

# THE DISTRICT MESSENGER

The Newsletter of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London  
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opinions expressed are the editor's unless noted otherwise

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**Helene Hanff** died on the 9th April, aged 80. Before the unexpected success of *84 Charing Cross Road*, her most popular contribution was to the *Ellery Queen* television series of the 1950s, but her love affair with a London bookshop epitomised the literate American's fascination with literary London.

Our Society has commissioned a First Day Cover for the 'Tales of Terror' postage stamps, issued 13th May. It features a rare *Strand Magazine* advertisement of 1901 and is franked with our logo. Members' prices are: set of stamps £9.50; signed by Tom Baker, Edward Hardwicke or Christopher Frayling £12.50; *Hound* stamp only £3.50; signed £5.50 (all plus postage: 50p UK, £1.50 overseas). They're available only from Steven Scott (Philatelists), 77 Strand, London WC2R 0DE (phone 0171 836 2341; fax 0171 240 5419).

*The Man Who Became Sherlock Holmes: The Tortured Mind of Jeremy Brett* by Terry Manners (Virgin Books, 332 Ladbrooke Grove, London W10 5AH; £16.99) has a great title. Shame about the sub-title and the contents. We must judge by what we know, and we know that there have never been 'more than 50,000 members of the Sherlock Holmes Society' in Britain alone, so we have a right to be wary of Mr Manners' other 'facts'. His acknowledgements really acknowledge nobody: *So many people have helped me to write this book. But to those who, for reasons best known to themselves, did not contribute to remembering Jeremy, I say thank you. You made me even more determined to tell his true story. A special thanks, however, to Linda Pritchard.* Much of this account of JB's life and career is cobbled together from various published accounts, notably in *The Sherlock Holmes Gazette* and Robert Stephens' autobiography. And seeing how he has trivialised the reminiscences he's lifted from published sources, I sympathise with those who preferred not to confide in him. There'll eventually be an authoritative biography, but this one is barely adequate. For Jeremy Brett as Sherlock Holmes, David Stuart Davies's *Bending the Willow* is the book to read.

Magico Magazine (P.O. Box 156, New York, NY 10002, USA) has issued a new edition of *'The Date Being — ?': A Compendium of Chronological Data* by Andrew Jay Peck & Leslie S. Klinger. This standard guide to the chronologists has been revised to mid-1996, and covers just about everything from Bell and Blakeney to Hall and Thomson. The 'Additional Chronological Scholarship' will be particularly helpful to scholars. The book is nicely produced in hardback, but I can't find a price anywhere.

Charles Hall (12 Paisley Terrace, Edinburgh EH8 7JW) has published another useful and unusual reference book, *On Stage Sherlock Holmes: Comedy, Drama and Musicals: A Guide to Sherlock Holmes Theatre Productions* by Charles Hall & Peter Blythe. 'The book, which consists of synopses of varying length, coupled with some comment on the performance where appropriate, is intended for both collectors of Sherlock Holmes

material and for amateur theatre companies who will be able to assess the style and complexity of the material available to them.' 70 plays are covered in all. This first, limited edition of 150 copies is issued as a tribute to the late Peter Blythe. It comes as two attractive A5 booklets, totalling 112 pages, a bargain at £6.00 including postage. (Buy this book and you can have the equally recommended *Sherlock Holmes and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in Edinburgh* for only £2.50.)

Several authors have written of present-day detectives putting the principles of Sherlock Holmes into practice. Raymond Kay Lyon comes pretty near the top with *The Sherlock Effect* (Alibi Books, 40 High Street, Orwell, Royston, Herts. SG8 5QN; £6.50). Christopher Sherlock Webster follows the destiny of his middle name, setting up The Baskerville Agency, just off Baker Street. These are thoroughly modern cases, featuring rock music, animal rights, UFOs, a pornographer, a stalker and more. The thought of Sherl Webster carrying out his commissions in full Victorian dress boggles the mind a bit, and 'Mr Christopher Sherlock Webster Esq.' shouldn't have got into print, but these are minor distractions from a very enjoyable read.

It's nearly a year since Eric Monahan's first Holmes story. He follows it with a 40-page booklet containing two pastiches: *The Tower Bridge Affair* and *The Case of the Surplus Sovereigns*. Both are well written, with a knowledge of the period and an affectionate respect for the subject. Copies can be had from Eric Monahan (Highcliff, 14 Silver Bridge Close, Broadsands Park, Paignton, Devon TQ4 7NW) at £5.00 including postage within the UK, or from Otto Penzler's Mysterious Bookshops (129 West 56th Street, New York, NY 10019, and 8763 Beverly Boulevard, West Hollywood, CA 90048), at \$9.95 + postage. Otto also has *The Man with the Shaven Scalp* at \$8.95 + postage.

Lynne Godden (Apple Tree Cottage, Smarden, Ashford, Kent TN27 8QE) has for sale *Papers Presented to the Joint Conference of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London and the Dorothy L. Sayers Society* held last year in Cambridge, at: UK £3.75; Europe £4.35; USA \$10.25; elsewhere £5.35 (all post-paid). Contributors include Richard Lancelyn Green and Auberon Redfearn. Cheques should be payable to the Sherlock Holmes Society of London.

Another double-cassette of readings by Douglas Wilmer is due in July from Penguin Audiobooks (27 Wrights Lane, London W8 5TZ; £7.99). Unlike the first two, the contents of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* have been abridged, by Neville Teller.

Due in 1997 from The Battered Silicon Dispatch Box (PO Box 204, 420 Owen Sound Street, Shelburne, Ontario L0N 1S0, Canada) are *Lasting Impressions: The 25th Anniversary of The Bootmakers of Toronto* (\$32.00); *An Irregular Sherlockian Pictionary* by Chris Redmond, illustrated by Paul Churchill; *The Sherlock Holmes Old Time Radio Show Companion* by Edith Meiser & others; *Shades of Sherlock* by Patrick Campbell; *The Practical Handbook of Bee Culture* by Sherlock Holmes (\$36.00); *The Adventures of Addington Peace*, and *The Trail of the Dead* by B. Fletcher Robinson & Malcolm Fraser (\$25.00); *Personæ Dramatis in ludis Sherlockiensibus: The Characters in the Canon* by Gary L. Heiselberg; *The Final Adventures of Solar*

*Pons* by August Derleth; *The Solar Pons Encyclopedia* by Robert Brooks. Prices are in US dollars. Payment can be accepted by check in US, Canadian and UK funds: US\$10.00 = Can.\$12.50 = £6.25. (Bliss Austin's *Bibliomania* [recommended in DM 167] costs \$8.00.)

Just published is *Sherlock Holmes, Dr Watson and Victorian Medicine: A Medical Review and Critique for the New Sherlockian* by James E. Anthony (Minerva Press, Michelin House, 81 Fulham Road, London SW3 6RB; £4.99). Then there are: *The Secret Notebooks of Sherlock Holmes* by June Thomson (May: Constable & Co. Ltd, 3 The Lanchesters, 162 Fulham Palace Road, London W6 9ER; £15.99); *The Secret Cases of Sherlock Holmes* by Donald Thomas (June: Macmillan London, Cavaye Place, London SW10 9PG; £15.99); *Buster Keaton's 'Sherlock Jr.'* by Andrew Horton (August: Cambridge University Press, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP; £30.00 and £10.95); *Sherlock Holmes and the Man from Hell* by Barrie Roberts (October: Constable & Co.; £15.99); *His Last Bow* by Arthur Conan Doyle (August: Penguin Books Ltd, 27 Wrights Lane, London W8 5TZ; £1.00).

New catalogues are available from **Nigel Williams Rare Books** (22 and 25 Cecil Court, London WC2N 4HE), **Post Mortem Books** (58 Stanford Avenue, Hassocks, Sussex BN6 8JH), **Bibliotecture** (Box 47347, Oak Park, Michigan 48237, USA) and **Gravesend Books** (Box 235 Pocono Pines, PA 18350, USA).

Bedlam Theatre Company is touring Hampshire and Dorset in June and July with Jeremy Paul's play *The Secret of Sherlock Holmes*. Dates are: 13 June **Phoenix Arts Centre**, Bordon (01420 472664); 20 June **Forest Arts Centre**, New Milton (01425 612393); 21 June **Medina Theatre**, Newport, IOW (01983 527020); 27 June **Ashcroft Arts Centre**, Fareham (01329 310600); 5 July **Royal Victoria Country Park**, Netley (01703 455157); 9 July **Tower Arts Centre**, Winchester (01962 868725); 24-26 July **Portsmouth City Museums** (01705 827261). Holmes is played by Rob Thrush (of the Poor Folk Upon The Moors), and Watson by David Head. This is the first amateur production of the play.

NatWest Theatre Company are putting on Tim Kelly's *The Hound of the Baskervilles* at the **Steiner Theatre** (near Baker Street Station), 25th-27th June. Tickets are £7.50, from Janet Hough, H.R. Services, Group Central Services, 3rd Floor, York House, 207 Pentonville Road, London N1 9UZ (0171 239 8501).

*Sherlock Holmes: 'Draco Draconis'* by Brett Spencer & Dorian David Altamont, published last October (see DM 165), is to be 'launched' at Granada Studios in Manchester on the 1st June. Tickets at £10.00 are on sale at the Sherlock Holmes Shop on the Baker Street set, or by post from Charlie Saia, Altamont Publishing, 83B Tower Bridge Road, London SE1 4TW.

Jill Paton Walsh will give the 1997 **Dorothy L. Sayers Lecture** at Witham Library on Wednesday the 21st May at 7.30 pm. The title is *'Thrones, Dominations': A Question of Inheritance*. Tickets cost £1.00, including refreshments, from Witham Library, 18 Newland Street, Witham, Essex CM8 2AQ (phone 01376 519625). Please enclose return postage. (\*The library is two doors from DLS's house and just opposite her statue by John Doubleday.\*)

**Fantasticon UK**, the fantasy & science-fiction convention held at Harrogate over the weekend of 24th-26th May, will feature some Holmesian content. Engagements permitting, two great Watsons will be there: Edward Hardwicke and Michael Williams. Details are available from Catherine Richardson, 38 Planetree Avenue, Fenham, Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 9TH.

**The Sherlock Holmes Society of London's** next meeting will be the AGM on Tuesday the 13th May, at Over-Seas House.

After the formal business, Richard Lancelyn Green will give a talk entitled 'New Light on the Hound of the Baskervilles'. Earlier that same evening, and very near at hand, the **Irregular Special Railway Company** will visit the long-closed Down Street Underground Station, used during the Blitz as a subterranean citadel. The cost of £10.00 is that charged by London Transport, and £6.00 goes to the charity Children in Need. (Details from Antony Richards, 170 Woodland Road, Sawston, Cambridge CB2 4DX.) (\*Antony notes that you can comfortably attend both meetings, if you haven't booked for dinner before the Sherlock Holmes Society's AGM.\*)

From 9th-11th May, the **Franco-Midland Hardware Company** takes its 'works outing', visiting Norfolk sites associated with 'The Dancing Men' (6 Bramham Moor, Hill Head, Fareham, Hants. PO14 3RU). The 22nd May is Arthur Conan Doyle's birthday, and the **Franco-Midland Hardware Company** and the **Glades of the New Forest's** 'ACD Day': they visit Conan Doyle's grave and other New Forest sites (address as above). On the 24th May the **Grimpen Post Office** visit the Postal Museum in Bath (Maggie & Brian Sutton, 3 Raleigh Road, Newton Abbot, Devon TQ12 4HG).

Periodicals received. *The Striking (T)Rifles*, April 1997 (**Von Herder Airguns Ltd**, Michael Ross, Bendheide 65, D-47906 Kempen, Germany) (\*Von Herder Airguns plan a packed weekend in Hanover, 27th to 29th June. Contact Michael for details\*). *The Petrel Flyer*, March-April 1997 (**The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia**, Len Haffenden, 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C. V7P 3C6, Canada) (\*a lively issue, containing Michael Higgs's identification of Leopold II of Belgium and Cléo de Mérode as the King of Bohemia and Irene Adler\*). *3 Pipe Problem Plugs & Dottles*, March-April 1997 (**The Nashville Scholars of the Three Pipe Problem**, Gael Stahl, 1763 Needmore Road, Old Hickory, TN 37138, USA) (\*I can't comment on this, as my copy was severely damaged in the post; can I please have a replacement, chaps? And if there's anything I can do for you...\*)

*The Parallelogram*, March 1997 (**The Parallel Case of St Louis**, Joseph J. Eckrich BSI, 914 Oakmoor, Fenton, MO 63126, USA) (\*I like Judy Mold's notion: 'Sometimes, I think, when we get caught up in "playing the game" - in trying to make the characters real, in substantiating details. . . we risk losing the basic mystery value of the stories.'\*). *The Devon County Chronicle*, December 1996 (**The Merripit House Guests**, Robert W. Hahn, BSI, 2707, South 7th Street, Sheboygan, WI 53081, USA) (\*has a delightful report on the 8th Canonical Convocation and Caper\*). *Pleasant Places of Florida Communication*, April-May 1997 (Jeff & Wanda Dow, The Papers on the Sundial, 1737 Santa Anna Drive, Dunedin, FL 34698, USA) (\*has a neat account in verse of Dave Scott's first encounter with Holmes\*). *The Serpentine Muse*, Spring 1997 (**The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes**, Evelyn Herzog, 360 West 21st Street, Apt 5A, New York, NY 10011, USA) (\*contains some great dog-oriented papers from January's 'Baskerville Bash'\*)

*Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press*, March 1997 (Peter E. Blau, 3900 Tunlaw Road NW #119, Washington, DC 20007-4830, USA). Peter notes that David Kahn's *The Codebreakers: The Story of Secret Writing* (1967), the best book about codes and ciphers and those who deal with them (including Sherlock Holmes and the dancing men cipher) is re-issued in a 30th-anniversary edition (New York: Scribner, 1997; \$65.00). **Penelope Wallace** died on the 13th January. Daughter of Edgar, she was founder of the Edgar Wallace Society, and the first woman to be Chairman of the Press Club and Chairman of the Crime Writers' Association.

*Roger Johnson*