

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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no. 328 22 December 2012

The subscription for postal subscribers who send money rather than stamped & self-addressed envelopes is (for 12 issues) £6.60 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.

As I mentioned in the last issue, *The District Messenger* is an almost unbelievable thirty years old as of this month. You can follow its progress, if you're interested, on the Society's website, where there's a complete archive at www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk/district.php.

On 3 January, Simon & Schuster will publish *Dead Man's Land*, a novel by **Robert Ryan** in which Dr Watson proves his worth as a detective on the Western Front (www.simonandschuster.co.uk/; £12.99). The noted crime writer Mark Billingham calls it a 'hugely powerful depiction of wartime horror, a cunning murder mystery and a brilliant re-invention of Dr John Watson which sees Sherlock Holmes's sidekick finally take centre stage in what I hope will be the start of a long-running series. Conan Doyle would most definitely approve!'

The publisher is kindly providing six signed copies as prizes for a Pearl Anniversary competition. To enter, just tell us what Sherlock Holmes said (in the canon) that makes it certain that Watson served as a medical officer in the Great War. Send your answer to me by 20 January. Winners will be chosen at random from the correct entries.

David Ruffle completes his 'Lyme Regis trilogy' with *Sherlock Holmes and the Lyme Regis Trials* (MX Publishing; £6.99/ \$9.95/ €7.99). The title refers in part to the difficulties overcome by the pioneer palaeontologist Mary Anning, a poorly educated woman in a world dominated by men, but principally to top-secret naval trials, which lead to espionage and murder. This pleasant volume is completed by a distinctly off-beat account of the case of the Grosvenor Square furniture van.

New from the Friends of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection, Toronto Public Library (c/o Doug Wrigglesworth, 16 Sunset Street, Holland Landing, Ontario, Canada L9N 1H4; www.acdfriends.org/) is the text of the 2011 Cameron Hollyer Lecture, *Sherlock Holmes and Shakespeare* by **Tom Ue**. It's good to have these papers made available to those of us who haven't been able to attend the lectures.

'Some Aspects of Fuel Technology', published in the Winter 2012 issue of *The Sherlock Holmes Journal*, is one of forty or so pithy and pertinent essays in *The Sherlock Holmes Stories and Combustion Science* by **Clifford Jones**. Copies of the 120-page book are available at £10.00 from the author at j.c.jones@eng.abdn.ac.uk.

Don Hobbs reports a new translation of the most famous volume in the Canon: *Ky Teylu Baskerville*, published by Evertime (www.evertime.com/) and available from Amazon.co.uk at £11.95, is in the Cornish language. The translator is **Nicholas Williams**.

Due on 17 January from Canongate (www.canongate.tv/; £16.99) is *Mastermind: How to Think Like Sherlock Holmes* by **Maria Konnikova**. 'What is it that separates Sherlock Holmes from his long-suffering friend and side-kick Dr John Watson? What makes Holmes such a superior detective, able to piece together clues and solve problems that seem elementary to Watson only in hindsight? And can we - most of us Watsons ourselves - ever harness a bit of Holmes's extraordinary powers of mind, not to solve crimes, but simply to improve our lives at work and home?... Writing for Holmes fans and casual readers alike, Konnikova has translated what so many of us love about the great detective into a remarkable guide to upgrading the mind.' Even before publication, Ms Konnikova's book has attracted enthusiasm from Holmesians and psychologists alike.

In 1976 a forensic investigator and long-time Sherlockian named **Thomas F Hanratty** produced *Crime Scene Sketches: Reproduced in Facsimile from the Pen and Ink Drawings in the Notebook of a Private Enquiry Agent*, illuminating eighteen of the chronicles in the style of the great Hans Gross. Long out of print, the contents of the book are freely available on-line at <http://redbirdstudio.com/CrimeScenes/> and are highly recommended.

Mr Hanratty's latest book is *The Singular Adventure of Charles Goodfoote: A Thrilling Tale of a Perilous Escapade Set in the Old West* 'by Charles Goodfoote, edited by John H Watson MD and Thomas F Hanratty' (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform; £9.35). 'When a brutal murder brings the teenage Sherlock Holmes to America, Charles Goodfoote, the crown jewel of the Pinkerton Detective Agency, is assigned as his bodyguard. Teaming up with an Apache woman-warrior, a beautiful British spy, and a hard-nosed US Marshal, the duo fight a master-villain in the hardscrabble town of Disenchantment, Arizona Territory. Combining early forensic science with Native American skills, the two uncover a fiendish plot of global magnitude, but suffer the pain of betrayal.' The novel is available from Amazon.co.uk and Amazon.com.

Other new and forthcoming titles include: *How to Think Like Sherlock* by **Daniel Smith** (Michael O'Mara Books, £9.99); *Sherlock Holmes: A Case at Christmas and Other Adventures* by **Nigel Scott** (Book Guild Ltd; £16.99); *The Scientific Sherlock Holmes: Cracking the Case with Science and Forensics* by **James O'Brien** (OUP USA, Feb 2013; £18.99); *From 221B Baker Street to Platform 9 3/4* by **Stephen Halliday** (The History Press Ltd, 1 Mar 2013; £9.99); *The Baker Street Translation: A Mystery* by **Michael Robertson** (Minotaur Books, April 2013; £15.61).

And there are new e-books from Endeavour Press (<http://endeavourpress.com>), available as Kindles from Amazon. The sleuth in *The Case of the Antiquarian's Study* by **G W Kolkitto** is a friendly rival of Sherlock Holmes, one Sebastian Symes. *Mycroft Holmes: The Case of the Romanov Pearls* is the latest novella about Sherlock's brother by **David Dickinson**. *Doctor Watson's Bout* by **Patrick Mercer** is by way of a sequel to Mr Mercer's well-received *Dr Watson's War*.

As always, there's lots of good stuff in the current *Sherlockian E-times*, the catalogue-magazine of **Classic Specialties**, online at www.sherlock-holmes.com/e_times12-11.html - not least a new story by **David Marcum**, 'Descent into Madness: the Truth about Mary Russell'. Mr Marcum recognises the high quality of the popular novels by **Laurie King** that began with *The Beekeeper's Apprentice*, but like many of us he rejects the notion that Miss Russell was married to Sherlock Holmes. 'Descent into Madness' offers a neat solution to our problem, and it's a good story in its own right.

Nathan Grainger has a small but select number of Holmesian items that he wishes to sell: twenty-seven in all - books, magazines, pictures, hats, games, Jeremy Brett's autograph and some others. You can get full details from Mr Grainger at nathangrainger1974@hotmail.com.

On 21 and 22 June 2013, there'll be a conference held at the University of London Senate House, under the title *Sherlock Holmes: Past and Present*. The organisers, **Jonathan Cranfield** and **Tom Ue** invite proposals for papers, which should be sent by email to both Jonathan at J.L.Cranfield@lmu.ac.uk and Tom at ue_tom@hotmail.com by 15 January 2013. Projected abstracts of 350 words should be accompanied by biographies 150 words.

On 3 January 1953 Carleton Hobbs and ex-Detective Inspector Robert Fabian unveiled a plaque, erected by the Baritsu Chapter of the BSI, on

the exterior wall of the Criterion restaurant in Piccadilly Circus, to commemorate John Watson's chance encounter with young Stamford – a meeting that was to have such momentous consequences. Alas, the plaque was stolen some years later, though one was erected inside in 1981. Thanks to **Takeshi Shimizu**, a replacement for the original plaque, this one erected by the Japan Sherlock Holmes Club, will be unveiled at 4.00pm on 20 January 2013.

Portsmouth City Museum has received £80,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund and £10,000 from the City Council to help bring the **Arthur Conan Doyle Collection (Lancelyn Green Bequest)** to a wider public through the *Sharing Sherlock – The story of a Pompey lad* project. There'll be a new online exhibition and study packs for schools. Thirty outreach and education workshops will be held in Portsmouth and the wider area. And twenty volunteers will be recruited to lead the workshops and develop the online material.

Bert Coules, instigator and chief writer of the magnificent Radio 4 dramatisation of the complete Canon, with Clive Merrison as Holmes and Michael Williams as Watson, reports that the BBC Holmes section of his website has been undergoing 'a bit of a wash and brush-up' and is now at www.merrisonholmes.com. He says, 'Not all the pages are active yet, but the actors' biogs, full cast lists, background notes, transmission details and other basic stuff is there' – and he adds, 'If anyone takes a look and spots a mistake or several, I'd appreciate knowing about it.' You can contact him at mail@bertcoules.co.uk.

Bert was also the sole writer of the subsequent *Further Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, again with Clive Merrison, and with Andrew Sachs a perfect replacement for the late Michael Williams.

Carol Russell notes that a production of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* by **F Andrew Leslie** will be staged at the Cloverdale Performing Arts Center in Cloverdale, California on the following days: 22, 23 & 24 February and 1, 2 & 3 March. Full information is at www.cloverdaleperformingarts.com.

On 15 March at the Towngate Theatre in Basildon, **Andrew Meller** will present his well-received one-man show *An Audience with Sherlock Holmes: Selected Tales from a Consulting Detective's Notebook*. The box office number is 01268 465465, and the theatre's website is at www.towngatetheatre.co.uk. Mr Meller's website is at www.andrewmeller.com.

Something less straightforward will be at the Unity Theatre in Liverpool on 20 & 21 March. 'The acclaimed National Theatre actor Robert Stephens said to the star of TV's *Sherlock Holmes* Jeremy Brett, "Do not undertake the role of Sherlock Holmes. He will be your undoing!" "You must drop it, Mr Holmes, you really must. It will be your undoing," said Professor James Moriarty upon his first encounter with Sherlock Holmes. Somewhere between the fact and the fiction Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's greatest creation stole the soul of Jeremy Brett, the actor who would become the embodiment of the Baker Street Sleuth. **The Curse of Sherlock Holmes** follows Jeremy as he fights for his sanity... his life.' You have been warned! The theatre's website is at www.unitytheatreliverpool.co.uk/.

This is from Scott Monty's admirable **Baker Street Blog** at <http://www.bakerstreetblog.com/>:

Sherlock Holmes occasionally enlisted the help of the Baker Street Irregulars, the 'unofficial force' that could 'go everywhere, see everything, overhear everyone.' So too it would seem that the new Google+ Sherlock Holmes Community aims to have us do the very same: to share what you know and what you see about Sherlock Holmes - on the web, in books, on the screen - and create content and lively discussions. The Google+ platform is open to anyone with a Gmail account, and if you don't have one, it's free to create. You'll have the opportunity to share photos, videos and other links from the web, as well as create posts and discussions. You can create events, add them to your calendar and invite others - think of the possibilities when running Sherlock Holmes society events! The Sherlock Holmes Community is divided into categories by media type, interest, etc. and can accommodate just about anything that the average (or above-average!) Sherlockian throws at it: https://plus.google.com/communities/114565123495685504221?utm_source=feedblitz&utm_medium=FeedBlitzEmail&utm_content=45933&utm_campaign=0

Scott also manages, in collaboration with Burt Wolder, the Holmesian podcast **I Hear of Sherlock Everywhere**, which you'll find at www.ihearofsherlock.com/.

The other grand podcast is that of **The Baker Street Babes**, at <http://bakerstreetbabes.com/>. The latest is a reading of 'The Blue Carbuncle' by **Lyndsay Faye**, BSI, ASH and Babe.

We'll have to wait some months yet for the third series of *Sherlock*; meanwhile the best way to keep up with developments is via the unofficial but (rightly) approved website *Sherlockology*, at www.sherlockology.com. And **Steven Moffat** has ensured that there will be Holmesian echoes in the *Doctor Who* Christmas Special, entitled *The Snowmen*.

From Peter Blau: 'The Société Sherlock Holmes de France has found **Heroes and Villains Miniatures**, who offer a pair of attractive miniature busts of Holmes and Watson (€39.95), sculpted in resin at 1/12 scale by Raúl García Latorre; the company is in Spain, and their web-site at www.tinyurl.com/c8xcxa3 has detailed instructions for assembling and painting the busts.'

Jacques Barzun, co-author of the Edgar Award-winning critique *A Catalogue of Crime: Being a Reader's Guide to the Literature of Mystery, Detection, and Related Genres*, died on 25 October, aged a hundred and four. His wide cultural interests produced several more books and articles on detective fiction in general and Sherlock Holmes in particular.

Joe Melia, who died on 20 October aged seventy-seven, had a small but telling role as Jefferson Hope's transvestite friend in the 1968 BBC TV film of *A Study in Scarlet*, with Peter Cushing and Nigel Stock. His menacing Jonathan Small in the 1983 *Sign of Four* with Ian Richardson and David Healy was overshadowed by John Thaw's performance in the far superior Granada production of 1987.

Roger Hammond, an excellent Jabez Wilson in the 1985 film of *The Red-Headed League*, was equally impressive as Jephro Rucastle in *The Copper Beeches* for Radio 4 in 1991, with Clive Merrison and Michael Williams. He died on 8 November aged seventy-six.

Periodicals received. *The Alfalfa Gazette*, December 2012 (**Friends of the Soldier Named Murray**, Jody Baker, joshiahbaker@bkhcw.com). *Cri Bar Crier*, October 2012 & December 2012 (**The Criterion Bar Association**, Susan Z Diamond, 16W603 3rd Ave, Bensenville, IL 60106-2327, USA). *For the Sake of the Trust: The Baker Street Irregulars Trust Newsletter*, Fall 2012 (**The BSI Trust**, Marshall S Berdan, 2015 Main Street, Glastonbury, CT 06033, USA). *The Gaslight Gazette*, November 2012 (**The Survivors of the Gloria Scott**, David J Milner, 6 Crowndale Drive, Taylors, South Carolina 29687, USA). *The Illustrious Clients News*, November 2012 (**The Illustrious Clients**, Steven T Doyle, 9 Calumet Court, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA).

Ineffable Twaddle, December 2012 & January 2013 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, www.soundofthebaskervilles.com). *Ironmongers Daily News*, er, irregularly (**La Société Sherlock Holmes de France**, Thierry Saint-Joanis, www.sshf.com/inscription-sshf.php). *The Magic Door*, Autumn 2012 (**The Friends of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection**, Doug Wrigglesworth, 16 Sunset Street, Holland Landing, Ontario, Canada L9N 1H4). *Proceedings of the Sherlock Holmes Society of The Hague*, 20 December 2012 (The Society, Jacques Zonneveld, Vlierboomstraat 464, 2564 JL Den Haag, Holland). *The Torr*, Autumn 2012 (**The Poor Folk Upon The Moors**, Stephan Arthur, Camelot, Hombergstrasse 9, CH-4433 Ramlinsburg, Switzerland).

The Sherlock Holmes Journal, Winter 2012 (**The Sherlock Holmes Society of London**, c/o Yours Truly).

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

The Compliments of the Season

Roger Johnson