

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

Roger Johnson, Mole End, 41 Sandford Road, Chelmsford CM2 6DE

e-mail: [rojerjohnson@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:rojerjohnson@yahoo.co.uk)

no. 302 12th April 2010

'From the start, *For Dummies* was a simple, yet powerful concept: Relate to the anxiety and frustration that people feel about technology by poking fun at it with books that are insightful and educational and make difficult material interesting and easy. Add a strong dose of personality, a dash of comic relief with entertaining cartoons — .' The range of subjects has expanded since 1991, and now we have *Sherlock Holmes for Dummies* by **Steven Doyle** and **David A Crowder** (John Wiley & Sons, The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester PO19 8SQ; £14.99). Mr Doyle, publisher of *The Baker Street Journal*, is a major player in our Great Game. Mr Crowder is 'the author or co-author of several *For Dummies* titles'; his brief was, presumably, to ensure that the product adhered to the house style. The book is full of information – mostly accurate, all enthusiastically presented – about Holmes, Watson and Conan Doyle, their world and the characters that inhabit it, dramatic adaptations, Sherlockian devotees, and the rest of the extraordinary phenomenon that we delight in. Perhaps too much is made of the Sherlock Holmes Museum at 239 Baker Street, whose owners appear to have fed Mr Doyle some dubious information. The '221B' on the door is not the address: it's permitted only because the proprietors registered a company called 221B. And it was they who put a blue plaque on the front of the house, in imitation of the real commemorative plaques erected by English Heritage. (See, e.g. 'Back to Baker Street' by Jean Upton, in *Baker Street Miscellanea*, Summer 1994.) That's a minor matter. The museum exists and is popular. *Sherlock Holmes for Dummies* is entertaining and informative, the product of a genuine and deep affection for its subject. The one really disappointing aspect of the book is that it's aimed entirely at the American reader. Only one non-American Holmes society is mentioned: the Sherlock Holmes Society of London, which gets just one page compared to the seven devoted to the Baker Street Irregulars – 'the premier Holmes society in the world,' we're told – and its scions. A twelve-page appendix lists only American societies. Nothing there for readers in the many countries outside the USA where the *Dummies* guides are distributed.

*The Strange Return of Sherlock Holmes* by **Barry Grant** (Severn House, 9-15 High Street, Sutton, Surrey SM1 1DF; £18.99) starts as a curiosity, quickly becomes an entertaining mystery, and concludes with a powerful revelation of deceit and inhumanity. Film-makers have imagined what might happen if Holmes were to be resuscitated in our time after having been cryogenically preserved. Barry Grant may be the first to write a novel with that premise, and he does it with great skill. James Wilson, looking for a quiet life after his experiences as a war correspondent in Afghanistan, is perhaps a little slow to realise that his new friend Cedric Coombes looks like Sherlock Holmes, and he's understandably reluctant to believe that Coombes actually is Sherlock Holmes – but believe it he does. The tale of the detective's apparent death while on a mission from King George to his cousin the Kaiser is a top-notch thriller in itself, but the main thread of the novel concerns Holmes and Wilson's first investigation together. A stranger came to Hay-on-Wye looking for a woman who doesn't exist. He is found dead, his throat cut, in the bathroom of an empty house. Nearby is a newly published book, *Abu Ghraib: Torture and Betrayal...* It's a fine detective story, and I'm impressed by the way the narrative parallels that of *a Study in Scarlet* without actually imitating it. James Wilson is likable, trustworthy and intelligent; that he comes to accept being addressed as 'Watson' is a tribute to his good nature. Holmes is, well – Holmes. Barry Grant promises more exploits of this engaging partnership, and I'm looking forward to reading them.

In *Sherlock Holmes and the Lyme Regis Horror* (FastPrint Publishing; £8.99) **David Ruffle** has taken on the challenge of writing a short novel in the style of Dr Watson. The story is exciting, and all in all he does

pretty well. It's very easy (I speak from experience) to be too stilted or florid or verbose. Mr Ruffle largely avoids the worst stylistic traps, though his Holmes and Watson are a bit too openly emotional, calling each other 'my dear friend'. The punctuation, alas, is decidedly sloppy; a comma is no substitute for a full stop or a semi-colon. Still, it didn't stop me enjoying the story, which, in essence, relocates the plot of a famous late Victorian thriller to the lovely Dorset resort of Lyme Regis. The development isn't identical, and the characters have different names, but if I mention a bloodless corpse, hypnotic seduction, and a nocturnal Transylvanian nobleman you'll get the idea. Mr Ruffle paints a vivid picture of Lyme and its harbour. The characters are distinct individuals: the charming landlady, the insufferable police inspector, Watson's friend the local doctor, and all the others. Six short stories, varying in length and mood, complete the book; 'Christmas with Holmes' is particularly appealing. *Sherlock Holmes and the Lyme Regis Horror* is available from [www.fast-print-net/store.php](http://www.fast-print-net/store.php), Amazon.co.uk and other outlets.

On 19 March, after a year of negotiation and simple hard work, **Gyles Brandreth** unveiled a City of Westminster green plaque at the Langham Hotel, commemorating the dinner given by J M Stoddart of *Lippincott's*, at which Oscar Wilde and Arthur Conan Doyle were each commissioned to write a story for the magazine. The result was *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *The Sign of the Four*. Gyles has also contributed a foreword to 'A Golden Day', in which **Nicholas Utechin** tells the story of that dinner and its outcome. The Society published two hundred copies of this lovely 28-page booklet as a souvenir of the unveiling. A limited number are available from Bob Ellis (13 Crofton Avenue, Orpington, Kent BR6 8DU) at £5.00 (UK), £5.50 (Europe), \$12.00/£6.00 (elsewhere). Prices include postage. Make cheques payable to The Sherlock Holmes Society of London.

New from Irregular Special Press ([www.crime4u.com/pressitdown.html](http://www.crime4u.com/pressitdown.html)) is *In the Dead of Winter: A Myrl Adler Norton Mystery* by **Abbey Pen Baker** (£8.50, €12.50 or \$18.50). You can pre-order *The Case of Sherlock Holmes' Secretary* by **Tony Harries** (Lulu Publishing, [www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com)) from the author at [rhinehart@sky.com](mailto:rhinehart@sky.com) for £8.00/\$12.00 (pay via PayPal). This is non-fiction, by the way. Mr Harries was employed as Holmes's secretary by Abbey National in 1989-90. Due in December is *The Sherlockian* by **Graham Moore** (Twelve, 3 Center Plaza, Boston, MA 02108, USA; \$24.99).

In June, to mark the Centenary of the death of Sir George Newnes, publisher of *The Strand Magazine*, MX Publishing (MX Publishing, 335 Princess Park Manor, Royal Drive, London N11 3GX) will launch an **Arthur Conan Doyle Collection**, comprising *Arthur Conan Doyle, Sherlock Holmes and Devon: A Complete Tour Guide & Companion* by Brian Pugh, Paul Spiring & Sadru Bhanji; Brian Pugh's *Chronology of the Life of Arthur Conan Doyle*; *Bertram Fletcher Robinson: A Footnote to 'The Hound of the Baskervilles'* by Messrs Pugh & Spiring; and *Aside Arthur Conan Doyle: Twenty Original Tales* by Fletcher Robinson. The full price will be £49.96. Members of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London can get a hefty £15.00 discount by ordering before mid June at [www.mxpublishing.co.uk/engine/shop/product/ACDPackage/Arthur+Conan+Doyle+Collection](http://www.mxpublishing.co.uk/engine/shop/product/ACDPackage/Arthur+Conan+Doyle+Collection). Type 'acdpack' at the shopping basket checkout. Members' orders will be sent out first.

**Pam Bennett** of Brentwood, Essex invites enquiries and offers for some Holmesian items, including the two-volume Doubleday *Complete Sherlock Holmes*, the BBC Radio Collection cassettes with Clive Merrison and Michael Williams, BBC postcard packs, and the 1993 commemorative stamps. Contact her at [pam\\_bennett@talktalk.com](mailto:pam_bennett@talktalk.com).

You'll find the March issue of *The Sherlockian E-Times*, the catalogue-magazine of **Classic Specialties** (PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH,

45219, USA; [sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com](mailto:sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com)), at [www.sherlock-holmes.com/e\\_times10-3.htm](http://www.sherlock-holmes.com/e_times10-3.htm). The April issue may be up by the time you read this.

Catherine Cooke sends warning that on 19 April the **Sherlock Holmes Collection** at Marylebone Library will move from the old library building into the Council House, and will be inaccessible for a while.

**Michael Procter** has devised a very elegant solution to the filing of journal, newspaper clippings and so forth. He even provides printable labels! See [www.michael-procter.com/SHLib.pdf](http://www.michael-procter.com/SHLib.pdf).

John Addy has discovered **W Clark Russell's** first novel, published anonymously in 1867. At <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/> he found a direct reference to *Life's Masquerade* in an interview published in the *Otago Witness*, New Zealand, 27 January 1888. In an on-line copy of the book at [www.archive.org/details/lifemasqueraden01lond](http://www.archive.org/details/lifemasqueraden01lond), he discovered that volume one carries a dedication to Russell's wife. *Life's Masquerade* is not listed in any bibliography of Clark Russell.

Last year Naxos AudioBooks released a fine unabridged reading by Greg Wise of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Now comes a quite superb recording of *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime, and Other Stories* by **Oscar Wilde** (2nd Floor, 40A High Street, Welwyn, Herts. AL6 9EQ; £16.99). The title story, published in the same year as *A Study in Scarlet*, is a delicious parody of crime fiction. 'The Canterville Ghost' combines high comedy and passages of remarkable beauty as the disreputable spectre is at last allowed to rest. Obsession and fraud are the twin themes of 'The Portrait of Mr W H'. The shorter stories – 'The Model Millionaire', 'The Sphinx Without a Secret' and 'The Birthday of the Infanta' – likewise vary, but all have an underlying profundity that belies the often effervescent tone. The excellent **David Timson** reads 'The Portrait of Mr W H', and his recital of some of Shakespeare's sonnets is a delightful bonus; 'The Birthday of the Infanta' is in the safe hands of **Anthony Donovan**; and all the rest is read by **Rupert Degas**, who makes every character unique, with just the right voice and accent. He has very quickly become one of my favourite narrators.

New from BBC Audiobooks (St James House, The Square, Lower Bristol Road, Bath BA2 3BH) is *The Further Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, volume 4*, written by **Bert Coules** and starring **Clive Merrison** and **Andrew Sachs**. The four-CD set contains *The Eyes of Horus* and *The Remarkable Performance of Mr Frederick Merriew* from the third Radio 4 series, plus last week's two-part serial *The Marlborough Point Mystery*, which takes Holmes and Watson to the Kent coast, at the request of Mycroft Holmes, to investigate a suicide and a murder – both with the same victim. They uncover exploitation of the innocent and corruption in high places. Bert Coules may just be the best radio dramatist of our time, and he's well served by producer and cast.

There are worthwhile articles on-line at [www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/Sherlock-Holmes-London.html](http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/Sherlock-Holmes-London.html), [vigilantcitizen.com/?p=3230](http://vigilantcitizen.com/?p=3230) and [www.publishersweekly.com/article/CA6715287.html?q=sherlock+holmes](http://www.publishersweekly.com/article/CA6715287.html?q=sherlock+holmes).

The website of **The Crew of the SS May Day** is up and running at [www.thessmayday.org.uk](http://www.thessmayday.org.uk). The Belfast-based Crew is, I think, the only Sherlock Holmes society in Ireland, and one of the liveliest and most interesting in the British Isles.

Olaf Maurer of **221b Deutscher Sherlock Holmes Club** ([info@221b-DSHC.de](mailto:info@221b-DSHC.de)) tells me that the third issue of *Sherlock Holmes Magazin* is out. As you'll see at [www.sherlock-holmes-magazin.de](http://www.sherlock-holmes-magazin.de), it looks superb.

The Asylum's production *Sherlock Holmes*, starring **Ben Syder** and **Gareth David-Lloyd** as Holmes and Watson, will be released on DVD in the UK by Revolver Entertainment on 26 April, with a new cover design echoing that for Guy Ritchie's film (due 17 May). You can order it now on Amazon.co.uk for just £4.99.

*Sherlock Meets His Violin* at the **Usher Hall** in Edinburgh on 15 May is a concert to celebrate Arthur Conan Doyle's birthday and to raise funds for the SOS Children's Haiti Orphan Appeal. The highly acclaimed **Ani Batikian** will play the unique *Sherlock* violin (made by Steve Burnett from a tree in the grounds of Liberton Bank House, Conan Doyle's only surviving childhood home) in a programme comprising Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* and a selection of shorter pieces, including the newly composed 'Elsie and Frances' by James Clapperton, interspersed with dramatic excerpts by Mike Maran. Tickets for what promises to be a fascinating event are available by phone on 0131 228 1155 or on-line at [www.usherhall.co.uk/concerts/?d=1272668400&cat](http://www.usherhall.co.uk/concerts/?d=1272668400&cat).

On 17 May **Surgeons' Hall** in Edinburgh will host a children's workshop: *Museum Detectives @ Surgeons' Hall: From Sherlock to CSI*. On 22 May there'll be *A Musical Evening at Surgeons' Hall in Celebration of the Life of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*, introduced by Dr Alan Mackaill, author of *Conan Doyle and Joseph Bell: The Real Sherlock Holmes*. Details are at [www.museum.rcsed.ac.uk](http://www.museum.rcsed.ac.uk), or phone 0131 527 1649.

**Liberton Bank House**, now a 'second chance' school run by the Dunedin Trust, is one of sixteen properties entered for the inaugural Scottish Civic Trust My Place Awards, set up to recognise 'good local design and conservation'.

From 22 April to 8 May, David Edgar's well-reviewed play *Arthur and George*, based on Julian Barnes's novel about the case of George Edalji, will be at the **Nottingham Playhouse** (phone 0115 914 9419; website [www.nottinghamplayhouse.co.uk/](http://www.nottinghamplayhouse.co.uk/)).

On 13 May, **Robert Crichton** will read *A Study in Scarlet* at **Groundlings Theatre** in Portsmouth (to be precise, The Old Beneficial School, 42 Kent Street, Portsea, Hants. PO1 3BT; phone 02392 737370). He'll follow it with *The Sign of Four* on 27 May, and the twelve adventures in four instalments on 3 June, 17 June, 8 July and 22 July.

Does anyone have details of *Eight Tales and Reminiscences of Sherlock Holmes*, a 1950s radio series broadcast in Australia? I'm at a loss here.

At [www.petitiononline.com/JBBAFTA2/](http://www.petitiononline.com/JBBAFTA2/) you can add your name, if you wish, to a petition urging the British Academy of Film & Television Arts to make a posthumous award to **Jeremy Brett**.

If you've listened to the dramatisations recorded by the Old Court Radio Theatre Company and posted on our Society's website at [www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk](http://www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk), you'll recognise the name of **Dennis Rookard**, whose expertise as producer and technician gave them a professional polish. Someone else must work the magic for future productions, alas, because Dennis died on 2 March aged sixty-eight. He was a radio man through-and-through. Hosipro, the name under which he made and provided original drama for hospital radio throughout the world, was just one of his many, mostly unpaid, activities. He loved Sherlock Holmes and for several years in the 1980s was a member of our Society. I miss him.

**Corin Redgrave**, son of Michael Redgrave and Rachel Kempson, brother of Vanessa and Lynn Redgrave, was himself an outstanding actor and director, though he's likely to be remembered at least as much for his socialist campaigning. In 1968 he gave a notable performance as Percy Phelps in the BBC TV production of *The Naval Treaty*, with Dennis Price as Lord Holdhurst. He died on 6 April, aged seventy.

I've learned recently of the passing of three of our members: **Raymond Noel Faulkner**, **Laurence Evans** and **Colin Schultz**.

Periodicals received. *The Baker Street Bugle*, 1 November 2009, 1 January 2010 & 1 March 2010 (**The Deerstalkers of Welshpool**, Roy Upton-Holder, Baskerville, 146 Little Henfaes Drive, Welshpool, Powys SY21 7BA). *The Camden House Journal*, March 2010 & April 2010 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, Debbie Tinsley, PO Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). *Communication*, no. 297 (**The Pleasant Places of Florida**, Wanda & Jeff Dow, 1737 Santa Anna Drive, Dunedin, FL 34698, USA). *The Formulary*, March 2010 (**The Friends of Dr Watson**, Nino Cirone, Highcroft Cottage, 14 Totteridge Common, Totteridge, London N20 8NL). *The Illustrious Clients News*, March 2010 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T Doyle, 9 Calumet Court, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). *Ineffable Twaddle*, April 2010 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). *Ironmongers Daily Echo and Franco-Midland Branches Advertiser*, January 1909 & February 1909 [*\*sic\**] (**La Société Sherlock Holmes de France**, Thierry Saint-Joanis, 15 rue Grande, 03370 Saint-Sauvier, France). *Mayday Mayday*, March 2010 & April 2010 (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardcarney Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). *Sherlockiana*, Nr 1 2010 (**Sherlock Holmes Klubben i Danmark**, Bjarne Rother Jensen, Højbovangens 24, 9200 Aalborg SV, Denmark).

And *Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press*, March 2010 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; [blau7103@comcast.net](mailto:blau7103@comcast.net)).

Roger Johnson