

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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The correct answers to the competition in the last issue: 1. Felix Felton dramatised *The Hound of the Baskervilles* for Carleton Hobbs and Norman Shelley. He had also written all the scripts for Hobbs & Shelley's earlier Holmes series on *Children's Hour*. 2. Michael Hardwick's three well-regarded Sherlock Holmes novels are *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* (jointly with Mollie Hardwick), *Prisoner of the Devil* and *The Revenge of the Hound*. I also accepted *Sherlock Holmes: My Life and Crimes* and *The Private Life of Dr Watson*. 3. The actors who, unlike Hobbs and Shelley, played Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson in all sixty stories on BBC radio were Clive Merrison and Michael Williams.

The three winners, chosen at random from a gratifying number of correct entries, are **Philip J Attwell**, **Peter Hartland** and **Tim Salisbury**, who each win a copy of the new six-CD set, *The Carleton Hobbs Sherlock Holmes Further Collection*, kindly donated by **AudioGO**, 'the home of BBC audiobooks'. Congratulations!

We've waited a long time for these recordings to be released, but believe me – they're worth it. Through the 1950s and 60s **Carleton Hobbs** and **Norman Shelley**, for me and many others, were the voices of Holmes and Watson. Tony Howlett pointed out that no listener would accept a Holmes whose voice was, as described by Watson, high and strident. Jeremy Brett has set the pattern (pioneered by John Gielgud) of beautifully modulated mellow tones, but Hobbs chose a quality that perhaps better represents those specified in the Canon – astringency. He also, as Tony noted, 'manages to infuse into his voice the pedantic precision, the sardonic humour and, above all, the steel cutting-edge of a strong, impatient-with-fools, intense personality'. He lacks the occasional manic quality and even rudeness of some recent interpretations, but he and Watson share a genuine mutual affection and respect. Norman Shelley's Watson is superficially like Nigel Bruce's, very much the cordial retired officer, with a brandy-and-cigars voice, but he's sensible and intelligent, as well as brave and compassionate. Hobbs and Shelley were a Holmesian partnership from 1952 to 1969. These productions – *The Copper Beeches*, *Thor Bridge*, *The Three Garridebs*, *The Sussex Vampire*, *The Three Gables*, *The Retired Colourman*, *The Boscombe Valley Mystery*, *The Crooked Man*, *The Cardboard Box*, *A Case of Identity*, *The Naval Treaty* and *The Noble Bachelor* – appear to date from the mid 60s, but in a way it doesn't matter, because their performances were consistently excellent and their voices didn't change. The admirable scripts, all nicely paced and utterly faithful to the original stories, are by Michael Hardwick, of course, and each play is introduced by our own Nicholas Utechin. *The Carleton Hobbs Sherlock Holmes Further Collection* is available from the usual sources, including www.audiogo.co.uk.

Due on 27 October from Duckworth Publishers (90-93 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6BF; £20.00) is *Houdini and Conan Doyle* by **Christopher Sandford**. Though this isn't the first book about the ultimately doomed friendship between these two famous and famously driven men, it's a penetrating and very readable account. Mr Sandford examines the similarities and the differences between the magician and the author – each effectively fatherless and in thrall to his mother, each desperate to communicate with the dead, the one convinced that he did so, the other knowing that every apparent success was a sham. This book helps us appreciate how huge a phenomenon Spiritualism was in the 1920s, when millions had lost fathers, sons, brothers and husbands in the Great War and the flu epidemic that followed it. Without Spiritualism, Houdini and Conan Doyle might still have become friends – they were intelligent, ingenious men, with ever-inquiring minds – but Spiritualism ensured that the friendship failed. Houdini's

campaign against fraudulent mediums was never wholly free of self-interest: he was always primarily a showman. Richard Lancelyn Green, I remember, said of Conan Doyle, 'Everything he did smacked of opportunism and superficiality,' but Mr Sandford concludes, probably rightly, that his Spiritualist campaign was inspired by a genuine faith in the improvement of humanity. The one disappointing feature of *Houdini and Conan Doyle* is that the many quotations and accounts are not specifically credited. It's encouraging to know that the author 'consulted a variety of journals, magazines and newspapers' – some titles are mentioned – but a book of this quality really ought to have proper references.

New novels from MX Publishing (www.mxpublishing.co.uk; www.mxpublishing.com). *A Case of Witchcraft* by **Joe Revill** (£12.99/\$19.95/€14.99) teams Holmes rather improbably with Aleister Crowley to investigate the disappearance of an eminent folklorist in what's described as a 'remote and rather backward northern isle'. The situation is strongly reminiscent of *The Wicker Man*, but, of course, Holmes is not Sergeant Howie. His attitude towards the so-called Old Religion, not to mention the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, is remarkably liberal, but perhaps that's the influence of his companion. *A Case of Witchcraft* is a decided oddity, but well written (in the third person) and thoroughly researched.

Sherlock Holmes and the Affair in Transylvania by **Gerry O'Hara** (due 2 November; £9.99/\$16.95/€12.99) is similarly idiosyncratic and entertaining. As you might guess, Mr O'Hara pits Holmes and Watson against Count Dracula, but in a different way from his predecessors, Loren D Estleman and David Stuart Davies. Although great chunks of Bram Stoker's text remain, his story has been rewritten to exclude Professor Van Helsing, and various other characters are reimagined. Mina is now Watson's niece, married to a Romanian named Janos. Lucy is the daughter of Dr Westenra, who supervises an asylum in Transylvania, where all the events occur. Surprisingly, this is Gerry O'Hara's first book, after a long career as writer and director in film and television (he wrote the story for *Sherlock Holmes and the Incident at Victoria Falls*, so he's not new to Holmes).

In DM 313 I reviewed *Baker Street Beat* by **Dan Andriacco**. Now comes *No Police Like Holmes* (9 November; £10.99/\$19.95/€12.99), an exciting and witty romp – not about Holmes but about his fans. The world's third-largest private collection of Sherlockiana has been donated to St Benignus, a small college in a small town in Ohio, and to celebrate, the college is hosting the Investigating Arthur Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes Colloquium. Jeff Cody, the college's PR director (and part-time crime writer), is an amused observer until the event is blighted by a real theft and a real murder, and he realises that there's rather a lot of suspects in deerstalkers. As if things weren't bad enough, Cody and his ex-girlfriend also become suspects... I like it!

For *A Study in Sherlock: Stories Inspired by the Holmes Canon* (Bantam Books, 25 October; \$15.00) **Laurie R King** and **Leslie S Klinger** have collected seventeen new, original, and very different tales from authors as diverse as Lee Child, Jacqueline Winspear and Neil Gaiman. All the contributors are highly successful writers, mostly of crime fiction – apart from Jerry Margolin BSI, who collaborates with his brother Phillip in a story about rabid collectors of Sherlockian artwork, which is Jerry's own specialism. Actually, that gives an indication of what makes this collection different – and successful. These are not, for the most part, stories about Sherlock Holmes: like Dan Andriacco's novel, they're stories inspired by Sherlock Holmes. Lee Child and S J Rozan each reinvent a classic case. Colin Cotterill

provides a very funny comic strip explaining why he's not qualified to contribute. Tony Broadbent rather brilliantly brings Holmes and Watson to present-day London, in a quite different way from *Sherlock*. Equally dazzling is Neil Gaiman's tale of Holmes and bees in China. There isn't a dud here.

The Musgraves have published a nice little *Musgrave Tribute to Edward Hardwicke*, who was an honorary member of the society. You can buy a copy from Anne Jordan (Hallas Lodge, Greenside Lane, Cullingworth, Bradford BD13 5AP) for £3.50. Please make your cheque payable to The Musgraves.

Vernon Meador reports that his book *The File on Colonel Moran: Sherlock Holmes Takes a Hand* (reviewed favourably in DM 305) is now available as a Kindle e-book from Amazon. Just received is *Sherlock Holmes & the Fabulous Faces: The Universal Pictures Repertory Company* by **Michael A Hoey** (BearManor Media, http://www.bearmanormedia.com/index.php?route=product/product&filter_name=hoey&product_id=412; \$19.95). The author's father was Dennis Hoey, the unforgettable Lestrade to Rathbone's Holmes. One from the Goodness Knows What This Is Like department: *Hound: The Curse of the Baskervilles – Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Classic Now with Werewolf Madness* by **Lorne Dixon** (Coscom Entertainment, <http://coscomentertainment.com/?p=98>; £11.99). From Carlton Books on 13 October comes *Sherlock Holmes: Solve the Famous Hound of the Baskervilles Mystery* by **Deborah Kespert** (www.carltonbooks.co.uk/display.asp?K=9781847328816&sf1=title%5Findex&st1=sherlock&sort=sort%5Fdate%2Fd&m=2&dc=5; £9.99).

On 15 September BBC Books will issue *Sherlock: A Study in Scarlet* by **Arthur Conan Doyle**, first volume in a tie-in edition of the Canon. There's an introduction by **Steven Moffat**. In October comes *Sherlock: The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* introduced by **Mark Gatiss**. See <http://www.eburypublishing.co.uk/bbcbooks.asp>.

On 16 September the auction at the Guildford Riverside Saleroom (Bedford Road, Guildford GU1 4SJ; 01483 802280) will include a unique poster from the Eille Norwood *Sign of Four*, a rare poster from Norwood's *The Beryl Coronet*, and a rare lobby card from Rathbone's *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* showing a scene deleted from the final print. www.the-saleroom.com/en-gb/auction-catalogues/wellers-auctioneers/catalogue-id-2845013?categoryID=105167.

On 28 September Mullock's auction at Ludlow Racecourse will include a handwritten letter from Arthur Conan Doyle to the makers of a golf-practising device, together with a photograph. (John Mullock, 01694 771771; auctions@mullocksauctions.co.uk).

The comedy *Sherlock Holmes Strikes Back* by **The Wireless Theatre Company**, presented last month as part of the Camden Fringe, was recorded live and is now free to download at www.wirelesstheatrecompany.co.uk/index.php/our-plays.

The Hounds of the Baskerville (sic) are co-sponsors of the *Newberry Library Arthur Conan Doyle-Sherlock Holmes Symposium* on 1 October (60 West Walton Street, Chicago, IL 60610, USA; newberry@newberry.org). The speakers are **Jon Lellenberg** & **Daniel Stashower** on ACD's 'lost' novel *The Narrative of John Smith*, **Jacquelynne Morris** on the campaign to save Undershaw, and **Henry Zecher** on William Gillette.

At Usher Hall, Edinburgh on 26 November, *Concert for Trees* will be an evening of music, poetry and dance to celebrate the UN's International Year of Forests. **Ani Batikian**, playing the famous 'Sherlock' violin, made from the sycamore tree that stood at Liberton Bank, Conan Doyle's childhood home, joins the new **Arthur Conan Doyle Quartet**, whose instruments are made from the same tree. **Owen Dudley Edwards** is guest speaker. Full details are at <http://www.usherhall.co.uk/What-s-On.html>, or phone 0131 228 1155.

Too soon after the death of our good friend Theo Wyler, we have lost **Eileen Holman**, who died on 3 August. Eileen was for many years the invaluable assistant and friend of Albert Kunz at the Swiss National Tourist Office in London. She naturally helped organise our Society's visits to Switzerland, even after her retirement, and she became a much loved and respected member of the Society. There was something very reassuring about Eileen's cheerful smile and profound common sense.

Participants in the Great Swiss Pilgrimage of 1988 will remember **Jim Dunn**, who died on 26 June. He had come from Australia with his

daughter Rosane (who's now married to Frank McNamara and is Navigator of the Sydney Passengers). Rosane recalls that her dad 'wasn't sure what he was in for' when they left Oz, but that he 'had a wonderful time', frequently in the company of fellow-Aussie Alan Olding.

I first met **Peter H Wood** at the Bimetallic Colloquium in Montreal, in 1990, and found him one of the most engaging conversationalists and raconteurs I've known. He grew up on the Isle of Man, and moved to Canada in the 1960s, retiring to British Columbia in the 1990s. He promptly became a leading member of the Stormy Petrels, taking them through a ten-year study of the entire Canon. Besides his contributions to journals in Canada and the US, Peter wrote an impressive novel *The Winged Wheel*, in which Dr Watson becomes a motorcyclist, taking part in the Isle of Man TT Races. Peter Wood was made a Master Bootmaker in 1983 and received the Irregular Shilling as 'The Second Stain' in 1985. He died on 31 July, aged eighty.

Richard Pearson, who died on 2 August, aged ninety-three, was a prolific, versatile and utterly reliable actor, always a pleasure to watch and listen to. I have a special fondness for his voicing of Mole in the Cosgrove-Hall animated series *The Wind in the Willows*. In 1968 he played Inspector Baynes in the now lost BBC TV production of *Wisteria Lodge* with Peter Cushing and Nigel Stock.

John Wood, who died on 6 August, aged eighty-one, was a great actor, whose most notable work was confined almost entirely to the theatre. At the Old Vic, at Stratford and at the National, he gave superlative performances in Shakespeare, and became especially associated with Tom Stoppard's plays. Michael Coveney in *The Guardian* said: 'As with all great actors, you always knew what he was thinking... he was as much the perfect Sherlock Holmes as he was the ideal Brutus.' We who saw the RSC's production of Gillette's play, in Britain or in America, will never forget Wood's wonderful performance as Holmes. It's a crying shame that it wasn't filmed.

Joe Cooper believed in the paranormal, but not uncritically. It was he who exposed the fakery behind the notorious Cottingley fairy photographs. His book *The Case of the Cottingley Fairies* was published in 1990. He died on 16 August, aged eighty-seven.

N F Simpson, who died on 27 August, aged ninety-two, was Britain's leading exponent of the Theatre of the Absurd. His plays include *One Way Pendulum* and *A Resounding Tinkle*. In 1973 John Cleese and Willie Rushton played Holmes and Watson in Simpson's crazy comedy *Elementary, My Dear Watson* on BBC TV.

Periodicals received. *The Baker Street Journal*, Summer 2011 (Steven Rothman, 220, West Rittenhouse Square, #15-D, Philadelphia, PA 19103, USA; subscriptions, PO Box 583, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). *Canadian Holmes*, Summer 2011 (**The Bootmakers of Toronto**, Mark & JoAnn Alberstat, 46 Kingston Crescent, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, B3A 2M2, Canada). *Ineffable Twaddle*, September 2011 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). *Irregular Newsletter*, August 2011 (**The Conan Doyle [Crowborough] Establishment**, Brian W Pugh, 20 Clare Road, Lewes, Sussex BN7 1PN). *Mayday Mayday*, June 2011 & September 2011 (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardarn Way, Belfast BT5 7RP). *The Moor: Magasin för Sherlockianer*, Sep 2011 (**The Baskerville Hall Club of Sweden**, Anders Wiggström, Byggnästarvägen 29, 168 32 Bromma, Sweden). *The Passengers' Log*, Autumn & Winter 2011 (**The Sydney Passengers**, Rosane McNamara, 4/2a Merlin Street, Neutral Bay, NSW 2089, Australia). *The Petrel Flyer*, Summer 2011 & Fall 2011 (**The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia**, Len Haffenden, 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7P 3C6). *3-Pipe Problem Plugs and Dottles*, August 2011 (**The Nashville Scholars of the Three-Pipe Problem**, Kay Blocker, 5017 Maywood Drive, Nashville, TN 37211, USA pkblocker@comcast.net). *The School Report*, Autumn 2011 (**The Priory Scholars**, Horace L Coates, 21 Butcombe Road, Leicester LE4 0FY).

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

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