

THE DISTRICT MESSENGER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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More obituaries, alas. Within a few days of each other, Alan Wheatley and Thorley Walters died. Wheatley made his mark back in 1951, the year of this Society's foundation, as the star of the very first Sherlock Holmes TV series. Walters was a memorable Watson, mostly in the silly-ass vein, opposite three Holmeses: Christopher Lee, Christopher Plummer & Douglas Wilmer. More recently, we lost Michael Harrison, a prolific writer in the field, whose *IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF SHERLOCK HOLMES* is an undisputed classic, while his *A STUDY IN SURMISE* is an extremely important, though sadly neglected, investigation into the origins of Sherlock Holmes.

Constable has just published two books of great interest. *LESTRADE & THE MAGPIE* is the 10th of M.J. Trow's clever and very funny adventures of Sholto Lestrade (£12.99). Now retired, Lestrade finds himself thrust into a case of espionage, murder, theft and abduction - and the kidnap victim is his own daughter. Irish revolutionaries, the fledgeling British film industry, George Bernard Shaw, the Russian Royal Family, and lots of throwaway jokes ("You don't like Mungo, Gerry?"). It's a treat. So is *THE CONSTABLE CRIME OMNIBUS 2*, which reissues in paperback (at last!) the first three Lestrade novels: *THE ADVENTURES OF INSPECTOR LESTRADE*, *BRIGADE*, and *LESTRADE & THE HALLOWED HOUSE*. Purists will detest the scurrilous treatment of Holmes & Watson, but Sholto Lestrade is a likeable protagonist, the plots are elegant, and it's a pleasure to see how Mr Trow's humour has been refined from the hammered-home punchlines of the early books to the artfully careless wit of the later ones. Be warned; if you're a Holmesian fundamentalist, *LESTRADE & THE HALLOWED HOUSE* is likely to give you brain-fever. (I was going to pass these books to Inspector G. Lestrade for review, but he turned a funny colour-and started foaming at the mouth.)

Collins Lions have published two new graphic novels: *THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES* and *THE SPECKLED BAND/THE BLUE CARBUNCLE* told in comic-strip form by Tim Quinn & George Sears. The characters are broadly drawn, the script carries the narrative along rapidly, and it's all good clean fun. Fair value for the young Sherlockian in your life at £3.50 but my advice would be to give such a youngster the real thing rather than an adaptation.

Besides the Company Shares, the Franco-Midland Hardware Company ("The Stock-Broker's Clerk", 6 Bramham Moor, Hill Head, Fareham, Hampshire PO14 3HU) has begun a series of Company Bonds, shorter monographs without illustrations. Company Bond no. 001 is *SHERLOCK HOLMES & SCOTLAND YARD: A LOVE-HATE RELATIONSHIP?* by John Pforr & Philip Weller, interesting in itself, and particularly so when read alongside Ian Smyth's "Sherlock Holmes & the Scotland Yarders" in *THE SPARKING PLUG* 1990 (see DM 113). This first Bond costs £2 (UK), £2.50 or \$5. (Europe), £3 Or \$6 (rest of world). All prices include postage - airmail outside the UK. Sterling payments by UK cheques, Girobank or Eurocheques, please; dollar payments in US dollar bills. Make cheques payable to Sherlock Publications. Meanwhile the Northern Musgraves (David Stuart Davies, Overdale, 69 Greenhead Road, Huddersfield HD1 4ER) have produced their second Musgrave Monograph, *DIVING DOWN INTO THE CELLAR: USES OF PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE CANON* by Matthew Booth. There are only ten copies left, at £2.50 including postage.

The Society's memorable trip to Winchester in August produced a number of very cherishable items. The handbook, *THE TRI-METALLIC QUESTION*, edited by Peter Horrocks, maintains the tradition of fascinatingly entertaining and scholarly essays, and is beautifully presented. Richard Lancelyn Green tells of Conan Doyle's connections with Hampshire; Peter studies Sherlock Holmes' and Dr Watson's associations with the county; Francine & Wayne Swift investigate the Winchester Races; Geoffrey Stavert and Jonathan McCafferty each offer an identification of Thor Place; Stephen Farrell goes into the matter of fire-arms; Philip Weller reports on railway journeys and on the Hampshire Police; Tim Owen goes to Netley; Grant Eustace adapts, the Hampshire cases for audio; Michael Cox produces them for television... It's not cheap at £15 (including postage), but not expensive for

such a lovely, collectable anthology. It's delightfully illustrated too. (P.L. Horrocks, 22 Old Buildings, Lincoln's Inn, London WC2A 3UJ; make cheques payable to The Sherlock Holmes Society of London.) Then there's the gorgeous spoof commentary on the running of The Wessex Cup by Peter O'Sullivan, introduced by Nick Ross and featuring interruptions by Sherlock Holmes, Dr Watson and Colonel Ross. Those who heard this little masterpiece at Winchester know how good it is. Copies may be had on cassette at £2.50 from the same address (cheques to P.L. Horrocks, please).

Issue no. 4 of Ann O'Neill's magazine "221B" is now out, with a wide variety of articles and illustrations (the latter mostly from the Granada TV series). Most interesting is an account of the often-impromptu script changes that occurred during the West End run of THE SECRET OF SHERLOCK HOLMES. Details from Ann O'Neill (38 Stephens Firs, Mortimer, Reading RG7 3UY). Charles Hall (12 Paisley Terrace, Edinburgh EH8 7JW) has issued a very attractive postcard reproducing the original poster for THE TRIUMPH OF SHERLOCK HOLMES; write to Charles for details.

David Stuart Davies and Michael Cox put me on to a real bargain: THE PICTORIAL HISTORY OF SHERLOCK HOLMES by Michael Pointer, a very large, copiously illustrated volume with a pithy commentary by one of the leading authorities. It's exclusively available from W.H. Smith at only £8.99. Stanley MacKenzie tells me of the world premiere of SHERLOCK HOLMES & THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES, a specially commissioned play by Nick Fisher, which will be produced at the Playhouse, Malthouse Lane, Salisbury, from the 7th November to the 7th December. Performances will be at 7.30 (Monday to Wednesday), 8 pm (Thursday to Saturday), with Thursday matinees (not 7th November or 5th December) at 2.30, and Saturday matinees at 4 pm. Ticket prices range from £6.30 to £9.40. Box Office telephones 0722 320333. There's free parking nearby after 6 pm.

New in America, is THE VIEW-HALLOA: SHERLOCKIAN ESSAYS, edited by Dana Richards (Donald McGrady, 530 North First Street, Charlottesville, Virginia, 22901, USA), containing studies of the Ku-Klux Klan, the role of the Victorian governess, gentlemen's clubs, and much more. The cost is \$9 + \$1.50 postage (but check with Mr McGrady about overseas postage). New in this country is MODERN SHERLOCK HOLMES by Judy Williams, published by Broadside Books at £14.95.

The new society in the south-west of England, The Poor Folk Upon The Moors, has two meetings coming up. There'll be an informal gathering at 11.30 am on Saturday 2nd November to elect a committee and hear a short paper. Meet at Worth. Road Station, Plymouth, and proceed to the venue. On Saturday 7th December the group will attend a performance of Patrick Hamilton's marvellous Victorian thriller GASLIGHT at the Theatre Royal, Plymouth, and gather for a seasonal drink in the theatre bar. For details, send a 1st class stamped & self-addressed envelope to Dawn Healy, 1 Warleigh Avenue, Keyham, Plymouth PL2 1NW, (Thanks to Clare Taylor for keeping us up to date.)

The Peter Tauber Press Agency (94 East End Road, London N3 2SX) has been asked by its publisher clients to provide "ingenious, high quality mystery novels set in England in the Victorian or Edwardian eras". If you're under 60 and think you can fill the bill, send a synopsis to the above address, together with an author CV, including age, and copies of all previous rejections from other agents and publishers. Oh, and a stamped & addressed envelope. The length of the story should be about 80,000 words.

The Northern Musgraves have once again produced a charming Christmas card, in large format and bearing an illustration by Kathryn White to "The Blue Carbuncle". There are only 250 printed, and they're sold in batches of 5 at £3 (UK), £4 (Europe), or \$9 (elsewhere - US dollar bills, please). The Sherlock Holmes Society of Australia (PO Box 13, Stirling, South Australia 5152) also offers Christmas cards, at \$15 the pack (Australian or US?). (Thanks to John E. Stephenson for this information.) Peter Blau notes that THE INTERNATIONAL ILLUSTRATED SHERLOCK HOLMES is once again available from William Berner (4712 17th Street, San Francisco, California 94117, USA) at the slightly increased price of \$35 post-paid (check with William about overseas rates). It would make a lovely Christmas present for the Sherlockian you love. Or for yourself, if it comes to that.

