

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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Benny Green died last week, at the age of 70. A musician, journalist, broadcaster and cricket enthusiast, he was also a keen Holmesian — as he proved at our Society's annual dinner in 1982, when he was a witty and very likeable Guest of Honour. Earlier this year the actor **David King** died. He had played Professor Moriarty and John Scott Eccles on radio, and was preparing a solo show as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle for the National Portrait Gallery.

Listeners to BBC Radio 4 will know that the great project has reached its triumphant conclusion. Today part 1 of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* was broadcast (repeated Saturday 4 July at 9.00 pm; with part 2 following at 3.00 pm on 5 July, repeated at 9.00 pm on 11 July). Clive Merrison & Michael Williams have now played Holmes & Watson in every Canonical story - a record in any medium. Some sort of award is surely due to them and the others who have seen the project through from *A Study in Scarlet* in 1989 - producers Enyd Williams & Patrick Rayner, and chief scriptwriter Bert Coules. (Check the BBC Holmes website on <http://freespace.virgin.net/bert.coules/sh-home.htm>.)

Spike Milligan appropriated the name of Moriarty for a villainous character in *The Goon Show* (and acted in the awful 1978 movie parody *The Hound of the Baskervilles*) so it's appropriate that on his 80th birthday he's turned his hand to *The Hound of the Baskervilles according to Spike Milligan*. Virgin Publishing (332 Ladbrooke Grove, London W10 5AH) have issued it in a nice gold-stamped mock-leather binding. The illustrations by Rob Seabury are reminiscent of the author's own cartoons, and Milligan's admirers will rejoice in the fact that *The Hound of the Baskervilles* is as outrageously funny as pretty well anything he's written. £15.99 is a trifle expensive, but worth it!

David Stuart Davies has written another gripping long story: *The Scroll of the Dead* (Calabash Press, PO Box 1360, Ashcroft, B.C. V0K 1A0, Canada). Sherlock Holmes begins by exposing a fraudulent medium, but soon finds himself pursuing a ruthless fanatic who will not stop at murder to obtain the scroll which is the key to immortality. A decadent dandy, a vicious sprig of the aristocracy and the hot-headed daughter of an archaeologist lead the detective and the doctor to adventure in rural Norfolk and to mortal peril amid the lakes and mountains of Cumberland. It's a rattling good yarn, well told and well produced - though there are a couple of odd lapses, unexpected from this author and this publisher. (For instance, 'accusative' is a grammatical term; it does *not* mean the same as 'accusatory'.) That said, I'm very happy to recommend this latest novel from Calabash, with its grand cover design by Chris Senior. It's available in Britain from Rupert Books, Murder One and Crime In Store, or it can be had direct from Calabash at £19.00 hardback (postage £4.85 air, £3.95 surface) or £12.50 paperback (postage £4.35 air, £2.55 surface).

Forthcoming from Calabash is *The Case Files of Sherlock Holmes: 'The Dying Detective'*, with contributions from Owen

Dudley Edwards, Richard Lancelyn Green, Sue Dahlinger, Chris Redmond and several others. Due for Christmas are *Canadians Suremock Holmes*; another volume of parodies compiled by Bob Adey; and *The Chronicles of Sherlock Holmes, vol. 2* by Denis O. Smith.

New this month from Breese Books (164 Kensington Park Road, London W11 2ER) are *Sherlock Holmes: The Chinese Junk Affair, and Other Stories* by Roy Templeman, and *Sherlock Holmes and the Sandringham House Mystery* by the prolific and ever-reliable Val Andrews - nicely produced paperbacks priced at £6.99 each.

Sherlock Holmes: The Detective Magazine continues to delight. For me, the high point of issue 25 is the latest chapter in Michael Cox's unique account of the Granada TV series, here covering *The Sign of Four* - probably the best feature-length Holmes film ever made. Linda Pritchard discusses her book, *The Jeremy Brett-Linda Pritchard Story*; Brian Faulkner writes about Conan Doyle, Bernard Shaw and the *Titanic*; David Stuart Davies surveys the movie *Sherlock Holmes and the Voice of Terror*; John Hall contributes a new story, 'The Adventure of the Venomous Lizard'; Roger Forsdyke begins a new series about Victorian crime; Brian Adrian looks at John Dickson Carr's great detective, Dr Gideon Fell; Barbara Roden tells of Conan Doyle and the fairies; Gaynor Coules examines H.R.F. Keating's detective novels; Paul Chapman considers the parallels between 221B and 007; 'Societies Forum' puts **The Franco-Midland Hardware Company** under the magnifying lens; Moriarty mutters - plus reviews, news, etc. It's published six times a year, at £2.50 or \$5.50 the issue. A six-issue subscription is £18.00 (Europe £20.00, rest of world £25.00 or \$40.00) from 46 Purfield Drive, Wargrave, Berks. RG10 8AR. The US representative is Classic Specialties (PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH 45219, USA; e-mail sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com.)

The Jeremy Brett-Linda Pritchard Story, by Linda Pritchard with Mary Ann Warner, is due in August from Rupert Books (58/59 Stonefield, Bar Hill, Cambridge CB3 8TE; e-mail rupert.books@compuserve.com). No price yet, but they're taking orders now. **Rupert Books** have a new catalogue available, as have several other dealers. **Black Cat Bookshop** (36-39 Silver Arcade, Leicester LE1 5FB); **Post Mortem Books** (58 Stanford Avenue, Hassocks, Sussex BN6 8JH; ralph@pmbbooks.demon.co.uk) (*lists a few new Holmes titles I've not encountered elsewhere, including *The Star of India* by Carol Bugge, *Sherlock Holmes and the Royal Flush* by Barrie Roberts, and *The Problem of the Missing Miss* by Roberta Rogow*); **Nigel Williams Rare Books** (22 & 25 Cecil Court, London WC1N 4HE; nwwarebook@tcp.co.uk).

Catalogues are also available from **The Mysterious Bookshop** (82 Marylebone High Street, London W1M 3DE; MysteriousLON@compuserve.com) (*the first major list of *Sherlockiana* from the London shop*); **The Mysterious Bookshop** (129 West 56th Street, New York, NY 10019, USA; mysteriousny@worldnet.att.net); **Bibliotective** (P.O. Box 47347, Oak Park, Michigan 48237, USA); and **Sherlock in LA** (1741 Via Allena, Oceanside, CA 92056, USA). (*Every item is from the collection of Ted Schulz, who's reducing the volume of

stuff that fills his house! This handsome 164-page book also contains numerous tributes to Ted, a true gentleman of the Sherlockian world.*)

Peter Blau notes that Carol Nelson Douglas's new Irene Adler story 'Mesmerizing Bertie' is in *Crime Through Time II*, edited by Grace Monfredo & Sharan Newman (September; Berkley; \$6.99).

Marion Smith (Waterhouse, Carbrooke, Norfolk IP25 6SF; phone 01953 881109) has a spare copy of *The Oxford Sherlock Holmes*, and wants to find a good home for it. This is the 9-volume hardback edition, new and still in its wrapper. At £25.00 (plus postage if necessary) it's a real bargain.

Ian Henry (20 Park Drive, Romford RM1 4LH) has issued a summer catalogue of Sherlockian books, including Julian Harries's gorgeous comedy *Sherlock Holmes and the Curse of the Mummy's Tomb* (reviewed in DM 175), *The Ultimate Sherlock Holmes Encyclopedia* (a reprint of an essential reference book, Jack Tracy's *Encyclopædia Sherlockiana*), and a forthcoming novel *Sherlock Holmes and the Lusitania* by Lorraine Daly.

Kelvin I. Jones (Oakmagic Publications, 2 South Place Folly, Penzance, Cornwall TR18 4JB) has put out a second edition of his booklet *The Obsidian, & Other Stories*, stories of the psychic detective Dr John Carter - who has a touch of Sherlock Holmes. The price is £3.95 post-free (cheques payable to K.I. Jones; no foreign currency or cheques).

'The magazine which sparked the Golden Age of the detective story is back' — or at any rate, a quarterly called *The Strand Magazine* has begun publication. The Managing Editor, A.F. Gulli, claims it as a revival of the original *Strand*. I hope he's right, but my heart sinks when I read that he 'grew up pouring over the works of Doyle, Christie, Chesterton, Bentley, Wodehouse and others...' ('Pouring' does *not* mean the same as 'poring'.) The annual subscription is \$24.95 in USA or Canada, or \$29.95 overseas. Send checks or money orders to PO Box 1418, Birmingham, MI 48021-1418, USA.

The Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections at the University of Minnesota issue a newsletter, which anyone interested in studying or collecting Sherlock Holmes will find fascinating. The Collections undoubtedly constitute the biggest and most comprehensive Sherlockian archive in the world. The Friends can be contacted at 466 Wilson Library, 309 19th Avenue South, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN 55455, USA.

Peter Blau notes that **The Sons of the Copper Beeches** celebrated their 50th anniversary last month in Philadelphia, with a reception at the Athenæum and a dinner at the Down Town Club. 'It was a grand affair, marking the first time in the history of the society when ladies have been welcomed to dinner with the Sons.'

The Sherlock Holmes Society of London expedition to Cornwall is now fully booked, but the organisers are compiling a handbook with a good collection of relevant essays.

The Crowborough *Sherlock Holmes Festival*, running from 3 to 10 July, will include: a talk on *The World of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle* by Philip Weller, at Winston Manor Hotel on Friday 3 July; a street market in the town on Saturday 4 July; the Sir Arthur Conan Doyle Memorial Ceremony at Terrace Montargis, and a 5-mile 'Walk with Sir Arthur', both Sunday 5 July; a recital from Conan Doyle's writings, with music, at Groombridge Place on Friday 10 July. Get details from PO Box 17, Crowborough, East Sussex TN6 1WU.

The Stormy Petrels of B.C. plan their Annual Barbecue for 4 July at 'Toad Hall' in North Vancouver. (Contact Len Haffenden at 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7P 3C6; phone 604 985 4613.) **The Pleasant Places of Florida** will

hold a 'Diogenes Meeting' on 11 July (Carl L. Heifetz, 3693 Siena Lane, Palm Harbor, FL 34685, USA). On 25 July **The Nashville Scholars of the Three Pipe Problem** will discuss 'The Boscombe Valley Mystery' (Gael Stahl, 1763 Needmore Road, Old Hickory, TN 37138, USA; GBStahl@juno.com).

On the evening of 1 August **The Franco-Midland Hardware Company** will hold its Maiwand Memorial Dinner at Hudson's Restaurant in Baker Street. Over the next eight days the Company will make a coaching expedition to Holmesian and Doylean sites in England, Belgium and France (6 Bramham Moor, Hill Head, Fareham, Hants. PO14 3RU). **The Norwegian Explorers of Minnesota** will celebrate their 50th birthday with *Founders Footprints*, a conference at the Holiday Inn Metrodome in Minneapolis over the weekend of 7 - 9 August (Julie McKuras, 13512 Granada Avenue, Apple Valley, MN 55124, USA — or e-mail Bruce Southworth at Bruces1@mindspring.com).

Von Herder Airguns Ltd will hold their annual meeting in Bonn on the weekend of 4 - 6 September. This will be a special occasion to mark the group's tenth anniversary (Michael Ross, Postfach 83 01 25, 51034 Köln, Germany; phone/fax 0221 600 28 79). On Saturday 19 September, **The Irregular Special Railway Company** and **The Sherlock Holmes Society of London** will travel by train from London to Bletchley Park, the World War II cryptology centre — a chance to compare code-breaking 100 years ago, 50 years ago, and today (Antony Richards, 170 Woodland Road, Sawston, Cambridge CB2 4DX).

Periodicals received. **The Ritual**, Spring 1998 (**The Northern Musgraves**, Overdale, 69 Greenhead Road, Huddersfield HD1 4ER) (*this 21st issue contains 76 pages of good material, including John Addy's paper 'Parliamentary, My Dear Watson'*). **The Parallelogram**, May 1998 (**The Parallel Case of St Louis**, Joseph J. Eckrich BSI, 914 Oakmoor, Fenton, MO 63126, USA) (*accounts of the activities of a lively and likeable group, plus some remarkable thoughts on 'A Scandal in Bohemia' by Pasquale Accardo*). **3 Pipe Problem Plugs and Dottles**, May 1998 (**The Nashville Scholars of the Three Pipe Problem**, Gael Stahl, 1763 Needmore Road, Old Hickory, TN 37138, USA) (*includes Jim Hawkins' inspiring story of his visit to the Sherlock Holmes pub in London, and part 1 of an engrossing interview with the great Sherlockian topographer David Hammer - which ends, frustratingly, in the middle of a word!*).

The Serpentine Muse, Summer 1998 (**The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes**, Evelyn Herzog, 360 West 21st Street, #5A, New York, NY 10011, USA) (*a mixed group of writers offer suggestions, mostly humorous, for extra-Canonical episodes - the wittiest is Susan Diamond's 'The Lady and the Tiger'*). **The FMHC Memo**, May 1998 (**The Franco-Midland Hardware Company**, 6 Bramham Moor, Hill Head, Fareham, Hants. PO14 3RU) (*the Company newsletter, mainly dealing with its many activities*). **The Franco-Midland Hardware Company Annual Report 1998: The Engineer's Thumb Contract** (*half a dozen interesting essays, particularly those by Donald Redmond and Richard Stacpoole-Ryding; the fullest is Philip Weller's — possibly definitive study of the geography of the case*). **The Formulary**, June 1998 (**The Friends of Dr Watson**, Dr Watson's Dresser, 14 Western Close, Letchworth, Herts. SG6 4SZ) (*lots of interest here, especially regarding 'The Blanched Soldier' — a case in which Watson took no part!*).

Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press, May 1998 (Peter E. Blau, 3900 Tunlaw Road NW #119, Washington, DC 20007-4803, USA) (*the original Sherlock Holmes newsletter*).

Roger Johnson