

THE DISTRICT MESSENGER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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Our Society recently lost one of its most scholarly early members: Vernon Goslin died of injuries sustained in a fire at his house in Middlesex. He was 82 years old. Sad news that I missed at the time was the death last year of the actor Ronald Lacey, a lovely put-upon Inspector Lestrade to Ian Richardson's Holmes, and a superb Thaddeus Sholto in Granada's THE SIGN OF FOUR.

Music Hall humour is alive and well, thanks to M.J. Trow and his Adventures of Inspector Lestrade, of which LESTRADE & THE DEAD MAN'S HAND (Constable, £13.99; published 13th April) is the 11th. The way in which the author merges accurate historical detail, rich Victorian atmosphere, classic detection, and raucous pun-filled humour is a delight. This one has Sholto Lestrade up to his neck in trouble as usual, what with strangulations on the Underground Railway, bully-boy tactics from Chief Inspector Abberline, and very little help from the likes of H.G. Wells, ex-Private Fred Hitch VC, Squire Bancroft, and the Marquess of Queensbury. It's very clever and great fun.

Geoff Bradley's splendid magazine CADS (Crime And Detective Stories) has reached its 18th issue; this one contains (among much else) an article on Sherlock Holmes by Fr Francis Hertzberg, and more on the uncollected John Dickson Carr by the indefatigable Tony Medawar. (G.H. Bradley, 9 Vicarage Hill, South Benfleet, Essex, SS7 1PA.) Due shortly from Theme Publications (43 Bowleaze Coveaway, Weymouth, Dorset DT3 6PL) is THE SHERLOCK HOLMES GAZETTE no. 4, a bumper issue to celebrate the Gazette's first year. On June 30th, Theme will publish in a strictly limited edition of 500 beautifully printed and bound copies THE TANGLED SKEIN: SHERLOCK HOLMES & THE DRACULA AFFAIR by David Stuart Davies. The first 50 copies will be signed by David and by Peter Cushing, who has contributed an enthusiastic foreword. Both a rattling good yarn and a collector's item, this special edition costs £25 the copy, which includes postage (by surface overseas).

Ian Henry Publications (20 Park Drive, Romford RM1 4LH) have forthcoming another of Jeremy Paul's splendid scripts for Granada: THE MUSGRAVE RITUAL (£5.45); another pastiche is due in the autumn. Coming next month in Dent's Everyman Library is THE BEST OF SHERLOCK HOLMES by Arthur Conan Doyle; (£5.99), while Macmillan Educational will issue GREAT TALES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES edited and abridged by Kerry Edwardes (£2.50). In May, Oxford University Press will publish a new edition of Raymond Smullyan's THE CHESS MYSTERIES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES (£5.99), and from Souvenir Press in June there's the first full-length study of the Edalji case, THE GREAT WYRLEY MYSTERIES: A REAL LIFE SHERLOCK HOLMES ADVENTURE by Michael Barley (£14.99).

Catherine Cooke sends information of a handsome 64 page book by W.S. Butler: SHERLOCKIAN. BOOKPLATES (Silent Books, Boxworth End, Swavesey, Cambridge CB4 5RA; £8.95; 7th May) a collection of bookplates from America & Europe, beautifully reproduced and fully indexed. For those who delight in the exploits of sleuths on the box, everything from Holmes to Starsky & Hutch can be found in THE BOXTREE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF TV DETECTIVES by Geoff Tibballs (Box-tree, £17.99), published last month.

Booklists are currently available from Howard Einbinder (180 Clinton Street, Brooklyn, NY 11201, USA) and Sylvian Hamilton (Hermitage, Mount Pleasant, Duns, Berwickshire TD11 3HU; this is SH 25, and like its predecessors lists much, much more than books).

Charles Hall (12 Paisley Terrace, Edinburgh EH8 7JW) has added five more delightful postcards to his range. In colour, there's "A Capital Mistake" - Holmes & Watson are struck by the wrong birthdate assigned to their creator on the plinth of the new Edinburgh statue - while the black & white cartoons are "Holmes & Watson Meet Nessie" (not quite as it was in THE PRIVATE LIFE), "The Rats Arrived" (how the Giant Rat got from Sumatra to London), and two in which Holmes exposes the Cottingley Fairies: "Holmes Spots the Fairies" and "Holmes Takes a Photograph". The cartoons are all fine products of Charles' artistic imagination and

skilled hand. (There s a subtle hint that a certain ex-professor was responsible for the erroneous date of the statue.)

An unabridged reading of THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES will come next month from Isis Audio Books (55 St Thomas Street, Oxford OX1 1JG); the reader is Patrick Tull, and the whole story, on four cassettes, lasts five hours. The set costs £23.95 + VAT. (Thanks to Geoffrey Stavert for passing this on.) From Tony Howlett comes the stimulating news that BBC TV has bought the two Harmony Gold movies starring Christopher Lee and Patrick Macnee: SHERLOCK HOLMES: THE LEADING LADY (with Morgan Fairchild, John Bennett & Engelbert Humperdinck) and SHERIQCCK HOLMES: INCIDENT AT VICTORIA FALLS (with Jenny Seagrove, Richard Todd & Claude Akins). No news yet as to when we'll see them - but watch this space!

Tom Stix, who as "Wiggins" is the benevolent autocrat of the Baker Street Irregulars, asks me to mention the John H. Watson Fund, established by the BSI to aid Sherlockians in need of financial help to attend the Master's birthday weekend in New York City. Contributions or requests for help should be sent to John H. Watson, c/o Thomas L. Stix, Jr., 34 Pierson Avenue, Norwood, NJ 07648, USA. To protect the anonymity of Watson, the donors and the recipients, no return address should be on the envelope.

Other news from Societies. The Bimetallic Question of Montreal and the Reichenbach Irregulars of Switzerland will install on the weekend of the 2nd/3rd May a very handsome commemorative plaque at the precise spot (identified so many years ago by Tony Howlett) where the momentous struggle took place above the Great Fall of Reichenbach. The plaque was commissioned by the Bimetallic Question; it will be flown by Swissair to Zurich, where the Reichenbach Irregulars will take over, arranging its installation before the unveiling in May. For further details, contact The Bimetallic Question (Wilfrid de Freitas, 369 Kitchener Avenue, Montreal H3Z 2G1, Canada) or The Reichenbach Irregulars (Markus Geisser, St Gallerstrasse 20, CH-9320 Arbon, Switzerland). Robert W. Hahn, one of the most energetic and scholarly Sherlockians in the world, is a joint founder of The Watsonians, a society dedicated to the proposition that Holmes and Watson are two sides of the same coin, of equal value, and inseparable. The society is basically a corresponding scion, but it will hold one general meeting each year, the Watsonian Weekend, as close as possible to the anniversary of the Battle of Maiwand. The first Watsonian Weekend will take place in Arlington Heights, Illinois over the weekend of the 24th to the 26th July. For information, contact Bob Hahn at 2707 South 7th Street, Sheboygan, Wisconsin 53081, USA.

As a practical tribute to the late David Kirby, Holmesian, bookseller, gentleman and friend, Christopher Roden devised the David Kirby Memorial Essay Competition. There are two categories: 1) the life, writings and/or criticism or study of the writings of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and 2) studies in the Sherlockian writings of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (parody and pastiche are specifically excluded). The Arthur Conan Doyle Society is offering a prize of £50 to the winner of each category, plus publication of the winning entries. Each entry must be accompanied by a fee of £2 (or US \$4) to cover administrative costs. The closing date for the 1992 competition is 31st December 1992. Official entry forms may be had from Christopher Roden, The Arthur Conan Doyle Society, David Kirby Memorial Essay Competition, 35 Penfold Way, Dodleston, Chester CH4 9ML.

Geoffrey Stavert has passed on an enquiry from a Mr or Ms Holt of 14 Chamberlain Road, East Finchley, London N2 8JS, who wants to track down some stories remembered from early school-days in the 1950s which featured a schoolboy detective named Holmes at a grammar school in the Wimbledon area. He uncovered a gang whose members signed their secret messages with squares, triangles etc cut out of rubber erasers and dipped in ink. The only thing that comes to my mind is the duo of Norman & Henry Bones, which I m sure is wrong. If you can identify the elusive Holmes, please write to the enquirer at the above address.

Derek Hinrich tells me of a pair of attractive white metal figures of Holmes (NH0025) and Watson (NH0026), designed by Roger Saunders and issued by New Hope Design (Tynwald Mill, St John's, Isle of Man) in kit form at £4.95 each. They're available from Under Two Flags and other military model emporia.

