

The DISTRICT MESSENGER



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON
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Michael Doyle alerts me to the death last month aged 93 of **William Ricker**, both a leading fisheries scientist and a major Canadian Sherlockian, remembered for his prize-winning paper 'The Absent Corpse Mystery Solved, or Professor Moriarty in the Yukon'.

Three of M.J. Trow's Sholto Lestrade novels are out in paperback - and not before time! *Lestrade and the Sawdust Ring*, *Lestrade and the Ripper* and *Lestrade and the Sign of Nine* are each priced at £9.99 from Ian Henry (20 Park Drive, Romford RM1 4LH). The series has gone well beyond Sherlockian parody now and can be enjoyed as an achievement in its own right. *Lestrade and the Sawdust Ring* exemplifies the dazzling mixture of wit, slapstick, excitement and ingenuity. Mr Trow knows his history and he knows just how to subvert it. We start with Benjamin Disraeli and the Duke of Cambridge discussing, if that's the word, the Zulu wars and Britain's responsibility for the Prince Imperial. We progress to a dead body on the Yorkshire moors. Can Detective Sergeant Lestrade be sure it isn't the elusive French prince? And how do the nasty events at Lord George Sanger's circus fit into the case? I'd love to see Trow and Lestrade win the Sherlock Award for the best comic detective series.

Romancing the Hound, the collection of essays by Don Hobbs, Pasquale Accardo, Peter Blau, Catherine Cooke, Julie McKuras, Peter Wood and others, published by **The Parallel Case of St Louis**, was issued in an edition of 100 copies, of which an unspecified number are available at \$10.00 postpaid. Send checks to Joe Eckrich at 914 Oakmoor Drive, Fenton, MO 63126, USA (e-mail jeckrich@earthlink.net).

Here are details, taken from Amazon.com, of more new and forthcoming books. *Sherlock Holmes and the Running Noose* by Donald Thomas (Macmillan London Ltd, 20 New Wharf Road, London N1 9RR; August; £16.99). *Murder in Baker Street: New Tales of Sherlock Holmes* edited by Martin H. Greenberg, Jon L. Lellenberg & Daniel Stashower (Carroll & Graf, c/o HI Marketing Ltd, 38 Carver Road, London SE24 9LT; 10 October; £17.06). *Chapel Noir: An Irene Adler Novel* by Carole Nelson Douglas (Forge, c/o Melia Publishing Services Ltd, PO Box 1639, Maidenhead, Berks. SL6 6YZ; October; £18.05).

Sherlock Holmes and the Secret Alliance, the latest novel by Larry Millett (Viking, Penguin Books Ltd, 80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL; 11 October; £16.66). *Night Watch: A Long-Lost Adventure in which Sherlock Holmes Meets Father Brown* by Stephen Kendrick (Pantheon Books, c/o Kuperard [London] Ltd, 311 Ballards Lane, London N12 8LY; 13 November; £16.00). *Sherlock Holmes on Screen: The Complete Film and TV History* by Alan Barnes (Reynolds & Hearn Ltd, 61A Priory Road, Kew Gardens, Richmond, Surrey TW9 3DH; 26 November; £14.95) (*publication was postponed from August*). *Sherlock Holmes and the Giant Rat of Sumatra* by Alan Vanneman (Carroll & Graf, c/o HI Marketing Ltd, 38 Carver Road, London SE24 9LT; December; £16.27).

Shelwing Ltd (4 Pleydell Gardens, Folkestone, Kent CT20 2DN) have sent their latest catalogues of Scarecrow Press and McFarland publications, which include several valuable Sherlockian reference books. Look out for *Terence Fisher: Horror, Myth and Religion* by

Paul Leggett (McFarland; March 2002; £30.40) and, despite its non-Sherlockian subject, *Ronald Colman, Gentleman of the Cinema* by R. Dixon Smith (McFarland; January 2002; £19.00).

Catalogue 92 from **Nigel Williams Rare Books** (22 & 25 Cecil Court, London WC2N 4HE; e-mail nwrarebook@tcp.co.uk) includes the 1960 BSI/SHSL *Beeton's* facsimile priced at £425.

Serious book collectors should consider R.B. Russell's *Guide to First Edition Prices, 2002/3* (Tartarus Press, Coverley House, Carlton, Leyburn, North Yorks. DL8 4AY; November; £14.99 postpaid). Previous editions are very highly regarded.

Recently released by Naxos AudioBooks (18 High Street, Welwyn, Herts. AL6 9EQ) is an abridgement of Hesketh Pearson's *Arthur Conan Doyle: A Life*, very engagingly read by Tim Pigott-Smith. Pearson was the archetype of the popular biographer — his subjects included Shaw, Shakespeare, Wilde, Disraeli and Tom Paine — and he had a talent for bringing them to life. But he always insisted on his right to tell the truth as he saw it, and this was the reason for the notorious falling-out with Adrian Conan Doyle, who first supported and then vilified Pearson's life of his father. Listening to Mr Pigott-Smith's mellow reading it's easy to see why Adrian objected. His fanatical devotion would never have allowed him to accept Pearson's portrait of Sir Arthur as a spiritually undeveloped and simple thinker. Personally I think Pearson strains too hard to present Conan Doyle as 'the man in the street', just as Adrian strained too hard to present him as a paragon of all the virtues, but when it comes to biography Pearson wins hands down. The reading is, as always with Naxos, enhanced by appropriate music, in this case from Dvorak, Grieg and Smetana. It's available on two CDs or two cassettes and can be highly recommended in either format.

Something to look forward to: due from Naxos AudioBooks in February is an unabridged reading by the excellent David Timson of *A Study in Scarlet*.

In issue 44 of *Sherlock Holmes: The Detective Magazine* David Stuart Davies interviews Ian Richardson and Charles Edwards, the stars of *Murder Rooms*; there's Jared Cade on *The ABC Murders*; Paul Chapman on the appeal of Sherlock Holmes; Chris Senior on *The Persuaders*; David Stuart Davies on more celluloid *Hounds*; Calum McLeod on Paul Johnston's futuristic novels and Gael Stahl on **The Nashville Scholars of the Three Pipe Problem**; plus a *Murder Rooms* story adapted from *The Patient's Eyes* by David Pirie, and contributions from Roger Forsdyke, John Hall, Pat Ward, Mike Ripley, me and Moriarty. 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).

Look out also for *The Strand Magazine* (PO Box 1418, Birmingham, MI 48012-1418, USA) which strikes an admirable balance between homage to its glorious original and celebration of today's best talents. Check the website at www.strandmag.com.

Here's some really exciting news! We've known for some time that four films from the 1968 Peter Cushing/Nigel Stock series survive in the BBC archives, but the Beeb has been terribly keen not to let anyone see them. Now it emerges that there's fifth, *A Study in Scarlet*, to add to *The Blue Carbuncle*, *The Boscombe Valley Mystery*, *The Sign of Four* and the two-part *Hound of the Baskervilles*. And BBC Worldwide is considering releasing them on video through its subsidiary BBC Learning. If you're in favour, send suggestions (eg.

release in NTSC as well as PAL would be a good idea) or messages of support to Gavin Collinson at BBC Worldwide, Room A-3022, 80 Wood Lane, London W12 0TT; or e-mail him at gavin.collinson@bbc.co.uk. The first release, possibly later this year, is likely to be *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Blue Carbuncle* on one tape (and possibly on DVD as well).

There's a lot of Sherlock Holmes theatrical productions this year. Our member Carolyne Bevan will direct King's Langley Players in Brian Clemens' play *Holmes and the Ripper* on 1, 2 & 3 November at **King's Langley Community Centre**. Tickets are £6.00 (concessions £5.00) from 01923 263205.

Dramatis Personae will put on a new stage version of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, claimed to be the most faithful yet, by Nick Scovell, with our member Rob Thrush as Holmes. The play will be at the **New Theatre Royal**, Portsmouth, from 7 to 10 November (tickets £7.50 or £6.50 from 023 9264 9000). On 6 November there'll be a preview performance following an illustrated talk on board HMS *Warrior* by Philip Weller. Get details from the theatre. The play will be at the **Phoenix Theatre**, Bordon on 23 November (01420 472664); the **Theatre Royal**, Margate on 30 November & 1 December (01843 293877); and the **Central Studios**, Queen Mary's College, Basingstoke on 7 December (01256 418318).

On 28, 29 & 30 November, Exit Stage Left will produce Tim Kelly's adaptation of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* at the **Braithwaite Hall, Croydon Clock Tower**. Tickets are £6.00, but Sherlock Holmes Society of London members can get in at the concessionary rate of £4.00 on the opening night if they show proof of membership at the box office.

Roger Llewellyn's success touring with *Sherlock Holmes — The Last Act!* continues. On 9 November he'll be at **Theatr Hafren** in Newtown, Powys; from 21 to 24 November at **Wimbledon Theatre Studio**; and from 26 November to 3 December in **Antibes!**

Meanwhile Paul Lehmann is touring with two one-man plays: *Dickens' Ghosts* and *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. The latter, being 'The Blue Carbuncle' and 'The Engineer's Thumb', will be at the **Rhodes Centre** in Bishop's Stortford on 27 October; **The Maltings**, Berwick upon Tweed, on 8 December; and **The Maltings Arts Centre**, St Alban's, on 14 December. The productions come highly recommended, and Mr Lehmann is open for bookings. Contact him at footloose@paullehmann.co.uk or 07801 755 157.

Finally, for the moment, you can see an adaptation of Conan Doyle's spooky tale *Lot 249* staged by Anyone Can Play at **Portsmouth Arts Centre** from 31 October to 3 November. Tickets at £5.00 or £4.00 are available from 012 9283 7373.

A 1968 Canadian Broadcasting Corporation production of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* has been released on cassette by Scenario Productions at \$18.99 (US and Canadian). I don't have an address, but there's a website at www.scenarioproductions.com and you can e-mail them at info@scenarioproductions.com.

Bart Bechtel, a former member of our Society, is now manager of a rather unusual company called SpyCruise, which offers cruises, in March and April next year, in the company of former intelligence agents. SpyCruise is a new project from the Centre for Counterintelligence & Security Studies of Alexandria, VA. For more information contact Cindy Kwitchoff at ci@cicentre.com.

Essex Police's bloodhounds, Sherlock and Morse, are off active duty while their performance is evaluated. A spokesman said, 'No decision has been made yet, but their future role is certainly under scrutiny.'

A wristwatch with portraits of Holmes & Watson by Kerstin Paxton is available from Omnibus Enterprises Ltd at \$25.00 plus \$5.00 postage. Bill Paxton's book *The Hidden Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* is available through stores, but there's a limited period special offer of book and watch for \$45.00 postpaid from Omnibus (12907 E. 36th Terr, Independence, MO 64055, USA; e-mail WPaxton159@aol.com).

Chuck Kovacic's stunning full-scale re-creation of the Baker Street sitting-room is well worth a visit. Take a virtual tour at www.221bbakerstreetla.com.

A Mexican Sherlockian asks whether there's someone who'd like to correspond with him about Sherlock Holmes. He's very enthusiastic

and writes reasonably good English, which he's keen to improve through correspondence. Please contact Catherine Cooke on 020 7641 1206 or c.cooke@dia1.pipex.com.

Our Society's next meeting will be a *Hound of the Baskervilles* evening at the Savage Club on 17 October. The biggest celebration of *The Hound* will be the 'Footprints of the Hound' symposium in Toronto, from 19 to 21 October, with a constellation of speakers (details from 19 Pinetree Crescent, Brampton, Ontario, Canada L6W 1C8). On 20 October **The Priory Scholars** will study 'The Three Students' (Horace Coates, 21 Butcombe Road, Leicester LE4 0FY), and **The Nashville Scholars of the Three Pipe Problem** will discuss 'The Abbey Grange' (Gael Stahl, 1763 Needmore Road, Old Hickory, TN 37138, USA). On 27 October **The Illustrious Clients'** will discuss *The Hound* (Steven T. Doyle, 540 W. Sycamore Street, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA), and **The Harpooners of the Sea Unicorn** will look at 'Shoscombe Old Place' (Michael E. Bragg, Box 799, St Charles, MO 63302-0799, USA).

On 2 November, at the British Film Institute **The Franco-Midland Hardware Company** will watch the 1921 silent *Hound of the Baskervilles*, starring Eille Norwood, and the talkie of ten years later, with Robert Rendell (6 Bramham Moor, Hill Head, Fareham, Hants. PO 14 3RU). Next day **The Friends of Dr Watson** will explore a part of Watson's London and then take their Annual Dinner (Richard Stacpoole-Ryding, 14 Western Close, Letchworth, Herts. SG6 4SZ). The weekend meeting of **The Jeremy Brett Society of France** at Aix-en-Provence on 2, 3 & 4 November will be dedicated to Jeremy Paul's play *The Secret of Sherlock Holmes*, though there'll be much else on the programme (JBSF, rés, Le clos de l'Arc, entrée 5, av. Gaston Berger, 13090 Aix-en-Provence, France; e-mail JBSF.com@wanadoo.fr).

Steve Duke of **The Sherlock Holmes Society of Victoria** (The Elementary Victorians) says Sherlockians in the northern hemisphere (**not DM readers, evidently**) have been whingeing that their Australian brethren seem to be doing nothing for the Hound's Hundredth. We know of the 'Dog, Fog & Bog' celebration by **The Sydney Passengers**, and Steve says that the Victorians have something in the pipeline. They are also hoping to arrange some collaboration with **The Sherlock Holmes Society of Melbourne** and **The Antipodean Holmesian Society** in New Zealand. Sherlockians visiting Oz should contact Steve at PO Box 340, Reservoir 3073, Australia (e-mail stirlingsteve@netscape.net).

Periodicals received. *The Baker Street Journal*, summer 2001 (**The Baker Street Irregulars**, Michael Whelan, 7938 Mill Stream Circle, Indianapolis, IN 46278, USA; subscriptions to *The BSJ*, PO Box 465, Hanover, PA 17331, USA). *The Camden House Journal*, September and October 2001 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, PO Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). *The Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections*, September 2001 (The Sherlock Holmes Collections, Suite 111, Elmer L. Anderson Library, University of Minnesota, 222 21st Ave S., Minneapolis, MN 55455, USA). *Morning Echo*, no date, (**The Sherlock Holmes Society of Victoria**, Steve Duke, PO Box 340, Reservoir 3073, Australia). *The Friends of Dr Watson 5th Birthday Annual* and *Practice Notes*, September 2001 (**The Friends of Dr Watson**, Richard Stacpoole-Ryding, 14 Western Close, Letchworth, Herts. SG6 4SZ). *The Tin Box*, January 2001 (**sic**) and *Exhibit 'A': The Magazine of The Friends of Newton Street, Greater Manchester Police Museum*, May 2000 - April 2001 (Barbara & Terry Harding, Riverbank, 2 Bohemia Cottages, Stalybridge, Cheshire SK15 1JY). *The Illustrious Clients News*, September 2001 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T. Doyle, 540 W. Sycamore Street, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA), *The Whaling News*, July, August and September 2001 (**The Harpooners of the Sea Unicorn**, Michael E. Bragg, Box 799, St Charles, MO 63302-0799, USA). *3 Pipe Problem Plugs and Dottles*, September/October 2001 (**The Nashville Scholars of the Three Pipe Problem**, Gael Stahl, 1763 Needmore Road, Old Hickory, TN 37138, USA). *Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press*, September 2001 (Peter E. Blau, 3900 Tunlaw Road NW #119, Washington, DC 20007-4830, USA; pblau@dgsys.com).

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