humour doesn't detract from its importance. Now it's been published, along with four more relevant pieces, in a beautiful 130-page hardback book, *Ronald Knox and Sherlock Holmes: The Origin of Sherlockian Studies*, edited, annotated and introduced by Michael J Crowe (Gasogene Books, Wessex Press, PO Box 68308, Indianapolis, IN 46268, USA; www.wessexpress.com; $32.95). In 'The Mathematics of Mrs Watson' Knox considers the problematic dating of *The Sign of Four*, and in 'The Mystery of Mycroft' he propounds a shocking theory about Holmes major. His introduction to *The Best Detective Stories of 1928* is interesting and entertaining but only marginally Sherlockian. The final piece, 'The Adventure of the First Class Carriage', is an excellent pastiche – the only one, I think, to have been published in *The Strand Magazine*, where it appeared in February 1947. Gasogene Books and Professor Crowe have done us a great service with this little book.

The name of **Léo Sauvage** was, I confess, unfamiliar to me, though he received the investiture of 'Victor Savage', BSI in 1960 and contributed four pieces to *The Baker Street Journal*. His *magnum opus* was unpublished and apparently unfinished at the time of his death in 1988, and unpublished it remained until now. Julie McKuras and Susan Vizoskie, with assistance from Sauvage's children, have edited, annotated and introduced the eight extant chapters of *Sherlockian Heresies*, adding three brief pieces about the Sherlockian phenomenon (Gasogene Books; $19.95). As his title suggests, Léo Sauvage expected his opinions to be controversial. He refuses to regard the Holmes stories as in any way sacred, rejecting the term 'the Canon' in favour of 'the Conan', but his criticisms are not mere carping. As George Fletcher has pointed out, 'he saves his heavy guns for substantive issues'. He condemns Holmes's cavalier attitude to security at 221B, for instance, and the fact that the detective persistently endangers his closest associates. He devotes a whole chapter to demolishing the misconception that the address 221B indicates just one floor within Mrs Hudson's house. He exposes numerous flaws in Holmes's methods and in Watson's reports, and when it comes to 'The Final Problem' and 'The Empty House' he is scathing. This sounds completely negative, but it isn't, because Sauvage writes superbly and with obvious deep affection. We learn too, in the editors' introduction, that the man himself was as remarkable as his subject. *Sherlockian Heresies*, incomplete as it is, is one of the great Holmesian commentaries.

The publication programme of the Baker Street Irregulars includes the International Series and the Manuscript Series. The former, which aims 'to bring the finest foreign language Sherlockian scholarship to English-speaking readers' – it's fascinating to discover the effect that the Holmesian phenomenon has on cultures beyond the anglophone – has just reached its fourth volume, *Italy and Sherlock Holmes* edited by **Enrico Solito** and **Gianluca Salvatori** (The Baker Street Irregulars, Michael H Kean, 3040 Sloat Road, Pebble Beach, CA 93953-2837, USA; www.bakerstreetjournal.com/; $39.95 plus postage). The editors' brief introduction is complemented by 'Notes on the Italian Sherlockscape', a revised version of a paper presented at the 2009 conference *Arthur Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes: Their Cultural Afterlives* at Hull University, which neatly and comprehensively summarises the situation. Unlike their Scandinavian and Japanese counterparts, Italian Sherlockians have had little impact on scholarship in the English-speaking world. A pity, because the essays in this collection show that they have a good deal to offer. I'm particularly impressed by Enrico Solito's tracing of Holmes's route from Meiringen to Florence, by Luca Martinelli's identification of Cardinal Tosca, by Roberto Pirani's examination of the Naval Treaty, by Ivo Lombardo's piece on fingerprints, and by Mr Solito's identification of 'Carina'. My one reservation is that the translation often reads rather clumsily, but that, after all, is a minor matter.

Bohemian Souls: A Facsimile of the Original Manuscript of 'A Scandal in Bohemia' edited and introduced by **Otto Penzler** ($35.00 plus postage) brings the BSI Manuscript Series up to seven. Not all of the original Sherlock Holmes manuscripts still exist, of course, and most of us will never get the chance to examine the survivors in person, so publications like this are especially important. Randall Stock describes the MS, which belongs to the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin, and recounts the history of this, the story that really brought Holmes to the attention of the public. Philip Bergem has transcribed and annotated the manuscript, which was originally entitled 'A Scandal of Bohemia'. Only twenty-three of the thirty pages are in Conan Doyle's hand; the writer of the other seven is still unidentified. The story poses several problems, such as doubtful dates, an apparently illegal wedding, and the very nature of Irene Adler as a person and as a singer. Essays by John Linsenmeyer, Andrew Jay Peck, Ray Betzner, Curtis Armstrong, Michael H Kean, Julia Rosenblatt and Donald Pollock tackle these and other enigmas, and the cover artist, Rikki Niehaus, writes briefly about the development of the design. Long may the BSI Manuscript Series continue!

Rikki Niehaus has also provided admirable illustrations for *Murder in the Vatican: The Church Mysteries of Sherlock Holmes* by **Ann Margaret Lewis** (Gasogene Books; $18.95), a very attractive 160-page paperback, in which Dr Watson recounts three of Holmes's hitherto unchronicled investigations: 'The Death of Cardinal Tosca', 'The Vatican Cameos' and 'The Second Coptic Patriarch'. The stories are clever and entertainingly told, in an acceptable imitation of the Watson style. The intrusion of historical personages into the world of Sherlock Holmes is always a risky move, but in at least two of these investigations it can hardly be avoided, since Watson has already told us of the Pope's involvement – and Ms Lewis writes with authority of the Papacy of Leo XIII. A bonus is the presence in the second and third stories of a yet more familiar figure, one Father Brown.

The early life of Sherlock Holmes has been much speculated upon, at least since Gerald Frow's fine 1982 television serial *Young Sherlock: The Mystery of the Manor House*. Most recently we've had the second book in Andrew Lane's exciting *Young Sherlock Holmes* series, and now comes *The Crack in the Lens* by **Darlene A Cypser** (Foolscap & Quill, PO Box 1018, Morrison, CO 80465-1018, USA; $14.95), which, like all the good ones, tells an engrossing story of the boy Holmes and at the same time explores the reasons why the man Holmes turned out as he did – a

brilliant, unconventional, and apparently emotionless righter of wrongs. In this account Mycroft, Sherrinford and Sherlock are the sons of Squire Siger Holmes of Mycroft Manor in Yorkshire, where Sherlock is educated by a private tutor, Professor James Moriarty. These inventions of William Baring-Gould have become far more influential in America than they should be, but they make a colourful and appropriately atmospheric basis for a tale that seems to owe as much to Emily Brontë as to Arthur Conan Doyle. Ms Cypser plans a further three novels, taking the young Holmes through his years at university and his career as an actor to his early days as a consulting detective. *[*Confusingly, **The Crack in the Lens** is also the title of Steve Hockensmith's fourth 'Holmes on the Range' mystery, featuring Otto Amlingmeyer and his brother Gustav – known as Big Red and Old Red.*]*

Fewer people have considered the early life of John H Watson in any depth. **Kieran McMullen**, author of *Watson's Afghan Adventure* (MX Publishing, 335 Princess Park Manor, Royal Drive, London N11 3GX; www.mxpublishing.co.uk and www.mxpublishing.com; £9.99 / €12.99 / $16.95) is a former professional soldier and a specialist in American military history – an appropriate person to tell of Watson's experiences as an army surgeon. A confrontation with the CO leads to his being, as he said later, removed from the Fighting Fifth and sent to join the Berkshires, who have an appointment at Maiwand. But Watson and a couple of fellow-officers have set themselves additional task: to search for the lost treasure of the Armenian Catholic Church. Catholicism is essential to the Watson of Mr McMullen's story, though Conan Doyle's Watson gives no indication of any particular religious faith. The novel could do with better proof-reading, but it's exciting, and full of authentic military detail.

Sherlock Holmes's Tibetan Adventure by **John F Rice** (Robert Hale Ltd, Clerkenwell House, Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0HT; £18.99) takes us further into Asia. As with his childhood, several writers have found that Holmes's *wanderjahre* offers great scope for combining imagination and research. In Mr Rice's novel, Holmes's journey to Tibet has both a personal and an official purpose. He seeks enlightenment; the British government wishes to ensure Tibet's independence from China. Once smuggled into Lhasa, the detective is called upon to recover priceless items stolen from the Dalai Lama – and to foil an attempted assassination. The account of the country and its society is entirely convincing, the detail always illuminating the narrative, never obscuring it. Mr Rice writes well, and the book is very handsomely presented.

AudioGO, which used to be BBC Audiobooks, has just released a splendid boxed set: *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* read by **Derek Jacobi** (AudioGO Ltd, St James House, The Square, Lower Bristol Road, Bath BA2 3BH). Whether you accept that the reading is, as claimed, 'complete and unabridged' depends on whether you place 'The Cardboard Box' here or in *His Last Bow*. What we have are the usual eleven stories on eight CDs, with a running time of just over nine hours. Sir Derek subtly but unmistakably defines each character, and his timing is superb. This production exudes class. Do I really need to say any more? At the moment prices vary widely, the cheapest being Amazon's £10.16 – an outstanding bargain!

More recent and forthcoming books. *Sherlock Holmes' Guide to Life: Lessons from the World's Smartest Detective* by **Sir Arthur Conan Doyle** (Vince Emery Productions, PO Box 460279, San Francisco, CA 94146, USA; £10.99). *Sir Arthur Conan Doyle* by **Michael Dirda** (Princeton University Press, 6 Oxford Street, Woodstock, Oxfordshire, OX20 1TW; £13.95). *Other People's Books: Association Copies and the Stories They Tell* by **The Caxton Club** (Oak Knoll, 310 Delaware Street, New Castle, DE 19720, USA; $75.00). *Spirit on the Water: Extraordinary Cricket Tours* by **Mike Harfield** (Loose Chippings Books, The Paddocks, Back Ends, Chipping Campden, Gloucestershire, GL55 6AU; www.loosechippings.org; 15 March; £12.99 hardback, £8.99 paperback, £8.99 e-book). *Sherlock Holmes: The Crossovers Casebook* edited by **Howard Hopkins** (Moonstone Books, www.moonstonebooks.com; 19 July; £10.47). *The Baskerville Legacy* by **John O'Connell** (Short Books, 3A Exmouth House, Pine Street, London EC1R 0JH; 1 September; £12.99).

The January issue of *The Sherlockian E-Times*, the catalogue-magazine of **Classic Specialties** (PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH, 45219, USA) is at www.sherlock-holmes.com/e_times11-2.htm. Classic Specialty's website is at sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com.

At 2.00pm on 26 March, as one of the 'Lost Hour' events marking the start of British Summer Time, a new murder mystery play, *The Prima Donna's Last Aria*, will be performed at John Pounds Corner, Queen Street, Portsmouth. The play, inspired by the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection (Lancelyn Green Bequest) was written by the Conan Doyle Projects Officer, **Dr Fiona-Jane Brown**. Details are at www.portsmouth.eu/learning/20159.html – or contact Laura Weston at 023 9283 4184; laura.weston@portsmouthcc.gov.uk.

The Ha Ha Boys have been described as 'Monty Python meets the Chuckle Brothers on acid'. Their 'elementary comedy thriller' *Ha Ha Holmes! The Beast of the Blistervilles* will be at the Warehouse Theatre, 62 Dingwall Road, Croydon CR0 2NF (020 8680 4060) from 11 March to 3 April before touring until 8 May. The itinerary is posted at http://jamiewilsonproductions.com/current-productions/ha-ha-holmes/ha-ha-holmes-tour-2011/.

Arthur Conan Doyle and **Harry Houdini** were friends for several years. Now comes news that two feature films, *Voices from the Dead* and *Edge of the Unknown*, and a television series, *Among the Spirits*, are planned, all featuring the two as a detective partnership – and each project was conceived independently, with no knowledge of the others.

The Society will make another trip to Switzerland next year. Prospective pilgrims might wish to contact Ian Hartley, a veteran of (I think) two Swiss trips in the 1980s, who has two leather suitcases which someone may like to use. Please drop Ian a line if you're interested. His address is 18A York Road, Harrogate HG1 2QL. And if you fancy visiting Meiringen on your own, take a look at www.theswissexperience.co.uk.

The tenth annual **Victorian Cricket Match** against the P G Wodehouse Society will be held at 11.30am on Sunday 19 June at West Wycombe Cricket Club, whose ground is one of the loveliest anywhere. Members and their guests should bring their own picnics and costume is very much welcomed. This is an excellent social occasion and free of charge. Do please come and give our players your support.

On Sunday 3 July the Society will play croquet at Pince's Gardens, Exeter, against **The Poor Folk Upon the Moors** for possession of the Henry Drew memorial cups. The Society's team will once again be captained by Charles Miller. The cost of this event, to include lunch, tea and green fees, is £14.00 per person. Please send cheques, payable to The Poor Folk Upon the Moors, to Judy Marshall, The Mill House, Crazelowman, Tiverton, Devon EX16 7DG.

Michael Meer has set up a website for **The Reichenbach Irregulars** at www.221b.ch. Click on 'Meiringen' for an interactive Google map. Resa Haile (413 S Washington Street, Janesville, WI 53548, USA) advises me that **The Original Tree Worshippers of Rock County** also have an internet presence, at http://originaltreeworshippersrc.blogspot.com/.

John Barry, Britain's most successful film composer, died on 30 January aged seventy-seven. He won five Oscars, though not for any of the eleven James Bond films he scored. His music for Anthony Harvey's 1971 comedy *They Might Be Giants* is excellent – as is the film. **Alfred Burke**, fondly remembered as Frank Marker in the 1965-1975 television series *Public Eye*, was an actor of great versatility and sincerity in a career that spanned nearly seventy years. In 1952 he played the lead in William Gillette's *Sherlock Holmes* at the Birmingham Rep, with Paul Daneman as Watson. He died on 16 February, just short of his ninety-third birthday. **Nicholas Courtney**, who died on 22 February aged eighty-one, was loved and respected as Brigadier Alistair Lethbridge-Stewart, the longest-serving co-star in *Doctor Who*. In 1981 he played Inspector Lestrade in *Sherlock Holmes vs Dracula* on BBC Radio 4, to John Moffatt's Holmes.

Randall Stock points out that the subscriptions address for ***The Baker Street Journal*** is now PO Box 583, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA.

Periodicals received. ***The Cri Bar Crier***, February 2011 (**The Criterion Bar Association**, Susan Z Diamond, 16W603 3rd Avenue, Bensenville, IL 60106-2327, USA). ***The Illustrious Clients News***, February 2011 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T Doyle, 9 Calumet Court, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). ***Ineffable Twaddle***, March 2011 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). ***Mayday Mayday,*** February 2011 (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardcarn Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). ***The School Report***, Spring 2011 (**The Priory Scholars**, Horace L Coates, 21 Butcombe Road, Leicester LE4 0FY).

And ***Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press***, January 2011 (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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Arthur Conan Doyle sometimes acted as a detective. His best known and most controversial case was the conviction of George Edalji, a Birmingham solicitor, for brutally maiming horses in a Staffordshire village. In 2005 the events were retold as fiction in Julian Barnes' novel *Arthur & George*, and the next year saw *Conan Doyle and the Parson's Son*, a substantial investigation by Gordon Weaver. Now comes *Outrage: The Edalji Five and the Shadow of Sherlock Holmes* by **Roger Oldfield** (Vanguard Press, Sheraton House, Castle Park, Cambridge CB3 OAX; £11.99 or €12.99). The controversy remains because opinions tend to be polarised – some think Edalji 'guilty as hell', even though he was cleared on appeal. His father, the Vicar of Great Wyrley, was born a Parsee in Bombay, and his mother came of an English family, but what difficulties arose through Shapurji Edalji's long incumbency in the parish were not great; they seem to have had more to do with his single-minded insistence on moral duty over compromise than with racial differences. Racism is evident in the story, but it doesn't always take the forms we might expect. The court that declared George innocent of the animal mutilations refused him compensation on the grounds that he was guilty of writing a series of vile anonymous letters – an offence of which he had never been accused, never tried and certainly never convicted. The amateur investigators working for Conan Doyle were sometimes inept, but they were at least matched in that respect by the police, who often seemed to have just one object in view – to arrest and convict George Edalji. Roger Oldfield became interested in the case when he taught history at Great Wyrley High School; he has pursued it with the zeal and rigour of a historian, and his book seems unlikely to be surpassed as a comprehensive, intelligent, balanced and intensely readable account.

Alistair Duncan's book *Close to Holmes* was, I think, the first to give equal consideration to the places associated with the great detective and to those frequented by his creator. Now we have *Sherlock Holmes and Conan Doyle Locations; A Visitor's Guide* by **Allan Foster** (McFarland & Co, The Eurospan Group, (c/o Turpin Distribution), Pegasus Drive, Stratton Business Park, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire SG18 8TQ; £30.50), which looks at places throughout Scotland and England. The author is a tour operator in Edinburgh, and his book is clearly and conveniently laid out, starting in Conan Doyle's native city and ending in the city where he gave birth to Holmes. Naturally Edinburgh and London receive the most attention, and it's with the former that Mr Foster really scores, not only because he knows the place inside-out but because we've long lacked a proper guide to the sites associated with Conan Doyle's youth. I wish I'd had this book when our Society visited Edinburgh in 2009! Allan Foster has done his homework, as his bibliography and his well-chosen quotations attest (though I note that he repeats the Sherlock Holmes Museum's false claim to the address 221B Baker Street and an 'official heritage plaque'). The entries are engagingly written and nicely illustrated. For a 168-page paperback the book is very expensive, but otherwise, full marks!

Holmes, Watson and Sir Henry Baskerville appear briefly in *Phantom Hounds: Curse of the Baskervilles Returns* by **WR Park** (Black Rose Writing, PO Box 1540, Castroville, TX 78009, USA; $16.95) but the protagonists are Matthew Ward and Jimmy Black, who, after returning from New York where they solved the mystery of Jack the Ripper (see Mr Park's earlier novel *Fatal Incision*) have resigned from Scotland Yard and set up a private detective agency at 221A Baker Street. Their first client is an American girl, bequeathed a house on Dartmoor by her relation, Sir Winston Weathers, who had bought it after the supposed death of its previous owner, one Jack Stapleton. Weathers' own recent death was suspicious, to say the least… From Devon, the investigation takes Ward and Black to Cairo, where they become entangled with a gang of grave-robbers. It's the sort of rip-roaring adventure story you'd find in the pulp magazines of the thirties and forties, and I'm sure it will find an appreciative American readership. Others, though, may have problems with the many historical and cultural anomalies. Matthew Ward's fiancée, daughter of the New York Police Commissioner, is 'Special Detective Mary Nolan', surely an impossibility for a woman in 1890. Jimmy Black's betrothed, Sarah Dewers, is a Doctor of Criminal Psychology, though no university awarded degrees in that discipline then, even to men. The dead man should be 'Sir Winston', not 'Sir Weathers'. The Edison phonograph used a half-inch steel or wooden needle, not 'a sapphire or diamond the size of a grain of sand' – didn't those come in with stereo LPs sixty years later? *Phantom Hounds* is fun, but *caveat lector*.

The railways feature prominently in the chronicles of Sherlock Holmes. In *The Little Book of Steam* (G2 Entertainment Ltd, Studio 19, Waterhouse Business Centre, Cromar Way, Chelmsford CM1 2QE; £7.99) **Clive Groome** combines the expertise of a former engine driver and the passion of lifelong enthusiast to tell the story of the steam railway in Britain. It's a very nice pocket-sized 128-page hardback, well-written and splendidly illustrated. You could hardly do better for an authoritative potted history.

We've waited long for a full biography, and I'm delighted that *William Gillette: America's Sherlock Holmes* by **Henry Zecher** has finally been published (Xlibris, 1663 Liberty Drive, Suite 200, Bloomington, IN 47403; www.xlibris.com; $34.99 hbk or $23.99 pbk). However, this DM is already, regrettably, later than I'd intended, so a review must wait till next time, along with ones of *The Magic Bullet: A Locked Room Mystery Featuring Shadwell Rafferty and Sherlock Holmes* by **Larry Millett** (University of Minnesota Press, 111 Third Avenue South, Suite 290, Minneapolis, MN 55401-2520; $24.95) and *Shadowfall: A Novel of Sherlock Holmes* by **Tracy Revels** (MX Publishing, 335 Princess Park Manor, Royal Drive, London N11 3GX; www.mxpublishing.co.uk and www.mxpublishing.com; £9.99/ €12.99/ $16.95).

Prospective Swiss pilgrims may be interested in *The Victorian Tailor: Techniques and Patterns* by **Jason Maclochlainn** (Batsford, Anova Books Group Limited, The Old Magistrates Court, 10 Southcombe Street, London W14 0RA £19.99). *The Mammoth Book of Best British Crime 8* edited by Maxim Jakubowski (Robinson, 3 The Lanchesters, 162 Fulham Palace Road, London W6 9ER; £7.99) includes a Holmes story by **M J Elliott**.

Anthony Horowitz's 'official' Holmes novel, *The House of Silk*, will be published on 1 November by Orion (Orion House, 5 Upper Saint Martin's Lane, London, WC2H 9EA) at £18.99. From MX Publishing on 5 December comes *An Entirely New Country: Arthur Conan Doyle, Undershaw and the Resurrection of Sherlock Holmes* by **Alistair Duncan**. Both books can be pre-ordered on Amazon.co.uk.

Other recent and forthcoming titles: *Sherlock Holmes and the Hilldrop Crescent Mystery* by **Val Andrews** (Irregular Special Press, Baker Street Studios Ltd, Endeavour House, 170 Woodland Road, Sawston, Cambridge CB22 3DX; £7.50). *The Valley of Fear* adapted by **Ian Edginton**, illustrated by **INJ Culbard** (Selfmadehero, 5 Upper Wimpole Street, London W1G 6BP; 19 May; £14.99). *The Sherlock Holmes School of Self-defence: The Manly Art of Bartitsu, as Used against Professor Moriarty* by **E W Barton-Wright** (Ivy Press, 210 High Street, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 2NS; 27 May; £6.99). *Young Sherlock Holmes: Black Ice* by **Andrew Lane** (Macmillan Children's Books, 20 New Wharf Road, London N1 9RR; 3 June; £6.99). *Between the Thames and the Tiber: The Further Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* by **Ted Riccardi** (Pegasus Books, 80 Broad Street, 5th Floor, New York, NY 10004, USA; 15 June; £15.44). *The Oriental Casebook of Sherlock Holmes* by **Ted Riccardi** (Pegasus; 15th June; £9.23). *The Peerless Peer* by **Philip Jose Farmer** (Titan Books, 144 Southwark Street, London SE1 0UP; 24 June; £7.99). *A Brief History of Sherlock Holmes* by **Nigel Cawthorne** (Robinson, 3 The Lanchesters, 162 Fulham Palace Road, London W6 9ER; 1 September; £8.99). *A Study in Sherlock* edited by **Laurie R King** and **Leslie S Klinger** (Bantam Books, 1745 Broadway, New York, NY 10019 USA; 25 Oct; £9.26).

Jeffrey Somers (finebooks.oriental@googlemail.com) is trying to track down a Sherlock Holmes pastiche published by Penguin in the green-for-

crime covers, probably in the 1950s. He can't recall author or title, but says that the names of Holmes and Watson aren't in the title. Holmes doesn't appear till about chapter 4. Can anyone help, please?

Joseph J Eckrich needs the first three issues of *The Sherlock Holmes Journal* – Vol. 1, nos. 1, 2 & 3 – to complete his collection. If you have any of these issues for sale, please contact him at jeckrich@sbcglobal.net.

Undershaw Preservation Trust is selling a very handsome enamel badge, with a brooch-pin fastening, and bearing the Trust's logo. It's available on eBay for £7.99 plus postage. Keep your eyes on eBay, as there'll be other stuff for sale to help save Conan Doyle's Surrey home.

The A3 Hindhead Tunnel, to be opened later this year, takes the London-Portsmouth road away from Hindhead town centre and under the Devil's Punchbowl. On 14 May Hindhead Together will hold a **Tunnel Vision Community Walkthrough**, at which Undershaw Preservation Trust, with support from our Society, will be well represented. The Trust has designated it Undershaw Preservation Day. Tickets for the walk went on sale on 20 April and sold out that same day!

On 15 May at 3pm **Gyles Brandreth** will speak at the Victoria & Albert Museum on Oscar Wilde, Conan Doyle and their circle. Tickets for *Elementary, My Dear Oscar*, including wine reception and book signing, are £15.00 from 020 7942 2277. From 5 to 8 May Gyles will be at Riverside Studios, Hammersmith (020 8237 1111) with his dazzlingly funny *The One to One Show*. These are the only London dates.

From June to August, **Miracle Theatre Company** will tour Cornwall and the West Country, and parts of Wales with a new play, *The Death of Sherlock Holmes* by Bill Scott. 'Miracle stirs up all the ingredients of the best Sherlock Holmes mystery with a large measure of comedy to bring audiences of all ages a period thriller with a sting in its tail.' The information is all on the company's website at www.miracletheatre.co.uk.

The Ha Ha Boys are touring England with their 'elementary comedy thriller' *Ha Ha Holmes! The Beast of the Blistervilles* until 8 May. Check the venues at http://jamiewilsonproductions.com/current-productions/ha-ha-holmes/ha-ha-holmes-tour-2011/.

Our member **Richard Dinnick** has dramatised *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and *The Tangled Skein* (David Stuart Davies's novel, I trust?) as audio dramas for Big Finish, who did such a splendid job with Roger Llewellyn's performances in DSD's one-man plays and with *Holmes and the Ripper*. The website at www.bigfinish.com/ranges/sherlock-holmes notes that *The Final Problem/The Empty House* will be released in October, followed by *The Reification of Hans Gerber* in November, *The Hound* in December and *The Tangled Skein* in January. Nick Briggs and Richard Earl will play Holmes and Watson, with Alan Cox as Moriarty.

Yesterday BBC Gloucestershire broadcast the fifth excellent Holmes spoof by **Mantelpiece Theatre**. *Sherlock Holmes and the Royal Wedding*, based loosely on 'A Scandal in Bohemia' and inspired by next week's marriage of Prince William and Kate Middleton, can be heard on www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/radio/bbc_radio_gloucestershire until 29 April.

Spotted by Philip Attwell in the BBC Radio Drama e-newsletter: 'In production – *The Rivals*. Set in a Victorian world where Sherlock Holmes is King, four lesser-known detectives are pitted against one another. By the Sony Award winning writer Chris Harrald. Coming up in October.'

'Broadcasting exclusively on the internet, *The Blog of Dr Watson* is a comedy series based on the original Sherlock Holmes stories by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. It's the latest project from long-time Sherlock Holmes fans – **Neil Hunt** and **Stephen Harvey Johnson** who have been writing and performing comedy together since 1997. www.drwatsonsblog.com.'

Ross Dillett of the **Friends of The Heath House** reports that the house, a magnificent Victorian gothic mansion, which served as Granada TV's 'Baskerville Hall', is open to visitors. The house also caters for weddings, conferences and other events. It's in Tean, Staffordshire, just a couple of miles from Alton Towers. See www.theheathhouse.co.uk and www.friendsofheathhouse.co.uk.

Anthony D P Mann writes from Canada: 'We have just completed final edit of an original film production - *Sherlock Holmes and the Shadow Watchers*. This 70-minute feature is an authentic Holmes piece produced with the kind permission of the Conan Doyle Estate.' See the film's website at: www.sherlockholmesadventures.ca. 'In May of this year, I will be travelling to the UK (Manchester) for a short spell between the 6th and 15th, and am hoping that we might be able to arrange a viewing for a smaller audience. If a venue / equipment can be provided to do so, we are happy to offer this screening at no cost.' Interested Mancunians should contact Mr Mann at amann2@cogeco.ca.

You'll find lots of original, rare, and very expensive material for sale at www.SherlockHolmesPosters.com including many film posters that are new to me. See also www.SherlockHolmesCollectibles.com,

Mime artist **Ed Johnson** has toured the world as a Sherlock Holmes Living Statue, devised for a street festival in Indonesia. See www.thelivingstatuecompany.com/sherlockholmeslivestatue1.html. He's available for functions and events, and can be contacted at info@thelivingstatuecompany.com.

Interesting websites and blogs include Rakshita Patel's **Umbrella Organisation** at http://mycroft-brolly.livejournal.com/, Martin Hickes' **Equinoctial Gales** at www.wix.com/martino1968/theequinoctialgales, and **Mycrofting** at http://community.livejournal.com/mycrofting/.

Derek Wood has founded **The Cambridge Deer Stalkers' Guild**, which he describes as 'An online Gentleman's clubroom, based in Cambridge UK, but open to any Holmes fan and anyone interested in Victoriana, or just good old-fashioned, no nonsense Chapishness'. See http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/deerstalkers/ or contact Mr Wood at holmes.mysteries@ntlworld.com.

The Society lost a good friend in **Theo Wyler**, who died in Zurich on 13 April. Having helped mastermind several Swiss Pilgrimages, he had been closely involved with preparations for the next one, scheduled for 2012. Jonathan McCafferty says, 'Theo was a very good chap. I well remember his astonishing impersonation of William Tell and a thousand quiet kindnesses.' He will be missed.

Michael Gough may be best known as Alfred Pennyworth in four *Batman* films, but he had a highly respected career on stage and screen, despite performances in many horror films of widely varying merit. In 1955 he played Russell Partridge in *The Case of the Perfect Husband*, one of the French-made TV series with Ronald Howard as Sherlock Holmes. He died on 17 March, aged ninety-four. **H R F Keating**, a giant in the field of detective fiction, died on 27 March; he was eighty-four. His many books include *Sherlock Holmes: The Man and his World*, he co-scripted *Sherlock Holmes and the Leading Lady*, the 1992 TV film starring Christopher Lee, and he wrote at least one excellent Holmesian short story. In 1988 Harry Keating was an admirable guest speaker at our Society's annual dinner.

Periodicals received. ***The Baker Street Journal***, Spring 2011 (Steven Rothman, 220, West Rittenhouse Square, #15-D, Philadelphia, PA 19103, USA; subscriptions, PO Box 583, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). ***The Camden House Journal***, February 2011 and March 2011 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, Debbie Tinsley, PO Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). ***Canadian Holmes***, Winter 2010/2011 (**The Bootmakers of Toronto**, Mark & JoAnn Alberstat, 46 Kingston Crescent, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, B3A 2M2, Canada). ***The Cri Bar Crier***, April 2011 (**The Criterion Bar Association**, Susan Z Diamond, 16W603 3rd Avenue, Bensenville, IL 60106-2327, USA). ***The Formulary***, March 2011 (**The Friends of Dr Watson**, Nino Cirone, Highcroft Cottage, 14 Totteridge Common, Totteridge, London N20 8NL). ***Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections***, March 2011 (Suite 111, Elmer L Andersen Library, University of Minnesota, 222 21st Avenue S, Minneapolis, MN 55455, USA). ***The Illustrious Clients News***, March 2011 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T Doyle, 9 Calumet Court, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). ***Ineffable Twaddle***, April 2011 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). ***Irregular Newsletter***, March 2011 (**The Conan Doyle [Crowborough] Establishment**, Brian Pugh, 20 Clare Road, Lewes, Sussex BN7 1PN). ***Mayday Mayday,*** March 2011 (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardcarn Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). ***The Moor: Magasin för Sherlockianer***, Mars 2011 (**The Baskerville Hall Club of Sweden**, Anders Wiggström, Byggmästarvägen 29, 168 32 Bromma, Sweden). ***The Passengers' Log***, January 2011 (**The Sydney Passengers**, Rosane McNamara, 4/2a Merlin Street, Neutral Bay, NSW 2089, Australia). ***The Petrel Flyer***, Spring 2011 (**The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia**, Len Haffenden, 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7P 3C6). ***The Serpentine Muse***, Spring 2011 (**The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes**, Evelyn Herzog, 301 Warren Ave, #203, Baltimore, MD 21203, USA). ***Sherlockiana***, Nr 1 2011 (**Sherlock Holmes Klubben i Danmark**, Bjarne Rother Jensen, Højbovangen 24, 9200 Aalborg SV, Denmark).

And ***Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press***, February 2011 & March 2011 (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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At the British Academy of Film & Television Arts' TV awards last week, *Sherlock* won the Bafta for Best Drama Series, and **Martin Freeman** won for Best Supporting Actor. **Benedict Cumberbatch**, Matt Smith and Jim Broadbent were beaten to the Best Actor award by Daniel Rigby, who played Eric Morecambe in *Eric & Ernie*.

The three films in the second series of *Sherlock* will be *A Scandal In Belgravia* (written by Steven Moffat), *The Hounds Of Baskerville* (Mark Gatiss) and *The Reichenbach Fall* (Stephen Thompson).

At our Society's Annual General Meeting on 19 May the third Tony & Freda Howlett Literary Award was presented to **Alistair Duncan** for his book *The Norwood Author: Arthur Conan Doyle & the Norwood Years (1891-1894)* (MX Publishing, 335 Princess Park Manor, Royal Drive, London N11 3GX; £9.99/$16.95/€14.99). Alistair's eagerly awaited next book is *An Entirely New Country - Arthur Conan Doyle, Undershaw and the Resurrection of Sherlock Holmes* (MX, 5 December; £12.99).

At the same event, **Nicholas Utechin** launched *The Best of The Sherlock Holmes Journal, Volume Two* (UK £25.00; Europe €27.00; elsewhere £30.00/US$60.00 – prices include postage). The 316 pages contain a wonderful variety of scholarship, reviews, Society reports, tributes and whimsy, all chosen by Nick from the years 1969 to 1990. There's much in this lovely hardback that's enlightening, some that's essential, and some that's simply entertaining. Pamela Bruxner has contributed an enthusiastic foreword, and I'm happy to give the book an enthusiastic recommendation. Whether or not you have Volume One, you will want Volume Two! It's available through the website at www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk, or from Bob Ellis at 13 Crofton Avenue, Orpington, Kent BR6 8DU.

William Gillette last played Sherlock Holmes on stage in 1932. The silent film of his play is long since lost, like his two performances on American radio. Only one short scene survives in a recording. But Helen Hayes spoke for many when she said, 'William Gillette is the only real Sherlock Holmes for me, or for anyone else who ever saw him.' Now we have *William Gillette: America's Sherlock Holmes* by **Henry Zecher** (Xlibris, 1663 Liberty Drive, Suite 200, Bloomington, IN 47403, USA; £23.00 hardback; £14.00 paperback). Gillette was 'one of the modern theatre's pioneering dramatists, one of its most majestic actors and one of its most fascinating personalities', and his theory of 'the illusion of the first time' led to a fundamental change in acting styles. Mr Zecher's fourteen years' research has uncovered no scandal, no sensation, just the fascinating life of a brilliant, chivalrous, witty gentleman, and he's done Gillette proud.

A few years ago an essay in the SHJ, 'Time Lines and the Trust' by **John E Weber**, identified both place and time of 'The Musgrave Ritual'. In *Under the Darkling Sky: A Chrono-Geographic Odyssey through the Holmesian Canon* (The Battered Silicon Dispatch Box, PO Box 50, RR #4, Eugenia, Ontario, Canada N0C 1E0; www.batteredbox.com/index.html; Cdn$40.00) Mr Weber applies the same meticulous research, rigorous logic and sound common sense to the entire Canon. He is the first, I think, to give equal emphasis to both chronology and topography in all sixty stories. He's familiar with every important commentary, and happily accepts a predecessor's conclusion if it seems right. Moreover he explains why he agrees or disagrees, and his standards are high. *Under the Darkling Sky* is an outstanding work of Holmesian scholarship.

Michael Duke, author of *Victorian Holmes* (The Battered Silicon Dispatch Box; Cdn$24.00), heads the Sherlock Holmes Society of Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. Here are fifty articles, none longer than eleven pages, and some much shorter. Often an important point can be effectively made with concision as well as precision. If the book has a theme, says Dr Duke, 'it may be that of considering the unconsidered people in the stories'. Some, naturally, are Australian, but, for instance, Tonga, Beryl Stapleton, Mrs Godfrey Staunton, Steve Dixie and Mrs Josiah Amberley are all appraised, intelligently and sympathetically. The essays also cover topics such as Gypsies, first aid, the Dacre Hotel, leprosy and chess. *Victorian Holmes* is literate, readable and full of stimulating insights.

Solar Pons knows that he is not Sherlock Holmes, and he knows that we know it, but his exploits capture the essence of Holmes better than almost any direct pastiche. *The Dragnet Solar Pons et al*. by **August W Derleth**. (The Battered Silicon Dispatch Box; Cdn$25.00) may be the last collection of uncollected material about 'the Sherlock Holmes of Praed Street'. Here are the texts of the first five tales as they appeared in *The Dragnet Magazine* or *Detective Trails* in 1929-30, before the market collapsed in the aftermath of the Wall Street crash, plus original versions of six more written in that same period. It's fascinating to compare these texts with the revised versions in the series that began publication in 1945 with *In Re: Sherlock Holmes – The Adventures of Solar Pons*. Mark Wardecker's numerous perceptive annotations are a real bonus.

David Hammer, who has written much excellent material, says that *Realms of Conjecture* (The Battered Silicon Dispatch Box; Cdn$20.00) is his final Holmesian book, but in truth there's little about Holmes in its 146 pages. Here are anecdotes, reminiscences, accounts of psychic experiences, memories of Michael Harrison, some light verse, a thought-provoking mystery novella… But what lingers, sadly, is the impression of bitterness at the perceived sorry condition of the BSI, and 'sadness at the state of Sherlockian scholarship'. I'm in no position to comment on that first point, but the latter complaint, at least, seems to me wilfully blind.

Also from The Battered Silicon Dispatch Box: *G K Chesterton on Detective Fiction: Everything the 'Father of the Whodunit' Wrote on the Mystery Story* edited by **John Peterson** (Cdn$30.00). Most of what GKC wrote is worth reading, and this collection is very welcome in the centenary year of the first book about the immortal Father Brown. And *Another 101 Sherlock Holmes Puzzles: Crosswords & Acrostixs* by **Franklin Saksena** (Cdn$30.00) containing some pretty fiendish problems.

The Sherlock Holmes novels of **Larry Millett**, though well regarded in America, are little known in Britain. I rather hope that changes, now that they're being reissued by the University of Minnesota Press (111 Third Avenue South, Suite 290, Minneapolis, MN 55401-2520, USA), because Mr Millett writes well, and he writes of what he knows – not London but the Twin Cities of Minneapolis-St Paul. The latest book is called *The Magic Bullet: A Locked Room Mystery featuring Shadwell Rafferty and Sherlock Holmes* (hardback, $24.95), but Holmes has only a minor rôle. The principal character is the detective-turned-saloonkeeper, who first appeared in the second novel, *Sherlock Holmes and the Ice Palace Murders* – newly republished in paperback at $14.95, along with the first, *Sherlock Holmes and the Red Demon*. Rafferty is an engaging character, but all of them are vivid and memorable, and the picture Mr Millett gives us of St Paul in 1917 is fascinating. The mysterious murder of a tycoon, alone in his fortified penthouse at the top of the city's tallest building, is a real cracker – and it's a nice touch to name one of the suspects J D Carr.

Vithal Rajan takes Holmes even further from London, but in the opposite direction, in his new novel *The Year of High Treason* (Rupa Publications India Pvt Ltd, 7/16 Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi 110 002, India; US$10.00 from www.rupapublications.com/client/Book/THE-YEAR-OF-HIGH-TREASON-.aspx). Holmes and Watson are sent by Winston Churchill to protect King George V at his Coronation Durbar in Delhi, and if Dr Rajan is to be believed, the King needs protection. The Imperial Crown of India must surely be an irresistible temptation to A J Raffles and Arsène Lupin. Mikhail Strogoff is there on behalf of the Tsar, but Dr Fu Manchu has his own agenda, while Lord Greystoke has quite a different one. Other notable persons, historical and fantastical, play their part, though their aims may not be quite what we expect. The complacent splendour of the Durbah, like the humour of the novel, is muted rather for us because we are aware of the impending war, which will signal the

beginning of the end for the British Empire. *The Year of High Treason* can be enjoyed on many levels.

In the first chapter of *Shadowfall* by **Tracy Revels** (MX Publishing, 335 Princess Park Manor, Royal Drive, London N11 3GX; www.mxpublishing.co.uk and www.mxpublishing.com; £9.99/ €12.99/ $16.95) a visitor arrives at 221B Baker Street – Titania, Queen of the Fairies. It's a strange beginning to a very strange adventure, in which Irene Adler is a soul-stealing monster, young Stamford a zombie, and John Brown a supernatural guardian. The abduction of a body from Highgate Cemetery and the disappearance of the London Stone are merely the prelude to the theft of England's most sacred relic, the heart of St George. Dr Revels has researched deeply into English legend, and *Shadowfall* has a delirious, almost surrealist quality, like an enjoyable nightmare.

Also from MX: a new edition of *The Outstanding Mysteries of Sherlock Holmes* by **Gerard Kelly** (£12.99); *Murder in the Library* by **Felicia Carparelli** (£10.99); *Rendezvous at the Populaire* by **Kate Workman** (£9.99); and *Baker Street Beat* by **Dan Andriacco** (20 June, £9.99).

A review of *No Place Like Holmes* by **Jason Lethcoe** (Thomas Nelson, PO Box 141000, Nashville, TN 37214, USA; $9.99) must wait till the next issue. Apologies!

Just out from Amanda Field's Chaplin Books (1 Eliza Place, Gosport, Hampshire PO12 4UN; www.chaplinbooks.co.uk) is *The Future Revisited: Jules Verne on Screen in 1950s America* by **Françoise Schiltz** (£14.99) – not strictly Holmesian but of interest none the less. Reported due in September is *Moriarty: The Hound of the D'Urbervilles* by **Kim Newman** (Titan Books, 144 Southwark Street, London SE1 0UP). *Houdini and Conan Doyle* by **Christopher Sandford** is due on 20 October from Gerald Duckworth (90-93 Cowcross Street London EC1M 6BF; £20.00).

Arthur Conan Doyle's first novel *The Narrative of John Smith* was lost in the post in 1883, but he rewrote it the next year. The manuscript is owned by the British Library, which will publish the book in September, introduced and annotated by Daniel Stashower, Rachel Foss and Jon Lellenberg (The British Library, 96 Euston Road, London NW1 2DB; http://publishing.bl.uk/; £9.95). There'll also be an audiobook edition, read by Robert Lindsay (£20.00). British Library books are distributed in North America by the University of Chicago Press.

Jeff Falkingham has made his Minnesota Sherlockian pastiches (favourably reviewed in the DM), *The County Courthouse Caper* and *In Search of the Source*, available as eBooks – details at cccaper.com. If you prefer real books, Classic Specialties (www.sherlock-holmes.com) still have a few autographed copies. *Mrs Hudson and the Irish Invincibles*, the second Mrs Hudson novel by **Barry S Brown**, is just out from Sunstone Press (Box 2321, Santa Fe, NM 87504-2321, USA) priced at $22.95. The first novel, an entertaining romp called *The Unpleasantness at Parkerton Manor*, is still available.

Peggy Perdue reports: '**Bento Comics**, an independent group of comic creators, is featuring an eclectic series of Holmes-inspired short comics online. www.bentocomics.com/. A printed collection will be available in their online store soon as well.'

From **E J Wagner**: 'Happy to tell you that a new audio version of *The Science of Sherlock Holmes is* available. The original had a few technical glitches now repaired. Audible.com will replace the old version free of charge if you contact them. Sample of audio is here; http://www.audible.com/pd/?asin=B0044TJZL8&source=PPPP0001WS01 1910.' *[*E J's book, in whatever form, is superb.*]*

Those who experienced **Laurence Owen's** audio production of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* during our Diamond Jubilation weekend will know that it's ingenious, atmospheric, exciting – and intelligent. The recording is available to download on a pay-what-you-like (including free) basis at http://corporaterecords.co.uk/artists/Laurence+Owen/The+Hound+Of+The +Baskervilles/. In August BBC Audiobooks (AudioGO Ltd, St James House, The Square, Lower Bristol Road, Bath BA2 3BH) will release a second CD set of twelve Sherlock Holmes plays starring **Carleton Hobbs** & **Norman Shelley**, with new introductions by Nicholas Utechin.

At www.sherlock-holmes.com/e_times11-5.htm is the May issue of *The Sherlockian E-Times*, the catalogue-magazine of **Classic Specialties** (PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH, 45219, USA; sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com). April's is at www.sherlock-holmes.com/e_times11-4.htm.

News from **The Sydney Passengers**: 'A bound copy of *Beeton's Christmas Annual* for 1887, the publication that introduced Sherlock Holmes to the world in *A Study in Scarlet*, is going up for auction in Armadale, Victoria on 30 May. It's the only copy of *Beeton's 1887* known to be in any collection (public or private) in Australia. It is from the collection of Dr John Loder, retired Principal Research Scientist with the CSIRO. **Randall Stock** also keeps a list of all confirmed existing copies of *Beeton's* 1887 and this is a new copy to him (the count now is 32 copies).' See www.bestofsherlock.com/ref/australia-2011-beetons.htm.

Brian Scrivener reports: '**The Langham Hotel** is celebrating its 146th anniversary on 10 June with a *Wonderland Tea* for just 7p – the equivalent to 1/6d, which is what it would have cost for afternoon tea when the hotel opened in 1865. Apply by Tuesday 31 May at www.palm-court.co.uk/1865/. The anniversary tea will be served at 11.30 only.'

At Essex Police Museum, at 7.30pm on 2 June, ex-Inspector **Martyn Lockwood** will speak about Victorian policing in *A Policeman's Lot*. Tickets cost £3 per person and include light refreshments. To book, phone Becky Wash on 01245 457150, or email museum@essex.pnn.police.uk. Details are at www.essex.police.uk/museum.

The same evening there's a lecture and discussion at the Bishopsgate Institute on *Crime and the City*, including a presentation by **Andrew Lane** on Arthur Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes. See www.bishopsgate.org.uk/events_detail.aspx?ID=4&Keyword=&TypeID=.

At 8.30pm on 10 June at the Lexi Cinema, Kensal Rise, **Mark Gatiss** will introduce Billy Wilder's film *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*. See http://thelexicinema.co.uk/2011/05/23/the-private-life-of-sherlock-holmes/.

Richard Burnip will give a free lunchtime lecture at the National Army Museum (Royal Hospital Road, Chelsea, London SW3 4HT) on 30 June: *Reading Around the Home Fires: The Strand Magazine in the Great War*. Details are at www.nam.ac.uk/whats-on/lunchtime-lectures.

In 1988 **Angela Scoular**, who died on 11 April aged sixty-five, played the clairvoyant Catherine Mead in the original production of *Holmes and the Ripper* with Francis Matthews and Frank Windsor as Holmes and Watson. **Nicholas Selby** died on 15 April aged eighty-five. In 1974-75 he was a splendid Jim Larrabee in the Royal Shakespeare Company production of Gillette's *Sherlock Holmes*, masking vicious greed with superficial charm.

Jeremy Paul was a principal writer for Granada TV's *Sherlock Holmes* series, later writing the play *The Secret of Sherlock Holmes* for Jeremy Brett. His script for *The Musgrave Ritual* deservedly won him an Edgar Award from the MWA. He died on 3 May, aged seventy-one.

Less than two weeks later, on 16 May, we lost **Edward Hardwicke**, at the age of seventy-eight. Taking over as Jeremy Brett's Watson in 1986, he consolidated David Burke's achievement, finally establishing Dr Watson in the public imagination as an intelligent gentleman, courageous, astute, honest and admirable. After Brett's death, he recorded half a dozen or so excellent readings from the Sherlock Holmes canon. One of his early television performances was as Mr Davenport in the 1968 BBC production of *The Greek Interpreter*, with Peter Cushing and Nigel Stock. To our great benefit he never severed his connection with Holmes and Watson.

Periodicals received. ***The Camden House Journal***, April 2011 and May 2011 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, Debbie Tinsley, PO Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). ***Communication***, no. 303 (**The Pleasant Places of Florida**, Wanda & Jeff Dow, 1737 Santa Anna Drive, Dunedin, FL 34698, USA). ***The Illustrious Clients News***, May 2011 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T Doyle, 9 Calumet Court, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). ***Ineffable Twaddle***, May 2011 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). ***The Magic Door***, Spring 2011 (**The Friends of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection**, Doug Wrigglesworth, 16 Sunset Street, Holland Landing, Ontario, Canada L9N 1H4). ***Mayday Mayday,*** May 2011 (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardcarn Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). ***Mémoires et Documents 2011*** (**Société d'Études Holmésiennes de la Suisse Romande**, (Vincent Delay, Chaumière 1, 1010 Lausanne, Switzerland). ***The Scion***, Autumn 2010 (**The Musgraves**, Anne Jordan, Hallas Lodge, Greenside Lane, Cullingworth, Bradford BD13 5AP). ***The Soft-Nosed Bullet-in & Striking (T)Rifles***, Winter 2010/11 (**Von Herder Airguns Ltd**, Jan Kipping, Schürbeker Str. 2, 22087 Hamburg, Germany). ***Studies of the Nippon Sherlock Holmes Club***, 1 December 2010 *[*sic*]* (**The Sherlock Holmes Research Committee**, Mr Saburoh Hiraga, 3-6-24 Uenohigashi, Toyonaka City, Osaka 560-0013, Japan).

And ***Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press***, April 2011 (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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Baker Street Beat by **Dan Andriacco** (MX Publishing, 335 Princess Park Manor, Royal Drive, London N11 3GX; www.mxpublishing.co.uk; £9.99/$16.95/€12.99) is subtitled *An Eclectic Collection of Sherlockian Scribblings*, which sums up the book rather well. There's nothing particularly profound or abstruse in its 140 pages. Rather, it gives you the same sort of feeling as when you're chatting over a drink with a knowledgeable fellow-Holmesian. After explaining how he came to be an enthusiast – his principal allegiance is to the Tankerville Club of Cincinnati – Mr Andriacco tells of his pilgrimage to Reichenbach. He considers the influence of Sherlock Holmes on the methods of John Thorndyke, and lays out sensible rules for the composition of a Holmes story. The reader can then judge how well he follows his rules in 'The Peculiar Persecution of John Vincent Harden'. Another neat story and two radio scripts complete this very pleasant book.

As students of crime will have guessed, *Sherlock Holmes & the Hilldrop Crescent Mystery* by **Val Andrews** (Irregular Special Press, Baker Street Studios Ltd, Endeavour House, 170 Woodland Road, Sawston, Cambridge CB22 3DX; www.breesebooks.com; £7.50) brings Holmes out of retirement to investigate, for his own satisfaction, the case of H H Crippen – rather belatedly, as Dr Crippen was hanged six months before, for the murder of his wife, the music hall singer Belle Elmore. Val Andrews spent his working life in variety, as a writer and performer. Also, he was adept at imagining how certain events might have turned out otherwise. His explanation of Crippen's innocence is ingenious and appealing. Unfortunately, the authoritative introduction by David James Smith, author of *Supper with the Crippens*, leaves little room for doubt about the doctor's guilt. Also unfortunately, the text reads like a rough draft: enjoyable as it is, it's in sore need of editing, especially as regards the punctuation.

When young Griffin Sharpe arrives in England to stay with his uncle the Baker Street detective, he's disappointed to learn that said uncle is not Sherlock Holmes but the occupant of 221A, a rather more erratic and socially inept sleuth named Rupert Snodgrass, who resents his neighbour's success. That's the premise of *No Place Like Holmes* by **Jason Lethcoe** (Thomas Nelson, PO Box 141000, Nashville, TN 37214, USA; $9.99). Snodgrass's strength is as an inventor: he has created devices that we'd recognise as, for instance, a lie-detector, a metal-detector, and even a primitive computer – but he lacks Holmes's sharp eye, retentive memory, and logical mind, and he's reluctant to accept that his nephew has just those qualities, along with intelligence and a cheerful, forgiving nature. The plot is wildly fantastical, involving a scheme by Professor Moriarty to kill Queen Victoria, destroy the Houses of Parliament, and ruin Sherlock Holmes. It would make a great cartoon film, and may well have been written with that in mind, as Mr Lethcoe is an award-winning animator. Don't expect much fidelity to history or to the Holmesian canon. Just enjoy the ride.

For full-blooded excitement, it would be hard to beat the *Young Sherlock Holmes* novels by **Andrew Lane**. The latest, *Black Ice* (Macmillan Children's Books, 20 New Wharf Road, London N1 9RR; 3 June; £6.99) seems to take its cue from Sam Goldwyn, who said: "We want a story that starts out with an earthquake and works its way up to a climax." When Sherlock and his mentor Amyus Crowe are ushered into the Strangers' Room at the Diogenes Club, they find a dead man, stabbed through the heart, and Mycroft Holmes clutching a knife. No one else has gone in or out, and there is no other entrance. The most significant clue is a name written on the dead man's card: The Paradol Chamber. Before they can discover its meaning the brothers must face deadly danger in London and Moscow. It's fascinating to see Sherlock, who at fourteen has no real plans for a career, learning the skills that will make him an outstanding detective and undergoing experiences that shape his personality, making him in time the man we know. Rufus Stone, from *Red Leech*, who taught Sherlock to play the violin, has a more substantial rôle here, making for some tension between him and Crowe, but each has a lasting effect on the boy. Sherlock's purchase of a violin from a broker in the Tottenham Court Road is a poignant episode, a touch of goodness amid the evil that threatens him. Future books will reveal something of the Holmes family's secrets, and Mr Lane has promised that next one, *Fire Storm*, will see the malevolent housekeeper, Mrs Eglantine, 'get her comeuppance'.

Derek Jacobi is one of our great actors. He's also one of our great readers, which is not quite the same thing. A critic has rightly said that, as narrator, 'he can capture the attention so fully that a listener is immersed in the story', and as actor he defines each character, creating an entire cast with apparent ease. AudioGO, formerly BBC Audio Books, is issuing what looks to be the entire Holmes canon, read unabridged by Sir Derek, the latest release being *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* (AudioGO Ltd, St James House, The Square, Lower Bristol Road, Bath BA2 3BH; www.audiogo.com). The ten-CD set is currently available from the website for £16.00, or the recordings can be downloaded for £9.84. Either way, for more than twelve hours' listening pleasure, it's a bargain.

Just out from MX Publishing at £7.99 is *The Case of the Grave Accusation*, a novel by **Dicky Neely** edited by **Paul R Spiring**, in which Holmes and Watson investigate certain bizarre allegations made against Sir Arthur Conan Doyle – that he stole the narrative of his most famous book from his friend Fletcher Robinson, that he had an affair with Robinson's wife, and that he murdered Robinson in order to conceal the scandal. If this sounds familiar, it's because those charges have been made! Richard Belzer said, 'If you tell a lie that's big enough, and you tell it often enough, people will believe you are telling the truth, even when what you are saying is total crap.' I hope Mr Neely's book nails the nonsense for good.

Andrew Lycett reports that his excellent biography *Conan Doyle: The Man Who Created Sherlock Holmes* is now available in Italian as *Conan Doyle: l'uomo che creò Sherlock Holmes* (Excelsior 1881; www.excelsior1881.eu/catalogo/bookshow.php?id=81; €26.50).

'Of making many books there is no end.' The trend seems to be towards making new pastiches available only on-line as Kindle books. From one point of view, clearly, it makes practical sense, and yet I can't help thinking that the ease and cheapness with which such a book can be produced encourages some (I stress, *some*) people to overlook such desirable things as proof-reading. Be that as it may, there are more than 700 entries under 'Sherlock Holmes' in the Kindle Store category at www.amazon.co.uk or www.amazon.com. Of course, that includes editions of the canon.

David Ruffle, whose short novel *Sherlock Holmes and the Lyme Regis Horror* was reviewed in DM 302, has compiled *Sherlock Holmes: Tales from the Stranger's Room* (Manor Avenue Publishing), an anthology of stories and squibs by contributors to the Holmesian.net forum. Among the mostly unfamiliar names I did recognise those of our members Hayley Williams and Ashley Polasek. Nearly all the stories and verses are refreshingly quirky, and none

outstays its welcome. It's a very entertaining collection. I can't comment on the novels *Whitechapel: The Final Stand of Sherlock Holmes* by **Bernard J Schaffer** (Apiary Society Publications; £1.70) and *The Case of the Russian Chessboard* by **Charlie Roxborough** (Forest Fountain Books; £1.90), but I hope they're as good as Mr Ruffle's anthology. All three books are published only in Kindle form.

Eva Masthoff has kindly sent me a copy of her story 'Bär Higgins auf den Spuren von Sherlock Holmes', published in the July-August issue of the German teddy bear collectors' magazine *Teddys Kreativ*. Fortunately for me, she also sent an English translation: 'Bear Higgins following in the steps of Sherlock Holmes'. The story was inspired by the nostalgic teddy bears created by Heather Lyell, a New Zealand artist, and by Ms Masthoff's own holiday in Leukerbad, where she – like Higgins – sought the plaque at the foot of the Gemmi Pass, and encountered a party of pilgrims from the Sherlock Holmes Society of London. It's a charming tale, especially for arctophiles, with some splendid photographs by Horstfried Masthoff. You can buy the magazine from http://www.teddy-kreativ.de/.

Sherlock Magazine, originally *The Sherlock Holmes Gazette*, ceased publication in 2006 after 68 issues. Now Atlas Publishing (Jordan House, Old Milton Green, New Milton, Hampshire, BH25 6QJ; e-mail info@sherlockmagazine.co.uk) offers back issues for sale, 'either the originals, or as a complete collection digitally archived on to DVD-ROM'. For details see www.sherlockmagazine.co.uk.

At www.sherlock-holmes.com/e_times11-6.htm is the June issue of *The Sherlockian E-Times*, the catalogue-magazine of **Classic Specialties** (PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH, 45219, USA; sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com). It's full of good things, as always.

On 23 and 24 July the New York Nineteenth Century Society will present the Antagonistics Weekend, showcasing **Bartitsu**, the gentlemanly art of self-defence devised by Edward Barton-Wright and misremembered by Conan Doyle as 'baritsu'. From 1.00pm to 5.00pm each day at 34 West Street, 5th Floor, New York, NY 10001, **Mark Donnelly**, Professor di Armes will conduct a seminar in Bartitsu. And on 23 July at 7.00pm the Society will host 'A Study in Scarlet: An Evening of Sherlockian Splendor' featuring cocktails, prizes and more Bartitsu, at The Way Station, a steampunk bar at 683 Washington Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11238. Admission is free. For more information see www.nycsteampunk.com/bartitsu or contact Rachel Murphy at mlleviolet@nycsteampunk.com.

The creator's original book has been reissued under a new title: *The Sherlock Holmes School of Self-defence: The Manly Art of Bartitsu, as Used against Professor Moriarty* by **E W Barton-Wright** (Ivy Press, 210 High Street, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 2NS; 27 May; £6.99).

At 7.30pm on 21 July at the Methodist Church in Daventry, Footloose Theatre will present **Paul Lehmann** in his well-received one-man play *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, comprising 'The Blue Carbuncle' and 'The Engineer's Thumb'. For tickets phone 01327 828391. A review in *The Stage* said: 'Paul Lehmann demonstrates both versatility and mental agility... he is the gaunt authoritative figure of Sherlock Holmes himself.' See also www.paullehmann.co.uk/.

From 9 to 12 November at the Stag Theatre in Sevenoaks, the **Sevenoaks Players** will stage Tim Kelly's play *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. You'll find booking details at www.stagsevenoaks.co.uk. Sylvia Thorpe, the company's Head of Drama, says: 'We would be delighted to offer Sherlock Holmes Society members a welcome drink in the theatre bar. The wearing of a deerstalker is all that is required to partake of this offer.' See also www.sevenoaks-players.co.uk/.

Paul Spiring sends this link to details for a flat for sale at Park Hill House in Ipplepen. He adds: 'This is of course Fletcher Robinson's former residence, and ACD stated in a letter sent to his mother from Princetown in 1901 that he intended to visit the property.' So, if you want to live in rural Devon and have £189,950 to spare… http://www.rightmove.co.uk/property-for-sale/property-18850536.html?premiumA=true

Paul recommends the National Library of New Zealand's **Papers Past** website at www.paperspast.natlib.gov.nz, where you'll find thousands of the country's newspapers covering the years 1839 to 1945. Peter Blau notes that a search for "conan doyle" turned up 8016 hits, and there were 6801 hits for "sherlock holmes".

Wessex Press will host its third conference, **From Gillette to Brett III**, in Bloomington, Indiana, 11 to 13 November. It's 35 years since the film *The Seven-per-cent Solution* was released, and author-adaptor Nicholas Meyer heads a list of presenters that includes Bert Coules, Tony Earnshaw, David Stuart Davies, Leslie Klinger, Kathryn White, Henry Zecher and Curtis Armstrong. You can register now at www.wessexpress.com.

A reminder to prospective participants in next year's Pilgrimage to Switzerland: **Ian Hartley**, a veteran of (I think) two Swiss trips in the 1980s, offers two highly appropriate leather suitcases which someone may like to use. Please drop Ian a line if you're interested. His address is 18A York Road, Harrogate HG1 2QL.

Vincent Delay points out that I've given the wrong address for him and for the **Société d'études Holmesiennes de la Suisse Romande**. The correct address is: Vincent Delay, Chaumière 1, 1010 Lausanne, Switzerland. My apologies for the error.

A fine actor with a craggy face and a distinctive voice, **Terence Longdon** was a familiar face on television fifty years ago, and for a while was hugely popular as the star of the children's thriller series *Garry Halliday*. His film work included the rôle of Drusus in *Ben Hur* as well as several early *Carry On* comedies. In 1986 he played Isa Whitney in the Granada TV production of *The Man with the Twisted Lip*. He died on 23 April, aged eighty-eight.

Jody Baker reports the death, aged ninety-four, on 17 June of **Revd Christopher Morley**, son of the founder of the Baker Street Irregulars. Father Morley served as an ambulance driver in the Second World War and was honoured for his activities with the American Field Service attached to the British Forces. Jody notes that he was happy to talk about his father and his uncle Felix, but he had no interest in Sherlock Holmes or the BSI.

Peter Blau records the death of **Bill Blackbeard** on 10 March, aged eighty-four. 'His cornerstone contribution to our literature was his book *Sherlock Holmes in America* (1981), which contained his essay on "The Image of Sherlock Holmes in Popular Art and Literature" and a wide variety of comic strips and cartoons, story illustrations, advertising, and reviews extracted from his collection.'

Anna Massey, who died today aged seventy-three, was an actress of great distinction in all media. Her father Raymond played Sherlock Holmes in the 1931 film *The Speckled Band*, and her first husband was Jeremy Brett, so it's perhaps surprising that she never performed in a Holmes production – particularly as her brother Daniel was an excellent Neil Gibson opposite Brett in *The Problem of Thor Bridge* in 1991. Her autobiography, *Telling Some Tales*, is exceptionally good.

Periodicals received. ***The Arthur Conan Doyle Newsletter and Birthday File XVIII*** (**The Conan Doyle [Crowborough] Establishment**, Brian Pugh, 20 Clare Road, Lewes, Sussex BN7 1PN). ***Communication***, no. 304 (**The Pleasant Places of Florida**, Wanda & Jeff Dow, 1737 Santa Anna Drive, Dunedin, FL 34698, USA). ***The Illustrious Clients News***, June 2011 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T Doyle, 9 Calumet Court, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). ***Ineffable Twaddle***, June 2011 and July 2011 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). ***The School Report***, Summer 2011 (**The Priory Scholars**, Horace L Coates, 21 Butcombe Road, Leicester LE4 0FY). ***The Scion***, Spring 2011 (**The Musgraves**, Anne Jordan, Hallas Lodge, Greenside Lane, Cullingworth, Bradford BD13 5AP). ***The Serpentine Muse***, Summer 2011 (**The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes**, Evelyn Herzog, 301 Warren Ave, #203, Baltimore, MD 21203, USA). ***The Sherlock Holmes Journal***, Summer 2011 *[*I trust you've all received your copies?*]*

And ***Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press***, May 2011 (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. 314 1 August 2011

To mark the release on 4 August of *The Carleton Hobbs Sherlock Holmes Further Collection*, AudioGO, 'the home of BBC audiobooks', offers three copies of this six-CD set as prizes in a competition for DM readers. The great **Carleton Hobbs** and **Norman Shelley** play Holmes and Watson in twelve classic dramatisations by Michael Hardwick, with new introductions by our own Nicholas Utechin. The plays in this set are: *The Copper Beeches*, *Thor Bridge*, *The Three Garridebs*, *The Sussex Vampire*, *The Three Gables*, *The Retired Colourman*, *The Boscombe Valley Mystery*, *The Crooked Man*, *The Cardboard Box*, *A Case of Identity*, *The Naval Treaty* and *The Noble Bachelor*.

To enter the contest, simply answer the following questions, and send your answers to me by 15 August.

1. Michael Hardwick wrote most of the scripts for the series, but who dramatised *The Hound of the Baskervilles* for Carleton Hobbs and Norman Shelley?

2. Name one of Michael Hardwick's three well-regarded Sherlock Holmes novels.

3. Which two actors, unlike Hobbs and Shelley, played Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson in all sixty stories on BBC radio?

The winners will be drawn at random, and the names will be announced in the next issue. *The Carleton Hobbs Sherlock Holmes Further Collection* is available from the usual sources, including www.audiogo.co.uk.

The Further Adventures of Sherlock Holmes is a hackneyed title, but it's doing Titan's series of pastiche novels no harm. The latest is *The Peerless Peer* (Titan Books, 144 Southwark Street, London SE1 0UP); £7.99), first published in 1974, by **Philip José Farmer,** whose concept of the 'Wold Newton family' was a major influence on *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*. (In 1795 a meteorite fell near the village of Wold Newton in Yorkshire. 'Farmer posited that this event caused genetic mutation in some people who were passing by at the time. Their enhanced genes led to the extraordinary abilities of their descendants, who include: Tarzan, Sherlock Holmes, Doc Savage, Nero Wolfe, James Bond, Lord Peter Wimsey, Professor Moriarty, Philip Marlowe, Sam Spade, Kinsey Millhone, Richard Hannay, Charlie Chan, Ernst Stavro Blofeld, and John Shaft.' – *Wikipedia*.) In 1916 Holmes and Watson are sent to German East Africa, where Von Bork is reported to be creating a deadly biological weapon. After a journey that nearly costs them their lives, they are forced into an alliance with an improbable English peer – Lord Greystoke, better known as Tarzan of the Apes. *The Peerless Peer* is as much parody as pastiche: excitement gives way to slapstick, and there's plenty of vaudeville humour (Fokkers, anyone?). I like it, though I could wish that this British edition had dispensed with the phonetic spelling 'Leftenant'. (Right, Lootenant?) Farmer's novella is supplemented by an afterword by Win Scott Eckert and four chapters of Kim Newman's forthcoming *Moriarty: The Hound of the D'Urbervilles*.

Due on 26 August is *The Star of India* by **Carole Buggé** (Titan; £7.99). Once again we learn that Holmes was not the only survivor of the duel at Reichenbach. Moriarty is back in London, and Holmes must solve a complicated conundrum if he is to protect the Empire and save his own life. The Star of India is a precious stone, of course, a present to the Prince of Wales from an Indian prince, but it and he are under threat from Prince Rabarrath's rival, who has the support of the master-criminal. The problem is presented to Holmes in terms of a game of chess, though the connection sometimes seems tenuous at best. The author is (or was in 1997) apparently unfamiliar with various aspects of British society a century ago. The Prince of Wales was, like his great-great-grandson, styled His Royal Highness, not His Majesty, and he was known as Prince Albert Edward, not Prince Edward. Likewise an Indian ruling prince would have been called Rajah, Maharajah or similar, and styled His Highness. The influence of W S Baring-Gould is unsurprisingly discernible, along with what William Hyder called 'the Martha myth', and the chronology in relationship to the established facts about Holmes and Watson is as puzzling as if the novel had been written by Conan Doyle himself. None the less, the exciting plot, the atmospheric descriptions, and the well-drawn characters make for an enjoyable read.

Vincent Delay (Chaumière 1, 1010 Lausanne, Switzerland) took part in our Society's Diamond Jubilation in May, and enjoyed the experience so much that he has recorded his impressions in a charming booklet, *Une Capitale Jubilation! Compte-rendu du voyage à Londres d'Imprimeur honorarire et du Président de la Société d'études holmesiennes de la Suisse romande du 18 au 23 mai 2011 à l'occasion des 60 ans de la Société Sherlock Holmes de Londres (1951-2011)*. My schoolboy French is put to shame by Vincent's excellent English, but because I was there for most of the weekend I was able to enjoy reading his account without turning too often to the French-English dictionary. (I don't know whether copies are available, but I want to say how pleased I am with this first published record of the Jubilation.)

Our Webmaster **Jonny Hough** has posted a lot of photos of that weekend in our Flickr photostream at www.flickr.com/photos/shsl. (This is quicker and more direct than going via our own website at www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk.) The photographers are Dena Howlett, Jean Upton, Alan Rettig and me.

Peter Blau notes that Easton Press (47 Richards Avenue, Norwalk, CT 06857, USA) has published a deluxe edition of *London: A Pilgrimage* by **Gustave Doré** and **Blanchard Jerrold**, first published in 1872. 'Doré provided 180 engravings for Jerrold's portrait of London that was published only a few years before Conan Doyle's first visit to the city at the end of 1874. It's a leather-bound limited edition that costs $496.00 postpaid.'

In November Bantam Books (Random House, 1745 Broadway, New York, NY 10019) will publish *A Study in Sherlock: Stories Inspired by the Holmes Canon*, edited by **Laurie R King** and **Leslie S Klinger**. The contributors' names are mostly unfamiliar to me, but the presence of Neil Gaiman and Lee Child is encouraging, and I expect something of interest from the well-known Sherlockian collector Jerry Margolin.

Barbara Roden reports that she and **Christopher Roden** are writing the supplementary material for a two-volume *Complete Sherlock Holmes* to be published by Barnes & Noble next March under the B&N Classics imprint (P.O. Box 111, Lyndhurst, NJ 07071, USA; www.barnesandnoble.com).

Mr Richard A Velting writes: 'I have a first edition of *The Annotated Sherlock Holmes* by William S. Baring-Gould - printed in 1967. The two volumes are in pristine condition except for some streaks of discoloration on the cover of volume 2. If you or any of your members would be interested in purchasing these volumes - please reply.' Mr Velting's e-mail address is rvelting@optonline.net. Note that he lives in the USA.

From 15 to 20 August, at Theatro Technis (26 Crowndale Road, Camden, London NW1 1TT), **Veni Vidi Theatre Company** will perform *The Hound of the Baskervilles* by Simon Williams – adapted as a radio play in the style of the 1930s. It sounds fascinating! All the information, plus online booking, is at www.venividitheatre.com/.

Not far away, on 16 August, you can see **The Wireless Theatre Company *in*** *Sherlock Holmes Strikes Back* by Peter Davis and Matthew Woodcock, at the Etcetera Theatre, above the Oxford Arms (265 Camden High Street, Camden, London NW1 7BU). This is part of the Camden Fringe, and details, plus online booking, are at www.etceteratheatre.com/details.php?show_id=1125.

Geoff Bradley has found that from 11.00am to 3.00pm on 28 August the village of **Acle**, between Norwich and Great Yarmouth, will host a *Victorian Village Mystery*. 'Sherlock Holmes has received a mysterious wedding invitation, the groom, none other than himself. He's never heard of the bride or the village where the wedding is to be held. When he and Watson arrive in Acle they find the mysterious bride comatose and the village terrified. It seems that it's not the first time an unconscious bride has been seen there. They discover that there's a curse in this quaint little Victorian village, and that there hasn't been a wedding in the village for the past 40 years. Who is the bride? Why has someone attacked her? And could there be a link to the curse or is it pure coincidence?' All the information is at www.villagemystery.com/menu.html. The website looks impressive!

They're understandably pretty rough after ninety years, but you can now enjoy three of **Eille Norwood's** silent two-reelers, thanks to Mysterious Angel Archive *[*sic*]*, which has posted them on YouTube. At www.youtube.com/watch?v=XQ3EmbS2IfY is *The Dying Detective*, at www.youtube.com/watch?v=GhpnHLt9yWk, *The Devil's Foot*, and at www.youtube.com/watch?v=kY-K_LAPWgA *The Man with the Twisted Lip*. See for yourself why Conan Doyle thought so highly of Norwood's performance.

Rather far in advance, but… Next summer, Gresham College, which has provided free public talks within the City of London for more than 400 years, will give a series of lunchtime lectures on *Literary London Crime* at the Museum of London. The fourth, on 2 July, will be *'A Stout Heart in the Great Cesspool': Arthur Conan Doyle and London*, and the speaker will be our member **Richard Burnip**. Information is at www.gresham.ac.uk/search/node/Literary%20London%20Crime. (Richard Burnip is, as Richard IV, a guide for London Walks. See www.walks.com/London_Walks_Home/Londons_Best_Guides!/default.aspx.)

The future of **Undershaw**, Conan Doyle's house at Hindhead, is still uncertain. No date has yet been set, I understand, for the judicial review instigated by John Gibson. If you don't already check it regularly, do take a look at the Undershaw Preservation Trust's website at www.saveundershaw.com/ and check the Facebook page. If you work in education, consider joining **Academics for Undershaw** and help challenge the official view that the house has no cultural significance. Contact David Charles Rose at oscholars@gmail.com.

In Regents Park a few days ago I spotted a poster: 'Introducing a New Central London Astronomical Society: **The Baker Street Irregular Astronomers**, meeting one Wednesday each month from 7pm at The Hub, Regents Park. Contact mikepoole1965@live.co.uk or find us on Facebook.' There's a website at www.bakerstreetastro.org.uk.

Last Tuesday, Resonance 104.4 FM, an independent London-based community radio station, broadcast a first-rate 55-minute documentary, *The Legacy of Sherlock Holmes*, written and produced by **James Hodder**. A stellar cast of contributors comprised Andrew Lycett, Mark Campbell, Alistair Duncan, Daniel Smith, Bert Coules, Nick Utechin, David Sinclair, Guy Adams and David Stuart Davies, with guest appearances by Roger Llewellyn. The presenter was Karl Carpani. Not many of us will have heard the broadcast, but you can listen on-line at http://soundcloud.com/radiohodder/the-legacy-of-sherlock-holmes, or download the recording.

The Sussex Courier reports that **David Cornell** has accused Crowborough town council of ruining his statue of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle with sloppy cleaning methods. He said, 'I think they have used an industrial cleaner. All it needed was a wash with soapy water, then waxed and polished up the following day.' The council will decide soon whether to spend £450 to restore the statue, which originally cost £48,000. *[*Thanks to Peter Blau and Al Gregory.*]*

There seem to be more Holmesian websites and blogs every week, many of them worth checking, and some very impressive indeed. Try these, for information, amusement, or simple pleasure: **The Diogenes Club** at http://thenewdiogenesclub.blogspot.com/. **Elementary: The Sherlock Holmes Fanlisting** at www.jordanna.net/fan/holmes/. **John H Watson, MD** at www.johnhwatsonmd.com/. **The Strand Magazine 1891-1930** at www.studium.com/holmes/strand01.html. **The Crew of the S S May Day** at www.thessmayday.org.uk/. **The Reichenbach Irregulars** at www.221b.ch/index_e.html. **The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia** at www.221b.ch/index_e.html. **Société Sherlock Holmes de France** at www.sshf.com. **The Umbrella Organization** at http://mycroft-brolly.livejournal.com/92193.html. **The Ocular Helmsman: A Vade Mecum Upon the Personal Effects & Environs of Sherlock Holmes & John H. Watson of 221B Baker Street for the Victorian Layman** at www.jadedcompass.com/ocular_helmsman.

Finally two essential sites: **The Best of Sherlock Holmes** by Randall Stock at www.bestofsherlock.com/index.htm. And **Sherlockian.Net** by Chris Redmond at www.sherlockian.net.

The actor **Billy Beck**, born Frank Billerbeck, died on 29 June, aged ninety-one. His first television credits in a long and varied career were for Sheldon Reynolds' series *Sherlock Holmes*, filmed in Paris in 1954. He was in three episodes, alongside Ronald Howard and Howard Marion Crawford: *The Mother Hubbard Case*, *The Case of the Tyrant's Daughter* and *The Night Train Riddle*. His last appearance on screen was in 2009 in *Dollhouse*.

Nick Utechin passes on news of the death on 7 July of **Bill Boddy**, a long-time member of our Society, at the age of ninety-eight. He edited *Motor Sport* magazine from 1936 to 1991, and continued writing for every issue after his retirement. His particular passion was Brooklands, which he first visited in 1927. In 1946 he published a four-page 'obituary' of the racetrack: 'Built at his own expense for the nation's good, by the late Mr H F Locke King - 1906. Betrayed by bureaucracy and declared an industrial area - 1946.' Bill Boddy contributed three articles and the occasional letter to *The Sherlock Holmes Journal*.

Periodicals received. ***The Camden House Journal***, June 2011 and July 2011 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, Debbie Tinsley, PO Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). ***Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections***, June 2011 (Suite 111, Elmer L Andersen Library, University of Minnesota, 222 21st Avenue S, Minneapolis, MN 55455, USA). ***The Illustrious Clients News***, July 2011 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T Doyle, 9 Calumet Court, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). ***Ineffable Twaddle***, August 2011 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). ***The Petrel Flyer***, June 2011 (**The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia**, Len Haffenden, 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7P 3C6).

Practice Notes, July 2011 (**The Friends of Dr Watson**, Nino Cirone, Highcroft Cottage, 14 Totteridge Common, London N20 8NL). ***Prescott's Press***, December 2010 *[*sic*]* (**The Three Garridebs**, Warren Randall, 15 Fawn Lane West, South Setauket, NY 11720-1346, USA). ***Sherlockiana***, Nr 2 2011 (**Sherlock Holmes Klubben i Danmark**, Bjarne Rother Jensen, Højbovangen 24, 9200 Aalborg SV, Denmark). ***3-Pipe Problem Plugs and Dottles***, June 2011 and July 2011 (**The Nashville Scholars of the Three-Pipe Problem**, Kay Blocker, 5017 Maywood Drive, Nashville, TN 37211, USA pkblocker@comcast.net) *[*a welcome return after far too long an absence*]*. ***The Torr***, Summer 2011 (**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***, June 2011 (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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The correct answers to the competition in the last issue: 1. Felix Felton dramatised *The Hound of the Baskervilles* for Carleton Hobbs and Norman Shelley. He had also written all the scripts for Hobbs & Shelley's earlier Holmes series on *Children's Hour*. 2. Michael Hardwick's three well-regarded Sherlock Holmes novels are *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* (jointly with Mollie Hardwick), *Prisoner of the Devil* and *The Revenge of the Hound*. I also accepted *Sherlock Holmes: My Life and Crimes* and *The Private Life of Dr Watson*. 3. The actors who, unlike Hobbs and Shelley, played Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson in all sixty stories on BBC radio were Clive Merrison and Michael Williams.

The three winners, chosen at random from a gratifying number of correct entries, are **Philip J Attwell**, **Peter Hartland** and **Tim Salisbury**, who each win a copy of the new six-CD set, *The Carleton Hobbs Sherlock Holmes Further Collection*, kindly donated by **AudioGO**, 'the home of BBC audiobooks'. Congratulations!

We've waited a long time for these recordings to be released, but believe me – they're worth it. Through the 1950s and 60s **Carleton Hobbs** and **Norman Shelley**, for me and many others, *were* the voices of Holmes and Watson. Tony Howlett pointed out that no listener would accept a Holmes whose voice was, as described by Watson, high and strident. Jeremy Brett has set the pattern (pioneered by John Gielgud) of beautifully modulated mellow tones, but Hobbs chose a quality that perhaps better represents those specified in the Canon – astringency. He also, as Tony noted, 'manages to infuse into his voice the pedantic precision, the sardonic humour and, above all, the steel cutting-edge of a strong, impatient-with-fools, intense personality'. He lacks the occasional manic quality and even rudeness of some recent interpretations, but he and Watson share a genuine mutual affection and respect. Norman Shelley's Watson is superficially like Nigel Bruce's, very much the cordial retired officer, with a brandy-and-cigars voice, but he's sensible and intelligent, as well as brave and compassionate. Hobbs and Shelley were a Holmesian partnership from 1952 to 1969. These productions – *The Copper Beeches*, *Thor Bridge*, *The Three Garridebs*, *The Sussex Vampire*, *The Three Gables*, *The Retired Colourman*, *The Boscombe Valley Mystery*, *The Crooked Man*, *The Cardboard Box*, *A Case of Identity*, *The Naval Treaty* and *The Noble Bachelor* – appear to date from the mid 60s, but in a way it doesn't matter, because their performances were consistently excellent and their voices didn't change. The admirable scripts, all nicely paced and utterly faithful to the original stories, are by Michael Hardwick, of course, and each play is introduced by our own Nicholas Utechin. *The Carleton Hobbs Sherlock Holmes Further Collection* is available from the usual sources, including www.audiogo.co.uk.

Due on 27 October from Duckworth Publishers (90-93 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6BF; £20.00) is *Houdini and Conan Doyle* by **Christopher Sandford**. Though this isn't the first book about the ultimately doomed friendship between these two famous and famously driven men, it's a penetrating and very readable account. Mr Sandford examines the similarities and the differences between the magician and the author – each effectively fatherless and in thrall to his mother, each desperate to communicate with the dead, the one convinced that he did so, the other knowing that every apparent success was a sham. This book helps us appreciate how huge a phenomenon Spiritualism was in the 1920s, when millions had lost fathers, sons, brothers and husbands in the Great War and the flu epidemic that followed it. Without Spiritualism, Houdini and Conan Doyle might still have become friends – they were intelligent, ingenious men, with ever-inquiring minds – but Spiritualism ensured that the friendship failed. Houdini's campaign against fraudulent mediums was never wholly free of self-interest: he was always primarily a showman. Richard Lancelyn Green, I remember, said of Conan Doyle, 'Everything he did smacked of opportunism and superficiality,' but Mr Sandford concludes, probably rightly, that his Spiritualist campaign was inspired by a genuine faith in the improvement of humanity. The one disappointing feature of *Houdini and Conan Doyle* is that the many quotations and accounts are not specifically credited. It's encouraging to know that the author 'consulted a variety of journals, magazines and newspapers' – some titles are mentioned – but a book of this quality really ought to have proper references.

New novels from MX Publishing (www.mxpublishing.co.uk; www.mxpublishing.com). *A Case of Witchcraft* by **Joe Revill** (£12.99/$19.95/€14.99) teams Holmes rather improbably with Aleister Crowley to investigate the disappearance of an eminent folklorist in what's described as a 'remote and rather backward northern isle'. The situation is strongly reminiscent of *The Wicker Man*, but, of course, Holmes is not Sergeant Howie. His attitude towards the so-called Old Religion, not to mention the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, is remarkably liberal, but perhaps that's the influence of his companion. *A Case of Witchcraft* is a decided oddity, but well written (in the third person) and thoroughly researched.

Sherlock Holmes and the Affair in Transylvania by **Gerry O'Hara** (due 2 November; £9.99/$16.95/€12.99) is similarly idiosyncratic and entertaining. As you might guess, Mr O'Hara pits Holmes and Watson against Count Dracula, but in a different way from his predecessors, Loren D Estleman and David Stuart Davies. Although great chunks of Bram Stoker's text remain, his story has been rewritten to exclude Professor Van Helsing, and various other characters are reimagined. Mina is now Watson's niece, married to a Romanian named Janos. Lucy is the daughter of Dr Westenra, who supervises an asylum in Transylvania, where all the events occur. Surprisingly, this is Gerry O'Hara's first book, after a long career as writer and director in film and television (he wrote the story for *Sherlock Holmes and the Incident at Victoria Falls*, so he's not new to Holmes).

In DM 313 I reviewed *Baker Street Beat* by **Dan Andriacco**. Now comes *No Police Like Holmes* (9 November; £10.99/$19.95/€12.99), an exciting and witty romp – not about Holmes but about his fans. The world's third-largest private collection of Sherlockiana has been donated to St Benignus, a small college in a small town in Ohio, and to celebrate, the college is hosting the Investigating Arthur Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes Colloquium. Jeff Cody, the college's PR director (and part-time crime writer), is an amused observer until the event is blighted by a real theft and a real murder, and he realises that there's rather a lot of suspects in deerstalkers. As if things weren't bad enough, Cody and his ex-girlfriend also become suspects… I like it!

For *A Study in Sherlock: Stories Inspired by the Holmes Canon* (Bantam Books, 25 October; $15.00) **Laurie R King** and **Leslie S Klinger** have collected seventeen new, original, and very different tales from authors as diverse as Lee Child, Jacqueline Winspear and Neil Gaiman. All the contributors are highly successful writers, mostly of crime fiction – apart from Jerry Margolin BSI, who collaborates with his brother Phillip in a story about rabid collectors of Sherlockian artwork, which is Jerry's own specialism. Actually, that gives an indication of what makes this collection different – and successful. These are not, for the most part, stories about Sherlock Holmes: like Dan Andriacco's novel, they're stories inspired by Sherlock Holmes. Lee Child and S J Rozan each reinvent a classic case. Colin Cotterill

provides a very funny comic strip explaining why he's not qualified to contribute. Tony Broadbent rather brilliantly brings Holmes and Watson to present-day London, in a quite different way from *Sherlock*. Equally dazzling is Neil Gaiman's tale of Holmes and bees in China. There isn't a dud here.

The Musgraves have published a nice little *Musgrave Tribute to Edward Hardwicke*, who was an honorary member of the society. You can buy a copy from Anne Jordan (Hallas Lodge, Greenside Lane, Cullingworth, Bradford BD13 5AP) for £3.50. Please make your cheque payable to The Musgraves.

Vernon Mealor reports that his book *The File on Colonel Moran: Sherlock Holmes Takes a Hand* (reviewed favourably in DM 305) is now available as a Kindle e-book from Amazon. Just received is *Sherlock Holmes & the Fabulous Faces: The Universal Pictures Repertory Company* by **Michael A Hoey** (BearManor Media, http://www.bearmanormedia.com/index.php?route=product/product&filter_name=hoey&product_id=412; $19.95). The author's father was Dennis Hoey, the unforgettable Lestrade to Rathbone's Holmes. One from the Goodness Knows What This Is Like department: *Hound: The Curse of the Baskervilles – Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Classic Now with Werewolf Madness* by **Lorne Dixon** (Coscom Entertainment, http://coscomentertainment.com/?p=98; £11.99). From Carlton Books on 13 October comes *Sherlock Holmes: Solve the Famous Hound of the Baskervilles Mystery* by **Deborah Kespert** (www.carltonbooks.co.uk/display.asp?K=9781847328816&sf1=title%5Findex&st1=sherlock&sort=sort%5Fdate%2Fd&m=2&dc=5; £9.99).

On 15 September BBC Books will issue *Sherlock: A Study in Scarlet* by **Arthur Conan Doyle**, first volume in a tie-in edition of the Canon. There's an introduction by **Steven Moffat**. In October comes *Sherlock: The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* introduced by **Mark Gatiss**. See http://www.eburypublishing.co.uk/bbcbooks.asp.

On 16 September the auction at the Guildford Riverside Saleroom (Bedford Road, Guildford GU1 4SJ; 01483 802280) will include a unique poster from the Eille Norwood *Sign of Four*, a rare poster from Norwood's *The Beryl Coronet*, and a rare lobby card from Rathbone's *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* showing a scene deleted from the final print. www.the-saleroom.com/en-gb/auction-catalogues/wellers-auctioneers/catalogue-id-2845013?categoryID=105167.

On 28 September Mullock's auction at Ludlow Racecourse will include a handwritten letter from Arthur Conan Doyle to the makers of a golf-practising device, together with a photograph. (John Mullock, 01694 771771; auctions@mullocksauctions.co.uk).

The comedy *Sherlock Holmes Strikes Back* by **The Wireless Theatre Company**, presented last month as part of the Camden Fringe, was recorded live and is now free to download at www.wirelesstheatrecompany.co.uk/index.php/our-plays.

The Hounds of the Baskerville (sic) are co-sponsors of *the Newberry Library Arthur Conan Doyle-Sherlock Holmes Symposium* on 1 October (60 West Walton Street, Chicago, IL 60610, USA; newberry@newberry.org). The speakers are **Jon Lellenberg** & **Daniel Stashower** on ACD's 'lost' novel *The Narrative of John Smith*, **Jacquelynne Morris** on the campaign to save Undershaw, and **Henry Zecher** on William Gillette.

At Usher Hall, Edinburgh on 26 November, *Concert for Trees* will be an evening of music, poetry and dance to celebrate the UN's International Year of Forests. **Ani Batikian**, playing the famous 'Sherlock' violin, made from the sycamore tree that stood at Liberton Bank, Conan Doyle's childhood home, joins the new **Arthur Conan Doyle Quartet**, whose instruments are made from the same tree. **Owen Dudley Edwards** is guest speaker. Full details are at http://www.usherhall.co.uk/What-s-On.html, or phone 0131 228 1155.

Too soon after the death of our good friend Theo Wyler, we have lost **Eileen Holman**, who died on 3 August. Eileen was for many years the invaluable assistant and friend of Albert Kunz at the Swiss National Tourist Office in London. She naturally helped organise our Society's visits to Switzerland, even after her retirement, and she became a much loved and respected member of the Society. There was something very reassuring about Eileen's cheerful smile and profound common sense.

Participants in the Great Swiss Pilgrimage of 1988 will remember **Jim Dunn**, who died on 26 June. He had come from Australia with his daughter Rosane (who's now married to Frank McNamara and is Navigator of the Sydney Passengers). Rosane recalls that her dad 'wasn't sure what he was in for' when they left Oz, but that he 'had a wonderful time', frequently in the company of fellow-Aussie Alan Olding.

I first met **Peter H Wood** at the Bimetallic Colloquium in Montreal, in 1990, and found him one of the most engaging conversationalists and raconteurs I've known. He grew up on the Isle of Man, and moved to Canada in the 1960s, retiring to British Columbia in the 1990s. He promptly became a leading member of the Stormy Petrels, taking them through a ten-year study of the entire Canon. Besides his contributions to journals in Canada and the US, Peter wrote an impressive novel *The Winged Wheel*, in which Dr Watson becomes a motorcyclist, taking part in the Isle of Man TT Races. Peter Wood was made a Master Bootmaker in 1983 and received the Irregular Shilling as 'The Second Stain' in 1985. He died on 31 July, aged eighty.

Richard Pearson, who died on 2 August, aged ninety-three, was a prolific, versatile and utterly reliable actor, always a pleasure to watch and listen to. I have a special fondness for his voicing of Mole in the Cosgrove-Hall animated series *The Wind in the Willows*. In 1968 he played Inspector Baynes in the now lost BBC TV production of *Wisteria Lodge* with Peter Cushing and Nigel Stock.

John Wood, who died on 6 August, aged eighty-one, was a great actor, whose most notable work was confined almost entirely to the theatre. At the Old Vic, at Stratford and at the National, he gave superlative performances in Shakespeare, and became especially associated with Tom Stoppard's plays. Michael Coveney in The Guardian said: 'As with all great actors, you always knew what he was thinking… he was as much the perfect Sherlock Holmes as he was the ideal Brutus.' We who saw the RSC's production of Gillette's play, in Britain or in America, will never forget Wood's wonderful performance as Holmes. It's a crying shame that it wasn't filmed.

Joe Cooper believed in the paranormal, but not uncritically. It was he who exposed the fakery behind the notorious Cottingley fairy photographs. His book *The Case of the Cottingley Fairies* was published in 1990. He died on 16 August, aged eighty-seven.

N F Simpson, who died on 27 August, aged ninety-two, was Britain's leading exponent of the Theatre of the Absurd. His plays include *One Way Pendulum* and *A Resounding Tinkle*. In 1973 John Cleese and Willie Rushton played Holmes and Watson in Simpson's crazy comedy *Elementary, My Dear Watson* on BBC TV.

Periodicals received. ***The Baker Street Journal***, Summer 2011 (Steven Rothman, 220, West Rittenhouse Square, #15-D, Philadelphia, PA 19103, USA; subscriptions, PO Box 583, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). ***Canadian Holmes***, Summer 2011 (**The Bootmakers of Toronto**, Mark & JoAnn Alberstat, 46 Kingston Crescent, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, B3A 2M2, Canada). ***Ineffable Twaddle***, September 2011 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). ***Irregular Newsletter***, August 2011 (**The Conan Doyle [Crowborough] Establishment**, Brian W Pugh, 20 Clare Road, Lewes, Sussex BN7 1PN). ***Mayday Mayday,*** June 2011 & September 2011 (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardcarn Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). ***The Moor: Magasin för Sherlockianer***, Sep 2011 (**The Baskerville Hall Club of Sweden**, Anders Wiggström, Byggmästarvägen 29, 168 32 Bromma, Sweden). ***The Passengers' Log***, Autumn & Winter 2011 (**The Sydney Passengers**, Rosane McNamara, 4/2a Merlin Street, Neutral Bay, NSW 2089, Australia). ***The Petrel Flyer***, Summer 2011 & Fall 2011 (**The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia**, Len Haffenden, 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7P 3C6). ***3-Pipe Problem Plugs and Dottles***, August 2011 (**The Nashville Scholars of the Three-Pipe Problem**, Kay Blocker, 5017 Maywood Drive, Nashville, TN 37211, USA pkblocker@comcast.net). ***The School Report***, Autumn 2011 (**The Priory Scholars**, Horace L Coates, 21 Butcombe Road, Leicester LE4 0FY).

And ***Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press***, July 2011 and August 2011 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; blau7103@comcast.net).

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Arthur Conan Doyle lost the manuscript of his first novel, and later professed horror at the thought that it should be found and published. As we now know, he rewrote much of it from memory, and *The Narrative of John Smith* has indeed been published. As it stands, it's not a long book, and next to nothing happens. I doubt it would have seen print in the 1880s, but now we're familiar with the author's life and work, and we're interested to follow his development as a writer, a thinker and a person. John Smith, perhaps Conan Doyle's vision of himself as an older man, is confined to his room by gout; the narrative consists of his reflections on life and his conversations with his doctor, his neighbours, his landlady, and the local curate – characters who are depicted with a lively authenticity. Nowhere else in his fiction does Conan Doyle discourse on such a range of topics – politics, religion, philosophy and much more – with the boldness of youth and often with the wisdom of maturity. Perhaps it's not a novel so much as a series of sketches: I was reminded of the *Sketches by Boz*, which is no bad thing. *The Narrative* is a precursor of *The Stark Munro Letters* and *A Duet*, rather than *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, *The White Company* or *The Lost World*, but there are details here that would become important elements in the chronicles of Sherlock Holmes, Sir Nigel and Professor Challenger. The admirable notes are by Jon Lellenberg, Daniel Stashower and Rachel Foss. (The British Library; £10.00; limited edition in slip-case £100.00; audiobook read by Robert Lindsay £19.59.)

In 1939 Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce played Holmes and Watson in two outstanding films for Fox, the first to set the characters in their true historical period. In 1942 Universal cast them in *Sherlock Holmes and the Voice of Terror*, the first of twelve films set in the present day. Amanda Field's recent book *England's Secret Weapon* examines the films in the context of their time. Now **Michael A Hoey**, whose father Dennis was the unforgettable Lestrade to Rathbone's Holmes, takes a different and equally interesting approach in *Sherlock Holmes & the Fabulous Faces: The Universal Pictures Repertory Company* (BearManor Media, http://bearmanormedia.bizland.com/; $19.95). His personal acquaintance with many of the artistes who contributed to these and other Universal productions gives his biographical sketches an unusually engaging immediacy. It's fascinating to follow the careers of actors such as Reginald Denny, Mary Gordon, Olaf Hytten and Frederick Worlock. The critical summaries of the films themselves are perceptive, pertinent and equally engrossing. Michael Hoey has given us a book that's both important and entertaining.

Thomas Bruce Wheeler has devoted much time and energy to researching our capital city. After 2009's admirable *The New Finding Sherlock's London* comes *The London of Sherlock Holmes* (MX Publishing; www.mxpublishing.com; £13.99/$22.95/€17.99), which updates the earlier book to a degree that no other guide, I think, has seriously considered. As before, we're directed to more than 300 sites, each of whose significance is clearly and pithily stated. You can visit the locations of a specific adventure, explore the sites near each of a hundred railway or Underground stations, or take any of six walking tours in the footsteps of Holmes and Watson. But *The London of Sherlock Holmes* is ideally used in its e-book format where the map references are hyperlinked to Google Maps and over 400 photographs. As a step-by-step guide to the London of the Canon, it's unbeatable.

Exploring London with Sherlock Holmes: A TravelGhosts Guide by **John Sykes**, published by traveldiary.de Reiseliteratur-Verlag (http://shop.traveldiary.de/product_info.php?products_id=113; €9.95) is an unexpected and very charming little volume. The pursuit of a mysterious criminal takes Holmes and Watson on an erratic journey across London, taking in Buckingham Palace, Westminster Abbey, the Houses of Parliament and other famous locations, where they are helped – or hindered – by certain people, not all of them living, who were intimately associated with those places. The conversations with, say, the boxer Ben Caunt, César Ritz and Sir Horace Jones provide a delightful way of learning about Big Ben, the Savoy Hotel and Tower Bridge – all in the course of an exciting adventure. The book is also available in German as *Mit Sherlock Holmes durch London*.

The Moriarty Papers, compiled by Colonel Sebastian Moran (New Holland; www.ivypress.co.uk/books/the-moriarty-papers/; £7.99) is a delicious spoof, purporting to be a facsimile of the random documents found after the mysterious disappearance of Moriarty in 1914 and published a year later by Moran in an attempt to stave off bankruptcy. If we're to believe these records, Moriarty controlled Watson, Mycroft Holmes, Mrs Hudson, Irene Adler, and pretty much the entire Metropolitan Police. Oh, and Florence Nightingale. And he was the instigator of just about every mystery investigated by Sherlock Holmes. The diary extracts, letters, photographs, diagrams of his mad inventions, and so forth are ingenious and very funny, as are Moran's laconic comments; they also show a considerable knowledge of the Canon. *The Moriarty Papers* is (are?) great fun.

Fire Storm is the fourth of **Andrew Lane's** *Young Sherlock Holmes* novels for young adults (Macmillan Children's Books; www.youngsherlock.com; £12.99). As we've come to expect, it's breathlessly exciting and intelligent. The fourteen-year-old Sherlock's schooling is dangerous but efficient: the lessons taught by the American bounty-hunter Amyus Crowe and the violin-playing spy (yes, honestly) Rufus Stone are preparing him for the unique career that he will create for himself. Crowe and his daughter Virginia have abruptly left Farnham, leaving an enigmatic clue that directs Sherlock and his friend Matty Arnatt to Edinburgh. Almost incidentally, Sherlock destroys Mrs Eglantine's hold over the Holmes family, but there are stronger forces ranged against them. A madman is determined to kill Virginia Crowe, and a powerful clan of thieves has Edinburgh under its thumb. Just two points: the Queen of the Night appears in *The Magic Flute*, not in *Three Oranges*, and the Admiralty Arch wasn't built until after Queen Victoria died.

The Breath of God by **Guy Adams** (Titan Books; www.titanbooks.com; £7.99) is on a higher level entirely than his disappointing book *The Case Notes of Sherlock Holmes*. A mysterious and apparently supernatural murder brings John Silence, a so-called 'psychic doctor', to Baker Street. Despite Holmes's scepticism, subsequent attacks indicate the deployment of occult forces by members of the Order of the Golden Dawn. Joined by Thomas Carnacki, a bumptious young ghost-hunter, Holmes, Watson and Silence make their way to Scotland, where their help is eagerly awaited by Aleister Crowley… *The Breath of God* is thrilling, at times really spooky, and well-written, with obvious knowledge of the work of Algernon Blackwood, William Hope Hodgson, M R James and Arthur Conan Doyle. It really is a ripping yarn.

The earliest dated piece to depict Sherlock Holmes investigating the Whitechapel murders of 1888 is probably a French play, *Jack l'Éventreur* by **Gaston Marot** and **Louis Péricaud**, in 1889, now adapted into English by **Frank J Morlock** as *Sherlock Holmes vs Jack the Ripper* (Black Coat Press; www.blackcoatpress.com; £12.99/$20.95). To be accurate, as Jean-Marc Lofficier says in his introduction, 'the original play did not feature Sherlock Holmes and Nick Carter, but identifiable facsimiles thereof, for an audience that was already familiar with the Great English Detective and his indomitable American counterpart.' If Mr Morlock's version is faithful, then the characters clearly do represent Holmes and Carter – which is remarkable, as in 1889 the former had appeared only in *A Study in Scarlet*. The play, like the anonymous 1908

short story that accompanies it, is fascinating as an example of late Victorian melodrama, and unintentionally hilarious in its complete disregard of anything resembling the facts of the case.

Jacquelyn Applegate, in her novel *Selena Jones: Trial and Error* (CreateSpace; selenajonesmysteries.weebly.com/; $13.00), ventures into Mary Russell territory, creating a young woman who is so much the equal of Sherlock Holmes that their relationship promises to become romantic. Whether that promise will be fulfilled, we shall no doubt learn from future chronicles of Lady Selena Jones. In this first novel the characterisation is good, and the historical detail is generally acceptable, though the dialogue is often anachronistic (perhaps I'm nit-picking, but this is a specialist field). The plotting is adequate, but the real interest is in the characters, especially Jones and Holmes.

The Punishment of Sherlock Holmes: Selected Sherlockian Puns edited by **Bob Burr** and **Philip K Jones** (MX Publishing; £11.99/$18.95/€12.99) is a deliberately and successfully funny assemblage of what must be several hundred short and short-short shaggy dog stories about Holmes and Watson. The book is dedicated to John Bennett Shaw, who would have loved it.

The House of Silk by **Anthony Horowitz**, the first Holmes novel for adults to be commissioned by the Conan Doyle Estate Ltd, (Orion; www.orionbooks.co.uk; £18.99) must wait till the next DM. So must **Tracy Revels'** *Shadowblood* and *The Case of the Russian Chessboard* by **Charlie Roxburgh**, both from MX Publishing.

Molly Carr has extensively revised and updated her book *In Search of Dr Watson* (MX; £9.99/$16.95//€12.99). The new edition actually is the valuable contribution to Holmesian, or Watsonian, scholarship that the first promised to be, giving us a rounded, balanced and accurate picture of the man. All that's missing is an index.

Leslie Klinger notes that a signed, limited hardback edition of *A Study in Sherlock* (see DM 315) is available from Poisoned Pen Press at http://www.poisonedpen.com/products/hfiction/9781590585498/?searchterm=study%20in%20sherlock.

More new books. *The Legends of Sherlock Holmes: New Adventures of the World's Greatest Detective* by **M J Elliott** (Kenwood Press; Kindle e-book, 86p from Amazon). *Sherlock's Missing* Files by **Stan Graham** (np; Kindle e-book; £1.14 from Amazon). *The Papers of Sherlock Holmes* by **David Marcum** (Battered Silicon Dispatch Box; www.batteredbox.com/SherlockianPastiches/PapersofSH.htm; Can$25.00). *Mr S.* by **Daniel Adams** (Alleycat Publishing, Kindle e-book; 86p from Amazon). *Sherlock Holmes and Philosophy: The Footprints of a Gigantic Mind* edited by **Josef Steiff** (Open Court Publishing; www.opencourtbooks.com/books_n/sherlock.htm; $19.95).

At www.sherlock-holmes.com/e_times11-9.htm is 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). It's full of good things, as always.

A Traveller's Notebook by **Grant Eustace** (Authors OnLine Ltd; www.authorsonline.co.uk/book/1107/Traveller%27s+Notebook/; £10.99/$15.95//€12.97) is non-Holmesian but worth a look – as, I hope is my own *In the Night – In the Dark: Tales of Ghosts and Less Welcome Visitors*, due from MX on 30 November.

AudioGO ('the home of BBC Audiobooks'; www.audiogo.co.uk) has released *His Last Bow*, the latest in the excellent series of readings by **Derek Jacobi**, complete on eight CDs. His mellow voice, so perfect for the reassuring personality of Watson the narrator, can instantly become harsh, sinister, authoritative – his versatility seems endless, but it's always under control. There's a wonderful range of characters here, in some first-rate stories – 'The Bruce-Partington Plans' is one of the very best – and Sir Derek does them proud.

Julian Finnegan & **Dominic Goodwin** are touring in *Holmes & Watson: The Farewell Tour* by Stuart Fortey. The itinerary is on-line at www.angusandrosstheatre.co.uk/tour.html. Kings Langley Players' production of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* by **Simon Williams** is on stage at the Community Centre, Kings Langley from Thursday, October 20 to Saturday, October 22 at 7.45pm. Call the box office on 07906 695959 for tickets.

Wienerworld (www.wienerworld.com/index.php) has released a highly idiosyncratic documentary on DVD: *Elementary My Dear Watson: The Man Behind Sherlock Holmes*, written and presented by **Philip Gardiner**, whose usual topics include secret societies, the Holy Grail, and the mind of God. Mr Gardiner distinguishes sensibly between the Watson that Conan Doyle created and the Watson of film and TV. Some of his statements are questionable. He says that Watson 'was born in the north of England on August the 25th 1852" – and where are the early manuscripts in which Holmes has *two* assistants? The disc also includes Mr Gardiner's *The Madness of Sherlock Holmes*; it all makes for entertaining, often instructive, and decidedly odd viewing.

It's reported from Hollywood that CBS is 'developing a modern-day take' on Sherlock Holmes for television. **Steven Moffat** tweeted: 'Dear CBS. A modern day Sherlock Holmes? Where, oh where, did you get THAT idea? We'll be watching!'

Sherlockology at www.sherlockology.com/ is an excellent fansite dedicated to the BBC series *Sherlock*.

Meanwhile a new Russian TV series is in production in St Petersburg, with 34-year-old **Igor Petrenko** as Holmes and **Andrey Panin** as Watson. If it's as good as the Lenfilms series it will be superb.

You can follow the progress of *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* at http://sherlockholmes2.warnerbros.com/index.html.

John Addy reports that a new British Mensa Special Interest Group (SIG) 'Sherlock Holmes' has been formed. For information, email enquiries@mensa.org.uk or phone 01902-772771.

Take a look at www.bakerstreetdiorama.com, where you'll see photos of a beautiful 1/6th scale model of the sitting-room at 221B, the work of our Australian member **Craig Calvert**.

Pia Trona, an Italian admirer, has generously donated funds to endow a scholarship awards programme in honour of **Jeremy Brett** at the Central School of Speech & Drama. Sally Thomas notes that until 31 October members of Sherlock Holmes societies and cultural organisations can still sign the petition for a posthumous BAFTA Award for Jeremy Brett.

Charlotte Walters, author of *Barefoot on Baker Street*, has set herself the task of reviewing all fifty-six short stories, one a day, starting here: http://barefootonbakerstreet.wordpress.com/2011/09/17/56-sherlock-holmes-stories-in-56-days/. On 10 November at 8.00pm GMT MX Publishing will host a live on-line debate about the 'traditional' Holmes, the Guy Ritchie Holmes, and *Sherlock*. Details are at www.facebook.com/pages/The-Great-Sherlock-Holmes-Debate/161705877248289 and http://twitter.com/#!/holmesdebate.

Dr Bryce L Crawford Jr, the last surviving founder of the Norwegian Explorers of Minneapolis, who died on 16 September aged ninety-six, was the brains behind the plaque unveiled at the Reichenbach Falls in 1957. He became 'The Solitary Cyclist', BSI in 1985.

Periodicals received. ***The Camden House Journal***, August 2011 and September 2011 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, Debbie Tinsley, PO Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). ***The Cri Bar Crier***, October 2011 (**The Criterion Bar Association**, Susan Z Diamond, 16W603 3rd Avenue, Bensenville, IL 60106-2327, USA). ***The Illustrious Clients News***, September 2011 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T Doyle, 9 Calumet Court, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). ***Ineffable Twaddle***, October 2011 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). ***The Magic Door***, Fall 2011 (**The Friends of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection**, Doug Wrigglesworth, 16 Sunset Street, Holland Landing, Ontario, Canada L9N 1H4). ***Mayday Mayday,*** October 2011 (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardcarn Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). ***3-Pipe Problem Plugs and Dottles***, September 2011 & October 2011 (**The Nashville Scholars of the Three-Pipe Problem**, Kay Blocker, 5017 Maywood Drive, Nashville, TN 37211, USA pkblocker@comcast.net). ***The Serpentine Muse***, Fall 2011 (**The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes**, Evelyn Herzog, 301 Warren Ave, #203, Baltimore, MD 21203, USA).

And ***Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press***, September 2011 (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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Michael Dirda is a bookman in the tradition of Christopher Morley and Vincent Starrett: highly intelligent, well educated, widely read, and entirely unpretentious. All this is gratifyingly evident in his latest book *On Conan Doyle, or, The Whole Art of Storytelling* (Princeton University Press; press.princeton.edu; £13.95), which concentrates largely on Sherlock Holmes but finds space in its 220-odd pages for perceptive discussion of Brigadier Gerard, Professor Challenger, Nigel Loring and pretty much all of Conan Doyle's important fiction – which is to say, most of it. As the subtitle indicates, Mr Dirda doesn't disagree with Greenhough Smith's claim in *The Strand Magazine* that Arthur Conan Doyle was 'the greatest natural storyteller of his age', but he knows that there was far more to it than natural talent. He knows too, that the telling of tales is not to be despised, and that Conan Doyle was actually one of the most important observers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Mr Dirda is, enviably, able to tell you just why he loves Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes, so that you realise, yes, that's why you love them too.

The subtitle of *Introducing Sherlock Holmes: The Great Detective According to Doyle* by **William Hyder** (The Battered Silicon Dispatch Box; www.batteredbox.com; Cdn$25.00; e-book Cdn$12.99) is a trifle misleading. The bulk of the book is pure Conan Doyle, consisting of the texts of eight significant cases plus the opening chapters of *A Study in Scarlet*, but the 'biography' that Mr Hyder offers as background material seems to derive mostly from his own imagination. We're told, for instance, that Sherlock's brother was given the name Mycroft by his mother, the first syllable reflecting 'her possessive feelings towards her first-born' and the second 'taken from her maiden name' of Howcroft being 'her way of affirming her presence in a household dominated by her husband'. None of this has anything to do with Conan Doyle, and in any case 'Mycroft' is a real name, particularly notable in Derbyshire – Bernard Davies's essay 'Mycroft Country' is especially enlightening. Bill Hyder is always worth reading, of course, but I've shelved *Introducing Sherlock Holmes* alongside the inventive 'biographies' of W S Baring-Gould, Michael Harrison, Michael Hardwick and Nick Rennison.

The second set of Sherlock Holmes audio productions from Big Finish comprises *The Final Problem* and *The Empty House*, dramatised by **Nicholas Briggs**, who also directs and plays Holmes, with Richard Earl as Watson. The partnership of Briggs & Earl is absolutely solid, and will rank, I'm sure, alongside Hobbs & Shelley, Merrison & Williams/Sachs, Lowrie & Albert or (I hope) Crozier & Hawkes. Unlike Bert Coules, who dispenses with narration as much as possible, Mr Briggs makes great use of Watson as storyteller – to a great extent, indeed, these are dramatised readings, so cleverly done that they lose none of their dramatic effect. You could argue, in fact, that the narration adds an element of immediacy, as the evidence of an eye-witness. John Banks makes an impact in his dual rôle as Lestrade and Moran; Beth Chalmers is effective as a Scottish Mrs Hudson; but it's a special treat to welcome Alan Cox as the suavest, most subtly sinister Moriarty imaginable. (Unexpectedly, the line, "You stand fast?' is given to Holmes, with Moriarty replying, 'Absolutely.' And it works.) Sound effects are admirable, and I love Jamie Robertson's music. Each play is followed by an interview with members of the cast and crew – a nice bonus.

At our Annual Dinner in January, **Anthony Horowitz** announced that he had been commissioned by the Conan Doyle Estate to write a Sherlock Holmes novel. The result is *The House of Silk* (Orion Books; www.orionbooks.co.uk; £18.99, e-book £9.99). As you'd expect from the creator of *Foyle's War* and *Midsomer Murders*, the narrative is exciting and the mystery baffling. Actually, that should be 'mysteries'. Mr Horowitz presents us with one puzzle, then introduces a quite different one, and cleverly leads us through the labyrinth until, with a flourish of his magician's staff, he reveals the devilish connection between them. The case of the Man in the Flat Cap, a mission of vengeance from the underworld of New York, has echoes of *The Valley of Fear* and 'The Dancing Men', but when Holmes involves the Baker Street irregulars he stumbles upon an even darker case, that of the House of Silk. The name hides something so abominable that even a certain criminal mastermind is repelled. And Sherlock Holmes is arrested for the murder of a young woman, committed while under the influence of opium. Mr Horowitz captures the Watsonian style competently, though there are lapses. The names of Edgar Allan Poe and Mary Morstan are misspelled. Addresses are inconsistently said to be 'on' a street, in the American style. Watson's accounts are published in *The Cornhill Magazine* instead of *The Strand*. The portraits of Henry Ward Beecher and General Gordon are said to belong to Holmes rather than to Watson. And we really could have done without the reiteration of several previous, published, cases. The adverts announce that this is Holmes's darkest case. It's certainly darker than any that Conan Doyle wrote – or would have considered writing.

The Papers of Sherlock Holmes by **David Marcum** (The Battered Silicon Dispatch Box; www.batteredbox.com; Cdn$25.00) contains nine intriguing mysteries. The first four are set in or near London, and, but for the odd intrusive Americanism, are very much in the classic tradition. Then, in 'The Affair of the Brother's Request', Holmes and Watson travel to rural Tennessee, Mr Marcum's own homeland – and why not? Some of the most interesting pastiches of recent years have taken the detective to the new world. The last and longest tale, 'The Adventure of the Other Brother', proposes a close family relationship between Holmes and Solar Pons, the sage of Praed Street, and draws on the theory that the Mycroft-like Nero Wolfe is the son of Sherlock Holmes and Irene Adler (there's a nod, too, to the film *Sherlock Holmes in New York*). You can't mistake David Marcum's educated affection for the creations of Arthur Conan Doyle, Rex Stout and August Derleth. He writes well, too.

The sequel to *Shadowfall* is just as deliriously weird. *Shadowblood* by **Tracy Revels** (MX; £10.99/$19.95/€12.99) introduces us again to the World of Shadows, whose interaction with our own world can be devastating. Watson's recuperation from his previous encounters with the supernatural is interrupted when an unpleasant recluse demands that Holmes find his missing daughter. Shortly after the detective's arrival, the old man is horribly murdered, and Holmes's own Shadowborn powers are tested to the limit in a quest for the girl and, ultimately, for the Fountain of Youth. He and Watson travel to Prague, where they are helped by Dr John Dee, and then to St Augustine, Florida, where they receive assistance and opposition from even stranger beings. The missing girl is practising blood magic and has acquired a very dangerous assistant, a woman skilled in murder. I said that *Shadowfall* is rather like an enjoyable nightmare. *Shadowblood* is even more enjoyable.

The Case of the Russian Chessboard by **Charlie Roxburgh** (MX Publishing; www.mxpublishing.com; £6.99/$9.95/€7.99) packs quite a lot into its 110 pages. Not for the first time, Holmes and Watson are caught up in international politics – the 'chessboard' is a metaphor for the deadly tussle between Russian revolutionaries and the Tsarist secret police, and the historical background is accurate. (The anarchist community that Holmes visits was only ten miles from my house.) Mr Roxburgh's writing is occasionally clumsy, and he hasn't, I think, quite

mastered Watson's style, but he tells a good story, and his subject – terrorism and the control of people's minds – remains sadly topical.

Should you wish to hold a Canonical quiz – or a series of quizzes – you could find everything you need in *Questions of Sherlock Holmes* by **Paul Avon** (www.thascales.co.uk; £9.99). I could argue with one or two of Mr Avon's statements – that Watson was married three times, that Lestrade's Christian name was Giles – but the book is intelligently devised and attractively produced. I don't see the point, though, of Dan Grigsby's illustrations, which are all redrawn from Paget, Steele, Wiles and others.

A Brief History of Sherlock Holmes by **Nigel Cawthorne** (Robinson; www.constablerobinson.com; £8.99), though blazoned on the cover as 'The complete guide to the world's most famous detective', simply isn't. Summarising every one of the sixty stories was a new idea, and useful, fifty years ago, when the Hardwicks wrote *The Sherlock Holmes Companion*. Like them, subsequent writers have been careful not to reveal the outcome of each story – until now. If plot outline is all you're interested in, then you can read Mr Cawthorne's book and not bother with Conan Doyle. But the book's information about Holmes and creator should be treated with caution. Facts gathered from the standard biographies are sometimes inaccurately presented, and speculation is presented as fact. (Conan Doyle's play *The Crown Diamond* was not filmed during his lifetime – or ever. *The Threshold*, which became *The Stark-Munro Letters*, was not, in any important sense, 'a reworking of *The Narrative of John Smith*'.) And misprints abound: 'the Society for Physical Research', 'his play, *Brigadier General*', 'His Last Blow'… Nigel Cawthorne has a good name as a writer, but the good in *A Brief History of Sherlock Holmes* is, sadly, outweighed by the bad.

Some excellent news from **Michael Cox**: his classic authoritative account of the making of Granada TV's Sherlock Holmes series, *A Study in Celluloid*, has been published in a revised edition by Gasogene Books (www.wessexpress.com/ – though the title isn't yet listed on the website). The first edition, published in 1999, is long out of print, and copies fetch three-figure prices, so the new edition is doubly welcome.

R T Campbell was the name under which Ruthven Campbell Todd wrote seven detective novels in the 1940s. Though described as lively, humorous and hugely enjoyable, they've long been almost impossible to find. Now Lomax Press (13 Park Place, Stirling, Stirlingshire FK7 9JR; www.lomaxpress.co.uk) has published the first edition since 1946 of *Take Thee a Sharp Knife*, introduced by Christopher Todd & Peter Main, and annotated by Forbes Gibb. This is a limited numbered edition of 300 copies, priced at £21.00 each, plus £4.00 postage within the UK.

Barbara Roden has written only a few Holmes stories, but quality far exceeds quantity. Now four of them have been published by Calabash Press as a Kindle e-book, under the title *The Thames Horror, and Other Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, the others being 'The Things that Shall Come upon Them', 'Of the Origin of the Hound of the Baskervilles' and 'The Adventure of the Suspect Servant'. The book is available for download for £4.95 on Amazon.co.uk or $7.38 on Amazon.com – or $5.99 from the publisher's website at www.ash-tree.bc.ca/eBooks.htm.

Other Kindle books that have been brought to my notice are *Sherlock Holmes' London* by **Joshua Hammer** (£2.14 – Mr Hammer spent an afternoon with members of our Society); Sherlock *Holmes and the Alien Abduction* by **Phillip Duke** (86p); and *Mr S.* by **Daniel Adams** (86p).

Mea culpa. The limited hardback edition of *A Study in Sherlock* (see DM 315), available from Poisoned Pen Press, is not in fact signed. See http://www.poisonedpen.com/products/hfiction/9781590585498/?searchterm=study%20in%20sherlock.

Highlights of the **Arthur Conan Doyle Weekend** to be held in Haslemere (close to ACD's home at Hindhead) 15-17 June next year include *Sherlock Holmes – The Last Act!* performed by **Roger Llewellyn**, a talk by **Andrew Lycett**, the Hammer film *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (shot nearby) introduced by **Alistair Duncan**, a murder mystery evening with **The Irregular Special Players**, a musical matinee with **Catherine Cooke** and local musicians, and a talk by, er, me. To be kept informed of the planned events, write to Haslemere Visitor & Local Information Centre, Haslemere Museum, 78 High Street, Haslemere, Surrey GU27 2LA, or e-mail haslemerevisitor@haslemere.com.

Paul Singleton will play Holmes in a reading of Alex Simmons's *Sherlock Holmes and the Hands of Othello* on 4 December at WorkShop Theater Company, 312 West 36th Street (between 8th and 9th Avenues), 4th floor, New York City. The performance starts at 6.00pm, and admission is free.

Sherlock Holmes and the Bearded Imposter, the 'alternative Christmas pantomime – for adults', will be staged at the Studio Theatre, South Hill Park, Ringmead, Bracknell, Berks. RG12 7PA, from 7 to 10 December. The box office number is 01344 484123.

Our member **Richard Burnip**, who regularly leads Sherlock Holmes walks for London Walks (www.walks.com), will offer two specials next month. On 11 December, meeting at Green Park Station (north exit) at 2.30pm, there's *Sherlock Holmes Saves the Nation! The Great Detective in Westminster*. And on 18 December, meeting at the Eros statue in Piccadilly Circus at 10.45am, there's the *Arthur Conan Doyle Walk – The Adventures of Sherlock's Creator*.

Lynn Gale tells me that the **Undershaw Preservation Trust** Christmas card – a very attractive painting of Conan Doyle's former residence - is now available, as are other goodies, from the Trust's online shop at www.saveundershawshop.com/index.html.

Andy Solberg has discovered that there's an active Sherlock Holmes society in mainland China – **The Chinese Sherlockian Society**, which has a website at www.sherlockian.org/sh/home.php and a forum at www.sherlockian.org/sh/forum/index.php. (Thanks to Peter Blau.)

A few days ago The Daily Telegraph reported: 'A burglar was caught after police caught him walking in the street carrying a pink handbag he had just stolen.' Clearly he hadn't learned anything from *A Study in Pink*!

Peter Hammond, who died on 12 October aged eighty-seven, directed eight of the Granada *Sherlock Holmes* films, including the first and best feature-length film *The Sign of Four*. His trademark penchant for reflected images – though ideal for a series such as *The Avengers* - occasionally got the better of him, but *The Sign of Four*, at least, will ensure that his memory is honoured.

James Peters reports the death on 12 November of **David Sinclair**, author of the admirable *Sherlock Holmes's London*, published by Robert Hale in 2009.

John Neville died on 19 November, aged eighty-six. He excelled at Shakespeare, quickly becoming a leading man at the Old Vic. In 1972 he moved to Canada, where, as artistic director, he rescued the Stratford Shakespeare Festival from financial peril. We treasure his performance as Sherlock Holmes in the 1965 film *A Study in Terror* – and envy those who saw him in William Gillette's play on Broadway a decade later.

Periodicals received. ***The Camden House Journal***, October 2011 and November 2011 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, Debbie Tinsley, PO Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). ***Canadian Holmes***, Fall 2011 (**The Bootmakers of Toronto**, Mark & JoAnn Alberstat, 46 Kingston Crescent, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, B3A 2M2, Canada). ***For the Sake of the Trust: The Baker Street Irregulars Trust Newsletter***, Fall 2011 (**The BSI Trust**, Marshall S Berdan, 2015 Main Street, Glastonbury, CT 06033, USA). ***The Gaslight Gazette***, vol. XVII, no. xi (**Survivors of the Gloria Scott**, David J Milner, 6 Crowndale Drive, Taylors, SC 29687, US). ***The Illustrious Clients News***, November 2011 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T Doyle, 9 Calumet Court, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). ***Ineffable Twaddle***, November 2011 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). ***Irregular Newsletter***, October 2011 (**The Conan Doyle [Crowborough] Establishment**, Brian Pugh, 20 Clare Road, Lewes, Sussex BN7 1PN). ***The Moor: Magasin för Sherlockianer***, November 2011 (**The Baskerville Hall Club of Sweden**, Anders Wiggström, Byggmästarvägen 29, 168 32 Bromma, Sweden). ***The Petrel Flyer***, November/December 2011 (**The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia**, Len Haffenden, 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7P 3C6). ***3-Pipe Problem Plugs and Dottles***, November 2011 (**The Nashville Scholars of the Three-Pipe Problem**, Kay Blocker, 5017 Maywood Drive, Nashville, TN 37211, USA pkblocker@comcast.net).

And ***Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press***, October 2011 (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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In DM 316 I gave an enthusiastic welcome to the AudioGO release of *His Last Bow*, read unabridged by **Derek Jacobi**. As a Christmas bonus, AudioGO is offering five copies of the eight-CD set as prizes in a quiz for our readers. Just answer these three questions and send your entry to me, by post or (preferably) e-mail, before 17 January. The winners will be picked at random. And do take a look at the AudioGO website at www.audiogo.co.uk.

1. What does Altamont mean by 'sparking plugs'?

2. Which institution was 'buzzing like an overturned beehive'?

3. Where did Mortimer Tregennis say his brothers were being taken in a closed black carriage?

It's a delight to know that *A Study in Celluloid: A Producer's Account of Jeremy Brett as Sherlock Holmes* by **Michael Cox** is in print again (Gasogene Books; www.wessexpress.com/html/studyincelluloid.html; $28.95). It was Michael Cox who proposed the series that became one of British television's most successful productions, in terms of popularity, critical acclaim, and longevity. As a member of Granada's staff he produced the first thirteen films and was executive producer for the next thirteen. As a freelance he was invited to produce the following six, but he had no hand in the remaining nine, and it shows. From 1990, thanks to that year's Broadcasting Act, the accountants rather than the programme-makers were in charge. Even while making *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes*, Michael had to pay £1,000 a day from an already tight budget for the use of the Baker Street set – which had been created and paid for by the Holmes series. By the time of *The Last Vampyre*, *The Eligible Bachelor* and *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*, Jeremy Brett's bi-polar disorder and his cardiomyopathy were seriously affecting his performance and his appearance. Either condition would have been controllable on its own, but each affected the other, and as far as Sherlock Holmes was concerned the combination of the leading man's ill-health and Granada's purely profit-driven approach was devastating. Those last unfortunate productions can't overshadow the superb quality of the earlier films, though – the ones that we watch and watch again, and proudly urge younger Sherlockians to watch. There's no single definitive record of the series, but together Michael Cox's excellent book and David Stuart Davies's *Bending the Willow* come pretty close.

Oscar Wilde and the Vatican Murders by **Gyles Brandreth** (John Murray [Publishers]; www.johnmurray.co.uk; £19.99) opens in 1892 in the German spa town of Bad Homburg, where Arthur Conan Doyle is taking a few days' break to catch up with his – and his fictional detective's – correspondence. A chance meeting with Oscar Wilde and the discovery of three unexpected objects among the letters and packages addressed to Sherlock Holmes lead the two to Rome. The objects are a lock of hair, a severed hand and a severed finger, but the bodies they came from must have been long dead – so what do they signify? Who sent them, and why? In Rome, the two must tread very carefully. They may have been summoned by one of the Pope's chaplains. Or by the new Anglican chaplain in Rome. Or by someone at the British Embassy. Or even by the remarkable Swedish doctor, Axel Munthe. Oscar encounters an old enemy and Arthur meets an old schoolfellow, but intrigue and dissimulation abound, murder is committed in the heart of the Holy See, and another murder waits to be discovered. It's Conan Doyle who acts as Wilde's assistant in this, the fifth volume in the series, and it's he who tells the tale, many years later, in the knowledge, which we share, that destruction would soon come upon his friend. Gyles Brandreth's writing is, as always, completely assured. Both portraits have the authentic touch, and Wilde's conversation is pure gold. The subsidiary characters are splendidly drawn, as is the setting; the mystery baffles, and its solution dazzles. Was Oscar Wilde the inspiration for Mycroft Holmes, as Mr Brandreth suggests? You know, I rather think he was!

Nicholas Briggs and **Richard Earl** return as Holmes and Watson in the latest audio drama from Big Finish (http://bigfinish.com/ranges/sherlock-holmes). *The Reification of Hans Gerber* is an original play by George Mann, best known for his steampunk fiction but clearly at home in Baker Street. The death of Sir Theobald Maugham prompts a frantic search for his will, under which his four relations stand to benefit. But Holmes's investigation indicates that the old man was murdered – and then another claimant shows his hand. Who is the mysterious Hans Gerber? Does he even exist? Well, he does, or rather he did – and you can interpret that statement in two ways. *The Reification of Hans Gerber* is exciting, exceptionally clever, and entirely faithful to Conan Doyle's creations. The production has all the quality we expect from Big Finish, and as usual there are interviews with the cast and crew. Full marks!

On New Year's Day BBC1's *Sherlock*, starring **Benedict Cumberbatch** and **Martin Freeman**, will return to our television screens. You may want to watch again *The Great Game*, the conclusion of Series One, before seeing *A Scandal in Belgravia*, the first film in Series Two. I guarantee that you will gasp at the audacity with which Steven Moffat resolves the perilous situation in which Mark Gatiss had placed the detective and the doctor. The audience at the preview did. They laughed and applauded as well! This case introduces *The* Woman, and she really is an 'adventuress'. We get to see quite a lot of Lara Pulver as Irene Adler, and Sherlock sees even more, but he doesn't feel any emotion akin to love for her. She is, after all, a lesbian dominatrix with a taste for blackmail. She's also capable of defeating him. The plot is elegantly convoluted, desperately exciting, and fiendishly cunning, and it's spiced with some excellent jokes. It also features a Christmas party at 221B – possibly the most hysterically embarrassing you'll ever see. Everyone's on sparkling form too, and it's particularly good that Una Stubbs has a more substantial rôle as Mrs Hudson. Series One was superb. On the evidence of *A Scandal in Belgravia*, Series Two is even better.

I enjoyed Guy Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes*, with its unlikely but successful pairing of **Robert Downey Jr** and **Jude Law**, though I had reservations about the story, with its numerous holes, some of which you could drive a train through. The sequel *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* was released yesterday, and it's a cracker, not least because the plot is both coherent and gripping. Robert Downey Jr is physically quite wrong for Holmes, but he's a compelling actor and his relationship with Jude Law's Watson is electric. The principal danger this time is from Professor Moriarty, played with urbane menace by Jared Harris as a distinguished public figure, a confidante of the highest in the land – and, of course, a brilliant and ruthless master criminal. Having anonymously taken over the great armaments factories of Europe, he aims to profit by provoking revolution and war. Ranged against him are Holmes, Watson and their unexpected Gypsy ally, the lithe and deadly Madame Simza. Watching anxiously in London are Mycroft Holmes (Stephen Fry, naturally) and Mary Watson (Kelly Reilly). There's action aplenty, the CGI work is astonishing, and it all looks pretty stunning. I definitely want to see this one again.

Back in January **Michael Sims** gave the 2011 Baker Street Irregulars' Distinguished Speaker Lecture. His latest book is *The Dead Witness* (Bloomsbury; www.bloomsbury.com/michaelsims; £18.99) – a satisfying 600 pages. Sir Hugh Greene may have been the first to

compile an anthology of such tales. His *The Rivals of Sherlock Holmes* was the first in a series of four, and other editors have followed suit. David Stuart Davies's *The Shadows of Sherlock Holmes* is particularly good, and so is *The Dead Witness*, which takes its title from the first known detective story by a woman, Mary Fortune, who wrote as 'WW'. Ms Fortune was unknown to me, but most of the names here are familiar – George R Sims, Hesketh Prichard, Robert Barr, James McGovan and others – and some are truly famous, including Poe, Dickens and Arthur Conan Doyle. This is, as the subtitle says, *A Connoisseur's Collection of Victorian Detective Stories*, and it would be wrong to omit Sherlock Holmes. Few will have read all the stories in this grand doorstep of a book, and even those who have may benefit from Mr Sims's introduction and his foreword to each tale. His website is at www.michaelsimsbooks.com/.

Showsaku Mashimo has kindly sent me a copy of the latest volume in the Japanese *Encyclopedia Sherlockiana*, covering a charmingly eclectic range of topics, including Cox & Co., the Lowther Arcade, disguise, Bradshaw, the Baritsu Chapter, and the figures of Holmes and Moriarty in the sculpted frieze on the Odeon, Covent Garden, which I showed to Mr Mashimo and other distinguished Japanese Holmesians when they visited London last year. I regret that I can't really say much about the book as it is, of course, in Japanese, but I am delighted to have it. Copies are, I think, available from Mr Saburoh Hiraga (3-6-24 Ueno-higashi, Toyonaka-shi, Osaka, 560-0013, Japan; JZB04100@nifty.ne.jp).

Kieran McMullen has once more combined his expertise as a military historian and former soldier with his devotion to Sherlock Holmes, and he's added a third element – his own heritage – in *Sherlock Holmes and the Irish Rebels* (MX Publishing; www.mxpublishing.co.uk; £10.99/ $18.99/ €12.99). Two years into the Great War, Dr Watson is called away from his post with the Royal Army Medical Corps and instructed to join Holmes in Dublin, where, under the alias of Liam Altamont, he has infiltrated the Irish Volunteers, who believe that 'England's extremity is Ireland's opportunity' and are preparing a rebellion against British rule. As we know, the Easter Rising was crushed, saving Britain from war in the west as well as the east, but disgust at the speedy execution of the leading rebels only intensified the desire for Irish independence. It's a powerful subject, and Mr McMullen handles it well. How would Arthur Conan Doyle have tackled it, I wonder?

Something I'm looking forward to with keen anticipation is *Sherlock Holmes on the Air* by **Matthew J Elliott** (MX; due 2 January; £14.99). This is our own M J Elliott, with eleven of his scripts for the Imagination Theatre series *The Further Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*.

On the Wings of Paradise by **Mary Ann Warner** and **Linda Pritchard** is a sometimes touching, but tritely written, account of Linda's friendship with Jeremy Brett in his last years. First published in 1998, it was reissued last month by Blurb at £14.95 paperback or £24.95 hardback (www.blurb.com/bookstore/detail/2697506). Linda Pritchard has also assembled her photos of the actor, mostly in colour, as a 120-page book *A Photographic guide to Jeremy Brett's Sherlock Holmes*, priced at £29.95 paperback or £38.95 hardback. The pictures cover every episode in the series (www.blurb.com/bookstore/detail/2677178). You can preview the whole book on the website.

Back in the 1980s **Kelvin I Jones** had a dozen or more books and booklets of Holmesian scholarship published. Now two of them, *The Sherlock Holmes Murder File* and *The Sherlock Holmes Smoking Companion*, are obtainable again – and very welcome too – this time as Kindle e-books, from Amazon.co.uk at £1.84 each and Amazon.com at $2.88 each. The publisher is Cunning Crime Books (http://cunningcrimes.blogspot.com/2011/07/cunning-crime-books.html).

Also new as a Kindle e-book is *The Mystery of Lenin's Watch (More Sherlock's Missing Files)* by **Stan Graham** (£1.14 or $1.78), comprising five unusual stories: 'The Mystery of Lenin's Pocket Watch', 'A Sherlock Holmes Fairy Tale', 'Sherlock and the Stones', 'The Bowden House Affair' and 'The Sinister Man'. Mr Graham says, 'Over 10,000 Words. For that long lunch hour.'

Forthcoming on Kindle is *Sherlock Holmes and the Cattle Mutilations* by **Phillip K Duke**, a follow-up to *Sherlock Holmes and the Alien Abduction*, which is available now.

In the last DM I recommended *On Sherlock Holmes* by **Michael Dirda**. At http://thebrowser.com/interviews/michael-dirda-on-sherlock-holmes you'll find an interview with Mr Dirda, in which he discusses his choice of five outstanding books by or about Arthur Conan Doyle. The website *The Browser* at http://thebrowser.com/ is worth a look anyway.

I don't know quite how they get away with it, but Rifftrax produces humorous commentaries for movies, long and short. **Matthew J Elliott** has been a writer and contributor for some time, and now he's pooled his creative expertise and his specialist knowledge in *Rifftrax Presents Sherlock Holmes*, his own take on Guy Ritchie's 2009 film. You can buy the commentary as an MP3 download at www.rifftrax.com/rifftrax-presents/sherlock-holmes, where you can also watch and hear a clip.

From 11 to 14 January, at the Barn Theatre, Southwick Street, Southwick, West Sussex BN42 4TE, **Wick Theatre Company** will stage *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, adapted and directed by Tony Brownings. You can book on-line at www.wicktheatre.co.uk/ or phone the box office on 01273 597094.

News from Mensa ('The High IQ Society'). Members are welcome to join the recently formed **Sherlock Holmes Special Interest Group**. The person to contact is Neil Matthews, SIGSec & Editor, 17 Peters Close, Prestwood, Great Missenden HP16 9ET (phone 01494 890494; e-mail sigsofficer@btopenworld.com). The second issue of the newsletter, *The Baker Street Times*, is out now.

David Ian Davies reminds me that besides his prolific recordings of the Canon and of Sherlockian pastiches he offers a striking Sherlock Holmes pen, designed by the *Mad Magazine* cartoonist Tom Richmond. See David's website at www.onevoicerecordings.com.

Willis Frick's very useful website Sherlocktron has relocated to http://sherlocktron.hostoi.com/Sherlocktron.html. Consequently, **Peter Blau's** invaluable Sherlockian newsletter *Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press*, hosted by Sherlocktron, also has a new home on the web, at http://sherlocktron.hostoi.com/scuttle.htm.

Gilbert Adair, highly intelligent and individual author and critic, strayed just once, as far as I know, into Holmesian territory, in his 2008 novel *And Then There Was No One*. He died on 8 December, aged sixty-eight.

Periodicals received. ***The Baker Street Journal***, Autumn 2011 (Steven Rothman, 220, West Rittenhouse Square, #15-D, Philadelphia, PA 19103, USA; subscriptions, PO Box 583, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). ***Baker Street Times***, December 2011 (**British Mensa's Sherlock Holmes Special Interest Group**, Neil Matthews, SIGSec & Editor, 17 Peters Close, Prestwood, Great Missenden HP16 9ET). ***The Cri Bar Crier***, December 2011 (**The Criterion Bar Association**, Susan Z Diamond, 16W603 3rd Avenue, Bensenville, IL 60106-2327, USA). ***The Illustrious Clients News***, December 2011 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T Doyle, 9 Calumet Court, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA).

Ineffable Twaddle, December 2011 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). ***Mayday Mayday,*** November 2011 & December 2011 (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardcarn Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). ***The School Report***, Winter 2011 (**The Priory Scholars**, Horace L Coates, 21 Butcombe Road, Leicester LE4 0FY). ***Sherlockiana***, Nr 3/4 2011 (**Sherlock Holmes Klubben i Danmark**, Bjarne Rother Jensen, Højbovangen 24, 9200 Aalborg SV, Denmark). ***The Torr***, Christmas 2011 (**The Poor Folk Upon The Moors**, Reggie Musgrave, Drummond Cottage, Old Tavern Yard, Westbourne, Chichester, West Sussex PO10 8TA). ***West End Journal***, November 2011 & December 2011 (**Japan Sherlock Holmes Club**, Saburoh Hiraga, 3-6-24 Ueno-higashi, Toyonaka-shi, Osaka, 560-0013, Japan).

And ***Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press***, October 2011 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; blau7103@comcast.net).

The Compliments of the Season

Roger Johnson