

THE DISTRICT MESSENGER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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Suddenly we have not one but two new books dealing with Arthur Conan Doyle's investigations into true crime. Published earlier this month was *THE REAL WORLD OF SHERLOCK HOLMES* by Peter Costello (Robinson Publishing, £14.95), which is by the far the more comprehensive, covering not only the well-known cases of Edalji, Slater et al, but also ACD's interest in criminal exploits past and present in the British Isles, Europe, the Americas and Australasia. It has to be said that much of this is very minor stuff, peripheral to the life and career of Sir Arthur, whose connection is often limited to his having known, or probably known, about the crime leading him to make a single suggestion - as in the case of George Joseph Smith, where he is said to have been the first to realise that a series of murders was in progress. It's all most interesting, helping to round out the picture of ACD that we have from the numerous biographies. A couple of points: Dame Jean Conan Doyle has made it clear that the later Holmes stories were not reworkings of previously discarded plots (SHJ, spring 1979), and Sir Arthur's epitaph reads "Steel True, Blade Straight" and not "... Blade Bright". Published on the 1 October is *THE CASEBOOK OF SHERLOCK DOYLE* by Harry Stone (Ian Henry, £15.95) which covers only five cases, but in rather more depth: those of Edalji, Slater, the Irish Crown Jewels, Norman Thorne and Mary Emsley (the latter being one of ACD's "Strange Studies From Life" - considerations of crimes of the past; this and others are glanced at by Peter Costello). The presentation of the two books is very different. Costello's is soberly factual, and speculation is identified as such. Stone's is that of the storyteller, or of Thucydides, reporting what people probably said and did in the absence of hard evidence. Conversations ring true, but only the trial examinations are quoted from verifiable sources; the accounts themselves are factual, though embellishing details may be conjectural (I fancy that this was also the method of John H. Watson; it was certainly that of John Dickson Carr in his *LIFE OF SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE*). Two different books, then, each worthy of the attention of those who know, with Dr Joseph Bell, that Conan Doyle was Sherlock Holmes.

Two new magazines have reached me. From Japan comes Hirayama Yuichi's *THE NEZIRE ZANMAI* ("THE TWISTED"), the first issue of this well-established journal to appear in English. After an introduction by a member of The Men With The Twisted Konjo whose name will be familiar to all, one Stanley MacKenzie, there's a wealth of fascinating monographs. The vexed matter of the cycle-tracks in "The Priory School" is settled by Yuichi himself - settled by reference to HANZAI SOUSA GIJUTURON ("THE TECHNIQUES OF CRIME DETECTION") by Sanekita Masayoshi, who was evidently a sort of Japanese Hans Gross; David Carlile likewise throws welcome light on the authenticity of "Hamish" as a Scottish equivalent of "James"; Iwamoto Tsutomu provides a delightful gallery of Holmesian portraits, parodying the styles of eight major 20th century artists; finally, Yuichi tells of "The Japanese Rivals of Sherlock Holmes", figures little-known to the western reader despite the long and honourable detective tradition in Japanese literature. There are only 100 copies of *THE NEZIRE ZANMAI*, available at the remarkably cheap price of \$4US or 3 International Reply Coupons (that is correct; I checked) from Hirayama Yuichi, 2-10-12 Kami-renjaku, Mitaka-shi, Tokyo, 181 Japan. *THE SPARKING PLUG 1990* is a collection of the papers presented to The Fratton Lodgers during their first year, along with a brief account of the society, the Chairman's address from the first annual dinner, and some notes on the 1990 Christmas card (an illustration would have been helpful for the non-Lodger). Ian Smyth considers the canonicity of *THE CASEBOOK* and *THE EXPLOITS*; he also investigates the relationship of Sherlock Holmes and the Scotland Yarders, and presents a striking account of what is known or can be deduced about Mycroft Holmes. Then there's a trio of papers about that surprisingly neglected adventure "His Last Bow". Philip Weller discusses the authorship of the story, Ian Smyth makes some geographical deductions, and Geoffrey Stavert considers espionage in the Great War. As with the Japanese journal, this is scholarship of a high order, nicely produced and illustrated. *THE SPARKING PLUG 1990* costs £7 (payable to C.

Neale, please) from Chris Neale, Paymaster For The Fratton lodgers, 15 Boldre Close, Bedhampton, Havant, Hampshire PO9 4BN. It's good to know that we have yet another active and scholarly regional society.

The lovely facsimile edition of Conan Doyle's MS for "The Dying Detective" was successfully launched at Marylebone Library on the auspicious date of Friday the 13th. Christopher Roden, Founder of the Arthur Conan Doyle Society, can provide a recording of the occasion (including a reading of the story by the Arthur Conan Doyle Society Players, featuring Owen Dudley Edwards, Richard Lancelyn Green and others) for £3.50 (Grasmere, 35 Penfold Road, Dodleston, Chester CH4 9ML). Chris also has copies available of the new Canongate Classics edition of THE EXPLOITS OF BRIGADIER GERARD, with a 13 page introduction by Owen Dudley Edwards (£4.95 postfree), SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE: INTERVIEWS & RECOLLECTIONS edited by Harold Orel (£45 postfree), and - limited numbers - LETTERS TO SHERLOCK HOLMES, THE SHERLOCK HOLMES LETTERS and all three volumes of THE UNKNOWN CONAN DOYLE (please ask Chris for details).

Paula Kirby tells me that she will be carrying on the business of Rupert Books to a limited extent. She will be sole agent for volume 1 in The Sherlock Holmes Natural History Series: A TROUT IN THE MILK: A MONOGRAPH ON FISH & FISHING IN THE TIME OF SHERLOCK HOLMES by Donald Girard Jewell this handsome limited edition, dedicated to the memory of Dave Kirby, costs £8.50, postfree (Paulina Massey Kirby, 59 Stonefield, Bar Hill, Cambridge CB3 8TE). The book is available in North America at \$7.95 + \$2 postage from Pinchin Lane Press, 4685 Geeting Road, Westminster, MD 21158, USA.

More news from regional societies. The Franco-Midland Hardware Company has just introduced a series of self-study projects which lead to the awarding of Certificate, Diploma and Master of Holmesian Studies scrolls. They have also commenced production of a second series of Holmesian monographs. Details of the study projects, the monographs produced by the group, and membership of the Company can be obtained by sending two 1st class stamps (from UK) or two International Reply Coupons, or two US dollar bills (from outside UK) to The Stockbroker's Clerk, 6 Bramham Moor, Hill Head, Fareham, Hampshire PO14 3RU. The FMHC will once again be hosting the SHSL's post-Annual Dinner function, the "Disjecta Membra II", for Saturday 11 January 1992. The all-day coach trip will be open to all SHSL members, and will include a visit to the interior of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's "Windlesham" home and lunch at the ACD Museum in Crowborough, as well as tea at a railway station with a canonical connection.

The Northern Musgraves are planning their first weekend event, "Aspects of Holmes", to be held at the Hollings Hall Hotel, Baildon, near Bradford (in Cottingley Fairies country) on Saturday 28th & Sunday 29th March 1992. The cost will be £95 for a single room or £85 each to share a twin room. Applications, with a deposit of £20 per person, should reach David Stuart Davies not later than 1 October (Overdale, 69 Greenhead Road, Huddersfield HD1 4ER); cheques won't be cashed until 30 November. I hope to be there, but don't let that put you off.

Michael Digby (3 Barrymore Walk, Rayleigh, Essex) asks if anyone can help him obtain recordings of the BBC radio adaptations by Felix Felton, originally broadcast on Children's Hour, and featuring Carleton Hobbs & Norman Shelley. Bert Coules tells me that 4 episodes of the Radio 4 ADVENTURES (Merrison & Williams) will be repeated on Sunday evenings starting 27 October; SCAN, REDH, BOSC & COPP. This time FM transmission is guaranteed! THE MEMOIRS will probably be broadcast & released on cassette early next year. The casts will include Brian Blessed, Peter Davison, Roger Hammond, Patrick Malahide, Jack May, Sean Arnold - and Michael Pennington as Moriarty (great!); while the writers, apart from Bert himself, Vincent McInnery & Peter Mackie, include Gerry Jones, Peter Ling & Denys Hawthorne.

From 5th October to 2nd November, Cambridgeshire Libraries will host a county-wide arts festival called MURDER IN THE LIBRARY, including a specially-commissioned play, music, a literary dinner, visiting authors, and much more. Linda King, the artist responsible for many superb Holmesian portraits, is moving: from 1 November until further notice her address will be c/o 10 Factory Road, Watleys End, Winterbourne, Bristol BS17 1QN (phone 0454 777334). Contact Linda to find out about her splendid drawings and prints. Sylvian Hamilton's latest list of Holmesiana, "SH 24", is out now; it's all here - books, posters, puzzles, Persian slippers -

even a gasogene (Hermitage, Mt Pleasant, Duns, Berwickshire - TD11 3HU, Scotland).

THE SOFT-NOSED BULLET-IN no. 8, journal of Von Herder Airguns Ltd, is now available, along with the 15th issue of the newsletter, THE STRIKING (T)RIFLES. All in German, including a touching tribute to Dave Kirby by Catherine Cooke. For information about the society, contact Kathrin Jaeck, Berliner Strasse 6E, D-3005 Hemmingen, Germany. (Fortunately Kathrin's command of English is excellent.) Also received: UNDER THE ARCH no. 1, the newsletter of The Parallel Case of St Louis - likewise full of interest. For details of this society, contact Joseph J. Eckrich, 7793 Keswick Place, St Louis, MD 63119, USA. Wayne (Giant Rat) Swift points out that THE BAKER STREET JOURNAL is available to all interested parties, not just members of the BSI. Subscription is \$17.50 a year (4 issues) from The Baker Street Journal, c/o Fordham University Press, University Box L, Bronx, NY 10458-5172, USA. Postage outside North America is by surface mail with a delay of 2 - 3 months.

Wai-Ming Chan has a small number of Holmesian books for sale, mostly recent pastiches, but a few nice scarce items, all at reasonable prices (312 Marlowe Road, Walthamstow, London E17 3HQ, - please enclose a stamped & addressed envelope). He also reminds me of a newly released tape cassette from Random Century Audiobooks: an adaptation of THE VALLEY OF FEAR "excellently read" by Christopher Lee - £7.99 for approximately 3 hours. John Bennett Shaw's COLLECTING SHERLOCKIANA; AN ESSAY is available in a limited edition of 200 copies from Opuscula Press (6307 Forrester Drive, Bradenton, Florida 34202, USA) at \$5.50 postfree (+ \$1.50 outside the USA) - payment in US currency, please. Ian Henry Publications Ltd (20 Park Drive, Romford RM1 4LH) has another pastiche forthcoming in what's proving a remarkably comprehensive lists DOCTOR WATSON & THE INVISIBLE MAN by Noel Downing, in which Watson and Langdale Pike investigate the mystery of the Invisible Man and confront Aleister Crowley, Arthur Machen and others. The cost will be £10.95. Watch this space.

Another new title for Ripperologists: forthcoming from Duckworth at £14.95 is THE RIPPER & THE ROYALS by Melvyn Fairclough. Published this month is THE WORLD OF SHERLOCK HOLMES, edited by Nigel Flynn & Richard Widdows (Prion, £7.95): "three of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's most popular sleuthing mysteries abridged for a young audience and illustrated with film stills". Christmas is coming, as the publishers well know; the Holmesian in your life would surely appreciate a copy of THE LIGHT IS DARK ENOUGH, the admirable collection of monographs about Sherlock Holmes and Cambridge, compiled by Jonathan McCafferty for the Society's visit to that enchanting city a, couple of years ago. Jonathan still has some copies left at £8 or \$17.50 postfree (5 Jonathan Court, Windmill Road, Chiswick, London W4 1SA) - first come, first served.

Charles Hall (12 Paisley Terrace, Edinburgh EH8 7JW) has produced another lovely cartoon postcard - full colour - in his "Famous Detectives" series. This one shows Dick Tracy with a backdrop of a cinema showing THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES and an eager queue of patrons at the box-office all wearing deerstalkers. Write to Charles for details. Ann O'Neill (38 Stephens Firs, Mortimer, Reading RG7 3UY) announces that issue no. 4 of her magazine 221B is available from mid-September, containing articles on Moriarty, the pastiches and Holmes's eating habits among other things. £3.50 postfree (+ 50p if ordering from Europe or £1 from elsewhere) - all payments in sterling, please.

The indefatigable Mark Chadderton tells me of THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES, currently available at £2.99 in Fabbri's "Classic Adventures" series, consisting of a copy of the book and a 24 page full-colour magazine. It's aimed at children, and very well produced. Copies can be had by post from Classic Adventures, Distinctive Distribution Ltd, PO Box 16, St Leonard's on Sea, East Sussex TN38 9NZ (cheques payable to Distinctive Distribution Ltd). Douglas Warren reminds me of a dayschool in the Science of Crime Detection at the School of Chemistry in Bristol on Saturday 16 November. The fee is £19. For full details, phone Dr Sue Pringle on Bristol 303611.

