

# The DISTRICT MESSENGER



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON  
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Sorry for the rise in overseas rates: Royal Mail has put up its postal charges yet again, and I just can't afford to absorb this latest increase. In less than two years, postage to America, Japan, Australia, etc. has risen from 40p to 44p to 45p, and postage to Europe has risen from 26p to 30p to 34p to 36p! So much for the benefits of the European Union . . .

Peter Blau reports that **Sy Weintraub** died on 4th April. He produced *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and *The Sign of Four* for TV, with Ian Richardson as Holmes; though enjoyable, they suffered by comparison with Granada's excellent series. **Edward Gorey** died on 15th April. He applied his unique gothic genius to illustrating various Sherlockian publications, most prominently in the credits for the *Mystery!* series on American PBS TV. **E.W. McDiarmid** ('The Bruce-Partington Plans', BSI) died on 27th April. A founder of **The Norwegian Explorers** of Minnesota, he was there to celebrate their 50th birthday in 1998.

Congratulations to Michael Doyle and Christopher Roden, both subscribers to this newsletter, who were appointed Master Bootmakers at the January Awards Dinner of **The Bootmakers of Toronto**. (Christopher joins his wife Barbara, who was already entitled to the letters M.Bt. after her name.)

*The Adventures of the Second Mrs Watson* by Michael Mallory is a very neat idea stylishly executed. Sherlock Holmes knew where he stood with Mary, the first Mrs Watson, but he thinks that the doctor's spirited second wife Amelia takes up too much of his friend's time. She has quite a different view on the matter, and as she is pretty much the detective's match in ingenuity, intelligence and stubbornness the relationship is not exactly smooth. These twelve exceptionally clever stories give us a fresh view of Holmes and Watson, and a lot of entertainment besides. You'll find echoes of 'real life' crimes here (a bizarre solution to the Ripper case, for instance), as well as new twists on Canonical matters. This attractive 168-page paperback is published by Deadly Alibi Press Ltd (P.O. Box 5947, Vancouver, WA 98668-5947, USA) at \$15.99.

Before the publication date of 17th May, Dan Kilcup's *Chinese Box Mysteries, volume II* can be ordered from the 'Washington Needs You' charities website at [www.needsyou.org](http://www.needsyou.org) at \$16.00 (post-paid within the USA);

\$8.00 will go to the Hospice of Northern Virginia. Orders for this 260-page hardback can also be placed with Amazon.com and Barnes&Noble.com, at \$24.00.

Ted Nye's even more improbably titled volume of Sherlock Holmes stories, *The Teddy Bear's Ribbon, and Other Tales*, is due shortly from Halvon Press, priced at NZ\$15.00 or £5.00 plus postage (51 Irvine Road, The Cove, Dunedin, New Zealand; e-mail [ted.nye@stonebow.otago.ac.nz](mailto:ted.nye@stonebow.otago.ac.nz)).

Bob Ellis passes on news that the Minstead Women's Institute has published a millennium history of the village, naturally including material about Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes. The cost is £12.50 plus £2.50 postage.

*Sherlock Holmes' Puzzles of Deduction* by Tom Bullimore was published in April at £3.99 by Sterling Publishing Co. (Orca Book Services, Stanley House, 3 Fleets Lane, Poole, Dorset BH15 3AJ).

Phil & Karen Woolley tell me that the **Black Cat Bookshop** can now take orders and messages by e-mail at [blackcatuk@aol.com](mailto:blackcatuk@aol.com), and that they have a website in the making, at [www.blackcatbookshop.com](http://www.blackcatbookshop.com). New in at the shop is 'a set of beautifully painted miniature metal figures', seven in all: Jack the Ripper, Holmes, Watson, a victim, a 'shocked bystander', a PC and a Chief Superintendent. Price is £50.00 the set, plus postage (£4.00 in the UK; ask about overseas rates).

Bert Coules' *Unrecorded Cases of Sherlock Holmes* hasn't yet been broadcast, but the BBC Radio Collection announces a recording for release on cassette in September. In November the Beeb plans to release a boxed set of *The Complete Sherlock Holmes* by Arthur Conan Doyle, at £127.65 plus VAT. An unabridged recording (I don't know who the reader is) of 'The Musgrave Ritual', 'The Red-Headed League', 'The Speckled Band' & 'The Final Problem' has been issued at £12.99 by Sound Room (Gazelle Book Services Ltd, 4 Falcon House, Queen Square, Lancaster LA1 1RN). And as of this month the first 8 cassettes of the 1945/46 radio series *The New Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, with Basil Rathbone & Nigel Bruce, are available in Britain from Simon & Schuster Audio.

Issue 36 of *Sherlock Holmes: The Detective Magazine* offers a new Sexton Blake story by John Hall, Bill Nadel on *The Thin Man*, Gaynor Coules on Natasha Cooper and her 'Willow King' novels, Sarah Neville on *The Moonstone*, Paul Chapman on the Shadow, Toby Earnshaw on *Randall & Hopkirk (Deceased)*, Mike Ripley on *The Oxford Companion to Crime & Mystery Writing*, Christine Simpson on the Dorothy L. Sayers Society, Kathryn White on doctors who go wrong, Roger Forsdyke on Victorian punishment, David Stuart Davies on *The Last Vampyre* and

Reginald Owen's *A Study in Scarlet* — and of course much more besides. The magazine is published six times a year, at £3.50 or \$6.00 the issue. A six-issue subscription is £20.00 (Europe £22.00, rest of world £25.00 or \$40.00) from the Admin. Dept, PO Box 100, Chichester, West Sussex PO18 8HD. The US representative is Classic Specialties (PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH 45219, USA; e-mail [sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com](mailto:sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com)).

Charles Hall has produced a handsome new bust of Sherlock Holmes and a flat-backed model of Conan Doyle's birthplace, 11 Picardy Place, Edinburgh. He says, 'I may put these models on the market in July'. To find out more, drop a line to 12 Paisley Terrace, Edinburgh EH8 7JW.

Even non-smokers might like to have the **221B Baker Street Collection**, a boxed set of six cigars (in Churchill, Torpedo, Pyramid, Lonsdale, Corona and Grand Corona sizes), with attractive Sherlockian labels. They can be had for \$30.00 plus postage from GSI, South Illinois Route 59, PMB 175, Aurora, IL 60504, USA. (\**The proprietor, Karen Jeffery, is the sister of our subscriber Geoff Jeffery.*\*) Check the website at [www.CUs4Cigars.com](http://www.CUs4Cigars.com).

Charles Hall passes on news that members of the Japan Society Scotland have written to city leaders in Edinburgh calling for Liberton Bank House (where Arthur Conan Doyle lived between the ages of 5 and 7) to be rescued from McDonald's bid to build a fast-food restaurant on the site.

From 9th to 25th May, the Hay Gallery at Colchester Institute will house an exhibition, by various artists, entitled **Drawing Dead Detectives**. It will be open 9.30 - 5.30 Monday - Friday, and 9.30 - 4.00 on Saturdays.

The first Murder Mystery Dinner at **The Sherlock Holmes** public house was extremely enjoyable, thanks to the excellence of the restaurant and the engaging ingenuity of the Irregular Special Players. Check about future such events with the managers, Sue & Ken Collier, on 020 7930 2644 (fax 020 7839 5864). The pub is at 10/11 Northumberland Street, just near Charing Cross Station and Trafalgar Square. (\**If you fancy mounting a Murder Mystery party, you can contact the Irregular Special Players at 170 Woodland Road, Sawston, Cambridge CB2 4DX.*\*)

Elfed Jones of **Yesterday's News** (43 Dundonald Road, Colwyn Bay, Clwyd LL29 7RE; phone 01492 531195) says that he can supply copies in very good condition of *The Times* (London) and *The Pall Mall Gazette* at £10.00 each.

The central public library in Dunedin, New Zealand, currently has a Sherlock Holmes exhibition, thanks to **The Antipodean Holmesian Society**, whose founder Ted Nye will give a talk there on Holmes and his creator, on 9th May at 5.40 pm. Unlike Arthur Conan Doyle, but like John H. Watson, Ted is a graduate of St Bartholomew's Hospital Medical School.

The entertaining but historically deeply flawed TV film *Murder Rooms: The Dark Beginnings of Sherlock Holmes* will be broadcast in America on *Mystery!* on 18th and 25th May. David Stuart Davies tell me that more adventures of Joseph Bell and Arthur Conan Doyle are being produced.

The Annual General Meeting of **The Sherlock Holmes Society of London** at the Savage Club on 18 May will precede a talk by Peter Horrocks on 'Horse-drawn Traffic in the Canon'.

**The Bimetallic Question** will host The *Second Bimetallic Colloquium* at McGill University in Montréal on 2 - 4 June. Write to P.O. Box 883, Stock Exchange Tower, Montréal, Québec, Canada H4Z 1K2 for information about this important Sherlockian convention.

On 10 June **The Stormy Petrels** will host the 4th annual *Reichenbachfall Games & Picnic* at Shannon Falls near Squamish (Fran Martin, 13020 - 104 Avenue, Surrey, B.C., Canada V3T 1T7).

From 16 to 18 June, **The Phoenician Tin Traders** and **The Franco-Midland Hardware Company** will investigate 'The Devil's Foot' country, on and around the Lizard peninsula in Cornwall (Brian Knuckey, 1 Cross Street, Penzance, Cornwall TR18 2EY).

**The Poor Folk Upon The Moors** will explore the same area in their first weekend expedition, 30 June - 2 July. Shirley Purves has details of The Poor Folk, at Lea House, Couches Lane, Woodbury, Exeter EX5 1HL.

Periodicals received. *The Illustrious Clients News*, April 2000 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T. Doyle, 540 W. Sycamore Street, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA) (\**Ed & Karen Lauterbach remember the Sherlockian bard Charles E. Lauterbach; Steven Doyle argues convincingly that Dr Watson was a slob, and reports on The Friends of Baron Gruner, one of the most exclusive Sherlockian societies.*\*)

*The Antipodean Holmesian Society Newsletter*, April 2000 (Ted Nye, 51 Irvine Road, The Cove, Dunedin, New Zealand) (\**Derek F. Evered contrasts the medical skills of A. Conan Doyle and John H. Watson.*\*)

*The Petrel Flyer*, March/April 2000 (**The Stormy Petrels**, Len Haffenden, 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7P 3C6) (\**Michael Doyle considers the life and character of ACD; Michael Higgs examines amputation in the Canon.*\*)

*Communication*, 'Special Paste-Up Issue 2000' and March/April 2000 (**The Pleasant Places of Florida**, Jeff & Wanda Dow, 1737 Santa Anna Drive, Dunedin, FL 34698, USA) (\**the former is Sherlockian cuttings from here and there; the latter recommends what sounds like a pleasant restaurant at 10063 Dixie Highway in Clarkston, Michigan — it's called 221B Baker Street.*\*)

And *Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press*, April 2000 (Peter E. Blau, 3900 Tunlaw Road NW #119, Washington, DC 20007-4830, USA; e-mail [pblau@dgsys.dgsys.com](mailto:pblau@dgsys.dgsys.com)) (\**the great Sherlockian newsletter.*\*)

This is our 200th issue, and as with the 100th there's a competition. Just write a *bad* opening sentence for a Sherlock Holmes story, as if Dr Watson was really off form. One sentence only, please. Get it to me by the 8th June, and there will be a prize for the best (i.e. worst) example.

Roger Johnson