At the British Academy of Film & Television Arts’ TV awards last week, Sherlock won the Bafta for Best Drama Series, and Martin Freeman won for Best Supporting Actor. Benedict Cumberbatch, Matt Smith and Jim Broadbent were beaten to the Best Actor award by Daniel Rigby, who played Eric Morecambe in Eric & Ernie. The three films in the second series of Sherlock will be A Scandal In Belgravia (written by Steven Moffat), The Hounds Of Baskerville (Mark Gatiss) and The Reichenbach Fall (Stephen Thompson).


At the same event, Nicholas Utechin launched The Best of The Sherlock Holmes Journal, Volume Two (UK £25.00; Europe £27.00; elsewhere £30.00/US$60.00 – prices include postage). The 316 pages contain a wonderful variety of scholarship, reviews, Society reports, tributes and whimsy, all chosen by Nick from the years 1969 to 1990. There’s much in this lovely hardback that’s enlightening, some that’s essential, and some that simply entertaining. Pamela Bruxner has contributed an enthusiastic foreword, and I’m happy to give the book an enthusiastic recommendation. Whether or not you have Volume One, you will want Volume Two! It’s available through the website at www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk, or from Bob Ellis at 13 Crofton Avenue, Orpington, Kent BR6 8DU.

William Gillette last played Sherlock Holmes on stage in 1932. The silent film of his play is long since lost, like his two performances on American radio. Only one short scene survives in a recording. But Helen Hayes spoke for many when she said, ‘William Gillette is the only real Sherlock Holmes for me, or for anyone else who ever saw him.’ Now we have William Gillette: America’s Sherlock Holmes by Henry Zecher (Xlibris, 1663 Liberty Drive, Suite 200, Bloomingom, IN 47403, USA; £23.00 hardback; £14.00 paperback). Gillette was ‘one of the modern theatre’s pioneering dramatists, one of its most majestic actors and one of its most fascinating personalities’, and his theory of ‘the illusion of the first time’ led to a fundamental change in acting styles. Mr Zecher’s fourteen years’ research has uncovered no scandal, no sensation, just the fascinating life of a brilliant, chivalrous, witty gentleman, and he’s done Gillette proud.

A few years ago an essay in the SHJ, ‘Time Lines and the Trust’ by John E Weber, identified both place and time of ‘The Musgrave Ritual’. In Under the Darkling Sky: A Chrono-Geographic Odyssey through the Holmesian Canon (The Battered Silicon Dispatch Box, PO Box 50, RR #4, Eugenia, Ontario, Canada N0C 1E0; www.batteredbox.com/index.html; Cdn$40.00) Mr Weber applies the same meticulous research, rigorous logic and sound common sense to the entire Canon. He is the first, I think, to give equal emphasis to both chronology and geography in all sixty stories. He’s familiar with every important commentary, and happily accepts a predecessor’s conclusion if it seems right. Moreover he explains why he agrees or disagrees, and his standards are high. Under the Darkling Sky is an outstanding work of Holmesian scholarship.

Michael Duke, author of Victorian Holmes (The Battered Silicon Dispatch Box; Cdn$24.00), heads the Sherlock Holmes Society of Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. Here are fifty articles, none longer than eleven pages, and some much shorter. Often an important point can be effectively made with conciseness as well as precision. If the book has a theme, says Dr Duke, ‘it may be that of considering the unconsidered people in the stories’. Some, naturally, are Australian, but, for instance, Tonga, Beryl Stapleton, Mrs Godfrey Staunton, Steve Dixie and Mrs Josiah Amberley are all appraised, intelligently and sympathetically. The essays also cover topics such as Gypsies, first aid, the Dacre Hotel, leprosy and chess. Victorian Holmes is literate, readable and full of stimulating insights.

Solar Pons knows that he is not Sherlock Holmes, and he knows that we know it, but his exploits capture the essence of Holmes better than almost any direct pastiche. The Dragnet Solar Pons et al. by August W Derleth. (The Battered Silicon Dispatch Box; Cdn$25.00) may be the last collection of uncollected material about ‘the Sherlock Holmes of Praed Street’. Here are the texts of the first five tales as they appeared in The Dragnet Magazine or Detective Trails in 1929-30, before the market collapsed in the aftermath of the Wall Street crash, plus original versions of six more written in that same period. It’s fascinating to compare these texts with the revised versions in the series that began publication in 1945 with In Re: Sherlock Holmes – The Adventures of Solar Pons. Mark Wardecker’s numerous perceptive annotations are a real bonus.

David Hammer, who has written much excellent material, says that Realms of Conjecture (The Battered Silicon Dispatch Box; Cdn$20.00) is his final Holmesian book, but in truth there’s little about Holmes in its 146 pages. Here are anecdotes, reminiscences, accounts of psychic experiences, memories of Michael Harrison, some light verse, a thought-provoking mystery novella… But what lingers, sadly, is the impression of bitterness at the perceived sorry condition of the BSI, and ‘sadness at the state of Sherlockian scholarship’. I’m in no position to comment on that first point, but the latter complaint, at least, seems to me wilfully blind.

Also from The Battered Silicon Dispatch Box: G K Chesterton on Detective Fiction: Everything the ‘Father of the Whodunit’ Wrote on the Mystery Story edited by John Peterston (Cdn$30.00). Most of what GK Chesterton wrote is worth reading, and this collection is very welcome in the century year of the first book about the immortal Father Brown. Another 101 Sherlock Holmes Puzzles: Crosswords & Acrostics by Franklin Sakensa (Cdn$30.00) containing some pretty fiendish puzzles.

The Sherlock Holmes novels of Larry Millett, though well regarded in America, are little known in Britain. I rather hope that changes, now that they’re being reissued by the University of Minnesota Press (111 Third Avenue South, Suite 290, Minneapolis, MN 55401-2520, USA), because Mr Millett writes well, and he writes of what he knows – not London but the Twin Cities of Minneapolis-St Paul. The latest book is called The Magic Bullet: A Locked Room Mystery featuring Shadwell Raffles and Sherlock Holmes (hardback, $24.95), but Holmes has only a minor role. The principal character is the detective-turned-salonkeeper, who first appeared in the second novel, Sherlock Holmes and the Ice Palace Murders – newly republished in paperback at $14.95, along with the first, Sherlock Holmes and the Red Demon. Raffles is an engaging character, but all of them are vivid and memorable, and the picture Mr Millett gives of St Paul in 1917 is fascinating. The mysterious murder of a tycoon, alone in his fortified penthouse at the top of the city’s tallest building, is a real cracker – and it’s a nice touch to name one of the suspects J D Carr.

Vithal Rajan takes Holmes even further from London, but in the opposite direction, in his new novel The Year of High Treason (Rupa Publications India Pvt Ltd, 7/16 Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi 110 002, India; US$10.00 from www.ruppublications.com/client/Book/THE-YEAR-OF-HIGH-TREASON.aspx). Holmes and Watson are sent by Winston Churchill to protect King George V at his Coronation Durbar in Delhi, and if Dr Rajan is to be believed, the King needs protection. The Imperial Crown of India must surely be an irresistible temptation to A J Raffles and Arsène Lupin. Mikhail Strogoff is there on behalf of the Tsar, but Dr Fu Manchu has his own agenda, while Lord Greystoke has quite a different one. Other notable persons, historical and fantastical, play their part, though their aims may not be quite what we expect. The complacent splendour of the Durbah, like the humour of the novel, is muted rather for us because we are aware of the impending war, which will signal the
to be in any collection (public or private) in Australia. It is from the collection of Dr John Loder, retired Principal Research Scientist with the CSIRO. **Randall Stock** also keeps a list of all confirmed existing copies of *Beeton’s* 1887 and this is a new copy to him (the count now is 32 copies).’ See [www.bestofsherlock.com/ref/australia-2011-beetons.htm](http://www.bestofsherlock.com/ref/australia-2011-beetons.htm).

Brian Scrivener reports: ‘The Langham Hotel is celebrating its 146th anniversary on 10 June with a *Wonderland Tea for just £p* – the equivalent to 1/6d, which is what it would have cost for afternoon tea when the hotel opened in 1865. Apply by Tuesday 31 May at [www.palm-court.co.uk/1865/](http://www.palm-court.co.uk/1865/). The anniversary tea will be served at 11.30 only.’

At Essex Police Museum, at 7.30 pm on 2 June, ex-Inspector *Martyr Lockwood* will speak about Victorian policing in *A Policeman’s Lot*. Tickets cost £3 per person and include light refreshments. To book, phone Becky Wash on 01245 457150, or email museum@essex.pmn.police.uk. Details are at [www.essex.police.uk/museum](http://www.essex.police.uk/museum).

The same evening there’s a lecture and discussion at the Bishophgate Institute on *Crime and the City*, including a presentation by *Andrew Lane* on Arthur Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes. See [www.bishophgate.org.uk/events_detail.aspx?ID=4&Keyword=&TypeID=](http://www.bishophgate.org.uk/events_detail.aspx?ID=4&Keyword=&TypeID=). At 8.30 pm on 10 June at the Lexi Cinema, Kensing Rise, Mark Gattis will introduce *Billy Wilder’s film* *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*. See [http://thalexicinema.co.uk/2011/05/23/the-private-life-of-sherlock-holmes/](http://thalexicinema.co.uk/2011/05/23/the-private-life-of-sherlock-holmes/).

**Richard Burnip** will give a free luncheon lecture at the National Army Museum (Royal Hospital Road, Chelsea, London SW3 4HT) on 30 June: *Reading Around the Home Fires: The Strand Magazine in the Great War*. Details are at [www.nam.ac.uk/whats-on/lunchtime-lectures](http://www.nam.ac.uk/whats-on/lunchtime-lectures).

In 1988 *Angela Scolari*, who died on 11 April aged sixty-five, played the clairvoyant Catherine Mead in the original production of *Holmes and the Ripper* with Francis Matthews and Frank Windsor as Holmes and Watson. *Nicholas Selby* died on 15 April aged eighty-five. In 1974-75 he was a splendid Jim Larrabee in the Royal Shakespeare Company production of Gillette’s *Sherlock Holmes*, masking vicious greed with superficial charm.

**Jeremy Paul** was a principal writer for Granada TV’s *Sherlock Holmes* series, later writing the play *The Secret of Sherlock Holmes* for Jeremy Brett. His script for *The Musgrave Ritual* deservedly won him an Edgar Award from the MWA. He died on 3 May, aged seventy-one.

Less than two weeks later, on 16 May, we lost *Edward Hardwicke*, at the age of seventy-eight. Taking over as Jeremy Brett’s Watson in 1986, he consolidated David Burke’s achievement, finally establishing Dr Watson in the public imagination as an intelligent gentleman, courageous, astute, honest and admirable. After Brett’s death, he recorded half a dozen or so excellent readings from the Sherlock Holmes canon. One of his early television performances was as *Mr Davenport* in the 1966 BBC production of *The Greek Interpreter*, with Peter Cushing and Nigel Stock. To our great benefit he never severed his connection with Holmes and Watson.


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

Roger Johnson