

The DISTRICT MESSENGER



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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no. 249 5 February 2005

Humphrey Carpenter, broadcaster, musician and biographer, died on 4 January, aged fifty-eight. A few years ago he presented a BBC Radio 4 programme, *The Secret History of Conan Doyle*, produced by Nicholas Utechin.

Several companies have released various of the once hard-to-find Sherlock Holmes films of Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce on DVD. Some sell for as little as £2.00, but they're pretty rough. In justice to the films and the actors, I say ignore them and stump up £49.00 for the complete set from Optimum! That's less than £4.00 a film, and you get all fourteen movies in digitally remastered prints, with audio commentaries by David Stuart Davies for *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, *Sherlock Holmes Faces Death*, *The Scarlet Claw* and *The Woman in Green*, and by Richard Valley for *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, production notes for all fourteen films by Richard Valley, a short documentary about the restoration project at UCLA, and a gallery of stills and posters. Most importantly, these prints are clear and sharp, pretty much as good as when they were first seen. This is the set released in America a couple of years ago by MPI. I'm delighted to welcome its release on this side of the ocean in Region 2! [*Richard Valley, editor of *Scarlet Street*, is writing a book about Rathbone's Holmes.*]

Breese Books' schedule is on course again with *Sherlock Holmes and the Giant's Hand* (£7.50), three tales by Matthew Booth, which tell of the Addleton Tragedy (and the Singular Contents of the Ancient British Barrow), Colonel Warburton's Madness, and the Abernethy Murder. The stories are clever, atmospheric and well written, and the book is as attractively produced as all the Breese publications. Readers of *The District Messenger* can buy *The Giant's Hand* at the reduced price of £5.00 (plus £2.00 postage) and buy up to five books from the backlist at £3.00 each (plus £2.00 flat rate additional postage). For details contact Breese Books, c/o Baker Street Studios Ltd, Endeavour House, 170 Woodland Road, Sawston, Cambridge CB2 4DX (phone 01223 473025; fax 01223 473053; e-mail sales@baker-street-studios.com). There's a website at www.baker-street-studios.com.

The Pocket Sherlock: A Portable Guide to the Canon compiled by John Sherwood (Mystery Visits, 120 Quimby Road, West Grove, PA 19390, USA; jcs@mysteryvisits.com; \$9.00 plus \$3.00 postage) contains synopses of all sixty cases, personal data on Holmes and Watson (from Baring-Gould), a brief summary of historical events 1874-1903, a few Canonical quotations, a short list of writings about the writings, and not much else. It's a pleasant little volume, but outclassed by Mark Campbell's *The Pocket Essential Sherlock Holmes* and Philip Weller's *Elementary Holmes*.

Very much more substantial is *The Suicide Club & Other Dark Adventures* by Robert Louis Stevenson (Tartarus Press, Coverley House, Carlton-in-Coverdale, Leyburn, North Yorkshire DL8 4AY; £35.00). You may know that Stevenson's writings influenced Conan Doyle's. Moreover he knew Joseph Bell and recognised him in Sherlock Holmes. *The Dynamiter*, the second part of *The New Arabian Nights*, had a profound influence on *A Study in Scarlet* — though you won't find it in this volume, because it was a collaboration between RLS and his wife Fanny Van de Grift Stevenson. What we do have is the first part of *The New Arabian Nights*, comprising 'The Suicide Club' and 'The Rajah's Diamond', along with *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, 'The Body Snatcher', and, in all, five hundred pages of 'dark adventures'. Conan Doyle loved and admired Stevenson and his work. Tartarus Press has done us a great favour with this big satisfying collection of his weird tales.

So, farewell then, *The Shoso-in Bulletin*. The final issue, Volume 14, maintains the *Bulletin's* reputation as the most international Sherlock Holmes periodical. Here are articles from Japan, the USA, Australia, New Zealand, the UK, the Czech Republic and India. The topics include the sober (Godfrey Hunt on Watson's background, Joe Marino on Jonathan Small), the abstruse (Michael J Brady's mathematical poser), the humorous ('Cockroach Bones and the Five Orange Peeps' by Kevin Reed), the nostalgic (Alan Olding interviewed by Bill Barnes, Ron De Waal's envoi to his career as Holmes's bibliographer), the whimsical (Brad Keefauver's 'Winding Your Way Down on Baker Street'), and the factual (reports on the Sherlockian year from around the world). There's also a devastating critical review of Rodger Garrick-Steele's *The House of the Baskervilles*. I'm pleased to express my gratitude to Hirayama Yuichi and Mel Hughes for fourteen volumes of stimulating and sympathetic Sherlockiana. John Hall (20 Drury Avenue, Horsforth, Leeds LS18 4BR) is the British agent. Or volume 14 is in stock at Classic Specialties (PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH 45219, USA). Check the website at www.sherlock-holmes.com for price.

Bjarne Nielsen's Sherlock Holmes Museet (Egebjergvej 206, 4500 Nykøbing Sjælland, Denmark) has published a facsimile of a rare and unauthorised early pulp, *Opdagernes Konge Sherlock Holmes* (The King of Detectives, Sherlock Holmes'). It's all in Danish, of course, but the synopsis in English is pretty startling: 'Sir Cyrith, Count of Douglas, lives in his ancestral home The James Palace on the corner of Trafalgar Square ...' A real collectors' piece, available from the publisher at 60 Kroner, which works out at about £6.00.

Cenarth Fox tells me that his fifth and final 'schoolboy Sherlock Holmes' book is due in June, in which Nicholas Twit will a) die the same way as Holmes, and b) not die the same way as Holmes! Check the website at www.twit.biz.

Alan Stockwell reports that his latest story 'The Singular Adventure of the Red-Nosed Artist' can be found on his website at www.mrsherlockholmes.co.uk.

There's much good stuff in the catalogues from **Black Cat Bookshop** (90 Charles Street, Leicester LE1 1GE; 0116 251 2756; www.blackcatbookshop.com); **Rupert Books** (58-59 Stonefield, Bar Hill, Cambridge CB3 8TE; 01954 781861; www.rupert-books.co.uk); **Nigel Williams Rare Books** (25 Cecil Court, London WC2N 4HE; 020 7836 7757; nwrarebook@tcp.co.uk); and **Adrian Harrington Rare Books** (64A Kensington Church Street, London W8B 4DB; 020 7937 1465). Also check **221Books** online catalogue at www.221Books.com.

The cover of *Sherlock* no. 64 has a still of Felicity Kendall and Pam Ferris from the television series *Rosemary & Thyme*. Inside, Rebecca Tope reports on the experience of turning one of the stories into a novel. Also in this issue, Paul M Chapman looks at Holmes's murder investigations, Barbara Roisman-Cooper interviews Inga Swenson (Irene Adler in the 1965 musical *Baker Street*), Calum McLeod examines the work of Stuart Pawson, MJ Elliott investigates *Kolchak*, Martin Edwards considers murder, Alan Perry meets Reginald Fortune, David Stuart Davies recognises Holmes in disguise, Danutah Reah contributes a new crime story, my column looks at Stevenson's influence on Conan Doyle ... The magazine is published six times a year by Atlas Publishing Ltd, at £3.95 or \$7.50 the issue. A six-issue subscription is £23.70 (rest of world £26.00 or \$45.00) from Atlas Publishing Ltd, Jordan House, Old Milton

Green, New Milton, Hants. BH25 6QJ. The website's at www.sherlockholmes.com. The US representative is Classic Specialties (PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH 45219, USA; sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com).

Teddy Hayes' musical *The Baskerville Beast*, enthusiastically received in its abridged preview at Hillingdon, will be staged in full at the **Questors Theatre** in Ealing, 22-26 March. The theatre is at 12 Mattock Lane, Ealing, London W5 5BQ (box office 020 8237 1111). There are matinees on Wednesday and Saturday. By all accounts the play deserves a national tour. Let's hope!

Cenarth Fox's play *The Real Sherlock Holmes* will be touring Victoria, Australia: **Phillip Island Arts Society** 10 April, **Cameron Close Theatre**, Burwood 16 April, **Donvale Village Performing Centre** 6 May, **Burwood Terrace Village** 25 May, **Cathouse Players Inc, Craigieburn** 2-4 June, and **Peridot Theatre, Mt Waverley** 16-19 June. Details from kevintrask@bigpond.com.

Cen Fox will speak on 'Meet Sherlock Holmes' at **Waverley Ladies Club** 2 March, and **St Aidan's Church Hall, Strathmore** 5 May. Enquiries to Mr Fox at writer@labyrinth.net.au.

Tim Evers will perform his one-man play *The Demons of Sherlock Holmes* from 28 April to 15 May at **The Strand Theatre** in Galveston, Texas (phone 409 763-4591 or toll-free on 877 STRAND-9). Details from Tim at TheatreBahHumbug@aol.com.

The Final Problem for Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson, a play by David Fletcher, will be produced at the **Loft Theatre** in Leamington 8-18 June. Chris Dobson of the Loft Theatre says that the play 'interweaves two or three stories from the Canon and puts a particular spotlight on the relationship between the two protagonists'. Check the website at www.loft-theatre.co.uk/shows/sherlock.php.

Melanie Odell, Chairman of **Hasemere Initiative**, reports that the Initiative wants to hold a literary weekend in May, when the local Educational Museum will have an exhibition on Surrey Writers, including Arthur Conan Doyle, whose house Undershaw is at nearby Hindhead. They'd like to feature lunch at Undershaw and a film at the local cinema alongside the exhibition. Interested groups and individuals should contact Melanie c/o Grayswood Computer Services, 1A Causewayside, High Street, Haslemere, Surrey GU27 2JZ (phone 01428 644858; e-mail melanie@haslemere.com).

Gerard Van der Leun alerts me to *The Quotable Holmes* free on the web at <http://americandigest.org/mt-archives/004817.php>.

At the annual dinner of The Sherlock Holmes Society of London, Stephen Fry said: 'I was asked if I might consider essaying the part of Holmes for the television, with my colleague Hugh Laurie giving it John H Watson. After much agonized thought we have judged ourselves unworthy and reluctantly decided against such a project.' So now you know. And you can read Mr Fry's address in full in the next *Sherlock Holmes Journal*. (Advt.)

David Pirie, who stretched history beyond the limit in *Murder Rooms*, does it again with a one-off BBC2 drama *The Strange Case of Sherlock Holmes and Arthur Conan Doyle*, filmed in Scotland for transmission in the summer. This time he's concentrating on the relationship between Arthur and his father. Douglas Henshall plays Conan Doyle, with Sinead Cusack as his mother Mary, Emily Blunt as Jean Leckie, and (rather excitingly) Brian Cox as Joseph Bell.

Faith Stern alerts me to an interesting article, 'Mind and Sherlock Holmes' by Ellen Reiss, accessible online at www.elisiegel.net/tro-04/tro1624.html.

The weekend 10-13 March sees the London Mini-Festival of **The Sherlock Holmes Society of London**, entitled *A Capital Idea, Watson*. It kicks off at 7.00 on Thursday, when Bernard Davies leads his final Marylebone Mews Walk, starting at the Devonshire Arms, Duke Street, W1, and concludes with MC Black's walking tour of St James's and Mayfair on Sunday, starting at the Duke of York's Column at 10.30. On Friday at 3.30 tea at the Diogenes Club (i.e. the Travellers'), and in the evening at the Savage Club the first *Richard Lancelyn Green Memorial Lecture*: 'Richard Lancelyn Green and Raffles' by Owen Dudley Edwards. Saturday morning: a

visit to the Enlightenment Gallery at the British Museum or to the Turkish bath at Porchester Baths (men only); in the afternoon a trip on an 1896 steam launch 'in pursuit of the Aurora'; and in the evening a Victorian Music Hall at the Old Dr Butler's Head. Book with Pam Bruxner (2B Hiham Green, Winchelsea, East Sussex TN36 4HB).

Kent Ross notifies me of an informal *Gathering of Southern Sherlockians* on 16 April at the Sheraton Read House in Chattanooga, Tennessee, planned by **The Confederates of Wisteria Lodge** and **The Nashville Scholars of the Three Pipe Problem**. Contact Mr Ross for details at 6875 Fielder, Rex, GA 30273, USA.

Periodicals received. *The Sherlock Holmes Journal*, Winter 2004. *The Baker Street Bugle*, November 2004 and January 2005 (**The Deerstalkers of Welshpool**, Roy Upton-Holder, Baskerville, 146 Little Henfaes Drive, Welshpool, Powys SY21 7BA). *The Baker Street Journal*, Winter 2004 (Steven Rothman, 220, West Rittenhouse Square, #15-D, Philadelphia, PA 19103, USA; subscriptions, PO Box 465, Hanover, PA 17331, USA; correspondence for **The Baker Street Irregulars** should go to Michael Whelan, 7938 Mill Stream Circle, Indianapolis, IN 46278, USA). *The Camden House Journal*, January 2005 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, Debbie Tinsley, PO Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). *Canadian Holmes*, Christmas (Winter) 2004 (**The Bootmakers of Toronto**, Trevor Raymond, 4 Lyons Court, Georgetown, Ontario L7G 1P1, Canada).

Christmas Annual 2004: The Architectural Holmes (The Norwegian Explorers of Minnesota), Suite 111, Elmer L Andersen Library, University of Minnesota, 222 21st Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55455, USA). *Communication*, Special Merchandising Issue 2004 and January/February 2005 (**The Pleasant Places of Florida**, Wanda & Jeff Dow, 1737 Santa Anna Drive, Dunedin, FL 34698, USA). *Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections*, December 2004 (Suite 111, Elmer L Andersen Library, University of Minnesota, 222 21st Avenue S, Minneapolis, MN 55455, USA). *The Illustrious Clients News*, December 2004 and February 2005 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T Doyle, 9 Calumet Court, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). *Ineffable Twaddle*, January and February 2005 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). *Irregular Newsletter*, January 2005 (**Conan Doyle [Crowborough] Establishment**, Brian W Pugh, 20 Clare Road, Lewes, Sussex BN7 1PN). *The Magic Door*, Winter 2005 (**The Friends of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection**, Doug Wrigglesworth, 16 Sunset Street, Holland Landing, Ontario, Canada L9N 1H4).

The Master's Trestleboard, January 2005 (**The Master's Masons**, Ron Fish, PO Box 4, Circleville, NY 10919, USA). *Mayday Mayday*, January 2005 (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardcam Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). *The Parallelogram*, December 2004 (**The Parallel Case of St Louis**, Joseph J Eckrich, 914 Oakmoor, Fenton, MO 63026, USA). *The Petrel Flyer*, January/February 2005 (**The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia**, Len Haffenden, 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7P 3C6). *Prescott's Press*, December 2004 (**The Three Garridebs**, Warren Randall, 15 Fawn Lane West, South Setauket, NY 11720-1346, USA). *3 Pipe Problem Plugs and Dottles*, November/December 2004 (**The Nashville Scholars of the Three Pipe Problem**, Kay Blocker, 5017 Maywood Drive, Nashville, TN 37211, USA pkblocker@comcast.net). *The Whaling News*, November and December 2004 (**The Harpooners of the Sea Unicorn**, Michael E Bragg, PO Box 256, St Charles, MO 63302-0256, USA).

And of course *Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press*, December 2004 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; blau7103@comcast.net).

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