

THE DISTRICT MESSENGER

The Newsletter of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London

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no. 139 Easter 1994

1994 is proving a very busy year. Jean and I are currently compiling and editing a collection of essays, **Back to Baker Street**, which will be published in May to support the Society's "Back to Baker Street" festival. A number of classic pieces, long out of print, will be complemented by new essays from some of the Society's most incisive minds; as a bonus there's a brace of new cartoons by the inimitable Jeff Decker, and a jeu d'esprit by Stephen Fry. We hope that, like the festival itself, the book will reflect the vital balance of scholarship and fun within the Society, and that it will prove a valuable handbook for future pilgrims to Holmes' London.

Sir John Gielgud, Holmes on radio in the early 1950s, a memorable Lord Salisbury in **Murder by Decree**, an actor apparently incapable of a bad performance, will celebrate his 90th birthday this month.

Last October, David R. Godine (Horticultural Hall, 300 Massachusetts Avenue, Boston, MA 02115, USA) published **Sherlock in Love** by Sena Jeter Naslund at \$21.95. **Kirkus Reviews** called it "one of the very few Holmes pastiches that not only honors the great man's memory, but unleashes his residual mythic power for more ambitious purposes"; for the life of me I can't see why, unless the reviewer's grasp of the nature of Sherlock Holmes was as weak as his grammar. The great love of Holmes's life, we are to believe, is his own half-sister, whose expertise at cross-dressing rivals Irene Adler's. It's clever, but rather pointless. The incidental mystery, involving King Ludwig of Bavaria, is neat. Even less for the purist is **The Sexual Adventures of Sherlock Holmes** by Larry Townsend, a Badboy book from Masquerade Books Inc. (801 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA; \$4.95). Don't expect a serious, tasteful homoerotic work like **My Dearest Holmes** - this is out-and-out pornography, but it's well written, by someone thoroughly familiar with the Canon, and the perversion of **A Study in Scarlet**, "The Greek Interpreter" and "The Final Problem" is very clever. On its first appearance in the early 1970s, Lord Donegall called it "wholly filthy". You have been warned.

Just out from Warner Books (Little, Brown & Co. [UK], Brettenham House, Lancaster Place, London WC2E 7EN) is **The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes** by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. The slogan "Now a Granada Television Series" gives the game away. This slim paperback actually contains the seven stories drawn on for the current TV series, plus a brief, amiable introduction by Charles Viney. There's a good, brooding cover photo of Jeremy Brett, but the book is nothing special, and £5.99 is a lot to ask for it.

Then we have **A Sherlock Holmes Handbook** by Christopher Redmond (Simon & Pierre Publishing Ltd, c/o Dundurn Press Ltd, 2181 Queen Street East, Suite 301, Toronto M4E 1E5, Canada; \$29.99). This really is something special. In 250 pages, without apparent strain, Chris Redmond covers the whole Holmes phenomenon with a light but authoritative touch. The Canon, the author, the background, the literary and social impact - it's all here.

This is such an important book that it's worth noting the few errors: "A Case of Identity" has indeed been adapted for radio at least twice by the BBC (p.13); the landlady who promised green peas at 7.30 was not Mrs Hudson but the proprietress of an inn (p.43); as far as I know a portion of the MS of "The Crooked Man" is not on deposit at Marylebone Library, though "The Lion's Mane" is (p.54); Dame Jean Conan Doyle's Christian names are Jean Lena Annette, not Lena Jean, and according to Dame Jean her parents' surname was Conan Doyle, not Doyle (p.72); the "amateur reasoner" did not solve the cases of "The Lost Special" and "The Man With the Watches" (p.82); Ellery Queen's novel **A Study in Terror** was based on the film, not vice versa (p.168); the Gielgud radio series was produced by Harry Alan Towers and not by the BBC (p.170); Jonathan Newth played Colonel Walter in Granada's **Bruce-Partington Plans**, not Geoffrey Bayldon, who was Sidney Johnson (p.176); Wayne & Francine Swift's presentation at **Autumn in Baker Street** 1987 surely covered this Society's Swiss Pilgrimage of that year rather than Sherry Rose-Bond and Scott Bond's trip (p.202); this Society has visited Switzerland in costume in 1968, 1978, 1987, 1988 and 1991 (pp. 202 & 206); John Doubleday's statue of Holmes in Meiringen, unveiled in 1988, was either the first or the second in the world (p.211). That is an astonishingly tiny number of errors in such a densely-packed text. Proof-reading and presentation generally are first-rate, and I thoroughly recommend the book. It's available outside North America from Dundurn Distribution (UK), 73 Lime Walk, Headington, Oxford OX3 7AD, England, for £16.50 plus postage.

Due last month from Macmillan Press Ltd (Brunei Road, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hants. RG21 2XS) was **Sherlock Holmes: the Major Stories, with Contemporary Critical Essays** by Arthur Conan Doyle, edited by J.A. Hodgson (£6.99). Tesco stores currently stock at £2.99 packs of ten "children's classics" in paperback. One includes **The Hound of the Baskervilles** and a selection called **Sherlock Holmes Investigates**. The publisher is Parragon Book Service Ltd, 4 Mulberry Close, Rosslyn Hill, London NW3 5UP. In a remainder shop at 60p Mark Chadderton found an Australian paperback, **The Great Detective and the Case of Captain Blunderbuss's Secret** by Susan Green, illustrated by Stuart Billington (Thomas Nelson Australia); it's based on a children's TV series about 11 year old Alexander Holmes and his dog Watson. Mark also notes that the new "Talking Classics" series from Orbis Publishing, a two-cassette or two-CD pack plus a full-colour magazine for £3.99, will include **The Hound of the Baskervilles**. There's no information as to the reader. The series appears fortnightly and is widely available in newsagents.

In the new catalogue from Counter Productions (PO Box 556, London SE5 ORL) is **Methods of Disguise** by John Sample: "the complete guide to changing your appearance, habits, mannerisms and voice" (£11.95 plus 75p postage). Georgina Ledger and Mark Hunter-Purvis have (separately) found **The Sherlock Holmes Book of Quotations** published in 1993 by Robert Frederick Ltd (Downwood, Claverton Down Road, Bath BA2 6DT) as a miniature hardback (3½"x 2½") at 99p. Mark says there are several different variants of the cover, all coloured Paget illustrations. Mark also found at The Works bookshop in Newcastle a Sherlock Holmes Notepad, from the same publisher at £1.99, with the same quotations and with coloured Paget illustrations.

From Christopher Roden: "To coincide with the first North American Convention of The Arthur Conan Doyle Society, the Society is republishing Conan Doyle's account of his 1914 visit to North America. **Western**

Wanderings was originally published in the **Cornhill Magazine** between January and April 1915, and was issued in an American copyright edition, comprising four booklets. The new edition of **Western Wanderings** is limited to 150 numbered copies and is being issued as a case-bound volume of 80 pages. An 11,000 word introduction by Christopher & Barbara Roden draws on contemporary newspaper reports to provide a commentary on Conan Doyle's 1914 visit. The book is illustrated with six photographs taken during ACD's visit, some of which are published here for the first time. Priced £19.50 (US\$33; Cdn\$45), including postage and packing, **Western Wanderings** is available from The Arthur Conan Doyle Society at Ashcroft, 2 Abbotsford Drive, Penyffordd, Chester CH4 OJG, UK."

New catalogues are out from The Black Cat Bookshop (37-39 Silver Arcade, Leicester LE1 5FB) (UK £1.00; overseas £2.00 or DM5 or \$6.00 or 6 IRCs - German or US currency in cash, please), Gravesend Books (Box 235 Pocono Pines, PA 18350, USA) and Sherlock In LA (1741 Via Allena, Oceanside, CA 92056, USA). Daniela Karger (Quirinstrasse 22, D-53129 Bonn, Germany) wants to sell her collection of German film programmes and stills from Holmes films from the 20s to the 80s. Send Daniela a stamped, self-addressed envelope if you're interested.

Simon & Schuster (West Garden Place, Kendal Street, London W2 2AQ) have issued, at £7.99 each, the first four cassettes in the Rathbone/Bruce radio series **The New Adventures of Sherlock Holmes**, written by Denis Green & Anthony Boucher and produced for audio cassette by 221A Baker Street Associates. These are (1) **The Unfortunate Tobacconist/The Paradol Chamber**, (2) **The Viennese Strangler/The Notorious Canary Trainer**, (3) **The April Fool's Day Adventure/The Strange Adventure of the Uneasy Easy Chair** and (4) **The Mystery of the Headless Monk/The Strange Case of the Demon Barber**. Matthew Parker, the Product Executive/Audio at Simon & Schuster, tells me that at present they have no plans to publish the full series of 26 in Britain. If you disagree with that decision, as I hope you will, please write to him. These plays feature ingenious and elegantly written plots, appropriately tied in with the Canon and set in the correct period. The performances by Rathbone, Bruce and the other, mostly unidentified, actors are grandly full-blooded. The commercials for the sponsor, Petri California Wine, have themselves a nostalgic value. The sound quality is very good indeed - astonishing in broadcasts that were done live 50 years ago.

Thanks to Simon & Schuster, I have one spare copy of each cassette. If you would like one, please let me know before the 1st May. I'll draw winners' names from a hat. Don't ask for a specific title, please.

Mark Hunter-Purvis points out that until the end of May, purchasers of the cassette recordings of the BBC Radio **Return of Sherlock Holmes** with Merrison & Williams can collect a voucher from each of the 3 sets and send them in for a free copy of "The Second Stain". After then, that particular play will be included on the last tape of **The Memoirs**, along with "The Final Problem".

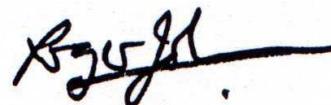
Catherine Cooke sends news of a "staged showcase reading of a new Sherlock Holmes play, **The Adventure at Sir Arthur Sullivan's**, by Tim Heath after Arthur Conan Doyle", which will take place on Sunday the 8th May at 8 pm at the Riverhouse Barn, Manor Road, Walton-on-Thames (box office phone 0932 253354). All tickets are £4.00 each. The play is set at the Royal Opera House, on a train from Waterloo, at Sullivan's house at Weybridge, and at

221B Baker Street. There's music by Sullivan and others. Holmes is played by Miles Richardson, whose father, Ian Richardson, was a memorable Holmes in **The Hound of the Baskervilles** and **The Sign of Four**. More information can be had from Tim Heath at 28A Battersea Rise, London SW11 1EE (071-350 2840).

One of the best and most versatile artists specialising in Sherlock Holmes is Deirdre Keetley. Original art, posters, end of range items and stained glass can be seen at Deirdre's Studio Gallery at 50 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DP, Monday to Friday 10.30 am - 5.30 pm, Saturday 10.30 am - 2.00 pm (other times by appointment: phone 071-837 9947). Deirdre's work can also be seen and purchased at the Sherlock Holmes pub in Northumberland Street, Charing Cross, and at the Sherlock Holmes Hotel in Baker Street. An American artist whose work impressed us when we were in New York in January is Tom Rieschick (179 Gold Kettle Drive, Gaithersburg, MD 20878, USA); his black & white prints of Jeremy Brett, Basil Rathbone, Edward Hardwicke, Eric Porter and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle are very good value at \$10.00 each plus postage. We found in a bargain store hand-painted statuettes, about 5" high, of costumed dogs, with the series title **It's A Dogs Life** (copyright 1992 by PMS); "Basset Hound" wears deerstalker and Inverness, and holds a magnifying glass. The face is more like a beagle's, and the quality is definitely inferior to Robert Harrop's **Country Companions**, but at £2.99 it's quite a bargain.

From Jane Weller: "Amongst the many functions arranged by the Franco-Midland Hardware Company for May, two highlights are: The Wessex Cup Day Meet at Newbury Race-Course on 14 May, with lunch, a seminar on horse racing in the Canon, a re-creation of the SILV race, and a walk along the track of the original Winchester Race-Course; a Military Day at the Berkshires' Regimental Museum in Salisbury on 22 May, with lunch, a seminar on the military in the Canon, a visit to the Maiwand exhibition, and a wreath-laying at the grave of ACD on the anniversary of his birthday. For further details, please send two first class stamps or one US dollar bill to 'The Stock-broker's Clerk', 6 Bramham Moor, Hill Head, Fareham, Hampshire. PO14 3RU."

Periodicals recently received. **The Torr** no. 4 (The Poor Folk Upon the Moors, Eric Monahan, Highcliff, 14 Silver Bridge Close, Broadsands Park, Paignton, Devon TQ4 7NW) (*Eric has taken over editorship of this lively journal from Stephen Farrell*); **The Baker Street Journal** March 1994 (The Baker Street Irregulars, William R. Cochran, Editor: BSJ, 517 North Vine Street, DuQuoin, IL 62832, USA) (*all correspondence for the Baker Street Irregulars should be addressed to Thomas L. Stix, Jr, "Wiggins", 34 Pierson Avenue, Norwood, NJ 07648, USA*); **The Pleasant Places of Florida Communication** no. 136 (Dr Benton Wood, Box 740, Ellenton, FL 34222, USA) (*brief but always fun - but, Ben, Holmes must have been a mere toddler when British postmen wore that kind of outfit!*); **The Petrel Flyer** March 1994 (The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia, Len Haffenden, 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C. V7P 3C6, Canada) (*the Petrels are taking over the organisation of the International Holmesian Games from the Sound of the Baskervilles; the 6th "Sherlympiad" will take place in Vancouver over the weekend of the 17th-18th September, and no doubt will be as pleasantly silly as its predecessors*).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. J. H.' with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.