

# THE DISTRICT MESSENGER

The Newsletter of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London

*Roger Johnson, Mole End, 41 Sandford Road, Chelmsford CM2 6DE*

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We have recently lost two giants in our field. Edith Meiser was single-handedly responsible for the presentation of Sherlock Holmes on the air with her adaptation of "The Speckled Band" for American radio in 1930. Her first Holmes was William Gillette. Over the next 25 years she wrote numerous radio scripts for actors including Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce, as well as the stories for the syndicated comic strip drawn by Frank Giacoia. In 1991, she was invested into the BSI as "A Fascinating and Beautiful Woman". Like Edith Meiser, Charles Scholefield was well into his 10th decade. A QC and past-President of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London, Charles was the Moriarty against whom others are measured. Tall and thin, soft-spoken and unfailingly courteous, he had quiet authority and a nice dry humour. He broke his hip in a fall some years ago, which curtailed his activities, but he retained his enthusiasm for Sherlock Holmes and for the Society.

Published on the 1st October was "**I Remember the Date Very Well**": **A Chronology of the Sherlock Holmes Stories of Arthur Conan Doyle** by John Hall (Ian Henry Publications Ltd, 20 Park Drive, Romford RM1 4LH; £6.25). This is the most ambitious work of its kind for several years, and will surely be mentioned in future years along with Brend, Bell and Baring-Gould. A couple of small errors should have been caught by the proof-reader (Michael & Mollie Hardwick wrote **The Sherlock Holmes Companion**, not Michael Harrison; Watson returned from India on the Orontes, not the Orestes), and I find that Mr Hall's use throughout of Prof. Christ's abbreviations instead of giving each story its full title is unnecessarily distracting. Those gripes aside, the book is clever and most interesting. It's certain that Mr Hall hasn't had the last word on the Holmes chronology, but scholarship should provoke controversy. I'd like to hear John Hall and Bernard Davies discuss the dating of **The Sign of Four** and **The Hound of the Baskervilles!** (If you order the book from the publisher, add 50p for postage.)

Available now from Ian Henry are all eight of Murray Shaw's excellent adaptations from the canon, the series entitled **Match Wits With Sherlock Holmes**. At £3.99 each (plus postage of 30p for 1, 50p for 2, 80p for 3, £1.00 for 4 or more) they cost little more than half what you'd pay for imported copies at a specialist bookshop. On the 24th November Ian Henry will publish a limited edition of 500 copies of the script of Eille Norwood's play **The Return of Sherlock Holmes** by J.E. Harold Terry & Arthur Rose, introduced by Norwood's son-in-law Ernest Dudley and featuring 20 photos from the original 1923 production. Copies can be ordered now at £31.45/\$54.00 including postage. This is the first and only edition of this version; Ernest Dudley is preparing a revised acting edition for 1994 publication.

The Conan Doyle (Crowborough) Establishment has just published **Recollections of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle** by residents of Crowborough,

collected by Malcolm Payne and edited by Philip Weller. There is a foreword by Dame Jean Conan Doyle, who has also contributed comments on the reminiscences. The booklet is very nicely produced by Sherlock Publications, but the content is the important point, and it's delightful, a chance at last to know something of ACD as he appeared to the people who met him every day. Any profits from sales of the booklet will go towards maintenance of the Arthur Conan Doyle memorial in the town. It can be ordered direct from Malcolm Payne, 4 Wealden Close, Crowborough, East Sussex TN6 2ST. Prices including postage are: UK £5.00; Europe £5.50/\$11.00; Canada & USA £6.00/\$12.00; elsewhere £6.50/\$13.00. Sterling cheques should be payable to The Arthur Conan Doyle Memorial Fund; dollar payments should be in US banknotes.

Mark Frost, co-creator of **Twin Peaks**, has written what promises to be an exciting "alternative universe" novel, **The List of Seven** (Hutchinson, £9.99; William Morrow, \$20.00), which pits the young Arthur Conan Doyle against the malevolent Dark Brotherhood. The book has been sold to the Mystery and Thriller Guild and to other book clubs in the U.S.A.

**The Case of Emily V** by Keith Oatley (Martin Secker & Warburg, £9.99) gives a new twist to the notion of Holmes meeting Freud. I hope to be able to review this one in the next DM. You'll be aware of **The Oxford Sherlock Holmes** (Oxford University Press; £7.95 each volume or £69.95 the set). Publication is supposedly set for November, but we've seen copies in the shops. However, I've had no reply to my enquiries about a review copy, so at present I can only say that it looks very nice!

The **Sherlock Holmes** (10-11 Northumberland Street, London WC2 5DA) has new managers, Robert and Anne Davie, who are very keen to make the pub the major attraction to Holmesians that it was always intended to be. In recent years, it had become a bit run-down, and the Davies found when they took over that some of the memorabilia that should have been on display was either damaged or missing. They're gradually getting things in order, and are particularly anxious to know if anyone can tell them what's become of the pastel portrait of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, a copy by Henry Gates of his own original in oils which is in the National Portrait Gallery. The Davies have also struck a deal with Deirdre Keetley of Studio Gallery for a range of really good quality souvenirs, some of which are already on sale at the pub.

The Royal Mail's Sherlock Holmes stamps were issued on the 12th October, and very handsome they are. There's been much coverage in the philatelic magazines. You may still be able to buy our Society's first day covers at £5.00 each (£6.50 to non-members) from Covercraft, P.O. Box 432, Beckenham, Kent BR3 3SZ. Others offering commemorative items are: Henry Murray (Arlington Supplies, P.O. Box 1102, Barnet, Herts. ENS 5AF), who have sets of postcards with relevant postmarks, and a limited edition first day cover signed by Dame Jean Conan Doyle and bearing Masonic information about Arthur Conan Doyle (these are £12.50 each); the Sherlock Holmes Memorabilia Company (230 Baker Street, London NW1 5RT) which has produced its own first day cover at £6.00 plus postage; Maximum Original Co. (Maurice Tanner, 180 Whitehorse Road, West Croydon CR0 2LA), which has issued a set of 5 postcards, each bearing a photograph of Sir Arthur and a full-colour picture of Holmes taken from the old John Murray dust-jackets, selling at: UK £6.99, abroad £7.99 (prices include postage; payment can be made by Mastercard or Visa, but 4.8% commission will be added). All the items I've seen are very nicely produced. (\*You can ask to be put on the

mailing-list for all these companies. Please remember to enclose a stamped and self-addressed envelope with any enquiry.\*)

The latest production from Charles Hall (12 Paisley Terrace, Edinburgh EH8 7JW) is a very striking low-relief grouping in white metal of Holmes, Watson and the Hound (all head and shoulders), about 3V high on a wooden base. On the reverse is Holmes, bending over and peering through his lens at one of the six Napoleons. Like all Charles Hall's work, it's remarkably reasonably priced at £6.00. Do enquire about his other products, which range from postcard caricatures to earthenware mugs. He still has a few copies left of his splendid book **The Sherlock Holmes Collection** at £10.00 including postage.

Marcelle Shulman of the Sherlock Holmes Memorabilia Company tells me that the Company's version of the attractive **Sherlock Holmes 1994 Collectors' Calendar**, produced by Cadds Printing (see DM 134), is now available from the Company at the Baker Street address for £3.99 plus postage. The Company's updated catalogue, out next month, will be sent automatically to existing customers. Newcomers should send £1.50 to pay for the catalogue and postage to any UK address. The Fry Art Gallery at Bridge End Gardens in Saffron Walden, has a unique collection of work by artists connected with nearby Great Bardfield, one of whose leading figures was Edward Bawden. The Gallery's current promotional leaflet prominently features one of Bawden's linocut illustrations to the Folio Society edition of **The Hound of the Baskervilles**.

Argo (EMI Records Ltd, 1/3 Uxbridge Road, Hayes, Middlesex UB4 0SY) has reissued the remaining two double cassettes of readings by Robert Hardy, **The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes**, being RESI, IDEN, BLUE & FIVE (Argo 1367), and **The Return of Sherlock Holmes**, being EMPT, SOLI, REDC & MAZA (Argo 1376). Cost is about £7.99. Needless to say, the texts are complete, and both performance and production are immaculate. A real curiosity is **Sherlock Holmes Songs**, a cassette by one Brian May, which among a number of his own songs includes Claude Ralston's "Sherlock Holmes" from **The Scottish Students' Song Book**. It's available from B. May, Peterbrook, Shirley, W. Midlands B90 1HZ.

Orbit has re-released two more Rathbone/Bruce films on video: **The Woman In Green** (ORB 0005) and **Sherlock Holmes & the Secret Weapon** (ORB 0006). It should be possible to find these, like Orbit's other movies, at prices as low as £3.99. Target Direct (FREEPOST KT4075, Chessington, Surrey KT9 2BR) is selling "The Complete Adventures of Sherlock Holmes" on video by post in weekly or monthly stages. These are actually the first 16 videos from the Granada series (i.e. not **The Casebook**, **The Master Blackmailer**, **The Last Vampyre** or **The Eligible Bachelor**). You get the first two for the price of one, and your 7th and 14th are free. Cost is £9.99 each plus £1.99 postage.

Kevin Jacklin (4 Lee Court, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 3SY) tells me that volume 3 of the game **Sherlock Holmes: Consulting Detective** is due out shortly on CD-ROM, and that the entire canon is now available on CD-ROM from Pioneer for about £30.00. Kevin himself has a number of duplicates for sale from his collection of board and role-playing games. Send him a stamped & self-addressed envelope for a list.

Another of our readers, Russell Paterson (Limpsfield, 16 Ranfurly Road, Bridge of Weir, Renfrewshire PA11 3EL) is Honorary Secretary of the John Buchan Society, an active group which holds meetings at various places,

and issues both a journal and a newsletter, Admirers of Richard Hannay, Sir Edward Leithen, Dickson McCunn and all those other marvellous characters should consider the benefits of membership.

The autumn issue of **The Sherlock Holmes Gazette** (P.O. Box 221, Alderney, Channel Islands GY9 3NY) is out now, full of interest and lively comment as always. There's a striking cover portrait of Eric Porter as Professor Moriarty by the American artist Cathy Childs, herself the subject of an article. There are reports from BBC Radio and Granada TV; an account of the opening of the High Moorland Visitor Centre at Princetown, Dartmoor; news of a film deal for David Stuart Davies' splendid novel **The Tangled Skein**; assessments of the Napoleon of Crime; an investigation by Philip Weller into the Norfolk origins of **The Hound of the Baskervilles**...

Andrew McLean, now studying at St David's University College, has discovered a fascinating American periodical, **Victorian Studies**, published by Indiana State University Department of Victorian Studies. The bound volumes (going back to 1953) in the college library suggest that no-one has yet contributed an article about Sherlock Holmes. There's an opening there for someone, surely.

Periodicals received include **The Baker Street Journal** vol. 43 no. 3 (P.O. Box 465, Hanover, PA 17331, U.S.A.) (\*all correspondence for The Baker Street Irregulars should be sent to Thomas L. Stix Jr, "Wiggins", Norwood, NJ 07648, U.S.A.\*); **The Petrel Flyer** vol. 5 no. 8 (The Stormy Petrels of B.C., 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C. V7P 3C6, Canada); **Montmorency Daily Echo** no. 1 (La Société Sherlock Holmes de France, Thierry Saint-Joanis, Grand dépôt de Paris, 47 rue de Montmorency, 75003 Paris, France) (\*it's all in French!\*); **Irregular Special Railway Company Newsletter** no. 6 (Irregular Special Railway Company, Anthony Richards, 163 Marine Parade, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex SS9 2RB) ; **The Log of the Canonical Hams** January 1990 - December 1992 (The Sherlock Holmes Wireless Society, Ron Fish, P.O. Box 3382, New Haven, CT 06515-3382, U.S.A.) (\*that dating is because of an unexpectedly long hiatus\*); **Scuttlebutt From the Spermaceti Press** September 1993 (Peter E. Blau, 3900 Tunlaw Road N.W. #119, Washington, DC 20007-4830, U.S.A.).

From Peter Blau: **Night of the Cooters** by Howard Waldrop (Ace Books, 1993; \$4.99) is a collection of fantastic short stories that includes "The Adventure of the Grinder's Whistle", a reminiscence of his childhood by Edward Malone, best known for his accounts of the exploits of Professor Challenger; at the age of seven, it seems, Malone was "a lad of the London streets", and in 1888 he was of assistance to Sherlock Holmes. American purchasers of **The Oxford Sherlock Holmes** should save their receipts: if they mail a "proof of purchase", for a volume or for the whole set, to "Elementary, My Dear Watson", Oxford University Press, 200 Madison Avenue (9th Floor), New York, NY 10016, they'll receive in return a set of nine postcards showing the silk-screen cover artwork. (\*I've enquired whether such an offer is open to British purchasers, but so far have received no reply\*). The new TV film with Anthony Higgins as a cryogenic Holmes defrosted in Los Angeles is called **1994 Baker Street: Sherlock Holmes Returns**. It was shown on CBS TV last month in the U.S.A. and seems to have attracted mildly favourable reviews.

(\*OOPS! Tom Stix's full address is: Thomas L. Stix Jr, "Wiggins", 34 Pierson Avenue, Norwood, NJ 07648, U.S.A.\*)

