

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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no. 310 28 February 2011

A memorial service for our much-missed honorary member **Bernard Davies** will be held at the church of St Lawrence Jewry, Guildhall Yard, London EC2V 5AA, on the afternoon of Thursday 31 March, followed by refreshments in the Guildhall. It's an appropriate location, as Bernard was a Freeman of the City of London. Please check the Society's website at www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk for details, or contact Guy Marriott at guvm144@googlemail.com (phone 07770 667603). And please let Guy know if you intend to come.

At the Bafta film awards on 13 February, **Christopher Lee** was made a Fellow of the British Academy of Film & Television Arts. In Sir Christopher's immensely varied career he has played Sherlock Holmes, Mycroft Holmes and Sir Henry Baskerville.

A hundred years ago, as if you needed reminding, **Ronald A Knox** delivered a paper to the Gryphon Club at Trinity College, Oxford. That paper, a parody of what had become known as the Higher Criticism of the Bible – which he called the 'minimising interpretations' of doctrine – applied the same sort of nit-picking critical methods to the chronicles of Sherlock Holmes. Whether or not that approach was appropriate to the Bible, it's entirely suited to Sherlock Holmes, and Knox's essay, subsequently published under the title 'Studies in the Literature of Sherlock Holmes', is regarded by many as the cornerstone of our game. Its satirical origins are evident in the references to fictitious scholars named Sauwosh, Backnecke, Piff-Pouff and the like, and there's at least one glaring error, concerning Gilchrist's pencil, but the essay's lively humour doesn't detract from its importance. Now it's been published, along with four more relevant pieces, in a beautiful 130-page hardback book, *Ronald Knox and Sherlock Holmes: The Origin of Sherlockian Studies*, edited, annotated and introduced by Michael J Crowe (Gasogene Books, Wessex Press, PO Box 68308, Indianapolis, IN 46268, USA; www.wessexpress.com; \$32.95). In 'The Mathematics of Mrs Watson' Knox considers the problematic dating of *The Sign of Four*, and in 'The Mystery of Mycroft' he propounds a shocking theory about Holmes major. His introduction to *The Best Detective Stories of 1928* is interesting and entertaining but only marginally Sherlockian. The final piece, 'The Adventure of the First Class Carriage', is an excellent pastiche – the only one, I think, to have been published in *The Strand Magazine*, where it appeared in February 1947. Gasogene Books and Professor Crowe have done us a great service with this little book.

The name of **Léo Sauvage** was, I confess, unfamiliar to me, though he received the investiture of 'Victor Savage', BSI in 1960 and contributed four pieces to *The Baker Street Journal*. His *magnum opus* was unpublished and apparently unfinished at the time of his death in 1988, and unpublished it remained until now. Julie McKuras and Susan Vizoskie, with assistance from Sauvage's children, have edited, annotated and introduced the eight extant chapters of *Sherlockian Heresies*, adding three brief pieces about the Sherlockian phenomenon (Gasogene Books; \$19.95). As his title suggests, Léo Sauvage expected his opinions to be controversial. He refuses to regard the Holmes stories as in any way sacred, rejecting the term 'the Canon' in favour of 'the Conan', but his criticisms are not mere carping. As George Fletcher has pointed out, 'he saves his heavy guns for substantive issues'. He condemns Holmes's cavalier attitude to security at 221B, for instance, and the fact that the detective persistently endangers his closest associates. He devotes a whole chapter to demolishing the misconception that the address 221B indicates just one floor within Mrs Hudson's house. He exposes numerous flaws in Holmes's methods and in Watson's reports, and when it comes to 'The Final Problem' and 'The Empty House' he is scathing. This sounds completely negative, but it isn't, because Sauvage writes superbly and with obvious deep affection. We learn too, in the editors' introduction, that the man himself was as remarkable as his subject. *Sherlockian Heresies*, incomplete as it is, is one of the great Holmesian commentaries.

The publication programme of the Baker Street Irregulars includes the International Series and the Manuscript Series. The former, which aims 'to bring the finest foreign language Sherlockian scholarship to English-speaking readers' – it's fascinating to discover the effect that the Holmesian phenomenon has on cultures beyond the anglophone – has just reached its fourth volume, *Italy and Sherlock Holmes* edited by **Enrico Solito** and **Gianluca Salvatori** (The Baker Street Irregulars, Michael H Kean, 3040 Sloat Road, Pebble Beach, CA 93953-2837, USA; www.bakerstreetjournal.com; \$39.95 plus postage). The editors' brief introduction is complemented by 'Notes on the Italian Sherlockscape', a revised version of a paper presented at the 2009 conference *Arthur Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes: Their Cultural Afterlives* at Hull University, which neatly and comprehensively summarises the situation. Unlike their Scandinavian and Japanese counterparts, Italian Sherlockians have had little impact on scholarship in the English-speaking world. A pity, because the essays in this collection show that they have a good deal to offer. I'm particularly impressed by Enrico Solito's tracing of Holmes's route from Meiringen to Florence, by Luca Martinelli's identification of Cardinal Tosca, by Roberto Pirani's examination of the Naval Treaty, by Ivo Lombardo's piece on fingerprints, and by Mr Solito's identification of 'Carina'. My one reservation is that the translation often reads rather clumsily, but that, after all, is a minor matter.

Bohemian Souls: A Facsimile of the Original Manuscript of 'A Scandal in Bohemia' edited and introduced by **Otto Penzler** (\$35.00 plus postage) brings the BSI Manuscript Series up to seven. Not all of the original Sherlock Holmes manuscripts still exist, of course, and most of us will never get the chance to examine the survivors in person, so publications like this are especially important. Randall Stock describes the MS, which belongs to the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin, and recounts the history of this, the story that really brought Holmes to the attention of the public. Philip Bergem has transcribed and annotated the manuscript, which was originally entitled 'A Scandal of Bohemia'. Only twenty-three of the thirty pages are in Conan Doyle's hand; the writer of the other seven is still unidentified. The story poses several problems, such as doubtful dates, an apparently illegal wedding, and the very nature of Irene Adler as a person and as a singer. Essays by John Linsenmeyer, Andrew Jay Peck, Ray Betzner, Curtis Armstrong, Michael H Kean, Julia Rosenblatt and Donald Pollock tackle these and other enigmas, and the cover artist, Rikki Niehaus, writes briefly about the development of the design. Long may the BSI Manuscript Series continue!

Rikki Niehaus has also provided admirable illustrations for *Murder in the Vatican: The Church Mysteries of Sherlock Holmes* by **Ann Margaret Lewis** (Gasogene Books; \$18.95), a very attractive 160-page paperback, in which Dr Watson recounts three of Holmes's hitherto unchronicled investigations: 'The Death of Cardinal Tosca', 'The Vatican Cameos' and 'The Second Coptic Patriarch'. The stories are clever and entertainingly told, in an acceptable imitation of the Watson style. The intrusion of historical personages into the world of Sherlock Holmes is always a risky move, but in at least two of these investigations it can hardly be avoided, since Watson has already told us of the Pope's involvement – and Ms Lewis writes with authority of the Papacy of Leo XIII. A bonus is the presence in the second and third stories of a yet more familiar figure, one Father Brown.

The early life of Sherlock Holmes has been much speculated upon, at least since Gerald Frow's fine 1982 television serial *Young Sherlock: The Mystery of the Manor House*. Most recently we've had the second book in Andrew Lane's exciting *Young Sherlock Holmes* series, and now comes *The Crack in the Lens* by **Darlene A Cypser** (Foolscap & Quill, PO Box 1018, Morrison, CO 80465-1018, USA; \$14.95), which, like all the good ones, tells an engrossing story of the boy Holmes and at the same time explores the reasons why the man Holmes turned out as he did – a

brilliant, unconventional, and apparently emotionless righter of wrongs. In this account Mycroft, Sherrinford and Sherlock are the sons of Squire Siger Holmes of Mycroft Manor in Yorkshire, where Sherlock is educated by a private tutor, Professor James Moriarty. These inventions of William Baring-Gould have become far more influential in America than they should be, but they make a colourful and appropriately atmospheric basis for a tale that seems to owe as much to Emily Brontë as to Arthur Conan Doyle. Ms Cypser plans a further three novels, taking the young Holmes through his years at university and his career as an actor to his early days as a consulting detective. [*Confusingly, *The Crack in the Lens* is also the title of Steve Hockensmith's fourth 'Holmes on the Range' mystery, featuring Otto Amlingmeyer and his brother Gustav – known as *Big Red and Old Red*.*]

Fewer people have considered the early life of John H Watson in any depth. **Kieran McMullen**, author of *Watson's Afghan Adventure* (MX Publishing, 335 Princess Park Manor, Royal Drive, London N11 3GX; www.mxpublishing.co.uk and www.mxpublishing.com; £9.99 / €12.99 / \$16.95) is a former professional soldier and a specialist in American military history – an appropriate person to tell of Watson's experiences as an army surgeon. A confrontation with the CO leads to his being, as he said later, removed from the Fighting Fifth and sent to join the Berkshires, who have an appointment at Maiwand. But Watson and a couple of fellow-officers have set themselves additional task: to search for the lost treasure of the Armenian Catholic Church. Catholicism is essential to the Watson of Mr McMullen's story, though Conan Doyle's Watson gives no indication of any particular religious faith. The novel could do with better proof-reading, but it's exciting, and full of authentic military detail.

Sherlock Holmes's Tibetan Adventure by **John F Rice** (Robert Hale Ltd, Clerkenwell House, Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0HT; £18.99) takes us further into Asia. As with his childhood, several writers have found that Holmes's *wanderjahre* offers great scope for combining imagination and research. In Mr Rice's novel, Holmes's journey to Tibet has both a personal and an official purpose. He seeks enlightenment; the British government wishes to ensure Tibet's independence from China. Once smuggled into Lhasa, the detective is called upon to recover priceless items stolen from the Dalai Lama – and to foil an attempted assassination. The account of the country and its society is entirely convincing, the detail always illuminating the narrative, never obscuring it. Mr Rice writes well, and the book is very handsomely presented.

AudioGO, which used to be BBC Audiobooks, has just released a splendid boxed set: *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* read by **Derek Jacobi** (AudioGO Ltd, St James House, The Square, Lower Bristol Road, Bath BA2 3BH). Whether you accept that the reading is, as claimed, 'complete and unabridged' depends on whether you place 'The Cardboard Box' here or in *His Last Bow*. What we have are the usual eleven stories on eight CDs, with a running time of just over nine hours. Sir Derek subtly but unmistakably defines each character, and his timing is superb. This production exudes class. Do I really need to say any more? At the moment prices vary widely, the cheapest being Amazon's £10.16 – an outstanding bargain!

More recent and forthcoming books. *Sherlock Holmes' Guide to Life: Lessons from the World's Smartest Detective* by **Sir Arthur Conan Doyle** (Vince Emery Productions, PO Box 460279, San Francisco, CA 94146, USA; £10.99). *Sir Arthur Conan Doyle* by **Michael Dirda** (Princeton University Press, 6 Oxford Street, Woodstock, Oxfordshire, OX20 1TW; £13.95). *Other People's Books: Association Copies and the Stories They Tell* by **The Caxton Club** (Oak Knoll, 310 Delaware Street, New Castle, DE 19720, USA; \$75.00). *Spirit on the Water: Extraordinary Cricket Tours* by **Mike Harfield** (Loose Chippings Books, The Paddocks, Back Ends, Chipping Campden, Gloucestershire, GL55 6AU; www.loosechippings.org; 15 March; £12.99 hardback, £8.99 paperback, £8.99 e-book). *Sherlock Holmes: The Crossovers Casebook* edited by **Howard Hopkins** (Moonstone Books, www.moonstonebooks.com; 19 July; £10.47). *The Baskerville Legacy* by **John O'Connell** (Short Books, 3A Exmouth House, Pine Street, London EC1R 0JH; 1 September; £12.99).

The January issue of *The Sherlockian E-Times*, the catalogue-magazine of **Classic Specialties** (PO Box 19058, Cincinnati, OH, 45219, USA) is at www.sherlock-holmes.com/e_times11-2.htm. Classic Specialty's website is at sherlock@sherlock-holmes.com.

At 2.00pm on 26 March, as one of the 'Lost Hour' events marking the start of British Summer Time, a new murder mystery play, *The Prima Donna's Last Aria*, will be performed at John Pounds Corner, Queen

Street, Portsmouth. The play, inspired by the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection (Lancelyn Green Bequest) was written by the Conan Doyle Projects Officer, **Dr Fiona-Jane Brown**. Details are at www.portsmouth.eu/learning/20159.html – or contact Laura Weston at 023 9283 4184; laura.weston@portsmouthcc.gov.uk.

The Ha Ha Boys have been described as 'Monty Python meets the Chuckle Brothers on acid'. Their 'elementary comedy thriller' *Ha Ha Holmes! The Beast of the Blisterilles* will be at the Warehouse Theatre, 62 Dingwall Road, Croydon CR0 2NF (020 8680 4060) from 11 March to 3 April before touring until 8 May. The itinerary is posted at <http://jamiewilsonproductions.com/current-productions/ha-ha-holmes/ha-ha-holmes-tour-2011/>.

Arthur Conan Doyle and **Harry Houdini** were friends for several years. Now comes news that two feature films, *Voices from the Dead* and *edge of the Unknown*, and a television series, *Among the Spirits*, are planned, all featuring the two as a detective partnership – and each project was conceived independently, with no knowledge of the others.

The Society will make another trip to Switzerland next year. Prospective pilgrims might wish to contact Ian Hartley, a veteran of (I think) two Swiss trips in the 1980s, who has two leather suitcases which someone may like to use. Please drop Ian a line if you're interested. His address is 18A York Road, Harrogate HG1 2QL. And if you fancy visiting Meiringen on your own, take a look at www.theswissexperience.co.uk.

The tenth annual **Victorian Cricket Match** against the P G Wodehouse Society will be held at 11.30am on Sunday 19 June at West Wycombe Cricket Club, whose ground is one of the loveliest anywhere. Members and their guests should bring their own picnics and costume is very much welcomed. This is an excellent social occasion and free of charge. Do please come and give our players your support.

On Sunday 3 July the Society will play croquet at Pince's Gardens, Exeter, against **The Poor Folk Upon the Moors** for possession of the Henry Drew memorial cups. The Society's team will once again be captained by Charles Miller. The cost of this event, to include lunch, tea and green fees, is £14.00 per person. Please send cheques, payable to The Poor Folk Upon the Moors, to Judy Marshall, The Mill House, Crazelowman, Tiverton, Devon EX16 7DG.

Michael Meer has set up a website for **The Reichenbach Irregulars** at www.221b.ch. Click on 'Meiringen' for an interactive Google map. Resa Haile (413 S Washington Street, Janesville, WI 53548, USA) advises me that **The Original Tree Worshipers of Rock County** also have an internet presence, at <http://originaltreeworshippersrc.blogspot.com/>.

John Barry, Britain's most successful film composer, died on 30 January aged seventy-seven. He won five Oscars, though not for any of the eleven James Bond films he scored. His music for Anthony Harvey's 1971 comedy *They Might Be Giants* is excellent – as is the film. **Alfred Burke**, fondly remembered as Frank Marker in the 1965-1975 television series *Public Eye*, was an actor of great versatility and sincerity in a career that spanned nearly seventy years. In 1952 he played the lead in William Gillette's *Sherlock Holmes* at the Birmingham Rep, with Paul Daneman as Watson. He died on 16 February, just short of his ninety-third birthday. **Nicholas Courtney**, who died on 22 February aged eighty-one, was loved and respected as Brigadier Alistair Lethbridge-Stewart, the longest-serving co-star in *Doctor Who*. In 1981 he played Inspector Lestrade in *Sherlock Holmes vs Dracula* on BBC Radio 4, to John Moffatt's Holmes.

Randall Stock points out that the subscriptions address for **The Baker Street Journal** is now PO Box 583, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA.

Periodicals received. **The Cri Bar Crier**, February 2011 (**The Criterion Bar Association**, Susan Z Diamond, 16W603 3rd Avenue, Bensenville, IL 60106-2327, USA). **The Illustrious Clients News**, February 2011 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T Doyle, 9 Calumet Court, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). **Ineffable Twaddle**, March 2011 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). **Mayday Mayday**, February 2011 (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardcan Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). **The School Report**, Spring 2011 (**The Priory Scholars**, Horace L Coates, 21 Butcombe Road, Leicester LE4 0FY).

And **Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press**, January 2011 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; blau7103@comcast.net).

Roger Johnson