

The DISTRICT MESSENGER



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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It's been a long time in the making, but *Holmes and Watson Country: Travels in Search of Solutions* by **Bernard Davies** (The Sherlock Holmes Society of London, Judi Ellis, 13 Crofton Avenue, Orpington, Kent BR6 8DU; SHSL221b@aol.com) was worth waiting for. As editor and, with Bob Ellis, designer, I'm biased, but the fact is that this, the Society's most ambitious publication yet, is a beautiful production. Two hardback volumes, 8½" x 12", in pictorial dustwrappers, containing more than 400 pages of text and maps, plus frontispiece photographs, an introduction by Leslie S Klinger, and a foreword to each volume... The twenty-seven essays, written over a period of more than fifty years, are, as the book's title indicates, mostly topographical investigations, in which Bernard Davies guides us gently but firmly around those parts of England, and especially London, that we may call Holmes and Watson Country. From the true site of 221B Baker Street, to Baskerville Hall, Donnithorpe, the Abbey Grange, the Priory School, Charlington Hall – even Josiah Amberley's house of horror, The Haven at Lewisham – his research is meticulous, his conclusions revelatory, and his presentation witty, enthusiastic and thoroughly engaging. *Holmes and Watson Country* is published in a limited edition of 200 copies at £30.00 (including postage: UK £39.00, Europe £45.00/€60.00 elsewhere £58.00/\$116.00). There's also a special collectors' edition of twenty-five copies, signed and numbered, in an attractive slipcase, at £50.00 (including postage: UK £59.00, Europe £65.00/€80.00 elsewhere £78.00/\$156.00). The two volumes aren't available separately.

A year after *Conan Doyle: The Man Who Created Sherlock Holmes* comes *The Adventures of Arthur Conan Doyle* by **Russell Miller** (Harvill Secker, Random House, 20 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London S1V 2SA; £20.00) – prompting the question: Do we really need another biography of Conan Doyle? Well, yes, I think we do – specifically because Russell Miller has had free access to the material that Richard Lancelyn Green bequeathed to the Conan Doyle Collection at Portsmouth and to all Sir Arthur's known surviving letters. Like Andrew Lycett, Mr Miller is an experienced biographer, and, like John Dickson Carr, he's an accomplished storyteller. His book is intensely readable, and, though I'm pretty sure that he likes Conan Doyle and would like to have known him, he maintains his objectivity, in recalling some of his subject's less loveable and less admirable traits. There's the odd error. The frontispiece to the 1887 *Beeton's Christmas Annual* doesn't portray Holmes 'as an anonymous figure stooped over a corpse' (that comes later): instead it shows Holmes, Watson, Gregson and Lestrade examining the word 'Rache'; and it was established long ago that Dame Jean Conan Doyle was christened Jean Lena Annette, and not 'Lina Jean'. There are some curious opinions too. In the portrait Sidney Paget, we're told, Sir Arthur looks 'more like a Victorian banker than a writer' – but is there really a standard model for writers? (What does Russell Miller look like, I wonder?) And there are several descriptions of ACD as 'unsmiling' in paintings and photographs, as if that was unusual, which it wasn't. But these are quibbles. This biography combines information and entertainment to a commendable degree.

In 1997 Oakmagic Publications issued the first of four booklets that would make up *Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective* by **Kelvin I Jones**. Had it been published in book form, this life of the great detective would, I think, have been acclaimed as a major contribution to Holmesian scholarship. Instead, it has remained largely unknown. I hope this year's new edition will remedy that, but I'd be more confident if the work had been made available as a single well-designed volume, rather than newly typeset versions of the original booklets. Eleven years on, *Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective, Volume One: The Early Years* (Oakmagic Publications, 1 Sir Williams Lane, Aylsham, Norwich NR11 6AW; £3.99) is set in Times Roman, which is certainly an improvement

on the Courier of the original edition, but the design is, frankly, clumsy – a shame, because the content is really good. Unlike Rennison and Baring-Gould, Mr Jones doesn't invent characters and events. He speculates, but the speculation is in the best tradition, based on reasoning from a sound premise. Not that his conclusions are always incontestable: a reading of Bernard Davies's 'Vacations and Stations' might convince him that Holmes attended Oxford University rather than Cambridge. But that's one of the joys of our great game! Mr Jones's estimable biography is re-published in an edition of just 100 signed copies.

Unsurprisingly, many of those who devise new exploits for Sherlock Holmes like to imagine him visiting their own corner of the world. **John S Fitzpatrick** was perhaps inspired by the success of Larry Millett, who had already brought Holmes and Watson to Minnesota in five books. At any rate, in *Sherlock Holmes: The Montana Chronicles* Mr Fitzpatrick brings the duo to 'Rodgersburg' (a lightly disguised Anaconda, Montana) after the events of Mr Millett's novel *Sherlock Holmes and the Ice Palace Murders*. The four stories are ingenious and engagingly told, though the style is not Dr Watson's. Mr Fitzpatrick justifies the Americanisms by the fact that the text is 'edited' by an American, but for the British reader that's perhaps stretching credibility rather far. At all events, *Sherlock Holmes: The Montana Chronicles* (Riverbend Publishing, PO Box 5833, Helena, MT 59604, USA; \$12.95) is great fun to read, not least as an introduction to life in Montana a century ago.

The New Annotated Dracula by Bram Stoker, edited and annotated by **Leslie S Klinger** (W.W. Norton & Company Ltd, Castle House, 75-76 Wells Street, London W1T 3QT; £22.50) has a surprising amount of Holmesian content, and if you've read and enjoyed *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes* – and if not, why not? – then you'll probably appreciate Leslie Klinger's new *magnum opus*, in which he applies the same outstanding level of knowledge, research, literacy and enthusiasm to Bram Stoker's gothic masterpiece. Mr Klinger is one of only two scholars to be granted access to the original manuscript, as well as the author's notes, enabling him to solve many of the problems implicit in the novel – and to pose a few more. This beautifully presented annotated edition of *Dracula* easily supersedes its predecessors.

Two new novels have just reached me: *Moriarty* by **John Gardner** (Quercus Publishing Plc, 21 Bloomsbury Square, London WC1A 2NS; £14.99) the posthumous final volume in the trilogy that began with *The Return of Moriarty* and *The Revenge of Moriarty*; and *The File on Colonel Moran, Volume One: The Lure of Moriarty* by **Vernon Mealor** (The Clyvedon Press, 95 Maes-y-Sarn, Pentyrch, Cardiff CF15 9QR; £10.00). I'll review these in the next issue.

New books that haven't yet come my way include *Gaslight Grimoire: Dark Tales of Sherlock Holmes* edited by **Jeff Campbell & Charles Prepolec** (EDGE Science Fiction and Fantasy Publishing, Inc., PO Box 1714, Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2P 2L7; £16.95); and *The Shadow of Reichenbach Falls* by **John R King** (Forge, Tom Doherty Associates LLC, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010, USA; £17.99).

Due on 28 October is *Sherlock Holmes Was Wrong: Reopening the Case of the Hound of the Baskervilles* by **Pierre Bayard** (Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 36 Soho Square, London W1D 3QY; £13.60); and on 31 October comes *The Chronicles of Sherlock Holmes* by **Paul D Gilbert** (Robert Hale Ltd, Clerkenwell House, 45-47 Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0HT; £18.99).

On www.amazon.co.uk you can pre-order *Close to Holmes: A Look at the Connections Between Historical London, Sherlock Holmes and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle* by Alistair Duncan, due on 1 February 2009 from MX Publishing (10 Kingfisher Close, Stanstead Abbots, Herts. SG12 8LQ) for £6.59. The publisher's price is £9.99.

Paul Spiring will be at Cottage Books in Bovey Tracey from 10am to 11am on 25 October to sign copies of *On the Trail of Arthur Conan Doyle* and *Bertram Fletcher Robinson*. Co-author **Brian Pugh** will join him at Waterstone's in Newton Abbot from 11am to 12 noon on 1 November, and at Borders in Cardiff from 1pm to 2pm on 3 November.

Alfred Weiner wants to sell his collection of Sherlock Holmes books, magazines and recordings. Items are available individually, and you can get details from Mr Weiner at 4105 Marietta Drive, Vestal, NY 13850, USA (e-mail almar@stny.rr.com).

Derek Hinrich spotted that the October/November issue of *The Chap* (£3.25 postpaid from Mrs Porter, 17 Ardmore Road, London SE13 6EL; www.thechap.net/index.html) features an article on **Bartitsu**, with original photographs from *Pearson's Magazine*.

At <http://www.sherlock-holmes.com/index.html> is the September issue of *The Sherlockian E-Times*, the catalogue-newsletter from **Classic Specialties** (PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH, 45219, USA; sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com), with many Holmesian collectibles and books, including a new CD transcription of the long-deleted cassette *Favourite Music of Sherlock Holmes*, featuring works by Mendelssohn, Weber, Brahms, and others (\$12.95). The theme of Classic Specialties' 2009 calendar, available shortly, is *Sherlock Holmes in the Movies*.

The International Crime Writing Hall of Fame was inaugurated on 3 October at the first ITV3 Crime & Thriller Awards, when Arthur Conan Doyle, Agatha Christie and PD James were the first authors to be inducted. Ian Rankin was named Author of the Year, and Colin Dexter won the ITV3 Writer's Award for Classic TV Drama.

Thanks to writer Bert Coules and producer Patrick Rayner, I recently attended the recording of one of the four plays in BBC Radio 4's forthcoming third series of *The Further Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, starring Clive Merrison and Andrew Sachs as Holmes and Watson. The plays will be broadcast on Friday afternoons beginning 26 December, and on 22 January BBC Audiobooks (St James House, The Square, Lower Bristol Road, Bath BA2 3BH) will release a 4-CD set containing the two unreleased recordings from the previous series plus two from the new series. [*A curious decision, but there you are...*]

Guy Ritchie's Sherlock Holmes film now has a title, *Sherlock Holmes*, and a cast. Robert Downey Jr is Holmes, with Jude Law as Watson, Rachel McAdams as Irene Adler, Kelly Reilly as Mary Morstan, and Mark Strong as Blackwood. Filming began this month in London, at St Paul's Cathedral and Freemasons' Hall in Great Queen Street. You can see photos here: <http://justjared.buzznet.com/2008/10/12/dr-watson-jude-law/> and here: <http://justjared.buzznet.com/2008/10/10/robert-downey-jr-as-sherlock-holmes-first-pictures/>. The release date for the film has been set for 20 November 2009.

Roger Llewellyn's tour with the newly retitled *Sherlock Holmes – The Death and Life!* by David Stuart Davies takes him to these venues: 13 Nov: **Bridport Arts Centre** (01308 424204; www.bridport-arts.com); 14 Nov: **The Exchange**, Sturminster Newton (01258 475137; www.stur-exchange.co.uk); 21 Nov: **Old Town Hall Arts Centre**, Hemel Hempstead (01442 228091; www.dacorum.gov.uk/arts); 24-29 Nov: **Tabard Theatre**, Bedford Park, London (08448 472264; www.tabardtheatre.co.uk); 5 Dec: **The Hall for Cornwall**, Truro (01872 262466; www.hallforcornwall.co.uk); 13 Dec: **Norden Farm Arts Centre**, Maidenhead (01628 788997; www.nordenfarm.org).

According to *Variety*, comic actor **Steve Carell** has been signed for the title role in a forthcoming film *The Adventures of Brigadier Gerard*.

The Sherlock Holmes Pen, based on the cartoons of *Mad Magazine* artist **Tom Richmond**, can be bought for \$10.95 from David Ian Davies's website at www.onevoicerecordings.com/p/shp. It would make a very nice stocking-filler for Christmas. Take a look at Mr Davies's Sherlock Holmes recordings too – including my own play *The Great Detective*.

The distinguished illustrator **Eric Kincaid** is selling some of his original artwork, including paintings from the Brimax edition of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, examples of which can be seen on the Society's website at www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk/press_cutting.php?id=147. If you're interested, please contact Sophie Woods on 07890 974068, or at sophieewoods@googlemail.com. The guide price of £1000 reflects the high quality of Mr Kincaid's work.

Geoff Budd recommends **Vision Enhancers Ltd** (PO Box 548, Stockbridge, Hants. SO20 6WJ; www.visionenhancers.co.uk) as a source of magnifying glasses.

Showsaku Mashimo of the **Japan Sherlock Holmes Club** has kindly sent some material relating to Maizuru City's Sherlock Holmes and Conan Doyle Exhibition, which can be seen from 18 October to 30 November at Maizuru City Tie Gura (Red Brick House Pavilion). Maizuru, near Kyoto, is twinned with Portsmouth, and the exhibition features material from the Lancelyn Green Bequest, with information in Japanese by Akiko Sato. Each Saturday there is a mystery tour of the city, and on 8 November there'll be Sherlock Holmes's Symposium (admission free) from 1.30pm to 4pm.

From 10am to 1pm on 8 November in the Wheeler Auditorium at the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore, MD, **The Six Napoleons of Baltimore**, **Watson's Tin Box of Ellicott City**, and **The Carlton Club** present the twenty-ninth annual Saturday with Sherlock Holmes: *Art in the Blood: Sherlock Holmes and the Arts*. Admission is free. For details phone 410 396 5494.

Kenneth Ross, who has been diligently videoing our Society's events, offers a 61-minute DVD recording of the recent weekend in Portsmouth. Copies cost £3.50 plus postage from Ken at: 4 Fennels Farm Road, Flackwell Heath, High Wycombe, Bucks. HP10 9BS; phone 01628 522600; email kiross@tiscali.co.uk. Also available are DVDs of visits to Truro, 1998; Gloucester, 1999; Norwich, 2000; the Baltic cruise, 2001, and separate DVD of the Russian Treaty; Dartmoor, 2002; and the Sussex Downs, 2004.

Michael Cox reports the death of **Celia Gregory** on 8 September, aged fifty-eight. In 1991 she gave an impassioned performance as Maria Gibson in *The Problem of Thor Bridge*, one of the last top-class productions in the Granada TV series. Early in his long career, **Peter Copley**, who died on 7 October aged ninety-three, appeared twice in the 1954 *Sherlock Holmes* television series, playing John Winthrop in *The Case of the Winthrop Legend* and Lord Beryl in *The Case of Lady Beryl*.

Periodicals received. *The Camden House Journal*, August 2008 and September 2008 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, Debbie Tinsley, PO Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). *Communication*, no. 282 and no. 283 (**The Pleasant Places of Florida**, Wanda & Jeff Dow, 1737 Santa Anna Drive, Dunedin, FL 34698, USA) [*the earlier *Dr Seuss* issue was also numbered 282...*]. *The Formulary*, September 2008 (**The Friends of Dr Watson**, Nino Cirone, Highcroft Cottage, 14 Totteridge Common, Totteridge, London N20 8NL). *Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections*, September 2008 (Suite 111, Elmer L Andersen Library, University of Minnesota, 222 21st Avenue S, Minneapolis, MN 55455, USA). *The Illustrious Clients News*, October 2008 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T Doyle, 9 Calumet Court, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). *Ineffable Twaddle*, October 2008 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). *Irregular Newsletter*, October 2008 (**The Conan Doyle [Crowborough] Establishment**, Brian Pugh, 20 Clare Road, Lewes, Sussex BN7 1PN).

Mayday Mayday, October 2008, (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardcarney Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). *The Passengers' Log*, 7 August 2008 (**The Sydney Passengers**, Rosane McNamara, 4/2a Merlin Street, Neutral Bay, NSW 2089, Australia). *Prescott's Press*, September 2008 (**The Three Garridebs**, Warren Randall, 15 Fawn Lane West, South Setauket, NY 11720-1346, USA). *The Scion*, Autumn 2008 (**The Musgraves**, Anne Jordan, Hallas Lodge, Greenside Lane, Cullingworth, Bradford BD13 5AP). *The Serpentine Muse*, Fall 2008 (**The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes**, Evelyn Herzog, 301 Warren Ave, #203, Baltimore, MD 21203, USA). *Sherlockiana*, nr. 2-3, 2008 (**Sherlock Holmes Klubben i Danmark**, Bjarne Rothe Jensen, Højbovangens 24, 9200 Aalborg SV, Denmark). *Studies of the Nippon Sherlock Holmes Club*, 1 August 2008 (**The Sherlock Holmes Research Committee**, Mr Saburoh Hiraga, 3-6-24 Uenohigashi, Toyonaka City, Osaka 560-0013, Japan).

And *Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press*, September 2008 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; blau7103@comcast.net).

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