

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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A year ago I hailed the completion of **David Timson's** ambitious project, to record the entire Canon for Naxos AudioBooks (2nd Floor, 40A High Street, Welwyn, Herts. AL6 9EQ). Last month, in the author's sesquicentennial year, Naxos launched *The Complete Sherlock Holmes* as a boxed set, priced at £180.00 (but we're negotiating a special offer for members of the Society with the Audiobook Store at 36 Baker Street, London W1U 3EU – watch this space!). I've reviewed the individual releases over a period of ten years, and I'm happy to bang the drum for the set. David Timson, quite simply, is one of our great voice actors. His characterisations are distinct and precise, his pacing is masterly, and his feeling for the stories is palpable. The production by Nicolas Soames and Roy McMillan is likewise excellent.

Also from Naxos, and likewise thoroughly recommended is *The Essential Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*, comprising *A Life of Arthur Conan Doyle* (abridged) by Hesketh Pearson, read by Tim Pigott-Smith; 'The Speckled Band' and an extract from *The White Company* read by David Timson; 'Lot no. 249' and 'The Sealed Room' read by Carl Rigg; 'How the Brigadier Slew the Fox' read by Rupert Degas; extracts from *The Lost World* read by Glen McCready, and 'Danger!' read by Jonathan Oliver; the poem 'The Inner Room' and extracts from *The Vital Message* and *The Cottingley Fairies* read by Crawford Logan; with introductions by David Timson and an eight-minute recording of Conan Doyle himself. Six CDs, for just £19.99!

Nine years ago **Brian Pugh**, Curator of the Conan Doyle (Crowborough) Establishment, self-published a useful list of the dates in Arthur Conan Doyle's life. The latest version, *A Chronology of the Life of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, 22nd May 1859 to 7th July 1930* (MX Publishing, 335 Princess Park Manor, Royal Drive, London N11 3GX; £13.99 or \$22.95), runs to more than 200 A4 pages, and includes twelve pages of significant dates between Conan Doyle's death in 1930 and the memorial service for his daughter Dame Jean in 1998, as well as lists of his residences, of his family's burial sites, and of relevant plaques and statues, and a chronological list of his writings. It's not a book to read from cover to cover, but for many of us it will quickly become an essential part of our reference libraries. [*\*I can add just one event to the chronology. On 22 May 1994, as well as the plaque at 2 Upper Wimpole Street, Dame Jean unveiled Jean Upton's portrait of Sir Arthur at the Sherlock Holmes pub in London.\**]

*Stage Whispers: The Memoirs* by **Douglas Wilmer** (Porter Press International, PO Box 2, Tenbury Wells, WR5 8XX; standard edition £19.99; special edition £45.00; [www.porterpress.co.uk](http://www.porterpress.co.uk)) was launched at our Society's meeting in March. Don't expect a full autobiography. Other people feature in the book almost as much as the author does. He says, 'It has been my lot to have encountered many people in my long lifetime who still, it appears, arouse enough interest to warrant inclusion in my memoirs.' They do indeed! Among them were Olivier, Gielgud, Richardson and Redgrave, Vivien Leigh, Charlton Heston, Sophia Loren, Richard Harris, Marilyn Monroe... There is, of course, a chapter on 'Sherlock and the BBC', but that was only a part of a career that's included *Richard III*, *El Cid*, *Cleopatra*, *Patton*, *The Pink Panther* and *Octopussy*. Douglas Wilmer's book is chatty, sometimes frank, sometimes discreet, always entertaining and, despite an idiosyncratic frequency of italics and some persistent errors with names ('Cedric Hardwick', 'Yakima Knut' and others), thoroughly readable. The US distributor is SNG Barratt USA (92 Londonderry Turnpike, Manchester, NH 03104, USA; [www.sngbarratt.com](http://www.sngbarratt.com).) [*\*If you can find a copy, the Franco-Midland Hardware Company's 1990 booklet Under the Deerstalker and Other Hats: Conversations with Douglas Wilmer is well worth reading.\**]

Pitkin Publishing (Healey House, Dene Road, Andover, Hants. SP10 2AA) is well known for handsome full-colour souvenir guides to places of interest – and to popular literary classics, the latest being *The World of Sherlock Holmes* by **Peter Brimacombe**. £4.99 gets you thirty-two pages of elementary but well-chosen, splendidly illustrated information. Visitors to London will be snapping it up, and quite right too.

Back in 1995, *Sherlock Holmes: Some Unpublished Cases* by **Robert A Kisch** was published in a limited edition by the Institution of Diagnostic Engineers (7 Weir Road, Kibworth, Leicester LE8 0LQ; [admin@diagnosticengineers.org](mailto:admin@diagnosticengineers.org); £9.99). For some reason it didn't come my way at the time, but the publishers have recently uncovered a box or two and sent me a copy. The eight cases are set mostly in the years between 1900 and 1930, the year of Arthur Conan Doyle's death. As you might expect, aspects of engineering feature more noticeably here than in Conan Doyle's own stories – indeed, one of the major characters is a diagnostic engineer – but not to an extent that might disconcert the non-specialist. The intertwined plots are intelligent and exciting, involving, as they do, espionage, murder, counterfeiting and more, and the narrative rattles along at a cracking pace. The period is pleasantly evoked, Holmes and Watson are on good form, the canonical style is acceptably reproduced, and, in sum, *Sherlock Holmes: Some Unpublished Cases* is a very enjoyable read.

The first full-length novel by **Rafe McGregor**, *The Architect of Murder* (Robert Hale, Clerkenwell House, 45-47 Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0HT; £18.99), only just misses being a thriller of the first water. Just before the end of the Boer War, Alec Marshall VC receives news from London of his sister's death. Within hours of his arrival in England he learns that she may have been murdered – and then he's recruited by Scotland Yard's Special Branch to help investigate matters concerning the will of Cecil Rhodes, recently deceased. A witness to the will is found murdered, and as Marshall and his reluctant colleague Truegood dig deeper they find disturbing evidence of a conspiracy that could change Britain and the Empire. Probably not a good thing, with King Edward's coronation imminent. Twenty-five years earlier, Rhodes had described his dream of creating a Secret Society whose aim would be the extension of British rule throughout the world. Now it looks as if that Society actually exists and may have been responsible for killing Ellen Marshall. Rafe McGregor expertly weaves verifiable events and real people into his suspenseful mystery. The book is let down only by a few annoyingly anachronistic phrases (a 'celebrity veterinary surgeon' suggests a reality TV show) and occasional use of the F-word, which actually makes the story seem less, rather than more, real. Not because it's offensive but because it's incongruous in a story supposedly told at a time long before that word could legally be published.

Like many devotees of Sherlock Holmes, **Kelvin I Jones** also enjoys ghost stories. He writes them too. *Carter's Occult Casebook* (Oakmagic Publications, 1 Sir Williams Lane, Aylsham, Norwich NR11 6AW; £7.99) collects the eight adventures of his Edwardian ghost-hunter John Carter. Carter has more than a touch of Holmes about him, despite the great detective's scornful dismissal of the supernatural ('No ghosts need apply!'), and these tales, narrated by his colleague Rigden, fit satisfyingly within the tradition set by Carnacki and Flaxman Low. Ten splendid illustrations and a full-colour dustwrapper by Douglas Walters more than compensate for the occasionally uneven typesetting.

For *The Penguin Book of Gaslight Crime: Con Artists, Rogues and Scoundrels from the Time of Sherlock Holmes* (Penguin Books Ltd, 80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL; £9.99 or \$15.00) **Michael Sims** has trawled through the magazines that flourished in the Victorian and Edwardian era – *The Strand* was in competition with *Pearson's*, *The*

*Pall Mall*, *The Windsor* and numerous others. He was not looking for detectives but for criminals – rivals, if you like, of Raffles and Arsène Lupin. In fact Mr Sims was inspired to compile this fascinating volume by the success of *Arsène Lupin, Gentleman Thief*, his selection of Maurice Leblanc's best stories about that most daring and imaginative of rascals. Here are tales of Colonel Clay, Simon Carne, Captain Gault and Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford, alongside stories by Edgar Wallace, O Henry, Arnold Bennett and Sinclair Lewis. It's a rich mixture, and a varied one, well worth reading.

One of the great crooks of the period, Guy Boothby's Dr Nikola, doesn't feature in Michael Sims' book, but his first two adventures make up *Dr Nikola, Master Criminal*, edited by **David Stuart Davies** (Wordsworth Editions, 8B East Street, Ware, Herts. SG12 9HJ; £2.99). David, as many know, oversees Wordsworth's excellent 'Mystery and Supernatural' series, whose recent additions include *The Ghost Stories of Edith Wharton*, *Tales of Mystery and the Macabre* by Elizabeth Gaskell, and *The Casebook of Sexton Blake* (each £2.99).

David has also provided a perceptive afterword for a lovely pocket-sized hardback edition of **John Buchan's** unsurpassed thriller *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (Collector's Library, CRW Publishing Ltd, 69 Gloucester Crescent, London NW1 7EG; £7.99). 'By God!' says one of the characters, 'it is all pure Rider Haggard and Conan Doyle.' The modern espionage novel was effectively created by Erskine Childers in 1903 with *The Riddle of the Sands*, but Buchan refined and perfected it in *The Thirty-Nine Steps*.

Last June Kessinger Publishing (PO Box 1404, Whitefish, MT 59937, USA), who specialise in reprints of hard-to-find books, published a new edition of *Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson: A Textbook of Friendship* by **Christopher Morley**. If you go through the website at <http://www.kessinger.net> you can buy it from Amazon for \$24.78, whereas if you go direct to [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) it's \$37.20. Odd!

*The Trial of Sherlock Holmes*, due in May from Dynamite Entertainment (155 E 9th Ave, Suite B, Runnemede, NJ 08078-1158, USA; \$3.50) is the first of a series of five graphic novels written by **Leah Moore** and **John Reppion** and drawn by Aaron Campbell.

The Conan Doyle Estate has authorised a series of novels about the boyhood of the great detective. The first, *The Colossal Schemes of Baron Maupertuis* by **Andrew Lane**, is due next spring from Macmillan Children's Books (Pan Macmillan Publishers, 20 New Wharf Road, London N1 9RR). Among much else, Andrew Lane has written some of the best *Doctor Who* and *Torchwood* novels, including *All-Consuming Fire*, in which the Doctor and Holmes battle forces from the Cthulhu Mythos of H P Lovecraft.

The April issue of the admirable *Sherlockian E-Times* is accessible at [http://www.sherlock-holmes.com/e\\_times09-4.htm](http://www.sherlock-holmes.com/e_times09-4.htm). (Classic Specialties, PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH, 45219, USA; [sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com](mailto:sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com).) It's a magazine as well as a catalogue, and full of interest. Lots of good stuff there, too, in **Bjarne Nielsen's** new catalogue at <http://www.sherlockiana.dk/hjemmesider/antikvariater/kataloger/katalog%20marts%202009.htm>. And a dealer new to me is **Sherlock Holmes Online** (37 Norman Close, Maidstone, Kent ME14 5HT) at [www.sherlockholmesonline.co.uk](http://www.sherlockholmesonline.co.uk).

**Ray Pinfold** is obliged to sell his extensive and varied Holmesian library. Please e-mail for details to [rpinfeld@btinternet.com](mailto:rpinfeld@btinternet.com), or write to Mr Pinfold at 47 St Margarets Road, Ward End, Birmingham B8 2BB (phone 0121 327 2319, after 6.30 pm).

**Maria Veiga Garcia** is another member who needs to find good homes for an interesting Sherlock Holmes collection. Besides books and Society artefacts, they include a maquette of John Doubleday's statue of Holmes at Meiringen, and an archive of her late husband James Hayzen's superb photographs. Please contact me for a basic list.

Talks set for Westminster Libraries as part of **The Lost World Read 2009** are *Lost Worlds and Fantastic Beasts: Dinosaurs at the Time of Conan Doyle* by Dr Paul M Barrett (Marylebone Library, 21 May) and *Conan Doyle's Double-Coded Dinosaurs: The Lost World and the Art of Popular Fiction* by Nils Clausson (Mayfair Library, 15 June). Details are at [www.westminster.gov.uk/libraries/news](http://www.westminster.gov.uk/libraries/news).

Jon Lellenberg tells of yet another Sherlock Holmes film to be released next winter, this one starring, er, Tom & Jerry!

In May **Roger Llewellyn** takes David Stuart Davies's play *Sherlock Holmes – The Death and Life!* to: **Haymarket Theatre**, Basingstoke on 14 May ([www.anvilarts.org.uk](http://www.anvilarts.org.uk); 01256 844244), **Discovery Centre**, Winchester on 28 May ([www.hants.gov.uk](http://www.hants.gov.uk); 01962 873603), and *Sherlock Holmes – The Last Act!* to: **The Met**, Bury on 21 May ([www.themet.biz](http://www.themet.biz); 0161 761 2216), **Southport Arts Centre** on 22 May ([www.seftonarts.co.uk](http://www.seftonarts.co.uk) 01704 540011).

Arthur Conan Doyle is buried in the churchyard at Minstead in the New Forest. On 22 May, his 150th birthday, **Minstead Players** will stage 'a suitably atmospheric costumed play reading' in the church at 6.30pm. Afterwards, *The Trusty Servant* pub offers a 'Sherlock Holmes themed Victorian dinner'. Tickets for both are available from *The Trusty Servant*, Minstead, Lyndhurst SO43 7FY (023 8081 2137).

**Miles Jupp** investigates Carrutherses in *By Jove, Carruthers!* on BBC Radio 4, at 11.30am on 12 May. I'll feature briefly, on the subject of Bob Carruthers and 'The Solitary Cyclist'. **Thomas Toughill**, author of *Oscar Slater: The Immortal Case of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle* (Sutton Publishing, £10.99), reports that German radio will broadcast a three-hour special on 22-23 May for Conan Doyle's birthday. German listeners will be able to hear Mr Toughill talking about the Slater case.

[www.nashvillescholars.net](http://www.nashvillescholars.net) (**The Nashville Scholars of the Three Pipe Problem**) and [thestormypetrels.wordpress.com](http://thestormypetrels.wordpress.com) (**The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia**) are sites worth looking at.

**James Bree**, who died aged eighty-five on 1 December, had a long career as a character actor. In 1987 he made a notable impression as the Coroner in Granada's production of *The Empty House*, patronising Edward Hardwicke's Dr Watson and fawning on the aristocrats. **Natasha Richardson** came of an outstanding acting dynasty: granddaughter of Michael Redgrave, daughter of Vanessa Redgrave and Tony Richardson, niece of Lynne and Corin Redgrave. She achieved success on film and television, and especially on stage, most notably in New York. She died on 18 March, aged just forty-five, following a skiing accident. Her first major rôle on screen was as Violet Hunter in *The Copper Beeches* for Granada TV in 1985.

Periodicals received. *The Baker Street Journal*, Spring 2009 (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. 97 (**České společnost Sherlocka Holmese**, Aleš Kolodrubec, Milešovská 1, 130 00 Praha 3, Czech Republic). *The Camden House Journal*, March 2009 & April 2009 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, Debbie Tinsley, PO Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). *Canadian Holmes*, Lady Day (March) 2009 (**The Bootmakers of Toronto**, Chris Redmond, 523 Westfield Drive, Waterloo, ON, Canada N2T 2E1) [*\*Welcome back after too long a hiatus!\**]. *Communication*, no. 288 and no. 289 (**The Pleasant Places of Florida**, Wanda & Jeff Dow, 1737 Santa Anna Drive, Dunedin, FL 34698, USA). *The Formulary*, March 2009 (**The Friends of Dr Watson**, Nino Cirone, Highcroft Cottage, 14 Totteridge Common, Totteridge, London N20 8NL). *Ineffable Twaddle*, April 2009 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). *The Magic Door*, Spring 2009 (**The Friends of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection**, Doug Wrigglesworth, 16 Sunset Street, Holland Landing, Ontario, Canada L9N 1H4). *Mayday Mayday*, March 2009 & April 2009 (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardcarney Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). *The Passengers' Log*, 6 January 2009 (**The Sydney Passengers**, Rosane McNamara, 4/2a Merlin Street, Neutral Bay, NSW 2089, Australia). *The Petrel Flyer*, Jan/Feb 2009 and Spring 2009 (**The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia**, Len Haffenden, 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7P 3C6). *Prescott's Press*, March 2009 (**The Three Garridebs**, Warren Randall, 15 Fawn Lane West, South Setauket, NY 11720-1346, USA). *The School Report*, Spring 2009 (**The Priory Scholars**, Horace L Coates, 21 Butcombe Road, Leicester LE4 0FY). *The Serpentine Muse*, Spring 2009 (**The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes**, Evelyn Herzog, 301 Warren Ave, #203, Baltimore, MD 21203, USA).

And *Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press*, March 2009 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; [blau7103@comcast.net](mailto:blau7103@comcast.net)).

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