

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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I give such addresses and prices as I have; if I don't provide details of importers or agents, it's because I don't have those details.

Our Society has a genuinely special relationship with **The Norwegian Explorers of Minnesota**: both names appear on the famous plaque at the foot of the Reichenbach Falls — though most of the credit, I think, belongs to the Explorers. These days they play an important part in supporting the world's largest publicly accessible Sherlock Holmes collection, at the University of Minneapolis in Minnesota, and they continue to issue a stimulating journal, *Explorations*. Since their foundation in 1948 they've also published four slim books of scholarship and learned whimsy, books that have long been out of print, causing frustration for those who'd like to follow up a reference, say, to Theodore C Blegen's study of the emotional Holmes, "These Were Hidden Fires, Indeed!" So it's a great pleasure to have all four newly available in one nicely presented 300-page paperback volume, *The Norwegian Explorers Omnibus*, published for *Victorian Secrets and Edwardian Enigmas: A Conference on the World of Sherlock Holmes*, to be hosted by the Explorers and the Sherlock Holmes Collections from 6 to 8 July at the Elmer L Andersen Library at the University of Minnesota. Here, for instance, are Philip S Hench on the conception and execution of the Reichenbach plaque, Stephen G Palmer on Holmes and the law, John Bergquist on wine in the Canon, and Jack D Key on Conan Doyle as a medical author. Lovely stuff! (The Norwegian Explorers of Minnesota, Julie McKuras, 13512 Granada Ave, Apple Valley, MN 55124, USA; <mike9750@aol.com>; \$25.00.)

*Hounding the Hound of the Baskervilles: A Poetic Portrait of the Detective Novel* by Yair Mazor (Goblin Fern Press, 6401 Odana Road, Madison, WI 53719, USA; \$12.95) is an unusual and penetrating study of the world's most famous murder mystery. As a distinguished scholar of Hebrew literature, the author brings a fresh eye and mind to this popular English language classic. It's not a big book — 100 pages of fairly large type, illustrated with twenty-nine pencil drawings whose relevance escapes me — but it has caused me to reconsider my former low opinion of *The Hound* as a detective story. Professor Mazor has noticed what so few others have: how elegantly Conan Doyle devised his plot and how cunningly he inserted verbal clues to guide the perceptive reader to the solution of the mystery. I should perhaps mention that the numbering of the notes in *Hounding the Hound* has gone rather awry, but that's a minor matter.

Four years ago, as I noted in the last issue, Joseph Green and Peter Ridgway Watt gave us *The Alternative Sherlock Holmes*, the fullest survey yet of Holmesian pastiche and parody (see DM 234). Now we have *Parodies and Pastiche Buzzing 'Round Sir Arthur Conan Doyle* by Charles Press (The Battered Silicon Dispatch Box, PO Box 204, Shelburne, Ontario L0N 1S0, Canada), which studies the unofficial exploits that were published during Conan Doyle's lifetime. Mr Press considers the distinction between parody and pastiche, and examines the qualities that make some examples outstanding while others are merely good or mediocre... or in some cases downright awful. He also looks at Conan Doyle's reactions, and those of the reading public. His own writing is relaxed, and he

puts his points across in a friendly way: a whole book of parodies, he says, 'may be like eating too many sweets all at once. Perhaps it's best to dip into collections of Sherlockian parody, as we are doing here, or take just a few full helpings at a time from those collections listed later on, rather than trying to swallow them all at once in one or two helpings. Parodies do make good bedside reading, though. Put us to sleep relaxed.' The greater part of this book gives me the feeling of a conversation with an intelligent and like-minded friend over a pint in a favourite pub. The extensive bibliography is invaluable, but necessarily less relaxed in style.

Some while ago I recommended the two volumes of Inspector James McLevy's memoirs, published by Mercat Press. McLevy was a real and very successful detective in mid-nineteenth century Edinburgh, where Arthur Conan Doyle would certainly have known of him. Back in 1999, before his reminiscences were reissued, David Ashton had written the first of an equally engrossing series of plays for BBC Radio 4, with that fine actor Brian Cox as McLevy, and Ashton himself as his superior, Lieutenant Roach. Now David Ashton has turned his hand to novels, and in *Shadow of the Serpent* (Polygon, Birlinn Ltd, West Newington House, 10 Newington Road, Edinburgh EH9 1QS; £6.99) and *Fall from Grace* (Polygon; £9.99) he's able to enlarge the picture of the smoky, dangerous, beautiful city and its infinitely varied denizens — and to present in more depth the fascinating, flawed but triumphantly human character of the Edinburgh detective. *Shadow of the Serpent* takes McLevy into the muddy and uncertain world of politics, in search of a brutal murderer. In *Fall from Grace* a murder investigation leads to more and even darker crimes, all centring upon the catastrophic collapse of the Tay Bridge in December 1879, in which ninety railway passengers and staff were killed. The stories are told in the third person, with occasional glimpses of an individual's thoughts, including passages from McLevy's diary. David Ashton's writing is excellent, his characters thoroughly convincing, and his narrative grabs you — I was going to say, by the throat — and doesn't let you go. Quintin Jardine has said that the seeds of the fictional anti-hero are there in the real-life James McLevy. David Ashton's novels prove him right.

Some exciting news from Jon Lellenberg: *Arthur Conan Doyle: A Life in Letters* (1 October: HarperPress, Westerhill Road, Bishopbriggs, Glasgow G64 0QT; £25.00) will be the BBC Radio 4 Book of the Week, 24-28 September. Five 15-minute readings will be broadcast at 9.45 am, drawn from chapters 3-9, from when Conan Doyle was a struggling young writer to when he was knighted. If you miss the broadcast, you can catch it over the following week at <[www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/arts/book\\_week.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/arts/book_week.shtml)>.

Catalogue 143 from **Nigel Williams Rare Books** (25 Cecil Court, London WC2N 4HE; <nwrrarebook@tcp.co.uk>) has some Conan Doyle material.

It's good to note that **Peter Sallis**, best known these days for *last of the Summer Wine* and *Wallace & Gromit*, was awarded the OBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours. In 1965 he was Dr Watson to Fritz Weaver's Holmes in the Broadway musical *Baker Street*.

A few of the Baker Street Irregulars are invested with the names of newspapers — 'The Evening News', 'The Western Morning News', 'The Pall Mall Gazette', and 'The Leeds Mercury'. Peter Calamai, who holds that last title, is searching for a copy of the *Mercury* from the period 1880-1903. If you can help him, please contact me.

[\*There may well be copies out there. I now have half a dozen issues of The Pall Mall Gazette, thanks to the internet.\*]

**Scott Monty**, in addition to the *Baker Street Blog*, which you'll find at <<http://bakerstreetjournal.blogspot.com>>, has collaborated with **Burt Wolder** to set up *I Hear of Sherlock Everywhere*, a podcast at <[www.ihearofsherlock.com](http://www.ihearofsherlock.com)>. [\*It needs more powerful and sophisticated equipment than I currently have at my disposal, alas.\*]

Two touring productions of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* have now closed, though Peter Egan tells me that there are plans to do more with Clive Francis' play in the autumn, and it looks as if Peepolykus may also tour further with theirs. Meanwhile the highly-praised company Illyria will start touring open-air venues with another production of *The Hound*. Dates for July are: 13 **The Vyne**, Hampshire (0870 428 8933); 14 **Cliveden**, Maidenhead (0870 428 8933); 15 **East Riddlesden Hall**, Keighley (01535 683800); 17 **Hawth Amphitheatre**, Crawley (01293 553636); 18 **Escot Country Park & Gardens**, Exeter (01404 822188) 19 **Hanbury Hall**, Droitwich (01527 821214); 20 **Erddig**, Wrexham (01978 355314); 21 **Greys Court**, Henley (0870 428 8933); 22 **Clandon Park**, Guildford (0870 240 4068); 24 **Tonbridge Castle**, Tonbridge (01732 770929); 25-26 **Tamworth Castle**, Tamworth (01827 709618); 27 **Wallington**, Northumberland (01670 773939); 28 **Sunnycroft**, Telford (01743 708162); 29 **Ham House**, Richmond (0870 428 8933); 31 **Castell Coch**, Cardiff (02920 880011). There's more information at <[www.illyria.uk.com](http://www.illyria.uk.com)>.

Peter Blau notes that those attending *Victorian Secrets and Edwardian Enigmas* will be able to see Charles Marowitz's play *Sherlock's Last Case* performed by the University of Minnesota Showboat Players, the best day being Friday 6 July. Their website is at <[www.showboat.umn.edu/sherlock.html](http://www.showboat.umn.edu/sherlock.html)>. The conference site is <[www.tc.umn.edu/~bergq003/norwegianexplorers/2007\\_conference.html](http://www.tc.umn.edu/~bergq003/norwegianexplorers/2007_conference.html)>.

Thomas Wheeler is reported to be adapting his own novel *The Arcanum* (Bantam, 2004) for production by Gold Circle Films. 'The Arcanum' is a secret society of occult investigators, comprising Arthur Conan Doyle, H P Lovecraft, Harry Houdini, and Marie Laveau [\*who she?]\*, who 'battle demons descending on New York City, including a serial killer of angels'. Hm.

Stephen Doyle of Wessex Press has alerted me to *From Gillette to Brett II*, the second weekend conference devoted to Sherlock Holmes on stage, screen and radio. It'll be held at the Hilton Indianapolis North Hotel (8181 N Shadeland Avenue, Indianapolis, Indiana) from 16 to 18 November. Speakers include Scott Allen Nollen (author of *Sir Arthur Conan Doyle at the Cinema*), Terence Faherty (Rathbone expert), David Stuart Davies & Kathryn White (who need no gloss from me), and Julie McKuras (Edith Meiser expert). Special guests are Jeremy Paul (dramatist: author of *The Secret of Sherlock Holmes*) and Patricia Garwood (actress: Kate Whitney in Granada's *The Man with the Twisted Lip*). You can get full details and a registration form at <[www.wessexpress.com](http://www.wessexpress.com)> — or contact Steve Doyle at <[sdoyle221@sbcglobal.net](mailto:sdoyle221@sbcglobal.net)>. There's a trailer at <[www.youtube.com/watch?v=xLP2OJ5hqe0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xLP2OJ5hqe0)>.

**Tom Pocock**, who died on 7 May aged eighty-one, was a notable naval historian and biographer, focussing particularly on the life and times of Lord Nelson, and a distinguished journalist. His 1973 book *London Walks* was one of the first to include Sherlock Holmes's Baker Street. There's less of Holmes and Watson than a specialist might expect, but the enthusiasm, wit and knowledge of the guide is more than adequate compensation.

The director **Robin Midgley** enjoyed a successful career in the theatre, encompassing everything from *Oedipus Tyrannus to Oliver!* — and on radio and television. In 1960, for the BBC Home Service, he directed Carleton Hobbs and Norman Shelley in *The Valley of Fear*, followed in 1961 by *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, and two series of short stories for the Light Programme in 1961-62. His production of *The Speckled Band* in the 1964 BBC TV series *Detective*, with Douglas Wilmer and Nigel Stock, led to the fondly remembered *Sherlock Holmes* series of 1965. Douglas Wilmer has said that he wanted Midgley to direct some of the plays in that

series, but it didn't happen. Robin Midgley died on 19 May, aged seventy-two.

Peter Blau reports the death of **Hans-Uno Bengtsson** on 18 May. 'He was Assistant Professor of Theoretical Physics at Lund University in Sweden, a former Assistant Associate Professor at UCLA, and an enthusiastic Sherlockian: his articles appeared in *The Baker Street Journal* in the 1980s and 1990s, and his analysis of "The Depth Which the Parsley Had Sunk into the Butter" (which was translated into English in the recent *Scandinavia and Sherlock Holmes*) is a fine example of his application of physics to Canonical problems.

Periodicals received. *The Arthur Conan Doyle Collection Lancelyn Green Bequest Newsletter*, Spring/Summer 2006 (Stephen Bailey, Head of Culture, Portsmouth City Council, Civic Offices, Guildhall Walk, Portsmouth PO1 2AD; e-mail <[lancelyngreencollection@portsmouthcc.gov.uk](mailto:lancelyngreencollection@portsmouthcc.gov.uk)>; the website is at <[www.conandoylecollection.co.uk](http://www.conandoylecollection.co.uk)>) [\*published to coincide with the official opening of the Collection on Friday last, which to my regret I wasn't able to attend\*]. *Bohemian Newsletter*, no. 75, 76 and 77 (**České společenost Sherlocka Holmese**, Aleš Kolodrubec, Milešovská 1, 130 00 Praha 3, Czech Republic). *Communication*, no. 271 and 272 (**The Pleasant Places of Florida**, Wanda & Jeff Dow, 1737 Santa Anna Drive, Dunedin, FL 34698, USA) [\*the former is one of the PPOF's occasional parody issues, this time of food and drink — and Wanda Dow contributes four perfectly sound recipes\*].

*The Illustrious Clients News*, June 2007 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T Doyle, 9 Calumet Court, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). *Ineffable Twaddle*, June 2007 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). *The Magic Door*, Winter 2007 (**The Friends of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection**, Doug Wrigglesworth, 16 Sunset Street, Holland Landing, Ontario, Canada L9N 1H4) [*Dayna McCausland's piece about Conan Doyle's 1894 visit to Toronto is particularly interesting, and Peggy Perdue's shows how some of items in the collection help us to understand Conan Doyle and his family*\*].

*Mayday Mayday*, June 2007 (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardarn Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). *Musgraves Matters* no. 1 (**The Musgraves**, Rafe McGregor, 62 Willow Park Road, Wilberfoss, York YO41 5PS; <[musgravesmatters@aol.com](mailto:musgravesmatters@aol.com)>) [\*the first issue of the bimonthly on-line newsletter, which will undoubtedly grow and grow\*]. *Practice Notes*, June 2007 (**The Friends of Dr Watson**, Nino Cirone, Highcroft Cottage, 14 Totteridge Common, London N20 8NL) [\*the Friends continue to research the life and times of John H Watson, and the results are always of interest\*]. *The School Report*, Summer 2007 (**The Priory Scholars**, Horace L Coates, 21 Butcombe Road, Leicester LE4 0FY).

*The Scion*, Spring 2007 (**The Musgraves**, Anne Jordan, Hallas Lodge, Greenside Lane, Cullingworth, Bradford BD13 5AP) [\*among much else, some more good discussion of parody and pastiche\*]. *The Sherlock Holmes Journal*, Summer 2007 [\*my first issue as joint Hon. Ed. — please treat it kindly\*]. *The Solar Pons Gazette*, June 2007 (Bob Byrne, <[www.solarpons.com](http://www.solarpons.com)>) [\*though only available online, the Gazette is proving a worthy successor to *The Pontine Dossier*; thank you, Bob!\*]. *Tonga Times*, Summer 2007 (**The Mini-Tonga Society**, Jay Pearlman, 1656 E 19th Street, #2-E, Brooklyn, NY 11229, USA) [\*I'm always impressed by the miniature 221Bs created by the Mini-Tongas\*]. *The Whaling News*, May 2007 and June 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*, April 2007 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; <[blau7103@comcast.net](mailto:blau7103@comcast.net)>).

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