

The DISTRICT MESSENGER



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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

e-mail: shjournal@btinternet.com

no. 323 30 June 2012

The subscription for postal subscribers who send money rather than stamped & self-addressed envelopes is (for 12 issues) £4.50 in the UK, and £11.00 or US\$18.00 overseas. Please make dollar checks payable to Jean Upton. An e-mail subscription costs nothing and pretty much guarantees instantaneous delivery.

The Judicial Review of the planning permission granted by Waverley Borough Council for **Undershaw** to be carved up into three terraced houses divided by solid block walls, with five more homes to be built on the site, was duly held at the High Court on 23 May, and the judge's decision was announced a week later. The council's action was legally flawed and therefore invalid. Waverley Borough Council did not appeal. Thanks to the dedication and persistence of John Gibson and his colleagues in the Undershaw Trust, the first battle has been won.

On the day of the hearing, MX Publishing released a book compiled by the **Sherlockology** team: *Sherlock's Home: The Empty House*, a collection of short stories and verse by Sherlockians from around the world, together with articles and statements by supporters including Mark Gatiss, Gyles Brandreth, Steven Fry, Douglas Wilmer, Michael Cox, Nicholas Briggs and Roger Llewellyn. Royalties will go to the Undershaw Preservation Trust (MX Publishing, www.mxpublishing.co.uk; £9.99).

Shortly before leaving her post as Conan Doyle Projects Officer at Portsmouth last year, **Fiona-Jane Brown** wrote a Sherlock Holmes play, *The Prima Donna's Last Aria*, which was staged as part of the city's 'Lost Hour' celebrations, marking the start of British Summer Time. Since her return to Scotland, Dr Brown has written another play, *Sherlock Holmes & the Adventure of the Jacobite Rose*, published this month by MX at £7.99/\$10.95/€8.99. It's a clever and entertaining drama, ideal for youth groups and schools. The first performances will take place later this year or early next, at Sir Christopher Hatton School in Wellingborough, Aberdeen College, and Lake View High School in Chicago. The script is available from Amazon, Waterstone's and other sources; performance rights are available from the publisher at www.mxpublishing.co.uk.

The second edition of *The Sherlock Holmes Triviography & Quiz Book* by **Kathleen Klaska** is out now from LL Publications (www.ll-publications.com; £10.99/\$14.99; e-book \$5.99). There's plenty here to exercise your brain and keep you amused, though it might be as well to double-check some of the facts. (Edward Hardwicke wasn't the only actor to play Dr Watson in the Granada TV series; Lily Langtry – not 'Langtree' – was born in Jersey, not New Jersey...)

In her intensively researched and lovingly written novel *The Crack in the Lens*, **Darlene Cypser** wrote of the boyhood of Sherlock Holmes. She continues the story in *The Consulting Detective Trilogy, Part I: University* (Foolscap & Quill; www.foolscap-quill.com; \$14.99), which covers the years from December 1871 to January 1875. Like Dorothy L Sayers, Ms Cypser sends the young Holmes to Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, but his experiences there, apart from his unusual introduction to Victor Trevor and the tale of the *Gloria Scott*, come mostly from her own powerful imagination. We learn how he was introduced to drugs and to tobacco, how he became an expert swordsman, and how – and why – he set about becoming a detective. *Part II: On Stage* will follow in 2013, and *Part III: Montague Street* in 2014.

I've mentioned *Steampunk Holmes* before – for full information see www.steampunkholmes.com. For the less elaborately electronically enabled, such as me, the first adventure is now available in its most

accessible form: i.e. a book. *Steampunk Holmes: Legacy of the Nautilus* by **P C Martin** (Noble Beast/MX Publishing; £7.99/\$14.95/€8.99) places Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson in a world where electricity has yet to be developed, the internal combustion engine is irrelevant, and steam power has been developed to the highest degree. Holmes's favoured transport is a powerful motorcycle. Watson sports a mechanical right arm. And Mycroft Holmes is Sherlock's beautiful, devastatingly intelligent sister. The story, as you'd expect, involves Captain Nemo and his famous submarine, cleverly working them into a re-imagining of 'The Bruce-Partington Plans'. With character portraits by Daniel Cortes and a superb cover by John Coulthart, it's very stylish – though for the best of Mr Cortes' illustrations you'll need to check the website.

Sherlock Holmes & the Plague of Dracula by **Stephen Seitz** was first published in 2007. Now there's a new and improved edition from MX Publishing (£9.99/\$18.95/€12.99). This isn't the first time that the detective and the vampire have been pitted against each other, and it won't be the last, but it has a good deal going for it. Other writers have shattered Holmes's disbelief in the supernatural, but Mr Seitz assaults the credulity of Dr Van Helsing and others of Bram Stoker's characters – without diminishing the excitement of the conflict. And (hurrah!) he doesn't try to make Count Dracula a Byronic romantic hero.

David Ruffle follows his entertaining volumes *Sherlock Holmes & the Lyme Regis Horror* and *Sherlock Holmes & the Lyme Regis Legacy* with a sweet, sad novella called *Holmes & Watson: End Peace* (MX Publishing; £6.99/\$9.95/€7.99) – the punning title doesn't really do it justice. Nearly fifteen years after his 'last quiet talk' with Sherlock Holmes, Dr Watson lies motionless in a hospital bed, conversing with a visitor only he can sense. The narrative consists entirely of dialogue – a bold and remarkably successful choice.

Also new from MX Publishing are *Sherlock Holmes & the Terrible Secret* by **Fred Thursfield** (£8.99/\$14.95/€11.99) and *Sherlock Holmes & the Murder at Lodore Falls* by **Charlotte Smith** (£7.99/\$12.95/€9.99).

Kelvin Jones advises me that no fewer than thirteen of his works of Holmesian scholarship are now available in Kindle form from Amazon – not including the nine individual volumes of his biography, *Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective*. There's also a rare venture into fiction: *Sherlock Holmes: The Plagues of London*.

Our German member **Johanna M Rieke** has written a Sherlock Holmes novel called *Die Themsmorde* ('The River Thames Murders'). It will be published by Lord Byrons Literary Press in association with Verlag (<http://lordbyronsliterarypress.co.uk>) and will be launched in October at the Frankfurt Book Fair. An English language edition is planned.

Vincent Delay informs me of a new book, *inklings - Jahrbuch für Literatur und Ästhetik: Der andere Conan Doyle* ('The Other Conan Doyle') edited by **Dieter Petzold** (Peter Lang; www.peterlang.com; £46.10/\$71.95/€51.20/SFR67.00). It contains papers, some apparently in German and some in English, from last year's international conference in Leipzig.

All students of the Victorian era will be delighted by the new availability on-line of **Queen Victoria's Journals** – all 141 volumes, along with an interactive timeline, drawings and sketches by the Queen, and authoritative essays on aspects of her life. Thanks to the

Bodleian Libraries, the Royal Archives, and ProQuest, all this is available to search and read at www.queenvictoriasjournals.org – ‘free of charge in perpetuity to all users in the United Kingdom and to the national libraries of Her Majesty’s Realms’.

‘Let me recommend this book – one of the most remarkable ever penned.’ Well, perhaps that’s an exaggeration, but I hope you’ll like it anyway... It’s *The Sherlock Holmes Miscellany* by **Roger Johnson & Jean Upton** (The History Press; www.thehistorypress.co.uk; £9.99).

Alfred Weiner wishes to sell his Sherlockian library, which appears to be ‘small but select’. If you’re interested, you can write to him at 4105 Marietta Drive, Vestal, NY 13850, USA; e-mail almar@stny.rr.com; or phone 607-722-6251.

On display at Portsmouth History Centre at the Central Library (Guildhall Square, Portsmouth, PO1 2DX) until the end of July is an exhibition called **Catching the Unseen: Spirit Photography from the Conan Doyle Collection**, which includes photographs, archives and books from the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection – Lancelyn Green Bequest, many of which have never been shown before. The exhibition is open every day except Friday and Sunday.

At the Greenwich Theatre (<http://greenwichtheatre.org.uk>; 020 8858 7755) from Monday 2 July to Sunday 8 July, Tim Kelly’s adaptation of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* will be performed by **Sell a Door Theatre Company**.

The live recording of the wonderfully effervescent spoof of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* by **Peepolykus** will be broadcast at 2.30pm on Saturday 7 July on BBC Radio 4. [*Apologies for the statement, made in good faith, that the transmission would be in May.*] The company has further good news: ‘Inspired by the fun of putting this together, we decided to work up a stage version of the radio version of *Baskervilles*, where four actors are providing all of the foley sound effects. This previewed at the Bath Fringe Festival on 4th June. The production will be available for touring (to pretty much any space) from next year. Please contact us FFI.’ Phone Eleanor Lloyd on 020 7395 7523, or e-mail her at eleanor@elproductions.co.uk.

In the autumn **Ian Sharrock** and **Nicholas Briggs** will tour in a new play, *Sherlock Holmes – A Study in Fear!* by John Goodrum, based on ‘The Final Problem’: 11-15 September: Connaught Theatre, Worthing (01903 206 206); 19-20 September: Octagon Theatre, Yeovil (01935 422884); 2-7 October: Greenwich Theatre (020 8858 7755); 10-11 October: Civic Theatre, Chelmsford (01245 606505); 18-20 October: Key Theatre, Peterborough (01733 207239); 23-24 October: The Kings Theatre, Southsea (023 9282 8282); 26-27 October: Pomegranate Theatre, Chesterfield (01246 345222).

Leslie Coombs, whose very enjoyable book of stories *Sherlock Holmes at the Breakfast Table* I reviewed in the last DM, is a surprising ninety years old and, he says, not very mobile. He asks whether any members of the Society, preferably in north-west London, would like to contact him to discuss matters Holmesian. Please contact me in the first instance.

The first **Sherlock Holmes Week**, from 30 July to 5 August, is our chance to celebrate all things Holmesian – simultaneously with other enthusiasts world-wide. The first two Great Sherlock Holmes Debates resulted in tens of millions of fan pages across the internet. The third Debate, this time on the vexed subject of the Best Holmes Story, will once again bring together the top actors, directors, historians, bloggers and commentators in the Sherlock Holmes world. It’ll be held in central London on 4 August. If you’d like to get involved in the debate, go to www.facebook.com/GreatSherlockHolmesDebate. New this year are the Sherlock Holmes Fashion Awards, sponsored by fashion MEGAZine Aigua Media, to be judged on 2 August. You can submit a design for Holmes, Watson, Lestrade, Mycroft, Irene Adler, Molly or Mrs Hudson. Aigua will prepare the shortlist for a panel of judges to pick the winner for each character. To enter simply send your design to fashioncompetition@sherlockholmesweek.com as a jpeg no larger than 1MB.

For more information about **Sherlock Holmes Week 2012**, check the website at www.sherlockholmesweek.com.

The town of Hillesheim in the picturesque Eifel region is Germany’s Crime Fiction Capital. It boasts the Café Sherlock, the German Crime Archives collection, the specialist Bookmarks bookshop, and the specialist publisher KBV Verlag – all within *Das Kriminalhaus*. From 24 to 26 August, Hillesheim will host **SherloCON 2012**, a convention to mark the 125th anniversary of the first Sherlock Holmes story, during which Germany’s first Sherlock Holmes museum will be officially opened. For details, check the Deutsche Sherlock Holmes Gesellschaft website at www.sherlock-holmes-gesellschaft.de.

In DM 321 I reviewed the excellent monograph *Melancholia in Music: The Posthumous Motets of Orlandus Lassus*. Only six weeks later I was shocked and saddened to learn of the death on 3 May of its author, **Michael Procter**, at the age of sixty-one. He joined the Society about two years ago, although the distance from his home in Germany made it difficult for him to attend meetings. Several musicians have considered the controversial questions of Holmes’s monograph on ‘The Polyphonic Motets of Lassus’. Michael was the first to examine the subject as a recognised expert in renaissance choral music.

It’s only right that we should record the death on 19 May of the blind American musician, songwriter and singer **Arthel Lane Watson**, at the age of eighty-nine – simply because he was universally known by his nickname, Doc Watson.

The cinematographer **Christopher Challis**, who died on 31 May, aged ninety-three, may be mostly associated with the films of Powell & Pressburger, but his long and distinguished career also saw him working with Billy Wilder on *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*.

Likewise **Caroline John**, who died on 5 June aged seventy-one, may be best remembered as Liz Shaw, one of the most intelligent of the Companions in *Doctor Who* (her Doctor was Jon Pertwee), but she was a notable Laura Lyons on the 1982 BBC TV serial *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, with Tom Baker.

Anthony Bate had an impressive line in politicians, spies and aristocrats. In 1994 he played Lord Cantlemere in Bert Coules’s dramatisation of *The Mazarin Stone* on BBC Radio 4. He died on 19 June aged eighty-four.

Periodicals received: *The Camden House Journal*, April 2012 and May 2012 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, Debbie Tinsley, PO Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). *The Arthur Conan Doyle Newsletter and Birthday File XIX*, 22 May 2010 (**The Conan Doyle [Crowborough] Establishment**, Brian Pugh, 20 Clare Road, Lewes, Sussex BN7 1PN). *Ineffable Twaddle*, July 2012 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, 3606 Harborcrest Court NW, Gig Harbor, WA 9832-8981, USA). *Ironmongers Daily News*, er, daily! (**La Société Sherlock Holmes de France**, Thierry Saint-Joanis, 15 rue Grande, 03370 Saint-Sauvier, France). *Mayday Mayday*, June 2012 (**The Crew of the SS May Day**, Oscar Ross, 19 Ardcaran Way, Belfast BT5 7RP).

The Medical Bulletin, Summer 2012 (**Dr Watson’s Neglected Patients**, Darlene Cypser, 6529 Lakeside Circle, Littleton, CO 80125, USA). *The Petrel Flyer*, Summer 2012 (**The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia**, Len Haffenden, 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7P 3C6). *Prescott’s Press*, March 2012 (**The Three Garridebs**, Warren Randall, 15 Fawn Lane West, South Setauket, NY 11720-1346, USA). *Report from the Unscrupulous Rascals*, May 2012 (**The Sherlock Holmes Society of South Australia**, Mark Chellew, 50 Richmond Ave, Colonel Light Gardens, SA 5041, Australia). *The Scion*, Summer 2012 (**The Musgraves**, Anne Jordan, Hallas Lodge, Greenside Lane, Cullingworth, Bradford BD13 5AP). *The Serpentine Muse*, Summer 2012 (**The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes**, Evelyn Herzog, 301 Warren Ave, #203, Baltimore, MD 21203, USA).

And *Scuttlebutt from the Spermacti Press*, May 2012 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; blau7103@comcast.net).

Roger Johnson