

THE DISTRICT MESSENGER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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Subscribers in the USA and Canada may like to take advantage of the fact that I can now happily accept payment in dollar bills or dollar cheques (US for preference), the cheques to be made payable to Jean C. Upton. \$10 will get you ten issues of the DM. This should be more convenient than International Reply Coupons. Please make cheques out to Jean and not to me!

To coincide with, and participate in, the unveiling of the Conan Doyle memorial at Crowborough (see DM 115), the Arthur Conan Doyle Society and the Northern Musgraves will host a weekend gathering from the 22nd to the 24th May at the Periquito Hotel, Tunbridge Wells. There'll be a mixed programme of discussions, formal papers, entertainments, and a trip to Crowborough for the unveiling. The cost is £90 per person, including meals and coach transport to Crowborough. The final date for booking is the 29th March; a deposit of £35 each is required. (Christopher Roden, Grasmere, 35 Penfold Way, Dodleston, Chester CH4 9ML.) For the Musgraves, David Stuart Davies tells me that due to a late cancellation there are now two spare places available on the Aspects of Holmes weekend at the Hollings Hall Hotel at Baildon near Bradford, over the 28th and 29th March. The cost is just £85 per person, from David (Overdale, 69 Greenhead Road, Huddersfield HD1 4ER). First come, first served.

A welcome addition to the sparse number of really good Holmes pastiches is June Thomson's second collection THE SECRET CHRONICLES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES (Constable, £13.99), published earlier this month. Once again, June Thomson captures the style and substance of the canon with apparent ease; her success owes much to thorough familiarity with the originals and to a knowledge of what to leave out (Conan Doyle didn't indulge in self-conscious literary flights or in obscure archaisms: his followers should take note, as June Thomson clearly has). Inevitably there are echoes of canonical plots ("The Paradol Chamber" recalls THE VALLEY OF FEAR, while "The Harley Street Specialist" reminds one of "The Greek Interpreter") but then what is "The Three Garridebs" but "The Red-Headed League" recast? The treatment is quite as important as the plot, and June Thomson scores every time. "The Sumatran Rat", I should add, is the only treatment of the theme that I've seen which doesn't strain credibility to breaking-point. As a bonus, there's a 6 page essay on Watson's chronology, purporting to have been written in 1930 by Dr. John F. Watson (no relation); it's sound, perhaps rather elementary scholarship that really might have emanated from Oxford at the time - do I detect the influence of Dorothy L. Sayers?

Donald Girard Jewell has issued volume 2 in his Sherlock Holmes Natural History series, A FEW HOURS TO THE BIRDS: A MONOGRAPH ON BIRDS AND BIRDING IN THE TIME OF SHERLOCK HOLMES (Pinchin Lane Press, 4685 Geeting Road, Westminster, MD 21158, USA). It's an attractively presented 40 page brochure, printed on excellent paper and limited to 500 copies. Copies are available in Britain exclusively from Rupert Books (59 Stonefield, Bar Hill, Cambridge CB3 8TE) at £8.50, including postage, or from Murder One. Donald Jewell has tracked down just about every canonical reference to birds: ornithology, wildfowling, poultry, and much more.

Charles Hall (12 Paisley Terrace, Edinburgh EH8 7JW) has a list available of his Sherlock Holmes Mementos & Related Items. Please accompany enquiries with a stamped & self-addressed envelope, 2 IRCs or one US dollar bill. There are postcards, earthenware and metal sculptures, stamps, theatre memorabilia and much else besides. Two new additions to Charles' postcard range are black & white cartoons: "The Giant Rat of Sumatra" (looking very like Professor Ratigan) and "The Rat at Baker Street", while soccer fans will like the colour postcard "A Capital Victory", showing the Edinburgh statue of Holmes helping to celebrate Hibernian Football Club's victory in the Skol Cup. The b&w cards are 23p each, and the colour card 35p. Others will be issued soon.

Karizzma Enterprises (aka Soho West Print Consultants, 55 Great Pulteney Street, London W1) who produced the excellent series of postcards for Granada (see DM 115 - the cards are available from Granada Studios Tour, or from Karizzma direct, the first set of cards at 16 for £5.80 and the second at 32 for £11.10 - these prices compare very favourably with the cost of individual cards) have now produced a very attractive "chronology" of Sherlock Holmes, a handsomely designed and printed tabular chart of major events in Holmes' ancestry and in his life. It measures about 24"x 16" and is ideal as a wall decoration. It can be had from Karizzma at £3.55 (UK) or £4.00 (overseas); packed in a sturdy tube and posted. Now, a caveat. This item is "produced by the Sherlock Holmes International Society for the Sherlock Holmes Museum, 221b Baker Street, London (c) 1991". (221b Baker Street is part of the address of Abbey National PLC; the Museum has no legal right to use it.) The greater part of the chronology actually derives not from Conan Doyle but from the wide research and fertile imagination of the late William S. Baring-Gould, as given in his "biography" SHERLOCK HOLMES OF BAKER STREET and other works. Yet there's no acknowledgement to Baring-Gould or to his executors. No doubt the Sherlock Holmes International Society has made appropriate arrangements with the Baring-Gould Estate, but until that's clearly established I'd suggest treating this item with great care.

Music For Pleasure, who now own the Argo spoken word recordings, have just reissued the third of Robert Hardy's excellent readings, four complete stories under the title of THE CASE BOOK OF SHERLOCK HOLMES. All-round quality, including a handsome cover for this double-cassette pack, is splendid. Shop price will be around £6.99.

The Franco-Midland Hardware Company has a very tasty selection of "Company Hardware" available, including Henry T. Folsom's chronology THROUGH THE YEARS AT BAKER STREET (£15.50 UK, £16/\$32 Europe, £17/\$34 rest of world - all prices include postage, by air where appropriate); THE STORY OF THE SEPULCHRE, the life & legend of Richard Cabell by Susan Cabell Djabri (£2.50, £3/\$6, £3.50/\$7); and Philip Weller's whimsical parody TEMPUS FUGITIVE, a nice neo-Holmesian Christmas tale (£1.25, £1.50/\$3; £2/\$4). All this and more from The Stockbroker's Clerk, 6 Bramham Moor, Hill Head, Fareham, Hampshire PO14 3RU. Cheques payable to Sherlock Publications (dollar payments in US dollar bills, please). Michael Connolly (Tirgarve, Allistragh, Armagh, Co. Armagh, BT61 8EZ, Northern Ireland) has an interesting list of Holmesian books for sale. Please send a stamped & self-addressed envelope or 2 IRCs for a copy.

Anthea Sinclair points out that the latest Oxfam catalogue lists a very handsome all-leather Gladstone bag at £89; it measures 19"x 13"x 9". The catalogue can be had from Oxfam Trading, Murdock Road, Bicester OX6 7RF.

Marilyn Pearce, Secretary of The Poor Polk Upon The Moors (76 Glen Park Avenue, North Road East, Plymouth PL4 6BE), sends information about the Poor Polk's forthcoming activities. On the 11th July there'll be a picnic on Dartmoor, with a short talk by Becky Taylor on "Horses on the Moor"; the AGM will be on the 31st October, followed by "Sherlock Holmes: a case for the courts" by Dawn Healy; and in December, at an informal Christmas Party, Clare Taylor will show that Mrs Beeton was no match for Mrs Hudson.

Derek Hinrich has passed me a letter from Patricia Buckley: the Reichenbach Irregulars of Switzerland will be visiting Scotland at the end of August, beginning of September. If you'd like to meet this charming bunch of young enthusiasts, please contact Patricia at 47 Ramsey Grove, Elton Bury, Greater Manchester BLS 2RE.

Jane Sayle reminds me that Disney will be re-releasing that charming film BASIL, THE GREAT MOUSE DETECTIVE at the end of the year (I wish they'd issue it on video...). News from Bert Coules that BBC Radio 4 will repeat more of the Merrison/Williams ADVENTURES: 24 May "A Case of Identity", 7 June "The Speckled Band", 14 June "The Noble Bachelor", 21 June "The Engineer's Thumb". The rest of THE MEMOIRS will be broadcast on Radio 4 in the autumn. Bill Blake points out that no. 15 in the Rathbone/Bruce NEW ADVENTURES is now available on cassette from Simon & Schuster: THE GUILELESS GIPSY and THE CAMBERWELL POISONERS.

Kevin Jacklin has found more Holmesian games, starting off with a computer adaptation of the famous SHERLOCK HOLMES, CONSULTING DETECTIVE. By the miracle of CD-ROM, digitised pictures, action and sound bring the cases to life. Live

actors play Holmes, Watson, Lestrade and the various suspects in 3 separate mysteries; you the player can consult Holmes' notebook, his clue file, the Times, a London directory - and even an Irregular. Also on CD-ROM is THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES, based on the Webb & Bower dossier edition. You are presented with Watson's desk, littered with clues to the case; you can bring any item into full-size focus, and if it has writing on it Watson's voice will read it out to you. "Great fun" is Kevin's verdict. Both games are available for the Commodore CDTV at about £30 each; the computer itself costs £499. Details from Esdevium Games (6 Wellington Street, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 1DZ). A new role-playing (non-computer game) may be had from B&B Productions, c/o Thilo Bayer, Postfach 12, 7129 Talheim, Germany (send an IRC for details): this is PRIVATE EYE: DAS DETEKTIV-ROLLENSPIEL. Holmes, Victorian London, lots of clues, maps, diagrams - the full set costs about £6 - and it's all in German.

Gravesend Books, "Sherlockian Specialists" (Box 235, Pocono Pines, Pennsylvania 18350, USA), have sent a supplement to their latest catalogue, pretty big in itself and full of Holmesian and Doylean interest. Many of the books come from the library of the late Dr Julian Wolff - and are priced appropriately. There's some wonderful stuff here.

Worthwhile magazines recently received: THE BAKER STREET PILLAR BOX (newsletter of the Franco-Midland Hardware Company: The Stock-broker's Clerk, 6 Bramham Moor, Hill Head, Fareham, Hampshire PO14 3RU); BAKER STREET MISCELLANEA (Box 225, Winnetka, Illinois 60093, USA); THE PARALLELOGRAM (The Paralle Case of St Louis: Joseph J. Eckrich, 7793 Keswick Place, St Louis, Missouri 63119, USA); THE SERPENTINE MUSE (The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes! Evelyn Herzog, 360 West 21st Street Apt. 5A, New York, NY 10011, USA); THE SCHOOL REPORT (The Priory Scholars: Mary Hercock, 13 Gaddesby Avenue, Leicester); VARIETIES OF ASH (S.E. Dahlinger, ASH, 758 3rd Street, Secaucus, New Jersey 07094, USA) - and (at last!) THE SHERLOCK HOLMES JOURNAL! ALL members, associate members and subscribers should have received the SHJ by now. The Hon. Editors apologise for the unprecedented delay, which really was outside their control.

From Peter E. Blau, Gryphon Publications (Box 209, Brooklyn, NY 11228, USA) have published as a Gryphon Double Novel at \$6.95 THE LOSS OF THE BRITISH BARK SOPHY ANDERSON by Gary Lovisi and THE GREY NUN LEGACY by P. Smith - two new pastiches. The price includes postage within the USA.

There's still room on the Sherlockian cruise from New York to Bermuda, departing 16th May and returning 23rd May. All sorts of accomplished and well-known persons will provide entertainment. Information may be had from Holmes On The Horizon (Box 96, Norwood, New Jersey 07648, USA). In not-dissimilar vein, North Americans may like to know of a tour called "Light Upon The Moor: Sherlock Holmes", offered by British Airways from 19th to 29th July, and featuring six days at Cambridge and five in Devon. Stanley MacKenzie, BSI, will be one of the speakers. Accommodation on Dartmoor will be at the Manor House Hotel. For information call 800-792-0100.

If you're into Holmesian/Watsonian erotica (yes, honestly) and have \$8 to spare, you may care to consider THE ADVENTURE OF THE INDOLENT MAID by J.C. Charles (The Filmoods Co., Box 475, Scarsdale, NY 10583, USA) - but since you get only 14 pages for the price, I'd guess this one's for pastiche-completists (or erotica-completists) only. Equally specialised but perhaps more tasteful are two volumes of Holmesian golfing tales by Bob Jones: SHERLOCK HOLMES THE GOLFER (\$8.75) and SHERLOCK HOLMES SAVED GOLF (\$10.95) - prices include postage within USA. The books may be had (inscribed on request) from Bob Jones (Box 582, Pebble Beach, California 93953, USA). Peter sums up the stories as "nicely told, and interesting even to those who are not avid golfers".

From John E. Stephenson, Chris Steinbrunner & Norman Michaels' invaluable study THE FILMS OF SHERLOCK HOLMES has been reprinted by Carol Publishing Co.

John recommends a newly discovered book dealer with "one of the finest selections of Sherlockiana that has been offered for quite some time": Sandpiper Books (Paul & Ginny Merz), 114 South Pacific Highway, PO Box 1273, Long Beach, Washington 98631, USA.

