

The DISTRICT MESSENGER



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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Something I missed last month: in the New Year's Honours List **Penelope Keith**, who had a small part in the dire Cook-Moore *Hound of the Baskervilles*, was appointed CBE (Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire) as was **John Wood**, the superb Sherlock Holmes in the RSC's outstanding 1974 production of William Gillette's play. **Hugh Laurie**, who has read *The Hound of the Baskervilles* on BBC Radio 2 and whose character in the Fox TV series *House* is strongly inspired by Holmes, became OBE (Officer of...). [*Thanks to Peter Blau for reminding me of this good news.*]

Nearly a century ago in his verse 'To an Undiscerning Critic' Arthur Conan Doyle warned against taking a fictional character's opinions as those of his author, yet people still claim that ACD himself was disdainful of Poe, Gaboriau and their creations. The latest is Andrew Norman in *Arthur Conan Doyle: Beyond Sherlock Holmes* (Tempus Publishing Ltd, The Mill, Brimscombe Port, Stroud, Glos. GL5 2QG; £18.99; 5 March). Dr Norman — like his subject a GP turned author — is on dangerous ground in stating that just about every mention of an alcoholic in ACD's fiction is a direct allusion to his own father. David Pirie makes such claims, but he's writing fiction. This new book makes an interesting case for ACD's having inherited a schizo-affective disorder from his father. There is clear evidence in the medical records, in his wife's letters, and in his own journal (published in 1978 as *The Doyle Diary*) that Charles Doyle suffered mental aberrations well beyond epilepsy and alcoholism, but evidence for genuine mental aberration on Arthur's part is less certain. Charles shared with his brother Richard and with his son a fascination with fairies, but, as a recent exhibition at the Royal Academy showed, such interest was widespread in the 19th century, particularly among artists; it was perhaps equivalent to today's fascination with angels. Dr Norman's arguments are thought-provoking, if not wholly convincing, but he does his case no good with such careless errors as identifying 'Jean Paul', mentioned in *The Sign of Four*, as Jean-Paul Sartre instead of Johann Paul Richter!

I've just received copies of the latest publications from **The Baker Street Irregulars**, which I'll look at more fully in the next issue. *Scandinavia and Sherlock Holmes* edited by Bjarne Nielsen (\$39.95) gives some background to the enduring popularity of Holmes in Denmark and Sweden, along with an admirable collection of essays from Sherlockian scholars in both countries, either translated into English or written in English. [*Holmes doesn't seem to have attracted a following in Norway, for some reason.*] The manuscript of 'The Red Circle' in facsimile is at the core of *Mandate for Murder* edited by Roy Pilot, Gianluca Salvatori & Enrico Solito (\$35.00). The MS is transcribed and annotated by Philip and Jane Weller, and there are illuminating essays by Italian and American scholars. Each book can be ordered from *Baker Street Journal*, 2 Dettling Road, Maynard, MA 01754, USA; or from www.bakerstreetjournal.com.

Philip Weller notes that the map of La Gaiola is misprinted in his essay. He and Jane will send by e-mail free copies of the map, in colour, and of the appropriate size to be pasted into the book. You can request it from acdsg@acd-221b.info.

Arthur Conan Doyle is a character in *Murder on the 'Celtic'* by Conrad Allen (St Martin's Press, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010, USA; \$23.95). [*'Conrad Allen' is the prolific and respected Edward Marston.*] University of Nebraska Press has reissued Conan Doyle's *The Coming of the Fairies*, introduced by John M Lynch, (233 North 8th Street, Lincoln, NE 68588-0255, USA; £7.99).

Conan Doyle: The Man Who Created Sherlock Holmes by Andrew Lycett, the first biography in over fifty years to draw on the family papers, is due on 9 August from Weidenfeld & Nicolson (Orion House, 5 Upper St Martin's Lane, London WC2H 9EA; £20.00). And on 1 October comes *Arthur Conan Doyle: A Life in Letters* edited by Daniel Stashower, Jon L Lellenberg & Charles Foley (HarperPress, Westerhill Road, Bishopbriggs, Glasgow G64 0QT; £25.00). *On the Trail of Dr Arthur Conan Doyle: An Illustrated Devon Tour* by Brian Pugh & Paul Spiring has been accepted for publication in late 2007 or early 2008.

The Conan Doyle (Crowborough) Establishment (Brian Pugh, 20 Clare Road, Lewes, Sussex BN7 1PN www.the-conan-doyle-crowborough-establishment.com) offers *Recollections of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle by Residents of Crowborough* (UK £6.00, elsewhere £7.00 or \$14.00) and *The Conan Doyle Crowborough Walk: An Investigation into the Connections of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and His Family in Crowborough* (post-paid UK £4.90; elsewhere £7.00 or \$14.00). In preparation are *Dr George Turnavine Budd* by Brian Pugh, *Bertram Fletcher Robinson* by Paul Spiring, and *A Chronology of the Life of Bertram Fletcher Robinson* by Paul Spiring & Philip Weller.

The Belgian at Baker Street by Rafe McGregor is not available on Amazon.co.uk — my error in DM 269. It can be downloaded for just 49c at www.amazon.com. Look for Amazon Shorts.

Sherlock in L.A. (1741, Via Allena, Oceanside, CA 92056 USA) is offering Theodore G Schulz's collection of *Strand Magazines* (474 single UK issues, 201 single US issues, 100 bound volumes, plus 19 *Strand Quarterlies* and a complete run of *The New Strand*) for £20,000 plus shipping. Serious collectors with serious money can phone Vincent Brosnan on 760 630 2013. Understandably, Ted Schulz wants the collection to remain intact.

The Sherlockian E-Times, Classic Specialties' catalogue-newsletter, is at www.sherlock-holmes.com/e-times14.htm. Or write to PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH 45219, USA. **Nigel Williams Rare Books** also has a new catalogue out (25 Cecil Court, London WC2N 4HE; nwrarebook@tcp.co.uk).

The fullest quickly accessible information about Fletcher Robinson is at www.bfronline.biz. **BFRonline.BIZ** is a German company for whom Paul Spiring acts as consultant. Worth a look!

I noted last time that the Irregular Special Press (Baker Street Studios Ltd, Endeavour House, 170 Woodland Road, Sawston, Cambridge CB2 4DX) has re-released *Sherlock Holmes on the Rails*, **Miles Richardson's** reading of 'The Bruce-Partington Plans' and 'The Wealden Pullman Theft', as a two-CD set priced at £7.00 (Europe

€12.00, elsewhere \$17.00). Each story is also available individually (£4.00, €8.00, or \$10.00), as is 'The Final Problem'. Or you can buy all three as *The Sherlock Holmes Railway Trilogy* (£10.00, €17.00, or \$25.00)! And there's a nice recording of *Sherlock Holmes and the Prince of Ventriloquists*, a Val Andrews story of the Edwardian Music Hall, read by Martin Goldman (£4.00, €8.00, or \$10.00).

At www.tadlowmusic.com you can hear an extract from the forthcoming world premiere recording of Miklos Rosza's score for *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*, which will be available only by mail order or on-line (Tadlow Music, 57 High Street, Tadlow, Royston, Herts. SG8 0EU).

The patronising response of Tessa Jowell, Secretary of State for Culture Media & Sport, to requests for Conan Doyle's house Undershaw to be listed Grade I has provoked accusations of literary snobbery. Having stated that ACD doesn't occupy a high enough place in the nation's literary consciousness, she said in a letter to *The Guardian* on 13 February: 'The building most closely associated with Sherlock Holmes is 221B Baker Street. I would be only too pleased to consider that building Grade I should such a request come forward.' Is this a joke or just shocking ignorance? (Clue: this is the politician who confused Isambard Kingdom Brunel with 'the Islamic Kingdom of Brunei'.) On the Society's website at www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk British voters can follow a link to an on-line petition which they can sign. Peter Turner, who set up the petition, points out that anyone can contact Ms Jowell via the government website at www.culture.gov.uk/about_us/our_ministers/tessajowell.htm.

Clive Francis' dramatisation of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* will be at **Theatre Royal**, Brighton (08700 606650) 6 - 10 Mar., **Arts Theatre**, Cambridge (01223 503333) 12 - 17 Mar., **Yvonne Arnaud Theatre**, Guildford (01483 440000) 19 - 24 Mar., **Civic Theatre**, Darlington (01325 486555) 26 - 31 Mar. The Peepolykus comedy version will be at **Palace Theatre**, Watford (01923 225671) 6 - 10 Mar., and **Oxford Playhouse** (01865 305305) 13 - 17 Mar. And a company called Illyria will tour with an open-air production of the same story during the summer (details to be announced)!

Announced as 'in pre-production' by Redfield Arts is a film called *The Crimes of Sherlock Holmes*.

Besides the video recording of Roger Llewellyn in *Sherlock Holmes — The Last Act!* www.youtube.com also has extracts from *The Man Who Loved Sherlock Holmes*, *Tribute to Sherlock Holmes*, various of the Ronald Howard series, and other Holmesian items.

Peter Blau reports that at www.switchpod.com you can listen to excellent readings by Patrick Horgan of *the Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* and some of the old Rathbone-Bruce radio plays.

www.hvgateway.com/Mycroft.htm is the website of **Mycroft Holmes Antiques** (144 Main Street, Cold Spring, NY 10516, USA).

A small selection of the original artwork for **Nis Jessen's** beautiful illustrations to *a Study in Scarlet* is for sale at www.comicart.dk. Prices start at 9,000 Kroner (\$1,500). E-mail info@comicart.dk.

Donna Goldthwaite reports that the exhibition *Conan Doyle & Joseph Bell: The Real Sherlock Holmes* remains at Surgeons Hall Museum in Edinburgh until 31 May. There's information at www.rcsed.ac.uk/site/619/default.aspx.

Friends of **Jeremy Brett** have arranged for a tree to be planted in his memory, to the west of the bandstand on Clapham Common at 2.30pm on 30 March. David Burke and other friends from the theatre hope to be there. All are welcome.

Robert Fisk has a salutary piece in *The Independent* on 25 February: '27 July 1880. A date Mr Blair should look up. Those sending British troops to Afghanistan should learn the lessons of the Battle of Maiwand.'

The Caithness Glass Company, now owned by Dartington Crystal, offers some attractive Holmesian paperweights: 'The Hound of the Baskervilles', 'The Final Problem' and 'The Speckled Band'. See www.caithnessglass.co.uk/caithnews.htm. These are announced as 'new for 2006' but are, worryingly, '©1996 Sir Arthur Conan Doyle Copyright Holders'.

From her online shop at www.spreadshirt.net/shop.php?sid=74810 (Europe) or www.spreadshirt.com/shop.php?sid=3589 (USA) **Stefanina Hill** sells a range of sweatshirts and the like featuring the Dancing Men code. The items have the word 'Elementary' in Dancing Men, or your own choice of wording. Prices start at about £9.00. For custom orders e-mail stefaninahill@yahoo.co.uk.

Rafe McGregor wants a recording of the 1943 Rathbone-Bruce radio play *The Dundas Separation Case*. If you can help, please contact him at RafeG@aol.com.

Peter Blau notes the death on 17 January of the great humorist **Art Buchwald**, who frequently mentioned Sherlock Holmes in his columns. 'In 1952 he interviewed Bill Rabe, then an Army Officer in Europe, about the Old Soldiers of Baker Street (and in a later column published a letter in which Adrian Conan Doyle complained that his father had been neglected in Bill's interview).'

The Independent notes that **Anna Cropper**, who died on 22 January, aged sixty-eight, 'was a commanding presence in challenging television plays of the 1960s and 1970s, most shockingly as the young schizophrenic, Kate Winter, in the writer David Mercer's *In Two Minds*.' Her many other roles included Mrs St Clair in 1965's *The Man with the Twisted Lip*, with Douglas Wilmer as Sherlock Holmes.

Ian Richardson will be known to many of us as a very good Sherlock Holmes in two enjoyable TV films, and an outstanding Joseph Bell in the series *Murder Rooms*. To the world at large he was the scheming politician Francis Urquhart in *House of Cards* and its sequels. To me he was one of the half-dozen finest classical actors of our generation. He had tremendous stage presence, a glorious voice, a genius for Shakespeare's verse, and a talent that encompassed high tragedy, low comedy and just about everything else. Why he was never knighted is a mystery. In 2003 he attended our annual dinner, and I had hopes that he'd be offered honorary membership, but it was not to be. He died unexpectedly in his sleep on 9 February at the age of seventy-two.

Derek Waring, who died on 19 February aged seventy-nine, was a prominent actor on stage and television. In 1968 he played Henri Fournaye in *The Second Stain* for BBC TV, with Peter Cushing as Holmes, and in 1989 was Dr Watson to Ron Moody's Holmes in the West End production of *Sherlock Holmes — The Musical*. Amanda Waring, his daughter by Dorothy Tutin, played Violet Westbury in the Granada production of *The Bruce-Partington Plans*.

The 48th running of the Chicago **Silver Blaze** will be held at Hawthorne Race Course on 28 April, during the sixth annual **STUD/Watsonian Weekend**. For details, contact Susan Diamond or Allan Devitt at 16W603 3rd Avenue, Bensenville, IL 60106-2327, USA, or e-mail szdiamond@comcast.net.

The Bootmakers of Toronto will celebrate their 35th anniversary with a one-day symposium on 9 June at the Metro Reference Library in Toronto. Contact Dave Drennan at drennan@allstream.net.

Periodicals received. *For the Sake of the Trust*, Winter 2007 (**The Baker Street Irregulars** Trust, Julie McKuras, 13512 Granada Avenue, Apple Valley, MN 55124, USA). **The Baker Street Journal**, Winter 2006 (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). **Bohemian Newsletter**, no. 73 (České společstvo Sherlocka Holmese, Aleš Kolodrubec, Milešovská 1, 130 00 Praha 3, Czech Republic). **The Camden House Journal**, February 2007 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, Debbie Tinsley, PO Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). **Communication**, 2007 (no month) (**The Pleasant Places of Florida**, Wanda & Jeff Dow, 1737 Santa Anna Drive, Dunedin, FL 34698, USA) [*Carl Heifetz has stepped down as Representative both with the Servants and with the Tradespeople. Ave atque vale.*]. **The Illustrious Clients News**, January 2007 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T Doyle, 9 Calumet Court, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). **Ineffable Twaddle**, March 2007 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA).

Irregular Newsletter, February 2007 (**The Conan Doyle (Crowborough) Establishment**, Brian Pugh, 20 Clare Road, Lewes, Sussex BN7 1PN). *The Magic Door*, Winter 2007 (**The Friends of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection**, Doug Wrigglesworth, 16 Sunset Street, Holland Landing, Ontario, Canada L9N 1H4). *Mayday Mayday*, February 2007 (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardarn Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). *The School Report*, Spring 2007 (**The Priory Scholars**, Horace L Coates, 21 Butcombe Road, Leicester LE4 0FY). *The Whaling News*, January 2007 and February 2007 (**The Harpooners of the Sea Unicorn**, Michael E Bragg, PO Box 256, St Charles, MO 63302-0256, USA).

And *Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press*, January 2007 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; blau7103@comcast.net).

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