

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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Welcome to the 300th issue! Thanks to **Nicholas Briggs** and his colleagues at Big Finish (PO Box 3787, Maidenhead, Berkshire, SL6 3TF; <http://www.bigfinish.com/ranges/sherlock-holmes>) we can mark this anniversary with yet another prize competition. Two of you can win a copy of the third Big Finish Sherlock Holmes CD set, *Holmes and the Ripper* by Brian Clemens, with Mr Briggs himself as the great detective. (He had a very successful run in the same play a year ago at the Theatre Royal, Nottingham.) Just name two films in which Sherlock Holmes investigates the Ripper murders. Send answers to me by 1 March, and the two correct answers drawn from the hat will win the CDs. *Holmes and the Ripper* will be released in March, at £14.99.

The *Sherlock Holmes – The Death and Life* CDs were won by MC Black and Geoff Jeffery, who will receive them direct from Big Finish.

The first award presented at the **Baker Street Irregulars'** Annual Dinner on 15 January was a unique crystal bowl, bearing the images of Queen Victoria and Sherlock Holmes and a personal dedication to the recipient, our own ex-President and Honorary Member **Freda Howlett**, attending the BSI dinner for the first time. Wiggins awarded nine investitures: **Tom Cynkin** ('Lord Bellinger'), **Pj Doyle** ('Ettie Shafter'), **Sir Christopher Frayling** ('Vernet'), **Patricia Guy** ('Imperial Tokay'), **Laurie R King** ('The Red Circle'), **Sarah Montague** ('Violet Smith'), **Daniel Polvere** ('Holloway & Steele'), **Sally Sugarman** ('The Three Gables') and **Maria Carmen Veiga Hayzen** ('Isadora Klein'). There were no fewer than three Two-Shilling Awards: to **John Bergquist**, **Bob Coghill** and **Steven Doyle**. Editors' medals went to **Steven Rothman**, **Leslie Klinger**, **John Bergquist**, **Susan Dahlinger**, **Glen Miranker**, **Gianluca Salvatore** and (posthumously) **H Paul Jeffers**.

In my 1950s childhood, my first Holmes and Watson were **Carleton Hobbs and Norman Shelley** on BBC radio, a partnership that lasted for seventeen years, playing the detective and the doctor in all but four of the sixty stories – some of them two or three times. Hobbs's voice immediately indicates wisdom and an incisive mind; equally, Shelley's rich fruity tones tell of an educated, intelligent and utterly reliable friend. Today, perhaps, they appear just a touch staid, but vocally they set the standard by which I judge others. Now, sounding as fresh as when they were first broadcast, we have *The Carleton Hobbs Sherlock Holmes Collection*, a six-CD boxed set from BBC Audiobooks (St James House, The Square, Lower Bristol Road, Bath BA2 3BH; £30.00 – currently offered by www.bbcshop.com/Audio/icat/audio at just £18.00). Nicholas Utechin introduces each play – twelve of them, expertly scripted by Michael Hardwick (apart from *Black Peter* by Alan Wilson). These are not the introductions you may have heard on BBC Radio 7, by the way. If this superb set sells as well as it deserves to, I trust that more of Hobbs and Shelley will be released on CD!

There must be more biographical studies of Arthur Conan Doyle than of any other popular writer of his time – and by 'popular' I mean that people read his work because they want to, not because they have to. Besides fifteen or more biographies there are books devoted to his spiritualist mission, to his campaigns against injustice, and to specific periods of his life. His upbringing in Edinburgh, his years in Southsea, his connection with Devon have all merited volumes of more or less depth. Now, from the industrious **Alistair Duncan**, comes *The Norwood Author: Arthur Conan Doyle & the Norwood Years (1891-1894)* (MX Publishing, 335 Princess Park Manor, Royal Drive, London N11 3GX; £9.99/\$16.95/€14.99). Conan Doyle's time in South Norwood has been largely neglected by the major biographers, even though it was then that he became truly famous, thanks to *The Strand Magazine* and *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. He travelled extensively during those three years, but, as Mr Duncan has discovered,

he did throw himself into local affairs as well, quickly becoming active in the Upper Norwood Literary & Scientific Society and Norwood Cricket Club. He also, no less significantly, joined the Society for Psychical Research. Alistair Duncan is one of a distinguished little group whose work takes us just a little closer towards a complete portrait of the man who created Sherlock Holmes. He writes well, too. I'm delighted to recommend his book.

MX Publishing has two special offers for members of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London. You can buy all three of Alistair Duncan's books (*Eliminate the Impossible*, *Close to Holmes* and *The Norwood Author*) at a 10% discount on the publisher's price of £29.97 by going through the Society's website. And to celebrate the launch of *Rugby Football in the Nineteenth Century* by Bertram Fletcher Robinson (£14.99) on 16 February, the first fifty members who pre-order through the website will also receive a limited edition hardback of *Bertram Fletcher Robinson* signed by the author Paul R Spiring worth £18.99. Go to www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk and click on *Sherlock Holmes Society January Offer* and *Sherlock Holmes Society Movie Offer*.

Sherlock Holmes; The Painful Predicament of Alice Faulkner, written and illustrated by **Bret M Herholz** (Alterna Comics, www.alternacomics.com; \$11.99) is the best Holmesian graphic novel I've come across in a long time. Mr Herholz has very cleverly adapted William Gillette's famous play *Sherlock Holmes*, giving Mycroft Holmes a cameo, and, I think, introducing some dialogue from the 1939 film *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. The lettering within the speech balloons could have been better placed, and the dialogue should have been more thoroughly proof-read ('conscious' appears more than once in place of 'conscience'), but these are minor matters. What makes the book outstanding is the quality of the illustrations. The black and white line drawings, with lots of hatching and grey wash, are strikingly reminiscent of Edward Gorey's work. The thin figures with their suspicious sidelong glances add to the indefinable atmosphere of foreboding. At the end, I confess, I find myself wondering whether this Holmes and this Alice Faulkner, both disturbed and damaged creatures, could truly be happy together – and that, to me, indicates an unusual depth in a graphic novel. I'll just add that I now own an original drawing of Holmes and Alice confronted by Professor Moriarty, which I was very happy to purchase from Bret Herholz.

The Baker Street Journal Christmas Annual 2009 is called 'Did You Notice Nothing Curious About That Advertisement?' by **Peggy Perdue** (The Baker Street Irregulars, Michael H Kean, 3040 Sloat Road, Pebble Beach, CA 93953-2837, USA; www.bakerstreetjournal.com/; US \$11.00 postpaid; elsewhere \$12.00 postpaid). Ms Perdue, curator of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection at Toronto Public Library, is in an ideal position to survey the use of Holmes and Watson in advertising, which goes back at least to 1894 and gives every sign of continuing *ad infinitum*. Remembering the interpretation of Holmes in Guy Ritchie's film, I was amused by Conan Doyle's comment on an early proposal: 'The picture would never do. Holmes must preserve his dignity. He looks about five feet high, badly dressed, and with no brains or character, an actor out of a job.' Peggy Perdue's monograph is quite fascinating.

From that lively and intelligent group **The Sound of the Baskervilles** comes *Beaten's Christmas Annual 2009* (Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 98332-8981, USA; \$18.00 postpaid). As always, its 48 pages (cerlox-bound, which always sounds somehow appropriate) contain scholarship and entertainment in satisfying proportions, with articles on Moriarty's mathematical skill, Holmes's firearms, beekeeping and Victorian prisons, a decent pastiche concerning a missing diplomat, quizzes, puzzles and more. 'An Estate

Bequest Sheds New Light on an Old Friend' examines the background of the late Sam Fry's fascinating paper about Holmes's influence on twentieth century Arctic exploration. And the cover reproduces a beautiful oil painting by Gayle Holmes (yes, Holmes): it depicts iconic objects – violin, pipe, magnifying glass et al. and is called *Sherlock's*.

Bjarne Nielsen's *Sherlock Holmes Museet* (Egebjergvej 206, 4500 Nykøbing Sjælland, Denmark; sherlock@sherlockiana.dk) has published *A Study in Green*, a 36-page chapbook by **Michael Skov Lambek**. Inspired by a remark made by the late Richard Lancelyn Green, Mr Lambek draws a convincing parallel between Sherlock Holmes and Robin Hood as heroes in the archetypal mould. The booklet is in English, and costs 60 Kroner.

At 7.00pm on 5 February, at le Musée d'Histoire de la Médecine, at 12 rue de l'École de Médecine in Paris, Editions Baker Street (2 Rue Christine, 75006 Paris 06, France) will launch *L'homme Qui Était Sherlock Holmes: une biographie de Dr Joe Bell*, a French translation of the classic biography *Doctor Joe Bell: Model for Sherlock Holmes* by **Ely Liebow**. For details, contact@bakerstreet-editions.com.

On 15 February, Wordsworth Editions (8b East Street, Ware, Herts. SG12 9HJ) publish *Sherlock Holmes: The Shadow of the Rat & The Tangled Skein*, two very good novels by **David Stuart Davies** in one paperback volume at £2.99.

I hope shortly to review *Sherlock Holmes, Conan Doyle and The Bookman*, edited and annotated by **S E Dahlinger** and **Leslie Klingner** (Gasogene Books, Wessex Press, P.O. Box 68308, Indianapolis, IN 46268, USA; \$29.95) – all the Holmesian and Doylean material which appeared in *The Bookman* from 1895 to 1933.

Michael Sims invites suggestions for stories, preferably unfamiliar, to be included in a forthcoming anthology he's preparing for Bloomsbury – *The London Train: A Connoisseur's Collection of Victorian Detective Stories*. Contact him at letters@michaelsimsbooks.com.

Following the success of *Gaslight Grimoire* and *Gaslight Grotesque*, **J R Campbell** and **Charles Prepolec** are preparing a third anthology of 'uncanny stories of Sherlock Holmes', called *Gaslight Arcanum*, and they invite submissions, to be sent to charles@bakerstreetdozen.com. The closing date is 1 June.

The February issue of *The Sherlockian E-Times*, the catalogue-magazine of **Classic Specialties** (PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH, 45219, USA; sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com), which you'll find at www.sherlock-holmes.com/e_times10-2.htm, is a bit different from the previous ones, being largely devoted to comments made by subscribers about Guy Ritchie's film *Sherlock Holmes*.

Andrew Lycett, author of *Conan Doyle: The Man Who Created Sherlock Holmes*, will give the Lunchtime Lecture at the National Army Museum at 12.30pm on 22 April. The subject is 'Conan Doyle'. Admission is free. The Museum is in Royal Hospital Road, Chelsea. www.national-army-museum.ac.uk. (Thanks to Michael Harper.)

At the **Tivoli Theatre, Wimborne** (phone 01202 885566) on 11, 12 and 13 February, Wimborne Drama will present *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, dramatised by Clive Francis. Full details are online at <http://www.wimbornedrama.co.uk/>.

Arthur & George, a new play by David Edgar, from Julian Barnes' novel, will be produced at **Birmingham Repertory Theatre** (0121 236 4455, tickets@birmingham-rep.co.uk) from 19 March to 10 April.

Hans Zimmer's splendid score for Guy Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes* is available on CD (Sony Music, 9 Derry Street, London, W8 5HY). [**Mr Zimmer isn't the first to use a banjo as a lead instrument for a Holmes film. That was John Scott, in his score for A Study in Terror in 1965.**]

Robert Downey Jr won a Golden Globe Award for his portrayal of Sherlock Holmes – only the second actor to receive a major award for playing Holmes on film, the first being Christopher Plummer, who won a Genie Award for *Murder by Decree* in 1980. *Sherlock Holmes* has been Oscar-nominated for best art direction and best original score.

Nicolette Jones sends news of this year's *Sunday Times Oxford Literary Festival*. At 2.00pm on Sunday 21 March in Christ Church, Oxford, **Tim Pigott-Smith**, author of the Baker Street Mysteries, and **Andrew Lane**, author of the forthcoming 'Young Sherlock Holmes' novels, will discuss the detective's enduring appeal. Find details and book tickets at www.oxfordliteraryfestival.com.

The complete Japanese animated series *Sherlock Hound* is currently available from <http://hmv.com> at £17.99. Holmes, Watson and just about everyone else are cartoon dogs in stories that are occasionally recognisable as having a basis in the Canon. It sounds preposterous but is often very imaginative and charming.

Supermonko has released *Sherlock Holmes Quiz* app, which is now on the App Store at <http://get.supermonko.com/sherlockholmes>. It's 'a quiz of your detective knowledge' with 'four challenging levels'. You can also get to the app at <http://apps.supermonko.com/sherlock-holmes-iphone-app/>.

John Daw reports that **The Sporebook Project** (an organisation for the promotion of classical literature in electronic form, where a forum for Sir Arthur Conan Doyle/Sherlock Holmes is now available) is looking for an Honorary Editor to assist with the creation of a new Sporebook based on one of the stories from the Canon. Contact john@sporebook.org if you're interested. The Doyle/Holmes forum is at www.sporebook.org/forums. There is no charge for using this forum.

It's become a tradition in our Society to follow the serious business of the AGM with some light-hearted game-playing. At this year's meeting on Thursday 13 May the plan is to stage our own version of the BBC2 quiz *Eggheads*. (You may have seen the programme on 13 January, when our team went down fighting bravely.) The programme's rules will be strictly observed, except that there'll be only four Eggheads (Catherine Cooke, Roger Johnson, Guy Marriott and Heather Owen). The fifth, Nick Utechin, will be the questionmaster – and he will be strictly impartial. We need two teams of four members to challenge the Society's Eggheads. If you fancy your chances, please contact Nick at highfieldfarmhouse@yahoo.co.uk. Remember, there's no charge to attend the AGM unless you choose to dine.

Volunteers are sorting out the Society's quite extensive archives. If you have any objects or documents relating to the Society that you think should be (a) stored in proper conditions and (b) accessible to students and researchers, please contact me in the first instance.

Donal Donnelly, who died on 4 January aged seventy-eight, was probably best known for his performances in classic Irish theatre, but he had considerable success in other sorts of drama. In 1987 he played Dr Watson to Frank Langella's Holmes in a Broadway production of *Sherlock's Last Case* by Charles Marowitz.

Patrick Stewart, whose mighty career has included seven years as Captain Picard in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, was knighted in the New Year Honours. Two of the most interesting *Star Trek* episodes involved Picard in a holodeck simulacrum of Sherlock Holmes's world, with the android Data as Holmes.

Periodicals received. *The Camden House Journal*, November 2009. December 2009, January 2010 & February 2010 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, Debbie Tinsley, PO Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). *The Illustrious Clients News*, December 2009 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T Doyle, 9 Calumet Court, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). *Ineffable Twaddle*, January 2010 & February 2010 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). *Mayday Mayday*, January 2010 and *C-Extra* no. 2 (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardcarney Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). *Practice Notes*, December 2009 (**The Friends of Dr Watson**, Nino Cirone, Highcroft Cottage, 14 Totteridge Common, London N20 8NL). *Studies of the Nippon Sherlock Holmes Club*, 1 November 2009 (**The Sherlock Holmes Research Committee**, Mr Saburo Hiraga, 3-6-24 Uenohigashi, Toyonaka City, Osaka 560-0013, Japan). *The Scion*, Winter 2009/2010 (**The Musgraves**, Anne Jordan, Hallas Lodge, Greenside Lane, Cullingworth, Bradford BD13 5AP). *The Serpentine Muse*, Winter 2009 (**The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes**, Evelyn Herzog, 301 Warren Ave, #203, Baltimore, MD 21203, USA). *Sherlockiana*, Nr 4 2009 (**Sherlock Holmes Klubben i Danmark**, Bjarne Rother Jensen, Højbovang 24, 9200 Aalborg SV, Denmark).

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

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