

THE DISTRICT MESSENGER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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To be published on the 11th April is SHERLOCK HOLMES & THE HENTZAU AFFAIR by our very own David Stuart Davies (Ian Henry Publications, £9.95). The dust-jacket design, uniform with those of the earlier Ian Henry pastiches, is graced with Peter Cushing's characterful sketch of Sherlock Holmes. Perhaps I should declare an interest in this particular book: I had the pleasure of reading it in manuscript, my name has been appropriated for one of the characters, and the book is dedicated to me. So, yes, I like it! What we have, as the title suggests, is a sequel to THE PRISONER OF ZENDA. A sequel: not the official sequel that Anthony Hope gave us, under the title of RUPERT OF HENTZAU. David has speculated on what might have happened if Sherlock Holmes had been brought into the affair, & a jolly good job he's made of it, re-creating Hope's world of romantic intrigue and the vivid characters that inhabit it. THE HENTZAU AFFAIR is a less reflective, less elegaic tale than RUPERT OF HENTZAU, with a much happier conclusion: a comedy rather than a tragedy, and a cracking good read. (There's one tiny error that I seem to have missed the first time around: Queen Flavia's hair was not "raven-black" but red - "the glorious Elphberg hair". Just thought I'd mention it.)

Exciting news from the Northern Musgraves: contrary to various press announcements (in this newsletter as elsewhere) there will be at least one more Sherlock Holmes series from Granada TV. Jeremy Brett has told David Stuart Davies that he's signed up for a two-hour Christmas special (will this be THE VALLEY OF FEAR at last?) plus some more one-hour episodes. Edward Hardwick will be back as Dr Watson, of course. Opened a couple of days ago was a further Holmesian development on the Granada Studios Tour, enlarging the exterior set, making the interior set more accessible, and adding an exhibition, a bookshop & refreshment facilities. Kathryn White, Christopher Roden & David Stuart Davies have been closely involved from the beginning as advisers and collaborators in the design, and the exhibition is headed by the Musgraves' logo. Finally, David Stuart Davies (I promise this is the last mention of him in this issue) asks me to remind members that subscriptions to the Musgraves are now due (£10 UK; £14 Europe; US\$26 elsewhere - and dollars in cash, please) to the Membership Secretary, John Addy (23 East Street, Lightcliffe, Halifax. HX3 8TU).

Two booksellers' catalogues just out: SH 23 from Sylvian Hamilton (Hermitage, Mount Pleasant, Duns, Berwickshire TD11 3HU), listing books and much more, and Geoff Bradley's CRIME & DETECTIVE FICTION list no. 13 (9 Vicarage Hill, South Benfleet, Essex SS7 1PA), which covers all aspects of the field, including Holmesiana, of course. While on the subject, The Old Soldiers of Baker Street of the Two Saults (W.T. Rabe, 1204 Davitt, Sault Ste Marie, Michigan 49783, USA) offer a selection of interesting material, including Bill Rabe's fascinating study of a popular song that has passed into oral tradition and Sherlockian legend, WE ALWAYS MENTION AUNT CLARA. Write to Mr Rabe for details.

Mark Chadderton passes on news of something I'd missed: just before Christmas the BBC published RUSS ABBOT'S FUN BOOK by Peter Vincent & Barry Cryer (£5.99), containing several pages of Abbot's travesty "Barrett Holmes". And Kelvin Jones has already published a second slim volume of the exploits of Dr John Carter, the Edwardian psychic detective. This is THE DARK ENTRY (Sir Hugo Books, 10 Athelstan Road, Chatham, Kent ME4 6EJ; £2.50 including postage - cheques payable to Kelvin I. Jones, please). Like its predecessor (THE OBSIDIAN; £2.30), the booklet is very strikingly illustrated by Douglas Walters.

Michael Cox has kindly passed on a copy of SCARLET STREET no. 1, a magazine devoted to mystery & horror on film & TV (formerly THE MYSTERY NEWSLETTER). It's handsomely printed, well written & illustrated, and contains a great deal of Holmesian interest. It's available from SCARLET STREET, PO Box 604, Glen Rock, New Jersey 07452, U.S.A. The price is \$3.50. (It's likely to be available in this country from Murder One.)

John Bennett Shaw and Cristina Macia have sent further information about LOS ARCHIVOS DE BAKER STREET, the new project from Valdemar Ediciones of Madrid, for which Cristina is Editorial Director, following the first volume (LAS HAZANAS DE SHERLOCK HOLMES, a translation of THE EXPLOITS by Conan Doyle & Dickson Carr) will be translations of SHERLOCK HOLMES OF BAKER STREET by William S. Baring-Gould and A THREE PIPE PROBLEM by Julian Symons. I don't know about the Baring-Gould, but the Symons will have a (no doubt scholarly) critical introduction by John Bennett Shaw. The books may be had from Libreria Gigamesh, Ronda de San Pedro 53, 08010 Barcelona, Spain. The price is 2600 pesetas each, including postage; Spanish currency only, please (cheques & postal orders payable to Gigamesh).

And another update. Charles Hall (12 Paisley Terrace, Edinburgh EH8 7JW) has added three more designs to his collection of Sherlock Holmes caricature postcards. The pack of ten cards for £3.50 now includes two each of: Holmes in deerstalker & Inverness; Holmes in topper & frock coat; Charlie Chan, Hercule Poirot & Father Brown; Watson telling Holmes about the Battle of Maiwand; Holmes & Moriarty. The third new card shows Holmes & Watson at Loch Ness; it's available at 35p the copy. Mr Hall has plans for at least half a dozen more. Write to him for details.

Ivy & Douglas Warren send news of another Holmesian play: A STUDY IN SCARLET (no author named; presumably it's Christopher Martin's adaptation) will be at the Grand Theatre, Wolverhampton from Monday 13 May to Saturday 18 May. Evening performances: Monday - Thursday 7.30 pm, Friday 8.00 pm, Saturday 7.30 pm; matinee: Saturday 4.00 pm. Evening tickets £4.50 - £7.50; matinee tickets £3.00 - £5.00. It's a Nick Orchard production featuring William Boyd & James Coombes. The theatre is 200 yards from the railway station, and the phone number is 0902 29212.

Another link with the past has been severed. Michael Hardwick died earlier this month at the age of 66. On his own or in collaboration with his wife Mollie, Michael was responsible for THE SHERLOCK HOLMES COMPANION, THE MAW WHO WAS SHERLOCK HOLMES, the novelisation of Billy Wilder's film THE PRIVATE LIFE OF SHERLOCK HOLMES, PRISONER OF THE DEVIL, THE PRIVATE LIFE OF DR WATSON, SHERLOCK HOLMES: MY LIFE & CRIMES, THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO SHERLOCK HOLMES, and THE REVENGE OF THE HOUND. Perhaps his most lasting achievement in our field will prove to be his radio adaptations of the canon, performed so memorably by Carleton Hobbs & Norman Shelley. A few years ago, the Hardwicks cut themselves off from our Society, and in 1988 Dame Jean Conan Doyle forbade the American publication of any more Hardwick pastiches. This effectively ended the long-standing Hardwick-Holmes connection, but the Hardwick influence will remain. (Thanks to Desmond Tyler & Stephen Farrell, who each sent me a copy of the Daily Telegraph obituary.)

News from John E. Stephenson: a dinner will be held at the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York, on Saturday 4th May to celebrate the centenary of the fatal struggle at Reichenbach. Cost is \$80.00, cheques payable to Albert M. Rosenblatt (Freedom Road, Pleasant Valley, New York 12569, USA). New from Gasogene Press (Box 1041, Dubuque, Iowa 52004-1041, USA) is David Hammer's TO PLAY THE GAME: THE TRAVEL GUIDE TO THE NORTH AMERICA OF SHERLOCK HOLMES (hardback \$39.95, paperback \$19.95), This is Mr Hammer's 3rd volume of topological detection; the first two were excellent. Forthcoming from Gasogene are Dick Warner's own account of the history of Holmes Peak, a book of Sherlockian poems by Deborah Sage illustrated by Jeff Decker; Michael Harrison's SHEAF OF SHERLOCK, being his collected Sherlockian stories, each with an extensive introduction. Michael Hardwick's death has presumably put paid to plans for completion & publication of his Holmesian memoirs. Dr Ben Wood (The Pleasant Places of Florida, PO Box 740, Ellenton, Florida 43222, USA) offers SHERLOCKIAN SING-ALONG by Mike Carroll & Ben Wood, "a dandy batch of Baker Street ballads & Doylean ditties". Cost is \$6.00, which includes postage (presumably in North America only).

From Peter Blau: the 10th NEW ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES cassette from Simon & Schuster is now out, containing "In Flanders' Fields" & "The Eyes of Mr Leyton". A comedy-adventure film, SHERLOCK HOLMES' ARCANe ADVENTURE, is scheduled to begin shooting in Estonia next month. Bruce Holmes (64 Maple Circle, Dollard des Ormeaux, Quebec H9B 1E5, Canada) offers a sales list of Sherlockian collectibles, mostly philatelic.

