

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. 339 30 January 2014

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 **The Sherlock Holmes Society of London**. An e-mail subscription costs nothing and pretty much guarantees instantaneous delivery.

At the Annual Dinner on 11 January, the Tony Howlett Award was presented to **Catherine Cooke**, whose work for the Society has been truly outstanding.

Wiggins announced eight investitures at the Baker Street Irregulars' dinner: **Mark Alberstat** ('Halifax'), **Sonia Fetherston** ('The Solitary Cyclist'), **Terry Hunt** ('The Something Hunt'), **Peter McIntyre** ('Arthur Cadogan West'), **Jacquelynn Morris** ('The Lion's Mane'), **Chris Music** ('Wagner Night at Covent Garden'), **SJ Rozan** ('Imperial Palace of Peking'). **Randall Stock** received the Two-Shilling Award.

Our thanks to Penguin USA for providing three copies of *Mastermind: How to Think Like Sherlock Holmes* by **Maria Konnikova** (www.us.penguin.com; \$16.00) as prizes. It was to Tobias Gregson that Holmes said, 'To a great mind nothing is little,' in chapter 6 of *A Study in Scarlet*. Ross Philpot, MC Black and Oscar Ross are the lucky winners.

For sheer sensuous delight the pick of the latest crop of books is yet another edition of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* – and what a lovely edition it is! Printed in clear type on fine quality laid paper and enhanced by superb new illustrations by **Matthew Stewart**, an artist best known for heroic fantasy, this is probably the most gorgeous book to grace our shelves. Mr Stewart has provided vignettes for each chapter heading – a portrait, a landscape, an object, all done with style, knowledge and precision – but the essential feature is the series of ten full-colour plates, each tipped in, and protected by a semi-transparent leaf. Holmes and Watson, Baskerville Hall, the man on the tor... these are among the finest illustrations I've seen for a Holmes story. The Hound itself is awe-inspiring. The pages are gold-edged, and the full leather binding is stamped in gold and black. The book comes in a fabric-covered slipcase, also stamped in gold and bearing a copy of the plate showing the arrival at Baskerville Hall. You won't be surprised to learn that the edition is limited to just 1,200 copies, each signed by the artist and numbered. *The Hound of the Baskervilles* is available from the publishers for three monthly instalments of \$89.00 or a single payment of \$267.00. (The Easton Press, 47 Richards Avenue, Norwalk, CT 06857, USA; http://www.eastonpress.com/prod/BDD/THE-HOUND-OF-THE-BASKERVILLES_2871.aspx).

Coin of the Canonical Realm by **Nicholas Utechin**, published by the John H Watson Society (www.johnwatsonsociety.com; \$14.00 inclusive to addresses outside the USA) fills a noticeable gap. The UK went decimal in 1971, but little has been done since then to indicate what 'old money' might buy in, say 1895, and what a particular sum might be worth in today's terms. This nice little book can benefit even those of us who remember pounds, shillings & pence. To those who never knew that arcane but serviceable system it will be invaluable.

Nick Utechin has also edited and introduced *The Baker Street Journal 2013 Christmas Annual*, subtitled *Disaster at the New Century: Sherlock Holmes: A New Play in Three Acts* by **Ouida Rathbone** – the first-ever publication of the play that at last brought Basil Rathbone to the stage as the Great Detective – the play that closed after just three performances on Broadway. The leaden script is the main reason why the production sank so rapidly, but there were others. The story behind it exercises a dreadful fascination. But be honest – wouldn't you have gone to see Rathbone live on stage playing Sherlock Holmes, even in the face of lousy reviews? The Annual is available only as part of the BSJ subscription (www.bakerstreetjournal.com/home.html).

Calvert Markham has provided the foreword for *The Holmes Sutra: A Birthday Gift for Sherlock Holmes as He Turns 160* by **Jayantika Ganguly** (MX Publishing; www.mxpublishing.co.uk; £6.99), a charming and entertaining collection of observations drawn from apocryphal sources as well as from the canon. I particularly like 'Sherlock Holmes is more than just a man – he is a just man' and 'The canon is real and true – though not always accurate'. As an appendix there's a questionnaire to enable you to gauge your Holmes Mania Quotient. (I apparently am 'Holmesick'...)

Sherlock Holmes in Japan by **Vasudev Murthy**, writing as Akira Yamashita (HarperCollins Publishers India; www.harpercollins.co.in; 350.00 rupees) also has a foreword by Calvert Markham. In June 1893 Dr Watson receives an envelope from Japan. Inside are a first class ticket from Liverpool to Yokohama and a note in a familiar hand: 'Watson, I need you. My violin, please. S.H.' Before the ship reaches Alexandria, a quiet, scholarly Japanese passenger is murdered, and shortly Watson learns that his friend is a fellow-passenger – and they are both in deadly danger. Moriarty survived the fight at Reichenbach and knows that only Holmes can thwart his plans to destroy international diplomacy and flood the world with opium. The novel is a cracking good read, witty, learned and desperately exciting.

The Watson style is deceptively difficult to imitate. Good practitioners include June Thomson, Hugh Ashton and David Marcum, but the best is probably **Denis O Smith**. His excellent early stories, collected in four volumes as *The Chronicles of Sherlock Holmes*, appear to be out of print, but it's a delight to welcome *The Mammoth Book of The Lost Chronicles of Sherlock Holmes*, twelve adventures, most previously uncollected (Robinson, www.constablerobinson.com; £8.99). Many pasticheurs think that Holmes must at least have a murder to investigate, but Mr Smith knows that 'The Red-Headed League' and 'The Blue Carbuncle' are among the best tales in the canon, and he follows suit. In his stories we hear the authentic voices of Holmes and Watson, and it all rings true.

David Marcum's good collection *The Papers of Sherlock Holmes* has deservedly done well, and MX Publishing has taken the bold step of issuing his novel *Sherlock Holmes & a Quantity of Debt* as a hardback original (www.mxpublishing.co.uk; £12.99). The title, taken from *Great Expectations*, hints at a Dickensian flavour in this account of the investigation of a crime apparently committed half a century before. There's a grand gothic atmosphere, and it's a pleasure to find Inspector Alec MacDonald among the main characters.

Dead Man's Land by **Robert Ryan** told how Major Watson of the Army Medical Corps found himself confronted by a series of mysterious deaths on the Western Front. In *The Dead Can Wait* (Simon & Schuster, <http://books.simonandschuster.co.uk>; £18.99) Watson is back in England, where his task is to help soldiers invalidated home with shell-shock, but a no less deadly situation arises. A powerful secret weapon is being tested, something quite new, nicknamed the 'tank', and the men involved are dying. Can Dr Watson make sense of it? Yes, with help from Sherlock Holmes, though the detective is no longer the man he was. The narrative is gripping, the writing is admirable, and the people – especially the courageous, intelligent and good-hearted Watson – are real human beings. There won't be many better novels of the Great War. The conclusion finds the doctor in a particularly hazardous position – assuring us of at least one more book in the series.

Having spent a day at the recording studio last March with the cast and crew, I've been waiting eagerly for the latest Holmesian audio-dramas from Big Finish. **Nicholas Briggs** and **Richard Earl**, now a firmly established team, play Holmes and Watson in *The Ordeals of Sherlock Holmes* by **Jonathan Barnes** (<http://www.bigfinish.com>; CD £30.00 or download £25.00). Why so expensive? Well, this is a boxed set of four

CDs, each containing a full-length play, with the usual bonus of a look behind the scenes. Now, let's get the gripe out of the way first. There are four or five instances in the dialogue of 'for Watson and I', 'between her and I', and the like – an annoying grammatical *faux pas* that Conan Doyle just wouldn't have committed. That's the negative bit. The rest is positive. The first play, *The Guttering Candle*, tells of events in the lives of Holmes and Watson, before the two men meet. The cocksure young Holmes raises the hackles of a sceptical Lestrade by insisting that an apparent murder is actually suicide. Watson's experience is more curious: kidnapped from his unit in Afghanistan, he's taken to tend a dying Englishman. Both occurrences will profoundly affect events in the future. Holmes is well established as a detective when *The Adventure of the Gamekeeper's Folly* takes him and Watson to rural Norfolk, where the curious behaviour of a young woman evokes sinister and puzzling memories for both men. *The Adventure of the Bermondsey Cutthroats* opens with a truly horrifying scene whose significance doesn't become apparent for some time. A vicious killer is taunting Holmes for reasons he can't fathom. The discovery of the truth is part of the reason for his retirement. At this stage you'd do well to listen to the earlier drama, *The Adventure of the Perfidious Mariner*. It's not essential, but it will enhance your appreciation of the final play, *The Sowers of Despair*. The conclusion is both fantastic and inevitable. Messrs Briggs, Earl and Barnes, director Ken Bentley, and the rest of the fine cast are to be congratulated.

Sherlock magazine published some very good short stories by the likes of June Thomson, Peter Lovesey and Alanna Knight, as well as MJ Elliott, Denis O Smith, and the editor, **David Stuart Davies**. Among the best were the exploits of Luther Darke, by AL Blake – a pseudonym, we now know, for Mr Davies. Due on 3 February is a nice paperback called *The Darke Chronicles: Tales of a Victorian Puzzle-Solver* (The Mystery Press, <http://www.thehistorypress.co.uk>; £7.99).

Also out from Big Finish is a boxed set of *The Confessions of Dorian Gray*, including *Ghosts of Christmas Past*, written by our member **Tony Lee** and featuring Nick Briggs as Sherlock Holmes.

Due from Ulverscroft on 1 February is a large print edition of the very enjoyable *The File on Colonel Moran: Sherlock Holmes Takes a Hand* by our member **Vernon Meador** (<http://www.ulverscroft.com>; £8.99).

Mrs. Hudson in the Ring by **Barry S Brown** (Sunstone Press, <http://www.sunstonepress.com>; £22.00), the third in the 'Mrs Hudson of Baker Street' series, is now available from Amazon.co.uk. Other new books of interest are: *Making Masterpiece: 25 Years Behind the Scenes at Masterpiece Theatre and Mystery! on PBS* by **Rebecca Eaton** (Viking; £18.09). *Postal Plots in British Fiction, 1840-1898: Readdressing Correspondence in Victorian Culture* by **Laura Rotunno** (Palgrave Macmillan; £50.00) – chapter 5 is 'Telegraphing Literature in Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Sign of Four*'. And Vincent Delay recommends *Playmobil - Sherlock Holmes et le chien des Baskerville* adapted and illustrated by **Richard Unglik** (Casterman; available from www.amazon.fr for €17.58). Vincent says, 'This book is rather based upon the "Hammer" movie than upon the Doyle book. I found it a pure treat (equally enjoyable for the young and the lesser young).'

At http://www.sherlock-holmes.com/e_times14-1.html you'll find the latest issue of *The Sherlockian E-Times*, newsletter-catalogue of **Classic Specialties** of Cincinnati. It's full of good things.

On 26 February **Roger Llewellyn** will present *Sherlock Holmes – The Last Act!* at the Haymarket Theatre, Basingstoke (01256 844244, anvilarts.org.uk).

From 11 February to 2 March the company Let Them Call It Mischief will present *The Final Revelation of Sherlock Holmes* by **Tim Norton** at The Pleasance Theatre, North Road, London N7 9EF (020 7609 1800; book online at www.pleasance.co.uk). DM subscribers who book by phone and quote 'Sherlock Holmes Society Offer' and get tickets at the reduced price of £8.00 for any performance from 11th-16th Feb.

Tacit Theatre's production of *A Study in Scarlet* by **Lila Whelan** and **Greg Freeman** will run from 19 March to 12 April at the Southwark Playhouse, 77-85 Newington Causeway, London SE1 6BD (020 7407 0234; www.southwarkplayhouse.co.uk). Check the podcasts at the Tacit website <http://www.tacittheatre.co.uk>.

Following the success of last summer's weekend conference *Sherlock Holmes Past & Present*, **Tom Ue** is preparing a one-day symposium for 11 April: *New Directions in Sherlock*, to be held at the Wilkins Gustave Tuck Lecture Theatre at University College London. Tom says: 'In this symposium, we will screen *His Last Vow*, attend presentations, and

discuss Sherlock Holmes, the BBC *Sherlock*, and aspects of neo-Victorian detective writing... This conference is free and open to the public. Please register here: <http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/new-directions-in-sherlock-tickets-6900426361?aff=eorg>.' The keynote speaker will be Dr Benjamin Poore, Department of Theatre, Film and Television, University of York. If you'd like to present a paper, please email your 200-word abstract for a 20-minute presentation and 50-word biography to ue_tom@hotmail.com by February 28.

The excellent *Sherlockian-Sherlock* website has recently added a thought-provoking and possibly controversial section on Common Misbeliefs at <http://www.sherlockian-sherlock.com/misbeliefs-about-sherlock-holmes.php>. It's well worth your attention, as is the rest of the website.

Hidden away on the Channel 5 schedule for Wednesday 5 February is *Sherlock: The First CSI* at 10.00pm. I'm pretty sure this is the good documentary first shown on the National Geographic Channel as *How Sherlock Changed the World*.

News was very late reaching me of the *Starfury: Elementary* convention, 'a three day celebration of the hit TV series, SHERLOCK, as well as over 100 years of SHERLOCK HOLMES in books, films and television', to be held at the Hilton Metropole Hotel in Birmingham, 7-9 February. Details are at <http://www.seanharry.com/events/elementary/>. Guests include **Arwel Wyn Jones**, **Tony Lee** and (on Sunday) **Benedict Cumberbatch**.

It seems just a few weeks ago that I was chatting by e-mail with **Vincent Brosnan**, a good friend and, as proprietor of Sherlock in LA, a major Sherlockian book dealer. Peter Blau notes: 'Vinnie began publishing Sherlockiana in 1985, was active in many Sherlockian societies in southern California, and received his quite appropriate Investiture ['That Gap on the Second Shelf'] from The Baker Street Irregulars in 2011.' He died on 28 December, aged eighty.

The beautiful actress **Alexandra Bastedo**, forever associated with the 1960s TV adventure series *The Champions*, devoted most of the past thirty years to the Alexandra Bastedo Champions Animal Sanctuary. In 1994 she played Mrs Ferguson on Bert Coules' dramatisation of *The Sussex Vampire* on Radio 4. She died on 12 January, aged sixty-seven. Her husband, writer and director Patrick Garland, died last April.

Periodicals received: *The Baker Street Journal*, Winter 2013 (Steven Rothman, www.bakerstreetjournal.com; subscriptions, PO Box 583, Zionsville, IN 46077, USA). *The Bilge Pump*, January 2014 (**The Crew of the Barque Lone Star**, Steve Mason, <http://barquelonestar.com>). *Bootmakers Winter Newsletter* and *Canadian Holmes*, Winter 2013/14 (**The Bootmakers of Toronto**, Mark & JoAnn Alberstat, 46 Kingston Crescent, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, B3A 2M2, Canada). *The Camden House Journal*, October 2013, November 2013 & December 2013 (**The Occupants of the Empty House**, Debbie Tinsley, PO Box 21, Zeigler, IL 62999, USA). *Cri Bar Crier*, December 2013 (**The Criterion Bar Association**, Susan Z Diamond, 16W603 3rd Ave, Bensenville, IL 60106-2327, USA). *Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections*, December 2013 (Suite 111, Elmer L Andersen Library, University of Minnesota, 222 21st Avenue S, Minneapolis, MN 55455, USA). *Ineffable Twaddle*, January 2014 (**The Sound of the Baskervilles**, Terri Haugen, www.soundofthebaskervilles.com). *Ironmongers Daily News*, 23 December 1913 [*sic*] (**La Société Sherlock Holmes de France**, Thiery Saint-Joanis, www.sshf.com/inscription-sshf.php). *The Magic Door*, Winter 2013 (**The Friends of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection**, Doug Wrigglesworth, 16 Sunset Street, Holland Landing, Ontario, Canada L9N 1H4). *The Petrel Flyer*, February/March 2014 (**The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia**, Len Haffenden, 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7P 3C6). *Proceedings of the Sherlock Holmes Society of The Hague*, December 2013 (The Society, Jacques Zonneveld, Vlierboomstraat 464, 2564 JL Den Haag, Holland). *The Scion*, Spring 2014 [*sadly, the final issue*] (**The Musgraves**, Anne Jordan, Hallas Lodge, Greenside Lane, Cullingworth, Bradford BD13 5AP). *The Serpentine Muse*, Winter 2013 (**The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes**, Evelyn Herzog, 301 Warren Ave, #203, Baltimore, MD 21203, USA). *The Solar Pons Gazette*, December 2013 [*welcome back!*] (Bob Byrne; www.solarpons.com).

And *Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press*, December 2013 (Peter E Blau, 7103 Endicott Court, Bethesda, MD 20817-4401, USA; blau7103@comcast.net).

Roger Johnson