

# THE DISTRICT MESSENGER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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My profound apologies for the lateness of this DM. I've been laid up for most of February with two successive viral infections (and no, you wouldn't want to know the details).

Very sad news to start this issue: Sheila Redfern, Founder and School Secretary of The Priory Scholars died suddenly on the evening of Saturday the 2nd February. Not long before, Sheila had invited Philip Weller to accept the post of President of the Society - an unexpectedly timely move. For the moment, at least, enquiries about The Priory Scholars should be addressed to Philip at 6 Bramham Moor, Hill Head, Fareham, Hants. PO14 3RU.

But the world of Sherlock Holmes continues, and so must we. On the 18th February, Constable & Co. published a fascinating first novel, THE DISAPPEARANCE OF EDWIN DROOD by Peter Rowland (1991). This isn't the first attempt to introduce Sherlock Holmes as the completing factor in Charles Dickens' last and unfinished novel, but it is, I think, the first in which Holmes is actually commissioned to investigate the case by one of the major participants - a tragic, decrepit John Jasper, who seems to exist simultaneously in 1870 and in 1894. Mr Rowland plays fair with Dickens' characters and with the events of the uncompleted mystery. Likewise, he plays fair with the world of Holmes and Watson. The narrative rattles along at a cracking pace in a very acceptable simulacrum of the Watsonian style (but was the verb "familiarise" in use in the 1890s?). There's one glorious joke, not truly Dickensian or Doylean, but deriving from a misidentification on the part of that jack-ass Thomas Sapsea and perfectly in character. All the loose ends are neatly accounted for, with the single exception of the identity of Mr Datchery, and here we are left with a rather mind-boggling hint - perfectly fair, given Holmes' remarks about the confusion between fact and fiction. As I said, fascinating.

The Argo spoken word catalogue has now been taken over by EMI/Music For Pleasure, who are busy re-releasing material from Argo's enormous range of prose, verse and drama. Of particular interest to us are new issues of FOUR SHERLOCK HOLMES STORIES (Argo 1004) and MORE SHERLOCK HOLMES STORIES (Argo 1202), both sets read impeccably by Robert Hardy. The first contains 3STU, SUSS, GREE & CHAS; the second has DYIN, SHOS, MUSG & CROO. Sound quality is excellent, and at £6.99 for 2½ hours one could hardly want more. On a similar subject, Bert Coules reminds me that cassette packs of the recently-broadcast ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES are now in the shops, 3 volumes, each containing 4 plays. Because of the international crisis several of the broadcasts were relegated to long wave only; here they can be heard as intended, first-rate sound quality, stereo and all. A bargain at £6.99 for 3 hours. Further news is that the 2nd stage of the project is now set: THE MEMOIRS OF SHERLOCK HOLMES will be recorded this summer, again with Clive Merrison & Michael Williams as Holmes & Watson. The transmission date has yet to be announced. Bert himself will write the scripts for SILV, CROO and FINA.

News from Granada Studios Tour Ltd (Quay Street, Manchester M60 9EA; phone 061-833 0880): to celebrate the birthday of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle on 22nd May, they plan a special open day just for members of Holmesian (& Doylean?) societies with a pre-booked reduced price of £6.95. If you've any queries, please contact the Public Relations Officer, Sandra Dempsey, at the above address or phone number.

I understand from Yvonne Parkin (44 Wimslow Close, Redesdale Park, Wallsend, Tyne & Wear NE28 8TB) that that there are still copies for sale of the first two issues of STAGE STRUCK: "Partners in Crime" is a series of illustrated interviews with Jeremy Brett & Edward Hardwicke (£2.50 + postage), and "Beauty, Royalty & Genius" an illustrated interview with Derek Jacobi (£2.50 + postage). Please make cheques payable to P.M. Clarke; proceeds go to the British Diabetic Association. In a similar vein, the Franco-Midland

Hardware Company has produced the first two in a series of monographs under the general title of Company Shares. The 1st, "Under the Deerstalker" is a transcript of an interview with Douglas Wilmer, who was the Sherlock Holmes of British TV in the mid-1960s and is now an Honorary Member of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London; the 2nd Share, "Holmesian Attire: Costume for Canonical Activities" by Anna Smyth & Roger Matthews, is aimed particularly at those preparing to take part in Holmesian expeditions (could be very useful for Switzerland). Price of each Share is £3.50/\$7 (UK & EEC), £4/\$8 (rest of Europe), £5/\$10 (USA & Canada), £5.50/\$11 (rest of world). Please make cheques payable to The Franco-Midland Hardware Company (sterling only; US dollar payment should be in cash), and send orders to The Stock-broker's Clerk, 6 Bramham Moor, Hill Head, Fareham, Hants. PO14 3RU.

Exciting news from Cristina Macia (Bajada de la Plana 8, Atico 10, 08032 Barcelona, Spain): Cristina is Editorial Director for a new project, LOS ARCHIVOS DE BAKER STREET, published by Valdemar Ediciones of Madrid. The first volume is LAS HAZANAS DE SHERLOCK HOLMES, a new Spanish translation of THE EXPLOITS by Adrian Conan Doyle & John Dickson Carr. Cristina has provided a general introduction, and there's a scholarly prologue (in Spanish) by David Kirby of Rupert Books, as well as a brief account of the Baker Street Irregulars by way of afterword. This 1st volume is attractively presented, and bodes well for the success of the venture. Further books will appear at 3-month intervals. Copies of LAS HAZANAS are available at 2600 pesetas (including postage) each from Libreria Gigamesh, Ronda de San Pedro 53, 08010 Barcelona, Spain. Cheques or postal orders should be made payable to GIGAMESH (Spanish currency only, please).

There's a fine new addition to the numerous Holmesian journals available. This is VARIETIES OF ASH, edited by Susan E. Dahlinger, whose premiere issue appeared in January. VOA is intended as a semiannual (January & June). No. 1 contains a good mixture of the very worthwhile (a fascinating article on "The Drinking Habits of Snakes"), the interesting, and the downright silly. Subscription rates are: \$10 per volume or \$6.50 per single issue. All communications should be addressed to S.E. Dahlinger, 30 East Elm Street, 11B, Chicago, Illinois 60611, U.S.A. Other magazines worth your attention include CANADIAN HOLMES, published four times a year by the Bootmakers of Toronto at \$12 (Canadian) p.a. (details from Maureen Green, CGA, 47 Manor Road West, Toronto, Ontario M5P 1B6, Canada); THE SERPENTINE MUSE, quarterly from the Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes at \$6 p.a. (Evelyn Herzog, 235 West 15th Street, New York, NY 10011, USA); and BAKER STREET MISCELLANEA, another quarterly, \$10 p.a. domestic or \$12.50 international (The Sciolist Press, PO Box 225, Winnetka, Illinois 60093-0225, U.S.A.).

Ann O'Neill passes on the information that issue 4 of her magazine "221B" has been delayed for the foreseeable future for financial reasons. Please be patient.

Charles Hall (12 Paisley Terrace, Edinburgh EH8 7JW) hasn't been idle. His latest project consists of 3 new postcards sold in packs of 10, each containing 4 x Holmes in deerstalker with pipe & magnifying glass, 3 x Holmes in frock coat & top hat, 3 x group of famous detectives (Charlie Chan, Hercule Poirot, Father Brown). These are very attractive full-colour caricatures, good value at the UK price of £4.20 for the pack of 10 (including postage). Please enquire of Mr Hall for international rates (and he adds, "trade enquiries welcome").

It all seems to be happening in April and May! Heather Owen sends details of a new play at the Polka Theatre for Children (240 The Broadway, Wimbledon, London SW19 1SB; phone 081-543 4888) running from 17th April to 25th May. This is ELEMENTARY, MR HOLMES by Robin Kingsland, in which Jo Watson from the late 20th century finds herself transported back to the late 19th century, where she's caught up in the Holmes/Moriarty feud. We have high hopes, as the last Holmesian production at the Polka was superb.

Information from Stanley MacKenzie. The elegant Polurrian Hotel (Mullion, South Cornwall TR12 7EN; phone 0326 240421) will host a Murder Weekend from the 22nd to 24th March. For £175 you get slap-up accommodation as well as the Murder Mystery; solve it and you could win a return weekend stay at the Polurrian. From the 8th to the 16th June, Ilfracombe will hold its 4th annual Victorian Week; full details of events and accommodation from Philip Mahoney, The Woodlands Hotel, Torrs Park, Ilfracombe, North Devon EX34 8AZ (phone

0271 863098). Finally, a few posters (23"x 16") & programmes from the play PARTNERS IN CRIME (reviewed in the Winter 1990 SHJ) are available to UK applicants. Posters £1.40, programmes £1.30 (prices include postage) from Elissa Swinglehurst, 15 Woodland Gardens, London N10 3UE.

SHERLOCK HOLMES LOG claims to be a nearly complete listing of the appearances of Holmes & Watson in the audio & visual media - British & American radio programmes, commercial recordings, silent & sound movies, TV plays & movies. The 36 page log is available for \$10 postpaid from Gordon Kelley, 8600 University Boulevard, Evansville, Indiana 47712, USA. And while we're on such things, the list of canonical recordings available from Isis Audio Books (55 St Thomas' Street, Oxford OX1 1JG) is: THE ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES read by Patrick Tull (10 cassettes, £37.95), THE MEMOIRS read by Alexander Spencer (7 cassettes, £30.50), THE SIGN OF FOUR read by Patrick Tull (4 cassettes, £23.95); forthcoming in April is A STUDY IN SCARLET read by Peter Mesney (4 cassettes, £23.95), and in August THE VALLEY OF FEAR (5 cassettes, £25.95) - these latter two won't be available in Canada.

Sherlock, Stock & Barrel (PO Box 8261, Colorado Springs, Colorado 80933-8261, USA) sell "Sherlockian collectibles". The current list includes Atlas Stone figurines, paperweights, T-shirts and lapel pins.

From Ivy & Douglas Warren: there's a residential course on SHERLOCK HOLMES & HIS WORLD over the weekend 19th to 21st April at Westham House College, Barford, Warwick CV35 8DP (phone 0926 624206), The tutor is Peter Street, and the fee for the weekend, including accommodation, is £62. Quote the course number R82.

From Peter E. Blau: the 2nd mini-series with Christopher Lee & Patrick Macnee as Holmes & Watson will be SHERLOCK HOLMES & THE INCIDENT AT VICTORIA FALLS; no transmission date has yet been set for the 1st, SHERLOCK HOLMES & THE LEADING LADY. Ah! and news of a more than welcome break with precedent: at the BSI's cocktail party in January full investiture into the Baker Street Irregulars was awarded to Dame Jean Conan Doyle ("A Certain Gracious Lady"), Katherine McMahon ("Lucy Ferrier"), Edith Meiser ("A Fascinating & Beautiful Woman"), Evelyn Herzog ("The Daintiest Thing Under a Bonnet"), Julia Carlson Rosenblatt ("Mrs Turner") and Susan Rice ("Beeswing"); this isn't the first time that women have been invested, but it is the first time that their rights & privileges as full members have been stressed. Well deserved congratulations to all concerned. Published last year by Magico Magazine was A SINGULAR SET OF PEOPLE, edited by Marlene Aig & David Galerstein (\$14.95), an anthology of Holmesian essays by scholarly members of New York scion societies. (I'm delighted to learn that Magico is still in business....) A recently formed Holmesian society is Stimson & Co. (details from Michael W. McClure, 1415 Swanwick Street, Chester, Illinois 62233, USA); membership is aimed principally at undertakers (sorry, funeral directors). The Abbey National, whose address actually is (or at least includes) 221B Baker Street, has appointed a new secretary to Sherlock Holmes: her name is Erica Harper. Meanwhile, despite its own publicity, mail for the Sherlock Holmes Museum should be addressed to 239 Baker Street and not to 221B. You may already know that the manuscripts of "The Dying Detective" and "The Lion's Mane" are now on indefinite loan from their owner to the Sherlock Holmes Collection at Marylebone Library. Catherine Cooke, the Librarian-in-Charge, intends to have microfilm copies available shortly for research purposes.

Finally, from John E. Stephenson: Richard Dalby's anthology MYSTERY FOR CHRISTMAS, including Ron Weighell's admirable Holmes pastiche "The Case of the Fiery Messengers", is available in America from Gallery Books at \$5.95. UNIVERSAL HORRORS: THE STUDIO'S CLASSIC FILMS 1931-1946, by Michael Brunas, John Brunas & Tom Weaver (McFarland & Co., 1990), features lengthy discussion of the 12 Universal Rathbone/Bruce Holmes films.

